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The Pivot to Canonisation:  
Fayḍ Kāshānī and the Safavid Hadith Discourse

by  
Amin Ehteshami

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requirements for the degree of  
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of the  
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Committee in Charge:

Professor Asad Q. Ahmed, Chair  
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Professor Maria Mavroudi  
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## Abstract

### The Pivot to Canonisation: Fayḍ Kāshānī and the Safavid Hadith Discourse

by

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Doctor of Near Eastern Studies

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Asad Q. Ahmed, Chair

This dissertation consists of an inquiry into Shi'i hadith, focusing on Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī (1599–1680) as its central figure, Safavid Iran (1501–1722) as its period of interest, and hadith canonisation as its main theme. Fayḍ was a seventeenth-century polymath and the compiler of an influential hadith compendium entitled *al-Wāfi*. Completed in 1658, *al-Wāfi* is unique in that it was the first major Shi'i hadith compendium to have appeared since the *Istibṣār* of al-Ṭūsī (d. 1067), compiled six centuries earlier. *Al-Wāfi* is also the first work to provide a comprehensive commentary on the Imāmī hadith corpus collectively referred to as the Four Books (*al-kutub al-arba'a*), namely al-Kulaynī's *al-Kāfi*, Ibn Bābūya's *Man lā yaḥḍuruḥu 'l-faqīh*, and al-Ṭūsī's *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām* and *al-Istibṣār*. While in recent years various aspects of Fayḍ's thought have been briefly explored, his writings on hadith remain largely neglected. This dissertation attempts to present a detailed study of Fayḍ's approach to hadith as a compiler, exegete, theologian, and jurist. It examines *al-Wāfi*'s structure and content, sources and influences, and the principles that direct Fayḍ's hadith authentication, compilation, and interpretation. In pursuing this line of enquiry, this dissertation contextualises *al-Wāfi* within Fayḍ's extensive writing oeuvre as well as the wider Safavid hadith discourse. This includes a study of the emergence of the Four Books as the locus of discussions regarding the authenticity of Shi'i hadith corpus during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

In addition to examining *al-Wāfi*'s relation to the historical development of arguments related to the authority of the Four Books amongst Safavid scholars, this dissertation addresses the issue of the canonicity of Shi'i hadith as discussed in Fayḍ's writings. Based on its examination of Fayḍ's attempts at providing a definitive hadith compendium, this study concludes that certain elements within his thought – such as privileging a report's content (*matn*) over its documentary evidence (*sanad*) as the most reliable means of hadith authentication – problematize the claims of canonicity for any particular corpus of hadith including his own.

In investigating how the discipline of hadith was envisioned by one of its leading practitioners, this study also opens a window onto the vast panorama of theological views, exegetical principles, and theories of hadith authenticity that have continued to shape Shi'i thought to the present. This dissertation represents a necessary step towards a larger project of writing a reception history of the Four Books from the eleventh century to the present and investigating the factors that have contributed to their consolidation as the most authoritative sources of Shi'i hadith.

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### Note on Transliteration, Dates, and References

The system of transliteration used in this dissertation for the Arabic and Persian scripts is that adopted in the third edition of *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*. The Arabic article *al* is omitted after an individual's first appearance in this dissertation (e.g., al-Shahīd al-Thānī/Shahīd Thānī). If some place-names or term have acquired a universal currency, they are preferred over literal transliteration; hence Shiraz and not Shīrāz, and hadith rather than ḥadīth.

The lunar years of the Islamic calendar are generally followed throughout the text and footnotes by the corresponding Gregorian solar years (e.g., 11/632). About a century ago, a solar Islamic calendar was officially adopted in Iran. The Islamic dates of the sources published in modern Iran are, therefore, solar (Shamsī), coinciding with the corresponding Gregorian solar years starting on 21 March (the first day of Spring). The Hijra solar dates are marked with Sh to distinguish them from lunar dates.

Translations from the Qur'an are from M. A. S. Abdel Haleem's *The Qur'an: A New Translation* (Oxford, 2008). In Qur'anic references, the first numeral indicates the chapter and the second the verse; for example, 31:22 = the Qur'an, chapter 31, verse 22.

### Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used for certain encyclopaedias cited frequently in the footnotes and bibliography:

|                 |                                                                 |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| DMBI            | <i>Dā'irat al-ma'ārif-i buzurg-i islāmī</i> . Tehran, 1367 Sh–. |
| EI <sup>2</sup> | <i>The Encyclopaedia of Islam, Two</i> . Leiden, 1954–2002.     |
| EI <sup>3</sup> | <i>The Encyclopaedia of Islam, Three</i> . Leiden, 2007–.       |
| EIr             | <i>Encyclopaedia Iranica</i> . New York, 1985–.                 |

## Introduction

### Fayḍ Kāshānī and the Canonisation of Shi‘i Hadith

#### §1. *Al-Wāfi*

This dissertation consists of an inquiry into Shi‘i hadith, focusing on Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī (1599–1680) as its central figure, Safavid Iran (1501–1722) as its period of interest, and the issue of hadith canonisation as its main theme. Fayḍ was a seventeenth-century polymath and the compiler of one of the most influential hadith compendia in the Shi‘i tradition—a twenty-six volume book entitled *al-Wāfi*.<sup>1</sup> Composed in Isfahan over a period of nine years, the compilation was finished in 1068/1658. *Al-Wāfi* is a unique book in that it was the first major Imāmī hadith compendium to have appeared in six centuries. Its last predecessor, *al-Istibṣār*, was composed by al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067) who some years earlier had compiled another major hadith compendium entitled *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām*. These two works, along with al-Kulaynī’s *al-Kāfi fi ‘ilm al-dīn* and Ibn Bābūya’s *Man lā yaḥḍuruḥu l-faqīh*, both compiled in the fourth/tenth century, constituted the primary Shi‘i hadith sources for centuries. An archive of reports attributed to the Imams, *al-Wāfi* brings together materials from these four compendia – collectively referred to as the Four Books (*al-kutub al-arba‘a*) – along with Fayḍ’s own commentary on a variety of subjects, from theology, law, and exegesis to ethics, supplication, eschatology and history. Although other scholars had written commentaries on the Four Books prior to Fayḍ’s undertaking, *al-Wāfi* is the first book of its kind to comment on all of these four compendia and gather them into a single work.<sup>2</sup>

This dissertation explores *al-Wāfi*’s structure and content, sources and influences, and its author’s method of compilation and hermeneutic approach. It sheds new light on the rise of the Four Books as the pivot of hadith discussions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by locating *al-Wāfi* within the wider Safavid hadith discourse and situating the book in the context of Fayḍ’s overarching intellectual project. In addition to examining *al-Wāfi* in relation to the Safavid hadith discourse, this dissertation addresses the issue of hadith authentication as discussed in Fayḍ’s writings.

In recent decades, the academic study of hadith has often taken one or a mixture of the following routes: analysis of transmission chains and investigation of the historical reliability of the hadith corpus (e.g., Juynboll, Cook, Crone, Motzki); examination of hadith narrations as historical artifacts (e.g., Goldziher, Schacht); issues pertaining to oral and textual transmissions (e.g., Schoeler); manuscript studies and textual criticism (e.g., Robson, Abbot, Sezgin, Azami, Ansari); theories of hadith canonisation (e.g., Brown).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Arranged in sixteenth parts (an introduction, fourteenth chapters, and an index of *isnāds*), the edition used in this study is Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *al-Wāfi*, 26 vols. (Isfahan, 1406). For a detailed study of *al-Wāfi*’s numerous manuscripts, facsimile and printed editions see ‘Alī Ṣadrāyī Khūyī, “Nuskhih-shināsī-i kitāb-i Wāfi”, in Shahnāz Shāyānfār (ed), *Fayḍ-pajūhi* (Tehran, 1392 Sh), 89–124.

<sup>2</sup> For a list of some of the commentaries and marginalia on the Four Books see Āqā Buzurg Ṭihrānī, *Dharī‘a ilā taṣānīf al-shī‘a* (Qom, 1408), 13:95–100 and 6:184 (on *al-Kāfi*), 6:223 (on *Faqīh*), 13:154, 13:82, 6:17–19, 6:51, 2:16 (on *Tahdhīb* and *al-Istibṣār*).

<sup>3</sup> See the bibliography for references on the relevant studies.

Of the abovementioned approaches, my study bears a greater affinity to those on canonisation. Among the questions I address are: what need did Fayḍ see for composing a new hadith compendium? In what ways is his compendium different from its predecessors? What is his epistemology of hadith authenticity? What is his assessment of the Four Books? Do all the reports (*akhbār*) narrated in these books satisfy his criteria of authenticity? Does he believe there are reports that satisfy his criteria but are absent from the Four Books? If yes, why does he refrain from including in *al-Wāfi* reports excluded from the Four Books? Since Fayḍ accompanies the hadiths with his own commentary, what principles guide his interpretive approach? In what ways is Fayḍ's interpretive approach informed by, and interact with, his hermeneutical perspectives in other areas, such as theology, exegesis, and jurisprudence? In what ways Fayḍ's approach in *al-Wāfi* informs his exegetical project in his sola-hadith Qur'an commentary (*al-Ṣāfi*)? Does Fayḍ consider the Four Books as canons of Shi'i hadith in the same way that the concept of "canon" is commonly used in relation to scriptures? In These and other related questions lie at the core of this dissertation.

## §2. Fayḍ: An Intellectual Biography

Muḥammad ibn Murtaḍā Kāshānī – widely known by the epithet Fayḍ – was born in 1007/1599 into a distinguished family in Kashan.<sup>4</sup> His intellectual activities blossomed during one of the most prolific periods in the history of Shi'i thought. In outlining the major stages of his life, I will chiefly rely on Fayḍ's brief autobiographical piece entitled *Sharḥ-i ṣadr* and composed in 1065/1655.<sup>5</sup> Fayḍ began his studies in his hometown of Kashan, a city renowned for centuries of Shi'i scholarship.<sup>6</sup> His father and uncles were both religious scholars. It is with them that he first studied what he calls the "exoteric religious sciences" (*ulūm dīniyya ṣāhira*): exegesis, hadith, law, doctrinal principles (*uṣūl al-dīn*), Arabic and logic. At the age of twenty, he left Kashan for Isfahan. In 1598, a year before Fayḍ's birth, Shah 'Abbās the Great (r. 1588–1629)—widely acknowledged as the greatest Safavid king—had ordered the capital to be relocated from Qazvin to Isfahan. 'Abbās's prudence married political ambition with artistic refinement and was turning the city into the cultural and political center of his kingdom.<sup>7</sup> Fayḍ remarks that he entered Isfahan eager to learn the "esoteric" (*bāṭin*) religious sciences.<sup>8</sup> He finds there, however, no expert teacher, and instead, spends his time learning mathematics. His hopes disappointed, he leaves Isfahan for Shiraz where he studies with Sayyid Mājīd b. Hāshim al-Baḥrānī (d. 1028/1619) whom

<sup>4</sup> Sayyid Abul Qāsim Naqībī, "Khāndān-i Mullā Muḥsin-i Fayḍ-i Kāshānī", in S.A. Naqībī and M.N. Naṣrābādī (eds), *Fayḍ-nāma* (Tehran, 1387 Sh), 43–67.

<sup>5</sup> On Fayḍ's biography see, Sayyid Abul Qāsim Naqībī (ed.), *Aqwāl al-'ulamā' fi tarjumat Muḥsin Fayḍ al-Kāshānī* (Tehran, 1387 Sh); Sayyid Riḍā Ṣidāqat Ḥusaynī, "Fayḍ-i Kāshānī dar tadhkirih-hā va tarājīm-i fārsī", in *Fayḍ-nāma*, 69–125; William Chittick, "Muḥsin-i Fayḍ-i Kāshānī", in EI<sup>2</sup>, 7:475; Mathieu Terrier, "Anthropogonie et eschatologie dans l'œuvre de Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī: l'ésotérisme shī'ite entre tradition et syncrétisme", in M. A. Amir-Moezzi et al (eds), *L'ésotérisme shī'ite, ses racines et ses prolongements* (Turnhout, 2016), 746–8; H. Algar, "Fayz-e Kāshānī", in EIR, 9:452–454.

<sup>6</sup> See "Kashan", in EIR; Muṣṭafā Ṣādiqī, *Kāshān dar masīr-i tashayyu'* (Qom, 1386 Sh); Rasūl Ja'fariyān, *Tārīkh-i tashayyu' dar irān az āghāz tā ṭulū' dawlat-i safavī* (Tehran, 1388), 210–15, 577–85, 834–8.

<sup>7</sup> On 'Abbās the Great see R. M. Savory, "'Abbās I", in EIR; Yusof Rahimlu, "'Abbās I", in EIS; Abbas Amanat, *Iran: A Modern History* (New Haven, 2017), Chapter 2. On Isfahan see, "Isfahan", in EIR; "Iṣfahān", in DMBI, 9:156–198.

<sup>8</sup> Fayḍ, "*Sharḥ-i ṣadr*", in *Dah risāla-yi Muḥaqqiq-i buzurg Fayḍ-i Kāshānī*, ed. R. Ja'fariyān (Qom, 1371 Sh), 3–14.

he calls “the jurist of the age and adept in exoteric sciences (*‘ulūm-i ṣāḥir*)”<sup>9</sup> and “my teacher and point of reference in the revealed sciences (*al-‘ulūm al-shar‘iyya*)”.<sup>10</sup> Bahṛānī taught him the sciences of hadith and law, and issued him a license (*ijāza*) to transmit hadith. Fayḍ writes that his studies with Bahṛānī made him independent of relying on another scholars’ expertise (*taqlīd*) in matters of the law. After a two-year stay in Shiraz, he returned to Isfahan in order to study under the city’s most prominent scholar, Bahā’ al-Dīn al-‘Āmilī (d. 1030/1621). He describes Bahā’ī as the “perfect learned master” (*al-shaykh al-fāḍil al-kāmil*).<sup>11</sup>

After receiving a hadith license from Bahā’ī, Fayḍ undertook the pilgrimage to Mecca in 1029/1620.<sup>12</sup> This year turned out to be decisive. First, during this journey, he met Ḥasan al-‘Āmilī’s son, Muḥammad (d. 1030/1621) who granted him a transmission license. As it will be discussed in Chapter Two, Ḥasan al-‘Āmilī was a pivotal figure and exerted a considerable influence on Shi‘i thought in the sixteenth century. Second, a short but formative meeting with Muḥammad Amīn al-Astarābādī (d. 1036/1627) in Mecca implanted, or perhaps intensified, in Fayḍ the belief that a genuine understanding of religion can only be gained through reliance on the reports attributed to the Imams.<sup>13</sup> Third, on his way back from the pilgrimage, a group of bandits murdered his brother. Fayḍ describes this event as a “shattering” experience. The two brothers were exceptionally intimate; “we were”, Fayḍ laments, “one soul in two bodies; each for the other a colleague, confidant, companion, friend, comrade, solace, consolation, aid, and support”.<sup>14</sup> According to Fayḍ, his brother had attained the rank of *ijtihād* (juristic competence) at the age of eighteen and was highly perceptive in intellectual and religious matters. Fayḍ remarks that through this shattering experience, God bestowed continuous blessings on him including coming into contact with learned teachers and benefiting from their knowledge and cultivation.<sup>15</sup>

Fayḍ reports that his intellectual quest reached its culmination in his encounter with Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad Shīrāzī (d. 1050/1640).<sup>16</sup> Sometime after Fayḍ’s return to Iran, he met Shīrāzī (hereon, Ṣadrā) in Qom, and for the next ten years the two were inseparable. Fayḍ’s quest for esoteric knowledge, which had been frustrated for years, was finally quenched by Ṣadrā whom he describes as the “head of the people of gnosis” (*ṣadr-i ahl-i ‘irfān*).<sup>17</sup> He writes that during his eight years with Ṣadrā in Qom, and a subsequent two years in Shiraz, he underwent ascetic practices until he gained insight (*baṣīrat*) into esoteric sciences. Ṣadrā, who at the time of meeting Fayḍ was entering the final decade of his life, had already completed his magnum opus, *al-Asfār al-arba‘a* (“The Four Journeys”). In addition to his philosophical writings, Ṣadrā wrote a commentary on a number of hadiths from Kulaynī’s *al-Kāfi*,

<sup>9</sup> Bahṛānī had emigrated to Shiraz from Bahrain and was considered an instrumental figure in the promulgation of hadith scholarship and Akhbārī ideas in Iran. On his relation to Astarābādī and Fayḍ see Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam*, 152–5, 163.

<sup>10</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:28.

<sup>11</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:29.

<sup>12</sup> *Dah risāla*, 8.

<sup>13</sup> Fayḍ, *al-Ḥaqq al-mubīn fī taḥqīq kayfiyyat al-tafaqquh fī al-dīn* (Tehran, n.d.), 12. For an analysis of Fayḍ’s relation with Astarābādī see Etan Kohlberg, “Aspects of Akhbārī Thought in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries”, in *Belief and Law in Imami Shīsm* (1999), 133–145.

<sup>14</sup> *Dah risāla*, 8.

<sup>15</sup> *Dah risāla*, 8.

<sup>16</sup> For a useful outline of Ṣadrā’s life and thought see Sajjad Rizvi’s entry “Mulla Sadra”, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* and its bibliography.

<sup>17</sup> *Dah risāla*, 8.

composed exegetical pieces on various chapters of the Qur'an, and engaged in theological discussions on topics such as the divine names and the afterlife. Among the recurrent features of Ṣadrā's writings is his attempt to synthesize various scholastic disciplines into a coherent unity. Fayḍ also pursued this project throughout his life. His tendency to synthesize is also evident in his engagement with Ghazālī who had undertaken a similar project, albeit in a Sunni context.

After this period of intense study and ascetic practice, Fayḍ returned to Kashan. Having decided to play a more active role in the community, he dedicated himself to teaching, writing, and civic affairs. While engaged in these matters, he received an invitation from Shah Ṣafi (r. 1629–1642) to join the royal court in a religious capacity. He travels from Kashan to Isfahan to meet the king and respectfully declines his offer. Fayḍ notes that at that time, he was still inexperienced and, observing that the king was surrounded with narrow-minded scholars, he decided to spare himself the trouble and returned to Kashan to continue his scholarly activities. It is to be noted that Shah Ṣafi was an unpopular ruler known for his excess and lack of respect for independent thinkers, qualities that might have further dissuaded Fayḍ from entangling himself with royal affairs.<sup>18</sup>

Two decades later, Fayḍ was called again to join the court. This time, the invitation came from Ṣafi's successor, Shah 'Abbās II (re. 1642–1666), a ruler known for his patronage of scholars and artists. Fayḍ accepted the offer—citing service to the “land (*bilād*) and worshippers (*'ibād*)” as his motivation. His aim in joining the court, Fayḍ writes, was to assist the king – whom he describes in laudatory terms – in the religious instruction of the masses and the implementation of the *sharī'a*. There may, however, have been another incentive for Fayḍ to join the court. He notes that after a few conversations he became aware of the king's eagerness for upholding the Friday congregational prayers. This issue, a controversial topic amongst Shi'i jurists, had for long been dear to Fayḍ's heart. The majority of Imāmī scholars maintained that congregational prayers are obligatory only when an infallible Imam leads the believers in prayer. Hence, during the Imam's absence, believers must perform the prayers individually.<sup>19</sup> Fayḍ, however, considers performing the communal prayers to be obligatory rather than recommended or prohibited.<sup>20</sup> Having the king's support would enable Fayḍ to implement his juristic view in the capital.

During his time at the court, Fayḍ requested the king to initiate a number of major undertakings such as instituting the Friday congregational prayer; removing the chief prosecutor of Isfahan who was known to be corrupt and oppressive; and repealing the policy of compulsory conversion of the Jews. Fayḍ writes that his activities were met with fierce opposition from other scholars active in the court. He attributes this opposition to the scholars' ignorance, jealousy, competition in gaining the king's attention and favor, and disagreements concerning the legal status of the Friday congregational prayer. Fayḍ remarks that he was not one to stand up to such benighted scholars and engage them in

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<sup>18</sup> On Shah Ṣafi see Amanat, *Iran: A Modern History*, 127–133.

<sup>19</sup> Rasūl Ja'fariyān has provided an overview of Safavid jurists' discussions pertaining to Friday congregational prayers in his “*Namāz-i jum'a: siyāsāt va fiqh*”, in *Siyāsāt va farhang-i rūzgār-i ṣafavī* (Tehran, 1388 Sh), 591–744. For a useful reference work of primary sources on this topic see Rasūl Ja'fariyān (ed), *Davāzdah risāli-yi fiqhī darbāri-yi namāz-i jum'a az rūzgār-i ṣafavī* (Tehran, 1381 Sh).

<sup>20</sup> For Fayḍ's views on this topic see his *Mafātih al-sharā'i'* and *Nukhba* as well as *al-Shihāb al-thāqib* which is dedicated to the question of communal Friday prayers.

confrontation.<sup>21</sup> With no allies in the court to support him, Fayḍ resigned from his position and returned to Kashan where he continued to write until his final days.

At the time of his death in 1091/1680, Fayḍ left behind one of the most voluminous and wide-ranging bodies of writing in Shi'i intellectual history. A salient feature of his scholarship is engagement with every facet of Shi'i thought and culture. A person of many talents, Fayḍ was proficient in a broad range of disciplines and wrote on diverse topics ranging from theology, law, jurisprudence, and exegesis to ethics, mysticism, and poetry. Among his precursors in this endeavor was his teacher Bahā' al-Dīn al-ʿAmilī (henceforth, Bahā'ī) who had expanded his engagement with Shi'i religiosity beyond theology and law to include mysticism, philosophy, poetry, and architecture.<sup>22</sup> Similar to Bahā'ī, Fayḍ was deeply interested in the aesthetic, poetic, moral, and experiential dimensions of religion.<sup>23</sup> If Fayḍ is the archetype of this approach, Bahā'ī is its prototype.

Fayḍ's writings display his ability to draw from various fields of learning and synthesize diverse views in order to enrich his own teachings. His large oeuvre covers nearly every field of Islamic sciences. These include *al-Ṣāfi* in exegesis; *al-Wāfi* and *Nawādir* in hadith; *Naqd al-uṣūl al-fiqhiyya*, *Safinat al-najāt*, and *al-Uṣūl al-aṣila* in jurisprudence; *Mafātih al-sharā'i* in law; *Ilm al-yaqīn* in theology. His books on philosophical and mystical themes include *'Ayn al-yaqīn*, *al-Kalimāt al-maknūna*, *Qurrat al-ʿuyūn fi a'azz al-funūn*, *Anwār al-ḥikma*, *Uṣūl al-ma'ārif*, and *al-Kalimāt al-ṭarīfa* as well as a treatise on ethics entitled *al-Ḥaqā'iq fi maḥāsin al-akhlāq*. Another remarkable work is Fayḍ's Shi'i recension of al-Ghazālī's epoch-making book *Iḥyā al-ʿulūm al-dīn*. Titled *al-Maḥajja 'l-bayḍā' fi tahdhib al-iḥyā'*, this eight-volume revision represents Fayḍ's attempt at providing a comprehensive attestation of Shi'i thought modeled on Ghazālī's *Iḥyā*. Besides prose, Fayḍ, an avid reader of Hafez and Rumi, left behind nearly a thousand sonnets, some of which exhibit refined literary abilities.<sup>24</sup> In addition to the above-mentioned titles, Fayḍ composed a number of terse treatises on various topics. Some of these works have been published; others remain in manuscript or are lost while the attribution of the rest to Fayḍ remains open to further investigation.<sup>25</sup>

### §3. Fayḍ and the Safavid Hadith Discourse

Fayḍ entered the Iranian intellectual landscape at a time when the religious scene was undergoing a most fundamental transformation only comparable to the arrival of Islam to Iran in the seventh century. While a millennium prior to Fayḍ's birth Iran converted from its state religion of

<sup>21</sup> *Dah risāla*, 11.

<sup>22</sup> Bahā'ī is credited with designing some of Isfahan's famous architectural monuments. For biographical information on him see Chapter 2.

<sup>23</sup> Other Imāmī figures such as al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā (d. 436/1044), Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067) or Ibn Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī (d. 726/1325) were also experts in various fields (law, jurisprudence, theology, logic, linguistics) but the aesthetic dimensions often manifested in exegesis, philosophical and mystical writings, poetry, or the *adab* literature is not pronounced in their writings.

<sup>24</sup> Fayḍ, *Divān-i 'allāma Mullā Muḥammad Muḥsin-i Fayḍ-i Kāshānī*, ed. Muṣṭafā Fayḍi-yi Kāshānī, 2 vols. (Qom, 1381 Sh). For studies on Fayḍ's poetry see *Fayz-pajūhī*, 885–927.

<sup>25</sup> For bibliographical studies of Fayḍ's writings see Sa'īd Anwārī and Sayyid Ḥusayn Mūsawīyān, "Barrisi-i muḥṭawāyi-i ta'lifāt-i Fayḍ-i Kāshānī", in *Fayz-pajūhī*, 47–76.

Zoroastrianism to the newly emerging religion of Islam, now, the transformation was from one dominant sect to another (Sunni to Shi'i Islam). This most recent transformation preceded Fayḍ's birth by a century. As biographical accounts indicate, Fayḍ was closely tied to a cluster of distinguished individuals whose ideas were consequential in shaping this religious transformation. To begin with, Fayḍ was for nearly two years a student of the hadith scholar Sayyid Mājīd al-Baḥrānī.<sup>26</sup> Often described as the first scholar to promulgate hadith in Shiraz,<sup>27</sup> Baḥrānī was a student of Muḥammad Amīn al-Astarābādī and received his transmission license (*ijāza*) from him.<sup>28</sup> Credited as the founder of the Akhbārī movement, Astarābādī was an epoch-making figure whose *al-Fawā'id al-madaniyya* contributed to making the eleventh/seventeenth century the Akhbārī century. In addition to being connected to Astarābādī via the *ijāza* chain of transmission of his teacher, Fayḍ alludes to having met Astarābādī in person on his journey to Mecca in 1029/1620.<sup>29</sup> More importantly, however, Astarābādī's pervasive influence is evident throughout Fayḍ's writings.<sup>30</sup> After Baḥrānī's passing, Fayḍ moved back to Isfahan, and continued his studies under the direction of another pivotal thinker of the period, Bahā' al-Dīn al-Āmilī. Fayḍ's prolonged association with Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī marked the next major stage of his development, when Fayḍ received training in philosophy and mysticism under his supervision.<sup>31</sup> In addition to Ṣadrā, some biographical accounts mention Mīr Dāmād (d. 1040/1630) among Fayḍ's teachers.<sup>32</sup> Besides his philosophical writings, Mīr Dāmād was also known amongst his contemporaries for his engagement with hadith literature, and especially for his commentary on *al-Kāfī* titled *al-Rawāshih al-samāwiyya*.<sup>33</sup> Fayḍ was familiar with this text, and according to Ṭīhrānī, composed a commentary on it.<sup>34</sup>

During this period and long afterwards, Fayḍ maintained a personal and intellectual exchange with 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Lāhijī (d. 1072/1662) who was among the most prominent theologians of his time. In addition to Lāhijī, Fayḍ was a contemporary of, and in contact with, a series of influential hadith scholars such as Muḥammad Taqī al-Majlisī (d. 1070/1660), Khalīl al-Qazwīnī (d. 1089/1678) and Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-Māzandarānī (d. 1081/1671), all of whom were among the pioneering hadith commentators of the period. He was also a contemporary of Hāshim al-Baḥrānī (d. 1109/1697) and al-'Arūsī al-Ḥuwayzī (d. 1112/1700) who, similar to Fayḍ, authored their own sola-hadith Qur'an commentaries.<sup>35</sup> Another important figure of the period is al-Ḥurr al-Āmilī (d. 1104/1693) whose *Wasā'il al-shi'a* is the third significant hadith compendium of the Safavid period. Among Fayḍ's other contemporaries who played a role in shaping the Safavid hadith discourse are Ḥusayn al-Karakī (d.

<sup>26</sup> Fayḍ, *al-Wāfi*, 1:28–9; Ni'mat Allāh Jazā'irī, *Zahr al-rabī'* (Beirut, 1999), 284–5.

<sup>27</sup> Yūsuf al-Baḥrānī, *Lu'lu'at al-baḥrayn*, (Manama, 1429/2008), 135.

<sup>28</sup> Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam*, 152–5, 163.

<sup>29</sup> Fayḍ, *al-Ḥaqq al-mubīn*, 12.

<sup>30</sup> Fayḍ describes Astarābādī as a pathbreaker and guide to the Akhbārī way (*al-Ḥaqq al-mubīn*, 12); it should be noted that Fayḍ's reception of Astarābādī's views was both appreciative and critical.

<sup>31</sup> *Dah risāla*, 8–9.

<sup>32</sup> 'Alī Mudarris Mūsawī Bihbahānī, *Ḥakīm-i Astarābād: Mīr Dāmād* (Tehran, 1370 Sh), 148. Other biographical accounts either do not mention Mīr Dāmād or dispute that Fayḍ was his student.

<sup>33</sup> Mīr Dāmād, *al-Rawāshih al-samāwiyya fi sharḥ al-aḥādīth al-imāmiyya* (Qom, 1405/1984). For a biography of Mīr Dāmād see Jūyā Jahānbakhsh, *Mu'allim-i thālith: zindigīnāmi-yi Mīr Dāmād* (Tehran, 1389 Sh).

<sup>34</sup> Ṭīhrānī, *Dharī'a*, 6:90.

<sup>35</sup> Hāshim al-Baḥrānī, *al-Burhān fi tafsīr al-Qur'ān* and al-Ḥuwayzī, *Tafsīr nūr al-thaqalayn*.

1076/1665), Muḥammad Bāqir al-Sabzawārī (d. 1090/1679), Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-Qummī (d. 1098/1686), and ‘Abd Allāh ibn Sulaymān al-Samāhijī (d. 1135/1722).

Having benefited from a series of leading teachers, Fayḍ in turn mentored a number of students who later became influential scholars. Among them were Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī (d. 1110/1699) whose *Biḥār al-anwār* is the second major hadith compendium of the period, the prolific hadith exegete Ni‘mat Allāh al-Jazā’irī (d. 1112/1700), and the theologian and hadith commentator Muḥammad al-Sa‘īd al-Qummī (d. after 1107/1695). Considering that Fayḍ was directly and indirectly connected to many central figures of the Safavid era and worked contemporaneously with a series of thinkers whose influence has carried on to the present, to study Fayḍ is to study the nexus of a rich hadith discourse with an enduring impact on Shi‘i religiosity.<sup>36</sup>

#### §4. Literature Review

Although Fayḍ has long been recognized as a seminal figure within Shi‘i intellectual history, there is an absence of comprehensive studies on his thought. Among those who have contributed to Fayḍ scholarship in European languages, Robert Gleave thus far has provided the most detailed studies. In his monograph *Scripturalist Islam* (2007), Gleave discusses various facets of Fayḍ’s ideas in the context of Akhbārī thought in general and in relation to Astarābādī in particular. A contribution of his study is the attention he draws to the nuances of Fayḍ’s Akhbārī approach.<sup>37</sup> He provides an analysis of Fayḍ’s mystical and philosophical thought and its relation to Akhbārī thought in his article, “Scripturalist Sufism” (2007).<sup>38</sup> He examines various features of Fayḍ’s jurisprudence in his article, “The Qāḍī and the Muftī in Akhbārī Shi‘i Jurisprudence” (2008).<sup>39</sup> Gleave’s first monograph, *Inevitable Doubt* (2000), had explored the aftermath of the Akhbārī movement in the eighteenth century by focusing on two central figures, the Akhbārī thinker Yūsuf al-Baḥrānī (d. 1186/1772) and his Uṣūlī counterpart Muḥammad Bāqir al-Bihbahānī (d. 1205/1791).<sup>40</sup> This monograph along with Gleave’s *Scripturalist Islam* are indispensable sources for acquiring a better understanding of the contrasting principles underlying the Akhbārī and Uṣūlī hermeneutical paradigms.

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<sup>36</sup> Indeed, the wide-ranging impacts of this discourse has a precedent only in the proliferation of hadith scholarship in the period between the beginning of the occultation in 260/874 and the death of al-Ṭūsī in 460/1067. Both movements lasted around two centuries and shared a number of similarities such as the proliferation of hadith compendia, emergence of sola-hadith Qur’an commentaries and widespread engagement with hadith by experts from different disciplines (al-Kulaynī, Ibn Bābūya, al-Mufīd, al-Murtaḍā, al-Raḍī, al-Ṭūsī, al-Karājakī). For a study of the sola-hadith Qur’an commentaries of the formative period see M. Bar-Asher, *Scripture and Exegesis in Early Imāmī Shī‘ism* (Leiden, 1999). For al-Mufīd’s views on hadith see Martin J. McDermott, *The Theology of al-Shaikh al-Mufīd* (Beirut, 1978); for a detailed analysis of al-Murtaḍā’s epistemology of hadith authenticity as elaborated in his theological and jurisprudential writings see Hassan Ansari and Amin Ehteshami, *Theories of Testimonial Knowledge in Medieval Islamic Theology* (Leiden, forthcoming [2020]).

<sup>37</sup> Robert Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam: The History and Doctrines of the Akhbārī Shī‘ī School* (Leiden, 2007). See especially the second half of the book.

<sup>38</sup> Robert Gleave, “Scripturalist Sufism and Scripturalist Anti-Sufism: Theology and Mysticism amongst the Shi‘i Akhbārīyya”, in Ayman Shihadeh (ed.), *Sufism and Theology* (Edinburgh, 2007), 158–176.

<sup>39</sup> Robert Gleave, “The Qāḍī and the Muftī in Akhbārī Jurisprudence”, in Peri Bearman, Wolfhart Heinrichs, and Bernard Weiss (eds), *The Law Applied: Contextualizing the Islamic Shari‘a* (London, 2008), 235–258.

<sup>40</sup> Robert Gleave, *Inevitable Doubt: Two Theories of Shī‘ī Jurisprudence* (Leiden, 2000).

Other studies on Fayḍ are shorter in length and narrower in scope. Etan Kohlberg has analysed aspects of Fayḍ's *Safinat al-naḡāt* (a text on jurisprudence) in an informative article;<sup>41</sup> Todd Lawson briefly discusses Fayḍ's *al-Ṣāfi* along with the other sola-hadith Qur'an commentaries of the Safavid period in his "Akhhbārī Shī'ī Approaches to Tafsīr";<sup>42</sup> in "The Hidden Words of Fayḍ Kāshānī" he provides an examination of Fayḍ's mystical treatise *al-Kalimāt al-maknūna*,<sup>43</sup> and in another article traces Fayḍ's reception in the nineteenth century and particularly in the thought of Aḥmad al-Aḥsā'ī.<sup>44</sup> Cyrus Ali Zargar has subjected *al-Kalimāt al-maknūna* along with its three abridgments to a further examination. His chief focus is on Fayḍ's reception of Ibn 'Arabī and Mullā Ṣadrā as well as his changing attitudes toward Sufism.<sup>45</sup> In a recent article, Mathieu Terrier has investigated Fayḍ's views on eschatology and anthropogony.<sup>46</sup> Among Terrier's concerns is to answer, "comment peut-on être à la fois traditionaliste (*akhhbārī*), philosophe et sympathisant du soufisme?"<sup>47</sup> He pursues this question by studying Fayḍ in relation to what he, following Corbin and Amir-Moezzi, calls Shī'ī "esotericism". Most of his discussions revolve around *al-Kalimāt al-maknūna* and *Anwār al-ḥikma*, which he quotes at length in his French translations. As the above studies indicate, Fayḍ's "esoteric" writings, and in particular his *al-Kalimāt al-maknūna*, have received greater attention in the secondary literature; detailed examinations of his writings on hadith, theology, law and jurisprudence are yet to be fully explored (a task partially set for this dissertation).

In the past two decades, a series of studies on Fayḍ have appeared in Persian and Arabic. In his *Siyāsāt va farhang-i ruzgār-i ṣafavī*, Rasūl Ja'fariyān has provided an instructive presentation of various aspects of Fayḍ's ideas in relation to the other major figures of the era.<sup>48</sup> Ja'fariyān has edited another useful volume on Safavid jurists' position on the status of Friday congregational prayer, which on many occasions contains references to Fayḍ's ideas.<sup>49</sup> Shahnāz Shāyānfār's edited volume, *Fayz-pajūhī*, provides a series of articles by Iranian academics on several facets of Fayḍ's thought.<sup>50</sup> *Fayz-nāmāh*, an earlier edited volume dedicated to Fayḍ and containing around thirty articles was published nine years

<sup>41</sup> Etan Kohlberg, "Aspects of Akhhbārī Thought in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries", in Nehemia Levtzion and John O. Voll (eds), *Eighteenth Century Renewal and Reform in Islam* (Syracuse, 1987), 133–160.

<sup>42</sup> Todd Lawson, "Akhhbārī Shī'ī Approaches to Tafsīr", in G. R. Hawting and Abdul-Kader A. Shareef (eds), *Approaches to the Qur'an* (New York, 1993), 173–210.

<sup>43</sup> Todd Lawson, "The Hidden Words of Fayḍ Kāshānī", in Maria Szuppe (ed), *Iran: Questions et connaissances*. Vol. 2, *Périodes médiévale et modern: Actes du IVe congrès Européen des études iraniennes, organisé par la Societas Iranologica Europaea, Paris, 6-10 septembre 1999* (Paris, 2002), 427–47.

<sup>44</sup> Todd Lawson, "Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy in Twelver Shī'ism: Aḥmad al-Aḥsā'ī on Fayḍ Kāshānī (the *Risālat al-'Ilmiyya*)", in Robert Gleave (ed), *Religion and Society in Qajar Iran* (London, 2005), 127–54.

<sup>45</sup> Cyrus 'Alī Zargar, "Revealing Revisions: Fayḍ Al-Kāshānī's Four Versions of *al-Kalimāt al-Maknūna*", in *Iranian Studies* 47.2 (2014), 241–62.

<sup>46</sup> Mathieu Terrier, "Anthropogonie et eschatologie dans l'œuvre de Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī: l'ésotérisme shī'ite entre tradition et syncrétisme", in M. A. Amir-Moezzi et al (eds), *L'ésotérisme shī'ite, ses racines et ses prolongements* (Turnhout, 2016), 743–780.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 746.

<sup>48</sup> Rasūl Ja'fariyān, *Siyāsāt va farhang-i ruzgār-i ṣafavī* (Tehran, 1388 Sh).

<sup>49</sup> Rasūl Ja'fariyān, *Davāzdah risāli-yi fiqhī darbāri-yi namāz-i jum'a az ruzgār-i ṣafavī* (Tehran, 1381 Sh).

<sup>50</sup> Shahnāz Shāyānfār (ed), *Fayz-pajūhī* (Tehran, 1392 Sh). It is to be noted that some of the articles included in this volume suffer from historiographical and conceptual shortcomings.

ago.<sup>51</sup> ‘Aliridā Fayḍ has explored Fayḍ’s approach to legal issues in his monograph *Ārā’-yi fiqhi-yi Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ-i Kāshānī*; some years earlier he had discussed some aspects of Fayḍ’s legal thought in his book on *ijtihād*.<sup>52</sup> The only monograph on *al-Wāfi* I have come across in Persian or Arabic is ‘Alī Muḥammad Mīr Jalīlī’s *Wāfi: mabānī va ravishhā-yi fiqh al-ḥadīthī dar ān*.<sup>53</sup> As the title indicates, the book’s primary focus is on Fayḍ’s interpretive approach to hadith. Despite its various conceptual pitfalls and the absence of contextualizing *al-Wāfi* within Fayḍ’s other books, Jalīlī’s book contains useful historical information concerning Fayḍ’s biography, the sources Fayḍ relies on in his commentarial remarks, various lithograph and printed versions of *al-Wāfi*, commentaries and *mustadrak* works composed on *al-Wāfi*, Fayḍ’s method of organizing *al-Wāfi*, and *al-Wāfi*’s critical reception among Fayḍ’s contemporaries and successors. As for Arabic sources, most of the printed editions of Fayḍ’s writing corpus are prefaced by introductory comments of the editors, which at times provide useful information. I have come across a monograph on Fayḍ’s philosophical and theological thought in Arabic by Alī Kinānī, which examines Fayḍ’s thought in the context of Mullā Ṣadrā’s transcendental philosophy.<sup>54</sup>

Noteworthy studies pertaining to early attempts at the canonisation of Imāmī scriptural sources include Etan Kohlberg’s lengthy article “*al-Uṣūl al-Arba‘umi’a*” as well as Ḥusayn al-Jalālī’s *Dirāsa ḥawl al-uṣūl al-arba‘imi’a*.<sup>55</sup> These two works investigate the corpus of hadith literature collectively referred to as the “Four-Hundred Foundational Sources”. According to many Shi‘i scholars, these sources, the overwhelming majority of which are no longer extant, served as the fountainhead for early hadith compendia in general and the Four Books in particular. Robert Gleave’s “Between *Ḥadīth* and *Fiqh*: The ‘Canonical’ Imāmī Collections of *Akhbār*” presents an insightful overview of the Four Books and brings to surface the ways in which the compilers’ juristic concerns directed their compilation processes.<sup>56</sup> Gleave has also examined the reception of the Four Books and the justifications provided for their authority in two of his monographs *Inevitable Doubt* and *Scripturalist Islam*. Another relevant study is Amir-Moezzi and Ansari’s lengthy article on al-Kulaynī’s *al-Kāfi* where the book’s compilation, transmission, and reception are discussed.<sup>57</sup>

The past three decades in particular have witnessed a flourishing in research on Safavid history both in Iran and the West. Thus far, the majority of these studies have focused on the socio-political,

<sup>51</sup> S. A. Naqībī and M. N. Naṣrābādī (eds), *Fayz-nāma* (Tehran, 1387 Sh).

<sup>52</sup> ‘Aliridā Fayḍ, *Ārā’-yi fiqhi-yi Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ-i Kāshānī* (Tehran, 1387 Sh) and *Vizhagihā-yi ijtiḥād va fiqh-i pūyā dar maktab-i fiqh-i sih faqih* (Tehran, 1381 Sh), 359–397 and 404–597 (where he provides a comparative study of the legal rulings of Fayḍ and Aḥmad Ardabili).

<sup>53</sup> ‘Alī Muḥammad Mīr Jalīlī, *Wāfi: mabānī va ravishhā-yi fiqh al-ḥadīthī dar ān* (Tehran, 1387 Sh).

<sup>54</sup> Alī Kinānī, *al-Falsafa wa-al-kalām fī madrasat al-ḥikma al-muta‘āliya: dirāsa fī ārā’ al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī al-falsafīya wa-al-kalāmīya* (Beirut, 2016).

<sup>55</sup> Etan Kohlberg, “*al-Uṣūl al-Arba‘umi’a*”, *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 10 (1987), 128–66; Ḥusayn al-Jalālī, *Dirāsa ḥawl al-uṣūl al-arba‘imi’a* (Tehran, 1394).

<sup>56</sup> Robert Gleave, “Between *Ḥadīth* and *Fiqh*: The ‘Canonical’ Imāmī Collections of *Akhbār*”, *Islamic Law and Society* 8.3 (2001), 350–382.

<sup>57</sup> M.A. Amir-Moezzi and Hassan Ansari, “Muḥammad b. Ya‘qūb al-Kulaynī (m. 328/939–40 ou 329/940–941) et son *Kitāb al-Kāfi*: Une introduction”, *Studia Iranica* 38.2 (2009), 191–247. An era that needs further investigation in mapping the emergence of the Four Books as the most authoritative sources of Imāmī hadith is the period beginning from al-Ṭūsī’s death in 460/1067 and the first explicit reference to the Four Books in the tenth/sixteenth century. Studying the books of *fiqh* and analysing the scriptural sources and compendia most relied on might be a useful way of approaching this issue.

cultural, and religious history of the period. Monographs on intellectual history have lagged behind.<sup>58</sup> Considering that this period includes many influential and prolific thinkers, this is a neglect that needs to be remedied. There is, however, one exception: numerous articles and books have appeared on Ṣadrā and to a lesser extent on the other philosophers of the period.<sup>59</sup> I have used a select number of these studies in Chapter One where I examine Fayḍ's theological thought.

## §5. Overview of Chapters

Besides the Introduction, this dissertation consists of four chapters and a conclusion. Chapter 1 investigates Fayḍ's theological writings. The authority designated to hadith in Fayḍ's thought stems from his conception of three issues that constitute the pillars of his theology: God's relationship to mankind, the role of the divine guides in mediating this relationship, and the dynamics of this relationship during the concealment (*ghayba*) of the divine guide. An enquiry concerning Fayḍ's hadith project is better conducted once *al-Wāfi* is studied in light of Fayḍ's writings regarding the above three issues. To this end, this chapter will present a detailed outline and analysis of Fayḍ's epistemology of religious knowledge as presented in his theological, exegetical, philosophical, and mystical writings. I will chiefly focus on his understanding of God's providence; His manifestation in the world in the person of the "perfect man" (*al-insān al-kāmil*); the role of the perfect men as God's chosen guides to mankind; their appearance in the world as imams and prophets; Muḥammad as the final prophet and al-Mahdī as the last perfect man; the imams as the "speaking" voice of the letter of the Qur'an referred to as the "silent" Qur'an; and the status of the "silent" Qur'an during the Imam's concealment.

This chapter will conclude by examining Fayḍ's assertion that in the face of al-Mahdī's concealment, the extant scriptural reports (*akhbār*) attributed to the Prophet and the Imams stand as the ultimate source of knowledge for understanding the letter of the Qur'an and implementing its precepts. This last issue shall be placed within Fayḍ's genealogical narratives of the process in which the authority of scriptural reports was gradually sidelined and replaced with other sources of knowledge such as legal interpretation (*ijtihād*) and consensus (*ijmā'*) through what he perceives as the "Sunnification" of Shi'ism. This chapter presents the theological foundations that inform Fayḍ's discussions of hadith authenticity and his project of compiling an authoritative compendium of Shi'i hadith. The texts examined in this chapter include *ʿIlm al-yaqīn*, *al-Kalimāt al-maknūna*, *Qurrat al-ʿuyūn fī aʿazz al-funūn*, *Safinat al-najāt*, *al-Uṣūl al-aṣīla*, *Anwār al-ḥikma*, and *al-Kalimāt al-ṭarīfa*. These enquiries will pave the way for Chapter 2, which is dedicated to the Safavid hadith discourse on the Four Books and Fayḍ's contribution to an array of views concerning the authority and authenticity of scriptural reports, canonicity, exegesis, and jurisprudence.

Chapter 2, the dissertation's longest, investigates the debates concerning the authority of hadith during the decades prior to *al-Wāfi*'s compilation. In exploring the intellectual context in which Fayḍ's ideas on hadith were developed, I will first begin with an analysis of *Sharḥ al-bidāya fī ʿilm al-dirāya* by Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī (d. 965/1558). This is the earliest available text to make an explicit reference to the

<sup>58</sup> This is not particular to the Safavid period; Islamic intellectual history in general remains an understudied field of research.

<sup>59</sup> See Sajjad Rizvi's entry "Mulla Sadra", in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* and the secondary sources mentioned therein.

Four Books and presenting them as the “best” sources of Imāmī hadith.<sup>60</sup> This will be followed by a brief presentation of Ḥusayn al-Ḥārithī’s ideas in *Wuṣūl al-akhyār ilā uṣūl al-akhbār* regarding the most authoritative sources of hadith. Next, I will explore Ḥasan ibn Zayn al-Dīn al-‘Āmilī’s *Muntaqā al-jumān fī al-aḥādīth al-sihāḥ wa al-ḥisān*.<sup>61</sup> In this book, Ḥasan al-‘Āmilī articulates his principles of hadith authenticity and at times criticizes his father’s positions. He restricts the authority of the Four Books by limiting the scope of their reliable hadiths to the authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) and sound (*ḥasan*) categories.<sup>62</sup> This is accompanied by relevant discussion of his influential text on jurisprudence, *Ma‘ālim al-uṣūl*.<sup>63</sup> Afterwards, I will provide a summary of Bahā’ al-Dīn al-‘Āmilī’s views on the epistemology of hadith authenticity as found in a number of his works including *al-Ḥabl al-matīn* and *Mashriq al-shamsayn*. This shall be followed by delineating Astarābādī’s role in further elevating the authority of the Four Books as well as his rejection of the *sanad*-centered criterion of hadith authenticity that had become widely accepted among Shi‘i scholars since the seventh/thirteenth century.<sup>64</sup> His Akhbārī conceptual framework proved paradigmatic and ignited new approaches to Shi‘i hadith literature and its application in law and jurisprudence, exegesis, theology, mysticism, and popular forms of religious practice. This chapter aims to present the topics, questions, concerns, and controversies pertaining to hadith authenticity current among scholars of the period. It will acquaint the reader with the background as well as the context within which Fayḍ’s approach to hadith compilation and interpretation took shape and eventually culminated in his hadith compendium *al-Wāfi* and his Qur’an commentary *al-Ṣāfi*.

In tracing out the detailed features of Fayḍ’s engagement with hadith, in Chapters 3 and 4, I will draw on two kinds of sources, his hadith compilations and hermeneutical writings. I will begin by introducing *al-Wāfi*, its structure, content, and authorial process. Next, a detailed analysis of the book’s preface is presented, explaining Fayḍ’s assessment of the Four Books and outlining his approach to compiling a new hadith compendium. Of particular interest to this dissertation are his remarks pertaining to hadith authenticity and the methods used to ensure the hadiths’ reliability. Another pertinent work in this context is Fayḍ’s Qur’an commentary, *al-Ṣāfi*. Completed in 1075/1665, seven years after *al-Wāfi*, this book has remained among Fayḍ’s most popular works. Fayḍ articulates his exegetics in the book’s lengthy preface, which provides a useful summary of his overarching hermeneutical principles. It is to be noted that his hermeneutical delineations are not restricted to the prefaces of *al-Wāfi* and *al-Ṣāfi* but are scattered throughout his voluminous writings. Of great relevance in this regard are two of his books on jurisprudence, *Safīnat al-najāt* and *al-Uṣūl al-aṣīla*, where Fayḍ further elaborates his historiographical and interpretive approach to hadith. Thus, an inclusionary principle guides my research: I will advance my presentation and interpretation with passages carefully mined from Fayḍ’s entire corpus.

<sup>60</sup> Amir-Moezzi and Ansari, “Muḥammad b. Ya‘qūb al-Kulaynī”, 227.

<sup>61</sup> Ḥasan al-‘Āmilī, *Muntaqā al-jumān fī al-aḥādīth al-sihāḥ wa al-ḥisān* (Qom, 1362 Sh), 1–45.

<sup>62</sup> As it shall be discussed, the fourfold division was first introduced into Imāmī discussions in the seventh/twelfth century.

<sup>63</sup> Ḥasan al-‘Āmilī, *Ma‘ālim al-uṣūl* (Qom, 1374), §1. “Faḍīlat al-‘ilm”, 13–38 and §6. “al-Akhbār”, 253–298. The full title of this book is, *Ma‘ālim al-dīn wa-malādhidh al-mujtahidīn*.

<sup>64</sup> The *sanad*-based method along with Astarābādī’s criticisms are discussed in Chapter Two.

The conclusion summarises the findings of these four chapters and offers further reflection on the issue of hadith canonisation within the context of Shi'i thought in general and Fayḍ's in particular. It argues that certain elements of Fayḍ's approach to hadith authentication problematize claims to the status of canon for any particular hadith compendium including his own. Two elements are particularly decisive in this regard. First, Fayḍ's emphasis that examining a report's content (*matn*) provides a more reliable means of hadith authentication than analyzing its documentary evidence (*sanad*). Second, his view that an individual can only understand a report's content by God's aid as mediated through the Holy Spirit. This concluding section reiterates the ways in which Fayḍ seeks to overcome the challenges of composing a definitive hadith compendium and assesses whether or not he succeeds in this endeavor.

## Chapter 1

### Fayḍ's Theological Thought

#### §1. Introduction

The authority designated to hadith in Fayḍ's thought stems from his conceptualisation of three issues that constitute the pillars of his theology: God's relationship to mankind, the role of the divine guides in mediating this relationship, and the dynamics of this relationship during the absence (*ghayba*) of the divine guide. An enquiry concerning Fayḍ's hadith project is better served once his compilation, *al-Wāfi*, is studied in light of his theological thought. To this end, this chapter presents a detailed analysis of Fayḍ's epistemology of religion as found in his theological, jurisprudential, and mystical writings. This analysis focuses on a series of interrelated issues: Fayḍ's understanding of God's existence and providence, God's manifestation in the world in the person of the perfect man (*al-insān al-kāmil*), the perfect man's role as God's chosen guides to mankind, his different functions in the world as prophet and *walī*, Muḥammad as the final prophet and al-Mahdī as the last *walī*, the distinction between the "speaking" and the "silent" Qur'an (the spirit versus the letter), the Imam as the "speaking" voice of the Qur'an, and the status of the "silent" Qur'an during the Imam's absence. This chapter will conclude by examining Fayḍ's assertion that in the face of al-Mahdī's absence, the extant scriptural reports (*akhbār*) attributed to the Prophet and the Imams stand as the ultimate source of knowledge for understanding the Qur'an and implementing its precepts. This last issue shall be placed within Fayḍ's genealogical narratives of the process in which the authority of scriptural reports was gradually sidelined and replaced with other sources of knowledge such as *ijtihād* and *ijmā'* (consensus) as a result of what he perceives as the "Sunnification" of Shi'ism. This chapter serves as an introduction to Fayḍ's discussions concerning the authenticity of reports attributed to the Imams, and his project of compiling an authoritative compendium of Shi'i hadith.

#### §2. *ʿIlm al-yaqīn*: On the Knowledge of Religion

*ʿIlm al-yaqīn fī uṣūl al-dīn* is Fayḍ's theological magnum opus. Written around 1042/1633 and containing over 1300 pages in its current printing, it provides detailed expositions on central doctrinal topics.<sup>1</sup> The book is prefaced with a brief prologue and an introduction explaining its authorial process, audience, aims, content, and structure. The prologue and the introduction open a window to Fayḍ's theological thinking and provide a useful roadmap for understanding his views on the authority of scriptures as supreme sources of knowledge. Fayḍ's remarks in these two opening sections indicate his high estimation for *ʿIlm al-yaqīn*. The book, he writes, came to him through God's grace and as a result of the blessing conferred to him due to adhering to the Qur'an, walking by the niches of the Messenger's lights,

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<sup>1</sup> Fayḍ provides this date in the self-composed *fihrist* of his writings. Cited in Muḥsin Bidādfar's introduction to his edition of *ʿIlm al-yaqīn fī uṣūl al-dīn* (Beirut, 1426/2005), 1:86.

following the extant teachings of the infallible Imams, and benefiting from the writings of righteous scholars. He deems *ʿIlm al-yaqīn* to contain divine words, Qur’anic allusions, intellectual signs, benevolent guidance, prophetic remarks, and saintly intimations. In his view, *ʿIlm al-yaqīn* stands as a guidance for the believers and a reminder for those of certain faith who bear witness to the signs of God.<sup>2</sup>

As for the book’s aim, he tells the reader, God from His unseen realms descended it to Fayḍ in order to “purge a group of you from the temptations of doubt, strengthen your hearts, fortify your steps, and expand your breasts”. He adds that the book will remove the need to engage with superfluous matters, which he specifies as disputing in religion, emending creeds through theologians’ innovations, and learning the invented technical vocabularies employed by polemicists. These, he writes, are the works of the devils and the deceptions of the cursed satan which increase confusions and doubts distancing people from God.<sup>3</sup> He cautions the reader to stay away from the path of theologians, and notes that the perceptive have condemned it and even some of the learned theologians themselves have prohibited it. His critique, however, is primarily directed at the practitioners rather than the discipline of theology itself:

Engaging with theology is an occupation for a person who having first fulfilled the obligations placed on him by God, seeks to render a sincere service to God by rejecting the misguiding views found among various communities that generate a distance between people and knowledge of God and his attainment. And it is necessary for whoever engages in this wide and deep science to traverse the path of success and speak to his adversaries with kindness and benevolence so that he remains safe from danger; otherwise he shall undoubtedly perish.<sup>4</sup>

This being the case, Fayḍ advises those bereft of the ability to engage with theology to follow the conventional sense (*ẓawāhir*) of the Qur’an and Sunna, practice mindfulness (*taqwā*) and abide by God’s commands (*sharīʿa*). In this way, God might bestow knowledge and a more expansive understanding of religion upon them.<sup>5</sup>

Fayḍ concludes that *ʿIlm al-yaqīn* is written as a means of guiding those who on their own are unable to derive their beliefs from the Qur’an and Sunna.<sup>6</sup> Although the book is not intended for a learned audience, Fayḍ demands a reflective engagement from his readers. He notes that abiding by this book would not constitute blind imitation (*taqlīd*) on the reader’s part;<sup>7</sup> rather he requires the audience to undertake critical investigation (*taḥqīq*) of the topics discussed. He remarks that he has written *ʿIlm al-yaqīn* in ways suited to be understood by the majority of people.<sup>8</sup> “Thus”, he concludes,

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<sup>2</sup> *ʿIlm al-yaqīn*, 3.

<sup>3</sup> *ʿIlm al-yaqīn*, 3.

<sup>4</sup> *ʿIlm al-yaqīn*, 4.

<sup>5</sup> He then cites three verses as evidence: 65:2–3; 2:282; 29:69.

<sup>6</sup> *ʿIlm al-yaqīn*, 4–5.

<sup>7</sup> As abiding by the rulings of the *muftī* would for those who are unable to derive the rulings themselves.

<sup>8</sup> *ʿIlm al-yaqīn*, 5. In the marginalia of the book, which according to the editor is most likely written by Fayḍ himself, it is stated: “But if this book does not heal your pains or satiate your hunger, and you desire more elucidations and deeper discussions, turn to our other book entitled *ʿAyn al-yaqīn*. The lights and secrets it contains will take you from speech to vision and from knowledge to faith. But only a select few will be able to benefit from that book. Those who are not worthy

“heed its guidance and seek its allusions so that you may be delivered from the darkness of ignorance and the deviances of disputing in religion”.<sup>9</sup>

Fayḍ follows the preface with an introductory section, which begins with a brief discourse on knowledge: “Know that the writings of writers, instructions of instructors, advice of advisors, and theories of theorists are all for the sake of two jewels: knowledge and worship. It was for the sake of these two that scriptures and messengers were sent, and indeed for them were created the heavens, the earth, and all that is between them”.<sup>10</sup> He notes that in the sayings of the Prophet and the Imams, attainment of knowledge is given precedence over performing acts of worship since worship has benefit only when one has knowledge of what he worships.<sup>11</sup> The relationship between the two, he explains, is akin to the relation between a tree and its fruit—worship is the fruit of knowledge.<sup>12</sup>

He remarks that the knowledge he refers to is the knowledge of religion, which in his view revolves around the knowledge of God, angels, scriptures (*kutub*) and messengers (*rusul*), and the judgment day.<sup>13</sup> According to Fayḍ, knowledge is the source of faith (*īmān*) since faith is to assent to a thing as it is in reality; this assent in turn requires a conceptualisation (*taṣawwur*) of that thing according to the best of one’s ability, which he explains is what he means by knowledge. Unbelief (*kufṛ*) is the opposite of faith in that it has its source in ignorance (*jahl*). Fayḍ remarks that in the context of *sharī‘a*, faith consists in assenting to the above mentioned five objects of knowledge (God, angels, scriptures and messengers, and the judgment day). He notes that to have knowledge of these five, even in a summary manner, is an obligation placed on every Muslim.<sup>14</sup> The obligation to acquire knowledge is relative to each person’s ability since knowledge and faith have different hierarchies in their strength and weakness, increase and decrease; some individuals are above others in these respects.<sup>15</sup>

Fayḍ quotes a hadith attributed to the fifth Imam, al-Bāqir, wherein believers are said to be of different ranks. These differences, Fayḍ explains, are determined by the level of each person’s faith, which depends on the measure of his knowledge: “The livelihood of heart depends on knowledge, and that is a light attained in the heart due to removing the veil between the heart and God”. He then quotes

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of it should not take the trouble to understand it since its path is not smooth and easy” (*‘Ilm al-yaqīn*, 5). It is to be noted, however, that *‘Ayn al-yaqīn* is almost exclusively concerned with the knowledge of the hereafter and contains only a terse discussion on the other aspects of religion addressed in *‘Ilm al-yaqīn*.

<sup>9</sup> *‘Ilm al-yaqīn*, 5.

<sup>10</sup> *‘Ilm al-yaqīn*, 6.

<sup>11</sup> *‘Ilm al-yaqīn*, 17.

<sup>12</sup> *‘Ilm al-yaqīn*, 7.

<sup>13</sup> *‘Ilm al-yaqīn*, 8; Fayḍ accompanies this categorization by citing two verses from the Qur’an: “The Messenger believes in what has been sent down to him from his Lord, as do the faithful. They all believe in God, His angels, His scriptures, and His messengers” (2:285) and “You who believe, believe in God and His Messenger and in the Scripture He sent down to His Messenger, as well as what He sent down before. Anyone who does not believe in God, His angels, His scriptures, His messengers, and the Last Day has gone far, far astray” (4:136). In 2:177, prophets (*nabiyyīn*) is mentioned instead of messengers (*rusul*): “The truly good are those who believe in God and the Last Day, in the angels, the Scripture, and the prophets”. In a well-known hadith, when Gabriel asks the Prophet about the meaning of faith he responds: “To believe in God, his angels, his books, his messengers, and the last day”. Gabriel then says: “You have spoken the truth”. See the collections of Bukhārī #50; Muslim #99; Tirmidhī #2610; Abū Dāwūd #4695; Nasā’ī #4993; Ibn Mājah #63; and Ibn Ḥanbal #191.

<sup>14</sup> *‘Ilm al-yaqīn*, 8.

<sup>15</sup> Fayḍ quotes: “God does not charge a soul with more than it can bear” (2:286).

two verses in which God's role in leading people from darkness to light is emphasized: "God is the guardian of the believers leading them from the depths of darkness into the light"; "Is a dead person brought back to life by Us, and given light with which to walk among people, comparable to someone trapped in deep darkness who cannot escape?"<sup>16</sup> He accompanies these two verses with a hadith attributed to Imam al-Ṣādiq that plays a pivotal role in Fayḍ's epistemology: "Knowledge is not excessive learning; rather it is a light God pours forth in the heart of anyone He wishes to guide". Fayḍ explains that this light, similar to other lights, is subject to addition and diminution; a veil's removal contributes to the addition of light, and hence faith is strengthened so that its light increases and its heart expands; one becomes aware of the truth of things, hidden matters manifest themselves, he knows everything in its rightful place, and for him is disclosed – either in a general manner or in details – the truthfulness of the prophets in all they have reported. The heart of the person who experiences this strengthening of faith is inspired to act on everything that has been made obligatory for him and refrain from things that have been made prohibited. Fayḍ notes that every act of worship, when correctly undertaken, leaves a purity in the heart that prepares it for acquiring another light, knowledge, certainty and further expansion. The newly acquired light, knowledge and certainty will in turn move the soul to more fervent worship. Fayḍ concludes, this dynamic between knowledge and worship shall proceed in this way as long as God wills.<sup>17</sup>

In keeping with his hierarchical understanding of knowledge, Fayḍ divides faith (*īmān*) into three ranks: In the beginning ranks, faith consists of assertions tainted in varying degrees with doubts and confusions (*shubha*) and might even be mixed with *shirk* as stated in the verse, "Most of them do not believe in God unless they join partners to Him".<sup>18</sup> He notes that, in light of the following verse, this degree of faith is often called submission (*islām*): "The desert Arabs say, 'We have faith'. Tell them, 'You do not have faith. What you should say instead is, 'We have submitted', for faith has not yet entered your hearts".<sup>19</sup> He then quotes a report from al-Kulaynī's *al-Kāfi* where Imam al-Ṣādiq is reported to have explained that faith is a degree higher than *islām*; *īmān* participates in *islām* outwardly (*ẓāhir*) but *islām* does not participate in *īmān* inwardly (*bāṭin*).

In the intermediate ranks, faith consists of assertions untinged with doubts and confusions. Fayḍ provides the following two verses as descriptions of those who have attained this rank: as described in the following two verses: "The true believers are those who have faith in God and his Messenger and leave all doubt behind, those who have struggled with their possessions and their persons in God's way: they are the ones who are true"; "True believers are those whose heart trembles with awe when God is mentioned, whose faith increases when his revelations are recited to them, who put their trust in their Lord, who keep up the prayer and give to others out of what we have provided for them. Those are the ones who truly believe. They have high standing with their Lord, forgiveness, and generous provision".<sup>20</sup>

In the advanced ranks, not only is faith free from unbelief and doubts but is accompanied with unveiling, witnessing, taste (*dhawq*), vision and perfect love for God and full eagerness for his holy

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<sup>16</sup> Qur'an 2:257 and 6:122.

<sup>17</sup> *Ilm al-yaqīn*, 10–11.

<sup>18</sup> Qur'an 12:106.

<sup>19</sup> Qur'an, 49:14.

<sup>20</sup> Qur'an 49:15 and 8:2–4.

presence: “They love God and God loves them; they are humble towards the believers, hard on the disbelievers, and strive in God’s way without fearing anyone’s reproach. Such is God’s favor. He grants it to whomever He will”.<sup>21</sup> Fayḍ notes that this stage of faith has been at times called *iḥsān* and sometimes *yaqīn*. He quotes a prophetic hadith and a verse as evidence: “Virtue (*iḥsān*) is to worship God as though you see him”,<sup>22</sup> “The believers have certainty of the Hereafter”.<sup>23</sup> He concludes his threefold division of believers by stating that the relation of *iḥsān* and *yaqīn* to *īmān* is akin to the relation of *īmān* to *islām* and writes: “Imam Ṣādiq has stated: “*īmān* is superior to *islām*, and *yaqīn* is superior to *īmān*; nothing is rarer than *yaqīn*”.<sup>24</sup>

As with knowledge, Fayḍ divides certainty into three ranks: the knowledge of certainty (*‘ilm al-yaqīn*), the vision of certainty (*‘ayn al-yaqīn*), the truth of certainty (*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*).<sup>25</sup> The first two are mentioned in Q. 102:5–7: “If only you knew for certain. You will most certainly see Hellfire, you will see it with the eye of certainty”; the last form of certainty is mentioned in Q. 56:95, “This is the certain truth’. In all three instances, *yaqīn* is referring to certainty regarding the coming of the Hour and the Judgment Day. Fayḍ explicates the differences between them using an example: in relation to fire, to have certain knowledge means to be able to see things that can be observed due to the fire’s light; certain vision is to see the fire itself, and certain truth is to be absolved in the fire, becoming one with it so that nothing else remains. He alludes to Imam ‘Alī’s statement as a description of the state of those who have reached *ḥaqq al-yaqīn*: “Removing the veil will not increase my certainty”.<sup>26</sup>

Having outlined various ranks of knowledge, faith, and certainty, Fayḍ turns to the topic of worship. Earlier in *‘Ilm al-yaqīn*, he had briefly discussed the relations between knowledge and worship and explained why the former has precedence over the latter. He ends the introduction by delineating various kinds of worship. He divides the acts of worship into outer and inner acts and sketches the characteristics of each. The science of *sharī‘a* and *fiqh* deals with the outer acts of worship such as daily obligatory prayers, almsgiving, fasting, and pilgrimage as well as forsaking outward sins such as adultery, usury, and drinking intoxicants. The science of ethics (*akhlāq*) addresses the inner acts of worship, and is concerned with acquiring virtues such as mindfulness, repentance, patience, gratitude, and trust while avoiding vices such as jealousy, pride, arrogance, and deceit. He notes that both of these aspects of worship have explicitly been outlined in the Qur’an,<sup>27</sup> and it is incumbent on Muslims to acquire both. Similar to the obligation to acquire knowledge, perfecting these outer and inner acts of worship are relative to the ability of each individual.<sup>28</sup> He explains that within his division of knowledge of religion into the knowledge of God, angels, scriptures and messengers, and the judgment day, the sciences pertaining to worship (i.e., *fiqh* and *akhlāq*) belong to issues discussed under the section

<sup>21</sup> Qur’an 5:54.

<sup>22</sup> Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, “Kitāb al-īmān”, hadith #1.

<sup>23</sup> Qur’an 2:4.

<sup>24</sup> *‘Ilm al-yaqīn*, 16. Quoting from *al-Kāfi*, 2:51.

<sup>25</sup> Also see Ibn ‘Arabi’s explanation of this division in *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya* (Beirut, 1418/1997), 2:560 (bāb 269).

<sup>26</sup> *‘Ilm al-yaqīn*, 16.

<sup>27</sup> He quotes two verses that distinguish between the outer and the inner: “Avoid committing sins, whether openly or in secret” (6:120) and “Stay well away from committing obscenities, whether openly or in secret” (6:151). Examples Fayḍ cites for outer acts from the Qur’an are mention in 2:110, 2:183, and 3:97; examples of inner acts are found in 24:31, 3:200, 2:172, and 5:23.

<sup>28</sup> *‘Ilm al-yaqīn*, 17–19.

pertaining to the knowledge of scriptures.<sup>29</sup> This is because divine laws and codes of conduct are set forth in scriptures.

Fayḍ structures *ʿIlm al-yaqīn* around his four-fold division of religious knowledge: §1. On the Knowledge of God; §2 On the Knowledge of Angels; §3. On the Knowledge of Scriptures and Divine Messengers; §4. On the Knowledge of the Judgment Day. Concerning this division, he notes, Part One examines the knowledge of God's names, attributes, and acts; Part Two, in addition to the knowledge of angels, also discusses issues pertaining to the knowledge of satan and his armies; as for Part Three, he informs the reader that since there are many common issues regarding the prophets and scriptures, rather than dedicating a separate part to each, he will address them both in one part; moreover, Fayḍ notes, it is in this part that he deals with knowledge concerning the Prophet's successors (i.e., Imams). The book concludes with the topic of the afterlife in Part Four where Fayḍ examines the human soul from its beginning as a fetus through its various developments until it passes away, is resurrected and stands before God. In structuring his theological framework in this way, he notes, none of the sciences of religion fall outside any of the abovementioned four sciences.<sup>30</sup>

### §3. On the Knowledge of God

Fayḍ begins his discourse on the knowledge of God with a brief exposition on the proofs for God's existence. The entire creation, he writes, is imbued with signs attesting to God's existence; among them is that the created world must have a creator, and God is that creator bringing everything into existence.<sup>31</sup> Fayḍ maintains that the knowledge of God's existence and oneness (*tawḥīd*) is innate to all humans.<sup>32</sup> In taking this position he sides with the early Shi'i tradition where – in contrast to later theological developments – knowledge of God's oneness was considered innate to mankind.<sup>33</sup> He points

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<sup>29</sup> *ʿIlm al-yaqīn*, 19.

<sup>30</sup> *ʿIlm al-yaqīn*, 19–20.

<sup>31</sup> *ʿIlm al-yaqīn*, 26–38. In this section, Fayḍ also provides a version of the Kalām Cosmological Argument. For a brief presentation of the Kalām cosmological argument see Ayman Shihadeh, "The Existence of God", in *The Cambridge Companion to Islamic Theology* (Cambridge, 2008), 204–8. For a more detailed examination see William Craig, *The Kalām Cosmological Argument* (New York, 1979); Michael Almeida, *Cosmological Arguments* (Cambridge, 2018). Avicenna's articulations regarding God's existence left an enduring impact on a number of major theologians including Fayḍ. For studies on Avicenna's proofs for God's existence see Toby Mayer, "Ibn Sīnā's 'Burhān al-Ṣiddiqīn'", *Journal of Islamic Studies* 12 (2001), 18–39; Peter Adamson, "From the Necessary Existent to God", in *Interpreting Avicenna*, ed. Peter Adamson (Cambridge, 2013), 170–189; Michael E. Marmura, "Avicenna's proof from contingency for God's existence in the *Metaphysics of the Shifā'*", *Mediaeval Studies* 42 (1980), 337–52. For early Mu'tazilī proofs for the existence of God see Josef van Ess, "Early Islamic Theologians on the Existence of God", in *Kleine Schriften* (Leiden, 2018), 1431–1445.

<sup>32</sup> al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *Qurraṭ al-ʿuyūn fi ʿazz al-funūn*, ed. Ḥasan Qāsimī (Tehran, 1387 Sh), 14.

<sup>33</sup> In contrast to Fayḍ's view, many Shi'i theologians did not consider the knowledge of God innate to mankind. For instance, al-Mufid (d. 1022) argues that knowledge of God is not innate and must be acquired through investigation. He criticises Ibn Bābūya (d. 991), a major hadith compiler of the fourth/tenth century, who had maintained that knowledge of God's existence and oneness is innate to mankind, and in two of his major works, *al-Iʿtiqādāt* and *al-Tawḥīd*, had dedicated a section to the innateness of the knowledge of God where he quotes a number of statements attributed to the Imams as further support. The early theologians who believed knowledge of God is necessary knowledge were known as *aṣḥāb al-maʿārif* and included figures such as al-Jāhīz. See van Ess, *Theologie*, 3:165. It is to be noted that this topic is often discussed in relation to two verses from the Qur'an: (1) "So [Prophet] as a man of pure faith, stand firm and true in your devotion to the religion. This is

out that this theme is expressed in a number of reports attributed to the Prophet and the Imams found in Shi'i hadith compilations. For instance, when Imam al-Ṣādiq is asked to explain what *ḥanīfiyya* means in the verse “Dedicate yourselves to God (*ḥunafā'a li-llāhi*) and assign Him no partners”,<sup>34</sup> he responds that it is the *fiṭra* according to which God created humans and his creation is inalterable; the Imam then adds, “God created mankind with [inborn] knowledge [of Him]”.<sup>35</sup> Fayḍ remarks that in another report *fiṭra* is identified with *tawḥīd*.<sup>36</sup> He notes that these and other similar sayings indicate that as the Prophet has stated, every infant is born with the innate knowledge of God and it is their parents who steer them toward Judaism, Zoroastrianism, or Christianity.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, Fayḍ quotes a statement attributed to Imam al-Bāqir in which it is stated that had God not presented and disclosed Himself to humans at the time of their creation, not a single soul would know his Lord.<sup>38</sup> He remarks that it is due to the innate character of this knowledge that people are excused for forsaking acquiring knowledge of God. It is sufficient on their part to simply make a verbal confession of faith and they are not obligated to engage in scientific inquiries in this regard. He concludes that since knowledge of God's existence is innate and among the necessary truths (*ḍarūriyyāt al-umūr*), further contemplation and

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the natural disposition God instilled in mankind—there is no altering God's creation—and this is the right religion, though most people do not realize it” (30:30). This verse and especially the part “the natural disposition instilled in mankind” is often interpreted as alluding to mankind's inherent knowledge of God. (2) “[Prophet], when your Lord took out the offspring from the loins of the Children of Adam and made them bear witness about themselves, He said, ‘Am I not your Lord?’ and they replied, ‘Yes, we bear witness.’ So you cannot say on the Day of Resurrection, ‘We were not aware of this’, or, ‘It was our forefathers who, before us, ascribed partners to God, and we are only the descendants who came after them: will you destroy us because of falsehoods they invented?’ In this way We explain the messages, so that they may turn [to the right path]” (7:172–4). Mankind's acknowledgment of God's lordship is taken as a proof against any excuse that their disbelief in God is due to their parents' influence over them since prior to their earthly existence all humans bore witness to God's lordship over them and any failure to abide by their covenant is due to their own shortcomings.

<sup>34</sup> Qur'an, 22:31.

<sup>35</sup> *Ilm al-Yaqīn*, 39–40. This hadith is quoted in *al-Kāfi*, 2:12 under the section “bāb fiṭra al-khalq 'alā al-tawḥīd”. A similar hadith is quoted in the earliest extant compilation of Shi'i hadith, al-Barqī, *al-Maḥāsīn*, 1:241, hadith no. 223 (Kitāb Maṣābiḥ al-zulm). On the term *ḥanīf* see W. Montgomery Watt, “Ḥanīf”, in EI<sup>2</sup>; Uri Rubin, “Ḥanīf” in *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*. Rubin explores the concept of *ḥanīfiyya* in pre-Islamic Arabia in his article, “Ḥanīfiyya and Ka'ba: An Inquiry into the Arabian Pre-Islamic Background of *dīn Ibrāhīm*”, *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 13 (1990), 85–112; Andrew Rippin, “Rḥmān and the Ḥanīfs”, in *Islamic Studies presented to Charles J. Adams*, eds. Wael B. Hallaq and Donald P. Little (Leiden, 1991), 153–168; François de Blois, “*Naṣrānī* (Ναζωραῖος) and *ḥanīf* (ἑθνωικός): Studies on the Religious Vocabulary of Christianity and of Islam”, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (65.1), 1–30; Walid A. Saleh, “The Etymological Fallacy and Qur'anic Studies: Muhammad, Paradise and Late Antiquity”, in *The Qur'ān in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qur'ānic Milieu*, eds. Angelika Neuwirth, Nicolai Sinai, Michael Marx (Leiden, 2010), 649–698, at 659–61.

<sup>36</sup> Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, 2:12 under the section “bāb fiṭra al-khalq 'alā al-tawḥīd”. Ibn Bābūya, *al-Tawḥīd*, 330, h. 9. In his Qur'an commentary, Fayḍ quotes two reports in which in addition to knowledge of God, mankind's inborn knowledge encompasses knowledge of Muḥammad's prophethood as well as the *walāya* of 'Alī. See Fayḍ, *al-Ṣāfi*, verse 30:30. Fayḍ, however, also quotes another hadith attributed to Imam al-Ṣādiq in which *fiṭra* is discussed in more neutral terms. According to this hadith, all humans were created according to the same *fiṭra*: they neither believed nor disbelieved in the *sharī'a*. Then God sent the messengers and guided some humans through them and some were not guided (Fayḍ, *al-Ṣāfi*, verse 30:30, *ibid*).

<sup>37</sup> *Ilm al-Yaqīn*, 42. Bukhārī, *Tafsīr*, (under verse 30:30). For a Shi'i source see al-Murtaḍā, *Amālī* (session 56); In his hadith compilations *al-Wāfi* (2:57–8), *al-Shāfi* (1:140), and *Nawādir al-akhbār* (Tehran, 1371, p. 70), Fayḍ dedicates a section to this issue under the title, “On the Innateness of God's Oneness”. Also see *Anwār al-ḥikma*, 18 and *al-Ma'ārif*, 25–7.

<sup>38</sup> *Ilm al-Yaqīn*, 40; also see his commentary on 7:172. This could indicate that knowledge of God is not inborn but was rather bestowed to mankind by God. Fayḍ notes that he has provided more explanation on this verse in *al-Wāfi*, 4:38.

reasoning only serves to increase one's insight, is exclusive to an elect few, and is for the sake of refuting the misguided.<sup>39</sup> According to Fayḍ, although this knowledge is easily available to everyone,<sup>40</sup> individuals are qualitatively and quantitatively different in the level of their knowledge, understanding, conviction, and vision of God.<sup>41</sup> These differences situate people in different ranks in light of their knowledge.<sup>42</sup>

It is to be noted that to say something is known innately does not necessarily mean that it is known completely or that one is aware of this knowledge at all times. Fayḍ notes that despite the innateness of their knowledge, except the elect few who are endowed with insight, most people do not have a clear perception of God or experience His presence in their daily lives. Quoting Ghazālī, he names a few factors contributing to this situation such as the masses' deficient understanding, scholars' inability to impart their knowledge to the masses in suitable ways, and the scholars' preoccupation with their own pursuits and their belief that imparting their knowledge will be of no benefit to the masses. He maintains that, in addition to these factors, people's constant pursuit of satisfying their lusts distracts them from being illuminated with the lights of knowledge.<sup>43</sup> Fayḍ's extensive engagements with different genres and composing books intended to accommodate diverse audiences bridges the gap between addressing the intellectual elite and the masses, between those with "insight" and those in need of it.

### 3.1. "I came to know God by bringing together the opposites"

Fayḍ provides a succinct outline of his views on the knowledge of God in his book *Qurrat al-'uyūn fī a'azz al-funūn* ('Solace of the eyes concerning the greatest of arts').<sup>44</sup> Chapter One is entitled "On the Knowledge of God" and its section headings indicate the contours of his orientation to the topic: (1) "Knowing and meeting God is both possible and impossible"; (2) "Reflection and discourse on God is both prohibited and encouraged"; (3) "God is both manifest and hidden"; (4) "The path to the knowledge of God"; (5) "There is no path to understand the essence of God and comprehending Him". As it will be observed, Fayḍ's exposition in these sections is influenced by Imam 'Alī's teachings as attributed to him in *Nahj al-balāgha*, a compendium of sermons, letters, and maxims compiled by al-Sharīf al-Raḍī (d. 406/1016).

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<sup>39</sup> *ʿIlm al-yaqīn*, 41–2.

<sup>40</sup> He writes, "Knowledge of God is either innate and necessary or one is guided towards it with the slightest attention" (*ʿIlm al-yaqīn*, 43). That he adds the second part is intriguing. He might mean that people get distracted from their innate knowledge and when reminded of their *fiṭra* they immediately grasp God's existence.

<sup>41</sup> *ʿIlm al-yaqīn*, 43; also, in *al-Wāfi*, 4:58–9; *al-Shāfi* (Tehran, 1383), 1:140–1; *Anwār al-ḥikma* (Qumm, 1425), 17–8; *al-Ma'ārif* (Tehran, 1387), 24.

<sup>42</sup> This hierarchical outlook is expressed in the Qur'an: "God will raise up, by many degrees, those of you who believe and those who have been given knowledge" (58:11).

<sup>43</sup> *ʿIlm al-yaqīn*, 49–50.

<sup>44</sup> Fayḍ completed this work in 1088/1677–8, nearly two years prior to his death in 1090/1679. It is a summary of *al-Kalimāt al-maknūna* written thirty years earlier. For the similarities and differences between these two texts as well as the other two abridgments of *al-Kalimāt al-maknūna* – *al-La'ālī* and *al-Kalimāt al-makhzūna* – see Cyrus Ali Zargar, "Revealing Revisions: Fayḍ al-Kāshānī's Four Versions of *al-Kalimāt al-Maknūna*", *Iranian Studies* 47 (2014): 241–261.

Fayḍ begins *Qurrat al-ʿuyūn* with a presentation of his approach to the knowledge of God. Throughout this section he brings to surface two contrasting dynamics involved in humans' relationship to God between those with a rudimentary understanding of this relationship and the spiritual elite.

The cherubims of the highest plenum are stopped in the station of “if I get an inch closer I shall burn”<sup>45</sup> and those brought nigh to the most exalted presence confess their failure to “know you as is your due”;<sup>46</sup> and the verse “no vision takes him in”<sup>47</sup> encompasses every onlooker and the saying “God is veiled from the intellects as he is from the sights” drives away every thinker and observer. The lions of the grove of devotion (*walāya*), however, declare “I have never worshipped a lord I’ve not seen”, and they walk in the path of “were the veil uncovered, it would not increase my conviction”.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, there is no path to know the essence of God since he encompasses everything, and hence could be encompassed by nothing; nothing is perceived unless it is encompassed, and knowledge of a thing is not acquired unless it is first perceived...And yet God—considered insofar as he manifests himself through his names and attributes—has a face in every creature and displays himself in every mirror, “so whichever way you turn, there is the face of God”.<sup>49</sup> “Even if with a rope you descend into the depths of the earth, you shall still be with God”.<sup>50</sup> This manifestation of God is available to all, but only the elite know what it is they are seeing. Imam Ḥusayn states: “You made yourself known to me in everything, and I saw you manifest in everything, and you are manifest to everything”.<sup>51</sup> But the multitude do not know what they see. “Truly, they doubt that they will meet their Lord; truly he encompasses everything”.<sup>52</sup>

As he points out, not every person is able to achieve this relationship to God; only select individuals are endowed with the gift of discernment and contemplation. For the spiritual elites God is an ever-present and proximate reality. Fayḍ's remarks have a distinct overtone of mystical cognition.<sup>53</sup> As Fayḍ's quotations from the hadith literature indicate, God's proximity to the believers is a prominent theme in the Imams' teachings. When Imam al-Ṣādiq is asked whether the believers will see God on the day of resurrection, he replies: “Yes, and they also see him in the world before the day of resurrection”.<sup>54</sup> This

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<sup>45</sup> A reference to Gabriel's exchange to the Prophet upon his ascension when Muḥammad asked Gabriel why he stopped accompanying him. Gabriel responded: “If I get an inch closer I shall burn”. On the concept of angels in Islam see Gabriel Said Reynolds, “Angels”, in *EF*<sup>3</sup>. For an overview of Cherubim in Abrahamic religions see, S.R. Burge, “Cherubim”, in *Encyclopaedia of the Bible and its Reception* (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2012), 5:55–70.

<sup>46</sup> A saying attributed to the Prophet: “We have not worshiped you as is your due and we have not known you as is your due”.

<sup>47</sup> “No vision takes him in but he takes in all vision” (6:103).

<sup>48</sup> Both of these statements are attributed to Imam ʿAlī.

<sup>49</sup> Qurʾan, 2:115.

<sup>50</sup> Lit. “You would fall upon God”. Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 2:370; al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 5:78.

<sup>51</sup> Majlisī, *Bihār al-anwār*, 64:142, bāb 4, hadith 7.

<sup>52</sup> Qurʾan 41:54; *Qurrat al-ʿuyūn*, 11–12.

<sup>53</sup> His recurring quotations of Hafez (d. 1390) provide further allusions to Fayḍ's orientation.

<sup>54</sup> *Qurrat al-ʿuyūn*, 13.

corresponds to the second of Fayḍ's three-fold division of *'ilm al-yaqīn*, *'ayn al-yaqīn*, and *ḥaqq al-yaqīn*. The believers are conscious of God and perceive his nearness.

The juxtaposition between the knowers and the ignorant, the believers and the multitude, is continued in the next section where Fayḍ writes that reflection and discourse on the essence of God is discouraged for the multitude but encouraged for the spiritual elite. And so he writes, whereas to the ignorant it is said, "When the word concerns God remain silent",<sup>55</sup> to the elites it is said, "Whoever knows himself knows God";<sup>56</sup> to the former it is said, "Nothing is like his likeness"<sup>57</sup> while to the latter, "He is the Seeing, the Hearing";<sup>58</sup> to one, "There is no place that can contain God", and to the other, "so whichever way you turn, there is the face of God";<sup>59</sup> to one group it is said, "They are being called from a distant place",<sup>60</sup> and to the other, "We are closer to you than your jugular vein".<sup>61</sup> What separates the knowers from the ignorant is the extent of their awareness (*ma'rifa*) of God. He continues: to the estranged it is said, "You have been given of knowledge but a little",<sup>62</sup> and to the endeared, "Whomever has been given wisdom has been given great merit".<sup>63</sup> "For you the religion of the old women (*dīn al-'ajā'iz*)",<sup>64</sup> the multitude are told, while concerning those endowed with knowledge (*ahl al-ma'rifa*) it is said, "Indeed there is a knowledge that is like a concealed planet; no one knows it except the *ahl al-ma'rifa*".<sup>65</sup> Ignorance of God is the mark of the estranged, awareness of the knowers.

While emphasizing the significance of knowledge, Fayḍ is explicit that no human being, no matter how knowledgeable, is able to fully comprehend God. He quotes a statement attributed to Imam 'Alī wherein it is said that although thoughts do not grasp God, "He manifests Himself to people through his creatures since they cannot conceive of him".<sup>66</sup> According to the Imam, "God is manifest in

<sup>55</sup> Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, 1:92, "Kitāb al-tawḥīd", hadith #2.

<sup>56</sup> A hadith attributed to Imam 'Alī. See *Biḥār al-anwār*, 2:32, bāb 9, hadith #22.

<sup>57</sup> Qur'an, 42:11.

<sup>58</sup> Qur'an, 17:1.

<sup>59</sup> Qur'an, 2:115.

<sup>60</sup> Qur'an, 41:44.

<sup>61</sup> Qur'an, 50:16; *Qurrat al-'uyūn*, 16–17.

<sup>62</sup> Qur'an, 17:85.

<sup>63</sup> Qur'an, 2:269.

<sup>64</sup> See *Biḥār al-anwār*, 66/135, bāb 30. The phrase, "the religion of the old women", has a long history in Islamic thought. Some provoke it as a way of denoting simple-mindedness and a religiosity devoid of reflection and imbued with popular practices and fables. Others, however, refer to it as an elevated form of religiosity centered on devoted obedience and devoid of intellectualism. The Ḥanafī scholar Abū Bakr al-Khwārizmī (d. 1013), proclaimed: "Our religion is the religion of the old women. We have absolutely nothing to do with *kalām*". See Livnat Holtzman, *Anthropomorphism in Islam: The Challenges of Traditionalism* (Edinburgh, 2018), 300. Al-Juwaynī (d. 1085), a seminal Ash'arī theologian, reportedly voiced a similar sentiment. According to al-Subkī, near the time of his death, al-Juwaynī expressed his regret for having engaged with theology and asked God to grant him the death of a simple woman of Nishapur (his hometown). See Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyya al-kubrā*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad al-Ṭaḥānī and 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Ḥilw (Cairo, 1965), 5191. References to "ignorant old women", as a negative phrase, is also found in ancient philosophical writings. Cicero, for instance, writes: "The first consequence of this theology is your doctrine of the necessity of fate, which you call *Heimarmene*. This impels you to claim that every chance event is the outcome of an eternal verity and a chain of causation. How much respect can be accorded to this school of philosophy, which like a pack of ignorant old women regards all that happens as the course of fate?" See Cicero, *The Nature of the Gods* (Oxford, 2008), 22, §55.

<sup>65</sup> *Qurrat al-'uyūn*, 17.

<sup>66</sup> *Nahj al-balagha*, Sermon 185.

hiddenness and hidden in his manifestation. His hiddenness does not prevent him from being manifest and his manifestation does not prevent him from being hidden. He is near and far, above and below, manifest and hidden, and hidden and manifest. He is with things, but things are not with him". Describing God with contrary qualities is a recurring theme of *Nahj al-balāgha* and of mystical literature in general. Taking note of this theme, Fayḍ states that it is due to these opposing qualities that it has been said: "I came to know God by bringing together the opposites".<sup>67</sup> Earlier in the section he had presented Ghazālī's view in the *Iḥyā'* according to which "things" (*ashyā'*) in the world become known through their opposites. This, however, is not the case with God since He is all-encompassing and has no opposite.<sup>68</sup> Hence, to come to know God by bringing together opposing attributes refers not to the knowledge of God's existence but rather of his reality. Fayḍ had previously argued that the knowledge of God's existence is innate to all humans. He quotes a passage from *Kashf al-maḥajja* by Ibn Ṭāwūs (d. 664/1266) who writes that while all sound minds assert that there exists a Creator, due to their different approaches, they disagree over the Creator's essence and attributes.<sup>69</sup>

### 3.2. God's Existence and Providence

In the next section, "the path to the knowledge of God", Fayḍ provides further explication of the distinction between the knowledge that God exists and the knowledge (*ma'rifa*) of his reality or who God is; the distinction is between God's existence and his providence. Having quoted Imam 'Alī's statement, 'Know God by God',<sup>70</sup> Fayḍ provides the following interpretation: God is manifested in his creations; in observing things one must consider those aspects that point to God in order to first realize that every created thing has a creating Lord. This approach will lead to detecting other signs of God such as prudence in his creations, his sustenance of them, and his dominance over all created things. In this way, one will be able to come to know God through the attributes that exists in him followed by the realisation that the existence of all things depends upon God. But by merely observing things in themselves, he explains, one will come to realise that any given thing has a quiddity and that quiddity on its own cannot bring it into existence, and that in order for it to come into existence it is in need of a creator. According to Fayḍ, to observe things in this light leads to know God by things since it establishes God's existence via things in the world.

He holds that to profess God's existence does not constitute the true knowledge of God, which for Fayḍ consists in the knowledge of God's existence as well as his providence. He presents the following example: if someone decides to undertake an action and does his utmost to achieve it but lacks the knowledge that in the existence there is something with an invisible essence that is preventing him from achieving his task, he would lack knowledge of God's providence and his governance of the world's affairs even though he has knowledge of God's existence.<sup>71</sup> For Fayḍ, a pivotal aspect of God's

<sup>67</sup> *Qurrat al-ʿuyūn*, 20–1. This saying is attributed to the Sufi, Abū Saʿīd al-Khazzāz (d. 297). See Ibn ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 1:184, bāb 24. The theme of God as possessing opposite qualities is also found in the sermons attributed to Imam ʿAlī (e.g., Sermon 185).

<sup>68</sup> *Qurrat al-ʿuyūn*, 19.

<sup>69</sup> *ʿIlm al-yaqīn*, 32.

<sup>70</sup> al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, 1:85.

<sup>71</sup> *Qurrat al-ʿuyūn*, 21–2.

reality consists in the knowledge that he governs and intervenes in the world and its affairs.<sup>72</sup> Hence, he aims to controvert the view according to which God is the First Mover and the Creator without being an active participant in his creation. In contrast to this view, he maintains that God created the world and he rules and administers it; without his providence, the world is not self-sustaining.

Fayḍ notes that knowledge of divine providence is not the result of speculative thought but rather has its source in mankind's innate disposition (*fiṭra*).<sup>73</sup> Most often, people's knowledge of God's providence is heightened in moments of intense need. He writes, "We see that people upon the occurrence of horrible events and experiencing difficult states, due to their nature (*jibilla*) put their trust in God and instinctually turn their attention to the Cause of all causes and the remover of all difficulties even though they are not conscious of this".<sup>74</sup> Quoting Imam al-Ṣādiq, he then presents the perennial example of a ship carrying a group of passengers on the turbulent sea; the ship begins to drown, the passengers do not know how to swim. Bereft of all assistance, they begin calling on their Lord. That being to whom one calls when all other means of relief have been exhausted – and from whom one hopes to receive assistance – is God.<sup>75</sup>

These examples are chiefly provided as pointers. Two passages from *Nahj al-balāgha* caution the reader from holding intellectual articulation as the true measure of God: "Do not measure God's greatness by the measure of your intellect otherwise you shall be among those who perish", and "He who qualifies God does not believe in his Oneness, nor does he who likens him [to other created things] grasps his reality. He who illustrates him does not signify him. He who points at him and imagines Him does not refer to him".<sup>76</sup> Fayḍ informs the reader never trust those who claim to know the essence of God. "Throw dust at their mouths", he writes, "for they are misguided". This is because, he explains, God transcends all thoughts and should not be contaminated with them. In his view, the furthest that refined minds have reached in this regard is expressed in the following verse attributed to Sanā'ī: "That which you see no way beyond/shows not God but the limitation of your mind".<sup>77</sup> Human concepts are incapable of capturing the ultimate unfathomability of God; they stand as conjectural approximations. God is at once everywhere and nowhere: He is everywhere, for the existence is sustained by him at every moment, but he is nowhere since he cannot be contained in any form and transcends them.

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<sup>72</sup> The belief in a deity who having created the world does not pay any heed to its affairs has a long history. See Plato, *The Laws* (Cambridge, 2016), Book X (lines 885b–c; 888c; 900–910), 387–401. According to Epicurus, the gods are indifferent to the affairs of the world. Plato argues against this position.

<sup>73</sup> Pointing to the much-commented verse, "Am I not your Lord?" (7:172), Fayḍ writes that God asks people to acknowledge His lordship and not His existence (*Qurrat al-ʿuyūn*, 23). He mentions this also in *Anwār al-ḥikma*, 18; *al-Maʿārif*, 25, *Qurrat al-ʿuyūn*, 23; *al-Mahajja*, 1:211; *al-Wāfi*, 1:477. Ṣadrā also discusses this in *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb* (Tehran, 1363), 241–2.

<sup>74</sup> He provides the following verse as scriptural proof: "Say, Think: if the punishment of God or the Hour should come to you, would you call on anyone other than God, if you are being truthful? No Indeed, it is on Him that you would call. If it were His will, He could remove whatever harm made you call on Him, and then you would forget what you now associate with Him" (6:40–1).

<sup>75</sup> *Qurrat al-ʿuyūn*, 23. This passage is also cited in *al-Wāfi* (Isfahan, 1406), 4:59 and 1:477.

<sup>76</sup> *Qurrat al-ʿuyūn*, 24.

<sup>77</sup> *Qurrat al-ʿuyūn*, 25; On Sanā'ī (ca. 1087–1130) see "SANĀ'Ī", in EIR; for a comprehensive introduction to his life and thought see J. T. P. de Bruijn, *Of Piety and Poetry: the Interaction of Religion and Literature in the Life and Works of Ḥakīm Sanā'ī of Ghazna* (Leiden, 1983).

### 3.3. The Divine Names

In Fayḍ's view, just as with God's essence, his attributes cannot be fully comprehended.<sup>78</sup> He notes, however, that since "the rays of God's attributes have shone on man's being", it is possible for individuals, each according to his ability, to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the divine attributes. This is because, he explains, man has a share of God's attributes but no share in his essence, and as a result, the most contradictory concepts/attributes such as knowledge and ignorance, power and inability, life and death are found in humans but not in God.<sup>79</sup>

He draws a distinction between understanding the divine attributes as realities and as conceptions: God's attributes are one with his essence in regard to their reality but not one with his essence in regard to their conception. He elucidates this through a statement attributed to Imam al-Bāqir wherein it is mentioned that anything humans fancy about God, even the most articulate conceptions, are nothing besides the elaborations of their minds, and like humans themselves are created. The Imam adds, "The ants might think that God has antennas just as they themselves have; this is because the ants' perfection consists in having antennas, and so, they would consider imperfect any being without them". The example illustrates that even though God's attributes provide humans with concepts that point to his reality, these concepts are mental constructions and as such are not identical with God's essence.<sup>80</sup>

At the same time, Fayḍ thinks it would be a mistake to understand divine attributes as mere human constructs without holding them as pointers to the divine essence. In his view, not considering the attributes—in their reality rather than their conception—identical with God's essence would result in maintaining that God's essence is dependent on another for acquiring these attributes, and hence, under another's rule (*ḥukm*). This, however, would undermine God's omniscience and omnipotence. Thus, the "attributes of perfection" all have their being in God alone, and just as God's being is not contaminated with any lack or deficiency, God's attributes of knowledge and power are not contaminated with ignorance or inability.<sup>81</sup> He quotes a passage from hadith literature in which God's attribute of power is the subject of an exchange between Imam al-Riḍā and his disciple:

I asked the Imam: "Has God created things with power or without power?" He said: It is not permissible to hold that God created things with power since to say this would imply that you have considered power to be something other than God and deemed it a tool with which God creates things; to maintain this is tantamount to *shirk*. And if you say that God created things without power then you have described him in such a way as to hold that he created things without his own power and was assisted by another who endowed him with the power to create. God, however, does not lack power in his essence and is in need of no assistance from others. He is rather a God who transcends the attributes of creatures; his power is essential to him and does not stem from anything other than him.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> *ʿIlm al-yaqīn*, 109.

<sup>79</sup> *Qurraṭ al-ʿuyūn*, 27.

<sup>80</sup> *Qurraṭ al-ʿuyūn*, 27–8.

<sup>81</sup> *Qurraṭ al-ʿuyūn*, 28.

<sup>82</sup> *Qurraṭ al-ʿuyūn*, 29–30.

God is self-sufficient and not in need of anything; there are no beings in the universe able to affect God. God's omnipotence would be undermined had there been forces that could subordinate His will to their own. This is a cardinal aspect of Islamic conception of God.

Power, along with a series of other attributes such as "life", "knowledge", and "light" are often classified as attributes of "perfection" (*al-kāmiliyya*). These attributes, in contrast to those such as the "avenger" and the "forgiver", do not have a negating pair and are considered "essential" to God. Fayḍ explains these attributes through a statement attributed to Imam al-Ṣādiq: "God is a light wherein is no darkness, a life wherein is no death, a knowledge wherein is no ignorance, and a truth wherein is no falsehood".<sup>83</sup> He remarks that God must not be referred to by any name that conveys a deficiency. He provides *dhakī* (clever) as an example: cleverness indicates quickness in perceiving something that had been hidden from the perceiver; nothing, however, is hidden from God. He further explains that each of the contrary names of God such as the "expander" and the "restrictor" or the "exalter" and the "abaser" should not be considered in isolation from its accompanying name since considering the names in pair better illustrates God's wisdom and power.<sup>84</sup> God's essence is beyond any opposition as he transcends all human attributes.

Throughout his writings, Fayḍ is adamant that no true knowledge of God's essence is attainable. In *ʿIlm al-yaqīn* he writes, all that the created beings know is that the orderly and steady/firm world they inhabit is in need of a governing, living, knowing, hearing, seeing, and powerful creator. This knowledge has two aspects, one pertaining to the world and the other to God. As for the world, it is known that the created world is in need of a governor; as for God, it is known that he has a series of names derived from attributes. Knowledge of God's essence, however, is not acquired by knowing his attributes since they only point to rather than representing his essence. He notes that if regarding an object, one asks, "what is it?" and in response is provided with a series of descriptions, the questioner has not been given the answer he was seeking. For instance, if looking at the water someone asks: "what is it?" and is told "water is cold" or if he points to the fire and is told "fire is hot" he has not been told what the "water" and "fire" are but rather what attributes they possess. In saying something is "hot", Fayḍ explains, we have not grasped its truth but only express that there is vague thing with the attribute of hotness. For him, something is truly known when we have knowledge of its truth and quiddity; names and descriptions of a thing are no substitute for grasping its truth. As he explains, the same difficulties faced in answering what is water or fire are also encountered when asking, "What is God?" The names of God, derived from his attributes, only point to a vague being whose truth cannot be fully known.<sup>85</sup>

He explains that a description of God such as "God is the necessary being" is a statement seeking to convey that God is not dependent on another being, and in this way the statement negates that God was caused by another cause. He remarks that this and other similar descriptions only provide information about what is not of God's essence regardless of whether such statements negate or affirm something about God. Thus, Fayḍ writes, for mystics the highest knowledge is to come to know their inability to know God, and to know that not only they do not truly know him, but that it is not possible to truly know him. Only God truly knows God. He believes to reach this awareness is to have arrived at the zenith of the knowledge of God: "Recognizing the inability to understand is itself understanding".

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<sup>83</sup> *Qurrat al-ʿayn*, 29.

<sup>84</sup> *ʿIlm al-yaqīn*, 216.

<sup>85</sup> *ʿIlm al-yaqīn*, 52–3.

He follows this with a relevant statement ascribed to the Prophet, “I do not have comprehension of your praise (I cannot enumerate the praise of you); you are as you have praised yourself”. Fayḍ comments that by this statement the Prophet is not saying he has reached the knowledge of God but is unable to express it; rather, he argues, the Prophet is expressing that he does not have comprehensive knowledge of God’s true praise and his divine attributes, and that God alone encompasses them. In his view, this is the stage from which further reflections on God only lead to bewilderment and dread.<sup>86</sup>

Yet, Fayḍ maintains that knowledge of the divine names – despite their limitations in relation to the true knowledge of God – is pivotal. He remarks that the differences in ranks between angels, prophets, and saints (*awliyā’*) stems from their respective knowledge of the divine names and attributes. There is a great difference, he notes, between someone who only knows God is omniscience and omnipotence, and someone who perceives God’s wondrous signs in his heavenly and earthly domains, has acquired all the angelic characteristics that bring about nearness to God, and not only has realized these characteristics but also manifests them in his own person.<sup>87</sup> While man cannot know God, he can attain a likeness to Him.

### 3.4. God’s Manifestations

Fayḍ maintains that names and conceptual expressions, despite their inadequacy may yet tell us something about God. Although one speaks of God and his attributes, none of such statements actually capture God as such. In this way, God’s transcendence is safeguarded since it is maintained that He is unspeakable and unlike anything we know. At the same time, God is not reduced to a mere metaphysical abstraction transcending all understanding since he manifests Himself in the world, has an immediate presence in all things, and controls and interferes in human affairs.<sup>88</sup> Unknowable in Himself, God can be known indirectly through his manifestations.

As noted above, Fayḍ holds that whereas the creation points to God’s existence, the divine is manifested in the world through his names. He explains that “name”, in regard to a specific/determined attribute and particular manifestation, is identical with the essence. The name “merciful” is the essence possessing mercy. He reiterates that one’s conception of the merciful is not identical with God’s essence but the reality of the merciful in itself is one with the divine essence. Besides the distinction between the reality of names and their conceptions, Fayḍ mentions the constituting letters of names, which he refers to as the “names of names”. He further divides the names into the names of beauty (e.g., the benevolent and the most forgiver) and the names of majesty (e.g., the avenger and the dominator) each alluding to a contrasting relation of God to his creation.<sup>89</sup>

Next comes a pivotal discussion in Fayḍ’s conceptualisation of the divine names and their relation to the created world. He writes, even though God’s essence is entirely self-sufficient of anything external to it, each of his infinite names, in order to find external manifestation, require a locus through

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<sup>86</sup> *ʿIlm al-yaqīn*, 54–5.

<sup>87</sup> *ʿIlm al-yaqīn*, 55.

<sup>88</sup> For a brief and informative overview concerning “anthropomorphism” (*tashbih*) and “transcendentalism” (*tanzih*) in the history of Islamic theology see J. van Ess, “Tashbih wa-Tanzih”, in EI<sup>2</sup>. For a more detailed examination see D. Gimaret, *Dieu à l’image de l’Homme: Les anthropomorphismes de la sunna et leurs interprétations par les théologiens* (Paris, 1997).

<sup>89</sup> *Qurraṭ al-ʿuyūn*, 33.

which their meanings become manifest; it is through the names that their meanings, one with God's essence, manifest themselves to the believers in the One God, and in this way, they come to know God.<sup>90</sup>

God's manifestations are found everywhere. According to Fayḍ, every created thing serves as a locus of manifestation for each divine name. The name "merciful", for instance, is first manifested through the person who enacts mercy toward another deserving of it so that the enactor and the enacted both stand as its manifestations. Similarly, the name "dominator" is manifested by the person who enacts dominance over another deserving of it so that the enactor and the enacted both stand as its manifestations. If in the external world there be no enactor and recipient of mercy, the "merciful" shall have no manifestation just as if there be no enactor and recipient of dominance, the "dominator" shall have no manifestation. The same holds for the rest of the divine names: names have reality in so far as they have a manifestation.<sup>91</sup>

Fayḍ considers the name "God" (Allāh) to be the all-comprehensive divine name. Similar to other divine names such as "merciful" and "dominator", the name "God" also requires a locus of manifestation in the external world. Since the name "God" encompasses all of the divine names, to become the manifestation of this name is to become the manifestation of all the divine names. He writes, "The person who manifests all of the divine names, is God's caliph, and from him shall emanate all the perfections gathered in the name Allāh to everyone else".<sup>92</sup> On earth, God is manifest in all creatures, most manifest in human beings, and most intensely manifest in the perfect human being (*al-insān al-kāmil*).<sup>93</sup>

In *al-Kalimāt al-maknūna*, Fayḍ elaborates his conceptualisation of the perfect human in more details.<sup>94</sup> In his view, the perfect man "is the reservoir of divine lights and the fortress/a hidden treasury of infinite divine emanations". Creation was brought into existence for the sake of *al-insān al-kāmil* since it is through him that God's names, attributes, and acts become manifest. According to Fayḍ, the perfect man is the eye through which God observes his creation.<sup>95</sup> He remarks that in mystics' view, *al-insān al-kāmil* is like the spirit of the world, and the world is his body. In the same way that the spirit dominates and governs the body with its physical and spiritual power, *al-insān al-kāmil* dominates and

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<sup>90</sup> *Qurrat al-'uyūn*, 33.

<sup>91</sup> *Qurrat al-'uyūn*, 34.

<sup>92</sup> *Qurrat al-'uyūn*, 34.

<sup>93</sup> On the concept of *al-insān al-kāmil* as articulated in mystical literature see "insān-i kāmīl", in DMBI, 10:373–81; R. Arnaldez, "al-Insān al-Kāmīl" in EI<sup>2</sup>; Reynold Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism* (Cambridge, 1921), Chapter II. 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī (d. 832/1428) expounded in detail the doctrine of the perfect man in his *al-Insān al-kāmīl*. For his life and writings see Helmut Ritter, "'Abd al-Karīm, Ḳuṭb al-Dīn b. Ibrāhīm al-Djīlī", in EI<sup>2</sup>; James W. Morris, "Ibn 'Arabī and His Interpreters", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 107 (1987), 101–119, particularly 108–110. Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī is the first known figure to attempt to apply Ibn 'Arabī's concepts within a Shi'i theological framework. In particular see Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī, *La philosophie shi'ite*, ed. Henry Corbin and Osman Yahia (Tehran and Paris, 1969); On Āmulī, see Josef van Ess, "Ḥaydar-i Āmulī", in EI<sup>2</sup>; Etan Kohlberg, "Āmolī, Sayyid Bahā' al-Dīn", in EIR, 1:983–985; Henry Corbin, *En Islam iranien: aspects spirituels et philosophiques* (Paris, 1971–72), III, 149–213; Peter Antes, *Zur Theologie der schi'a: Eine Untersuchung des Jāmi' al-asrār wa manba' al-anwār von Sayyid Ḥaidar Āmolī* (Freiburg, 1971). For a twentieth-century Shi'i appropriation of Ibn 'Arabī and the doctrine of *al-insān al-kāmīl*, see Ruhollah Khomeini, *Miṣbāḥ al-hidāya ilā khilāfa wa al-wilāya* (Beirut, 1403/1983), 36–7.

<sup>94</sup> The book's full title is, *Kalimāt al-maknūna min 'ulūm ahl al-ḥikma wa al-ma'rifa wa aqwālihim* (Hidden words from the sciences of philosophers and mystics and their sayings). Fayḍ composed this work in 1057/1647–8.

<sup>95</sup> *Kalimāt al-maknūna*, 130.

governs the world through the divine names entrusted, taught, and instilled into his disposition by God.<sup>96</sup> God is manifested to humans through *al-insān al-kāmil*, and divine blessings and merciful manifestations do not reach the world except through their manifestations in him. For this reason, *al-insān al-kāmil* is God's representative and his successor to the humanity. He writes, "God is manifested in the mirror of the heart of *al-insān al-kāmil* who is his vicegerent, and the reflection of the lights of manifestations emanates to the world through the mirror of his heart". It is through this emanation that the world remains intact and as long as *al-insān al-kāmil* is in the world he shall summon manifestations of God's mercy and beneficence through the divine names and attributes, and in this way, he preserves the world's existence.<sup>97</sup>

Within Fayḍ's theological framework, *al-insān al-kāmil* stands as the alpha and omega of existence: he is the first because his spirit was the first thing created by God and he is the last because he is the last creature to appear in the world and the last in the chain of the return to God; he is both the outer by his physicality and the inner by his spirit. He is a servant to God since as a created being he is dependent on Him and is not immune from experiencing hardship and suffering. He is a lord since it is him who educates everyone in the world through his vicegerency, divinity (*ilāhiyya*), and spiritual conception (*al-nasha' al-rawḥāniyya*). Because of his spirituality, he is able to receive from God what people seek, and because of his physicality he is able to deliver to them what he has received from God.<sup>98</sup> Fayḍ notes that it is due to these two aspects, the physical and the spiritual, that *al-insān al-kāmil* is chosen as God's representative.<sup>99</sup>

While emphasizing the cosmic role of the perfect man and his sovereignty (caliphate) on the rest of humanity, Fayḍ points out that all humans have a share in this caliphate.<sup>100</sup> This is because in the mirror of their divine conduct (*akhlāq al-rabbāniyya*) all humans embody the sublime and beautiful manifestations of God's essence and attributes. Those who are not perfect humans (*al-insān al-kāmil*) mirror the manifestations of the beauty of God's handiworks and the perfection of divine creativity in their own professions such as tailors, builders, and spinners. In many cases they act as God's vicegerents (caliph) since He manifests those professions through them.<sup>101</sup> Hence, all humans embody divine names, but do so in varying degrees of intensity. Prophets and saints are superior to others, and even among them there are different degrees of potentiality and actuality.<sup>102</sup> What separates the perfect human from other humans is that in him divine realities have found the greatest actualization.

To summarize, God discloses Himself in the world through the divine names; the divine names are manifested in God's creations. God's self-disclosure has its most complete manifestation in the person of the perfect man; the perfect man is the embodiment of God's presence in the world and is the fullest manifestation of his immanence.

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<sup>96</sup> *Kalimāt al-maknūna*, 131.

<sup>97</sup> *Kalimāt al-maknūna*, 131–2.

<sup>98</sup> *Kalimāt al-maknūna*, 132.

<sup>99</sup> As support he quotes: "Even if we were to send an angel as our messenger we would have given him a human form" (6:9).

<sup>100</sup> In this regard he quotes 6:165: "It is He who has made you successors on the earth and raised some of you in rank above others so that He may test you in respect of what He has given you".

<sup>101</sup> *Kalimāt al-maknūna*, 133.

<sup>102</sup> Fayḍ writes that in certain prophets, some names might dominate other names as was the case with the prophets of Israel; in other prophets such as Muḥammad, names are manifested in equal measure and no particular names dominate the others (Fayḍ quotes 2:253). See, *Kalimāt al-maknūna*, 126–7.

#### §4. Divine Providence and the Necessity for the Perfect Men

The concept of the perfect man brings together two central principles of Fayḍ's theological thinking: (1) that God manifests Himself to people through his divine names since people, due to their limitations, are unable to conceive of him; (2) that God is not a passive creator of the world but rather actively governs it (i.e., divine providence). As regards to the first principle, Fayḍ holds that God discloses Himself in the world through the divine names; the divine names are manifested in God's creations. God's self-disclosure has its most complete manifestation in the person of the perfect man; the perfect man is the embodiment of God's presence in the world and is the fullest manifestation of his immanence. As regards to the second principle, he maintains that God is both the creator and sustainer of the world. Not only God creates humans, but he also provides them with necessary guidance toward their wellbeing. Since humans are unable to discern guidance on their own, and because they are unable to directly communicate with God, guidance is provided to them through God's vicegerent on earth, the perfect man, who as the manifestation of all the divine names acts as a mediator between God and humans.

God's active participation in the world is highlighted in a series of his divine names such as the "merciful", the "guide", the "generous", and the "loving". It is due to God's mercy and love that He guides people toward realizing the purpose for which they were created: to know and worship God. The perfect man stands midway between the existence and providence of God: he is the ultimate proof of God's existence and the channel of God's providence. Whereas by observing the creation humans come to the awareness of God's existence, by coming into contact with perfect men they are guided to live in accordance with God's commands. Since the perfect man is the manifestation of all the divine names, through him names such as the "wise" (*al-ḥakīm*), the "knowledgeable" (*al-ʿalīm*), the "guide" (*al-hādī*) and the "guardian" (*al-walī*) find their fullest manifestations in the world. Wise and knowledgeable humans who stand as guides to the divine have existed throughout history; the perfect man, however, has these attributes per excellence.

Adam, the first human, is also the first perfect man. It is stated in the Qur'an that God "taught Adam *all* the names",<sup>103</sup> appointed him as his vicegerent on earth, and promised guidance to Adam's descendants.<sup>104</sup> According to Fayḍ, from Adam to the present and as long as the world is in existence, humans have never been bereft of perfect men (the earth has never been without the presence of God's vicegerent on it). Indeed, as was discussed earlier, the world was created for the sake of the perfect man and will end once he ceases to remain on earth. A report attributed to the Imams states: "If there remain only two humans on earth, one of them shall be the proof (*ḥujja*) of God".<sup>105</sup> The perfect man is the bond between God and humans. This bond will never be broken as long as there are humans on earth.

Fayḍ holds that the need for the perfect man's mediation between God and humans stems from humans' inability to find guidance on their own. He explains that at the beginning of their creation, humans are born bereft of that perfection for which they are created. He notes a relevant verse from

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<sup>103</sup> Qur'an 2:31.

<sup>104</sup> Qur'an 2:38–9: "We said, 'Get out, all of you! But when guidance comes from Me, as it certainly will, there will be no fear for those who follow My guidance nor will they grieve—those who disbelieve and deny Our messages shall be the inhabitants of the Fire, and there they will remain'".

<sup>105</sup> *Ilm al-yaqīn*, 513.

the Qur'an: "God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers when you did not have any knowledge".<sup>106</sup> While man enters the world in ignorance, he is born with the disposition (*fitra*) and the potential for reaching perfection through using the tools that have been provided to him by his creator.<sup>107</sup> This potential, Fayḍ maintains, remains unfulfilled if man is left on his own without any guidance since he is by nature inclined toward pursuing things that accord with his self-gratifying instincts/impulses and [physical] constitution. Citing the verse, "Everyone acts according to his constitution" (*kullun ya'malu 'alā shākilatihī*),<sup>108</sup> Fayḍ explains that people pursue those drives that are most suitable to their constitution. The problem is that these drives, if remained undisciplined, bring out the worst aspects in man. He quotes a series of verses in which the majority of humankind is depicted in unfavorable light: "Man is created hasty"; "man is ever-grudging"; "man was truly created anxious"; "they have always been inept and foolish".<sup>109</sup> This being the state of mankind, they need guides to educate their drives, reorient them toward their Lord, and guide them toward actualizing their inborn potentials for lasting fulfilment.<sup>110</sup>

According to Fayḍ, it is erroneous to think that the same God who has not neglected such minute tasks as to ornate the eyebrows with hair would neglect to provide humans with messengers to guide them toward their wellbeing in this world and the bliss in hereafter. Following Avicenna, he argues that for their survival humans are in greater need for such guides than they are for many other things God has created for them. In the section "On the Proof of Prophecy" from his *The Metaphysics of the Healing*, Avicenna had written:

With respect to the survival and actual existence of the human species, the need for this person is greater than the need for such benefits as the growing of hair on the eyebrows, the concave shaping of the arches of the feet, and many others that are not necessary for survival but are, at best, useful for it. [Now], the existence of the righteous man to legislate and to dispense justice is possible, as we have previously remarked.<sup>111</sup> It becomes impossible, therefore, that divine providence should ordain the existence of those [former] benefits and not these [later], which are their bases.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Qur'an 16:78.

<sup>107</sup> Fayḍ quotes the following two verses: "He gave you hearing and sight and minds so that you may be thankful" (16:78); "God explains for you his signs that you may find guidance" (3:103).

<sup>108</sup> Qur'an 17:84.

<sup>109</sup> Qur'an 21:37, 17:100, 70:19, 33:72.

<sup>110</sup> *Ilm al-yaqīn*, 450–1.

<sup>111</sup> Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of the Healing*, trans. Michael E. Marmura (Provo, 2005), 358–9. Marmura notes that Avicenna has discussed this issue in more details in his *Psychology*, 4.2, 151–2.

<sup>112</sup> Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of the Healing*, 365; Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī presents the same view (*Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyyah* (n.p., 1370), 2:523–4). On Avicenna's theory of prophecy see Michael E. Marmura, "Avicenna's Theory of Prophecy in the Light of Ash'arite Theology", in W.S. McCullough (ed.), *The Seed of Wisdom. Essays in Honour of T.J. Meek* (Toronto, 1964), 159–78, 161–4; Michael E. Marmura, "Avicenna's Psychological Proof of Prophecy", *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 22 (1963): 49–56.

Avicenna, therefore, holds that God necessarily acts to bring about what best serves mankind's welfare.<sup>113</sup> In this context, prophecy is a logical outcome of God's attributes such as mercy, wisdom, and love. Adopting Avicenna's articulation for the necessity of God-sent guides, Fayḍ comments that just as God, in his mercy, pours down the rain on nature for its nourishment, he sends guides to instruct mankind in pursuing their wellbeing both in this world and the hereafter.<sup>114</sup> Who are these guides and why does God not guide humans without their intermediary? Fayḍ addresses this question through a reported exchange between Imam al-Ṣādiq and a heretic. When asked, "How do you establish the necessity for prophets and messengers?", the Imam responds that having established humans have a Creator who transcends them and everything he has created and is wise and exalted, it is neither possible for humans to see or touch him nor for them to converse with him or for him to converse with them. Hence, God has representatives through whom he communicates with people and inform them concerning matters that if adhered to contribute to their wellbeing and if abandoned to their demise. These representatives are the prophets and the elect individuals from his creatures; instructed in wisdom they are designated to guide others.<sup>115</sup>

What is the means through which God instructs his chosen representatives? Earlier Fayḍ had asserted that knowledge of God's existence and oneness is innate to mankind. The knowledge of God's reality and commands, however, must be acquired. According to Fayḍ, any knowledge that is not necessarily known is acquired either through reasoning and instruction or it is vouchsafed in the heart from an unknown place; the former is particular to scholars and philosophers, and the latter to *awliyā'*, Imams, prophets, and messengers. In the second mode, knowledge invades the heart from a place the recipient does not recognize. In such instances, if the recipient knows the intermediary agent through whom he receives the knowledge—meaning seeing the angel who brings the knowledge to his heart—the knowledge involved is called revelation (*waḥy*) and is exclusive to the prophets and messengers. If the recipient, however, does not know the intermediary agent, knowledge is either vouchsafed in his heart through inspiration (*ilhām*) or by hearing the angel's speech (*taḥdīth*).<sup>116</sup> This particular means of acquiring knowledge is exclusive to the *awliyā'* and the Imams. He concludes that there is no difference between inspiration and the angel's speech on the one hand and acquiring knowledge through reasoning and instruction on the other. These two ways of acquiring knowledge are distinct from one

<sup>113</sup> This conception of the aim of prophecy is not shared by many theologians. For a criticism see Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzī, *Miftāḥ dār al-sā'ada wa-manshūr wilāyat al-'ilm wa al-irāda* (Cairo, 1358), 455–460.

<sup>114</sup> Avicenna's successors also adopted this argument. See Suhrawardī, *Talwīḥāt*, ed. Henri Corbin (Istanbul, 1945), 1:95–6; Sirāj al-Dīn Maḥmūd Urmawī, *Laṭā'if al-ḥikma*, ed. Ghulām-Ḥusayn Yūsufi (Tehran, 1351 Sh), 144–6. Ibn Kammūna (1215–1284), the Jewish philosopher of Baghdad, agrees with Avicenna's view on the need for prophets as lawgivers. See his *al-Jadīd fī al-ḥikma* (Baghdad, 1403), 456–8. Also see, Averroes, *The Book of Decisive Treatise: Determining the Law and Wisdom, and the Epistle Dedicatory*, trans., with intro and notes, C. E. Butterworth (Provo, 2001), 43–6; Alfarabi, "Book of Religion", in *The Political Writings*, trans., and annotated, C. E. Butterworth (Ithaca and London, 2001), 93–113. For a secondary source that explores the philosophical theories of prophethood see F. Raḥmān, *Prophecy in Islam: Philosophy and Orthodoxy* (London, 1958).

<sup>115</sup> *Ilm al-yaqīn*, 452.

<sup>116</sup> On the notions of *ilhām* and *taḥdīth* in the Imāmī context see E. Kohlberg, "The Term Muḥaddath in Twelver Shī'ism", in *Studia Orientalia memoriae D. H. Baneth dedicata* (Jerusalem, 1979), 39–47; E. Kohlberg, "Imam and Community in the Pre-ghayba Period", in Arjomand (ed.), *Authority and Political Culture in Shī'ism* (Albany, 1988), 25–53; J. van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra: eine Geschichte des religiösen Denkens im frühen Islam*, 6 vols. (Berlin and New York: 1991–5), 1:278–85.

another only in the manner through which they are obtained and their aspect (*jahat*); otherwise knowledge, in both cases, is of the same source and cause (*sabab*). Likewise, inspiration and angelic speech do not differ from revelation except that revelation is more intense and illuminating and the intermediary angel is directly witnessed by the recipient.<sup>117</sup> Hence, knowledge is acquired in four ways: *istidlāl*, angelic speech, inspiration, revelation. Whereas ordinary humans acquire knowledge through reflection and *istidlāl*, God endows knowledge to his representatives via revelation or inspiration.

Thus far Fayḍ has drawn distinction between four types of perfect men: *awliyā'*, Imams, prophets, and messengers. Prophets and messengers experience the angels' intermediary in a way that the *awliyā'* and Imams do not. He adds a further distinction: a prophet, he explains, is a person to whom it is revealed to act; a messenger, in addition to receiving revelation to act is asked to promulgate his revelation to others;<sup>118</sup> a *walī* is a person to whom it is inspired to act or is spoken to by an angel to act; an Imam is spoken to by an angel to act and is charged with proclaiming to others what has been communicated to him. He further elaborates that the prophecy (*nubuwwa*) of a prophet precedes his messengership (*risāla*) and his prophecy is preceded by his *walāya*. In this framework, every messenger, prophet, and Imam is a *walī*, but the reverse is not the case; every messenger is an Imam but not vice versa.

Within this framework, messengership is an extension of prophethood and imamate an extension of *walāya*. Hence, the perfect man fulfills his role as the ultimate proof of God and his representative on earth in two functions. "The perfect man", writes Fayḍ, "is either a prophet (*nabī*) or a *walī*".<sup>119</sup> These two functions stem from the perfect man's two related and yet distinct roles as summoners to God and institutors of His laws/commands. Prophets and *awliyā'* either fulfill a legislative or a non-legislative task. A prophet who is sent to establish a community and communicate God's laws/commands, is called "messenger" (*rasūl*); a *walī* with a legislative task is called an *imām*.<sup>120</sup> Fayḍ writes that *walāya* is common to messengers, prophets and Imams; it is the inner dimension of the perfect man that binds mankind to God.<sup>121</sup> Humans learn knowledge and virtue from the perfect men. It is through them that their welfare is secured in their worldly and otherworldly endeavors. They are guided by the perfect man toward the knowledge of God's reality, are informed about the afterlife and the day of judgment and summoned to abide by God's commandments.

#### 4.1. The Perfect Man as the Institutor of God's Commands

Guidance, therefore, is provided to mankind through the perfect man – whether as a *walī*, prophet, messenger or Imam – who instructs mankind to the path of God. This guidance addresses both beliefs

<sup>117</sup> *ʿIlm al-yaqīn*, 479–80.

<sup>118</sup> Qur'an 33:40 refers to Muḥammad as a prophet and messenger as does 19:51 to Moses. See Fayḍ, *ʿIlm al-yaqīn*, 516.

<sup>119</sup> *Kalimāt maknūna*, 188.

<sup>120</sup> Not all Shi'i theologians make this distinction between prophets and messengers. Al-Murtaḍā, for instance, considers *nabī* and *rasūl* synonymous terms. On the differences between *nabī* and *imām* see "*Risāla fi al-farq bayna al-nabī wa al-imām*", in Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, *al-Rasā'il al-'ashar* (Qumm, 1414), 109–114.

<sup>121</sup> *ʿIlm al-yaqīn*, 488. For a recent treatment of *walāya* within a Ṣadrān philosophical theology see Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'i, *Risālat al-walāya* (Kuwait, 1987).

and actions. Beliefs regulate man's thought, laws/commands his conduct. Fayḍ conceptualises the regulation of conduct in terms of the law (*qānūn*). His views on the need for divine laws are as follows: the purpose of the law is to regulate human actions and structure the society in ways most conducive to human flourishing. At the most elementary level, the law seeks to protect human life ensuring the health of the body and continuity of human reproduction. The next stage, is to facilitate mutual intercourse and traffic, and above all cooperation among mankind since no single individual is able to rely only on his own abilities and is dependent upon others for fulfilling his necessary needs. These mutual dependencies lead to the professionalization of people's talents, emergence of communities, and complex societal relations (what Fayḍ calls *tamaddun* or civilization). Consequently, a set of laws are needed to regulate human relations involving matters such as trade, marital relations/matrimony, conflict arbitration, and criminal actions; the law serves as the ultimate point of reference and is the means of establishing justice. In Fayḍ's view, without an established law, people in their pursuit of self-interest will fight and shed each other's blood, disrupt their own survival, cause social disorder and chaos, and most significantly, will be prevented from traversing the path to God. Fayḍ, quoting Avicenna, retraces the genesis of this conflict, mayhem and murder to humans' eagerness to pursue their needs/impulses and eliminate anything that impedes their fulfilment. Hence, a set of laws and codes of conduct are necessary in order to put human affairs in ways most conducive to their flourishing. Fayḍ calls this law *sharʿ*, and writes that *sharʿ*, in order to be established, is in need of a *shāriʿ* or lawgiver. This lawgiver does two things: establishes laws to regulate human actions that assist people to fulfill their worldly needs; launches for people the path that leads them to God by turning their attention to the remembrance of the life to come and warning them of a Day when they shall be brought back to life and judged.<sup>122</sup>

To this end Fayḍ– quoting from Avicenna's discourse on prophethood in *The Healing* – enumerates some of the duties assigned to God's representatives: calling people to God and obligating them to perform individual acts of worship such as prayer, fast, and remembrance of God as well as communal acts such as almsgiving, refraining from lying to others or causing them harm; prescribing rules for regulating monetary exchanges (trade, property and inheritance laws, alms, war spoils), family laws (marriage, divorce, treatment of children), and criminal laws (robbery, murder, sexual misconduct, adultery, usury, prostitution); instituting morals and customs conducive to establishing justice and balance between the extremes of vice and virtue;<sup>123</sup> fighting the unbelievers and rebels who wage war on the believers in order to ward off any harm on people's worldly and religious affairs; designating a successor not through their own choosing but rather through revelation and explicit designation (*naṣṣ*) of God.<sup>124</sup>

Fayḍ, quoting from *Iḥyāʾ*, notes that according to Ghazālī, the chief purpose of all the divine laws is to steer mankind toward God's nearness and the blessing of meeting Him. There is no path to achieving this except through knowledge of God and the knowledge of his attributes, messengers and

<sup>122</sup> *ʿIlm al-yaqīn*, 448–50. Also see Suhrawardī, *Talwīḥāt*, vol. 1, ed. Henri Corbin (Istanbul, 1945), 95–6.

<sup>123</sup> Medieval Muslim thinkers were greatly influenced by Aristotle's ethics of the golden mean. Noteworthy examples are *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq* of Miskawayh, al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī's *al-Dharīʿa ilā makārim al-sharīʿa*, Ghazālī's *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, and Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī's *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī*.

<sup>124</sup> *ʿIlm al-yaqīn*, 453–8. This is a summary of Avicenna's exposition on prophecy in *The Metaphysics of the Healing*, 364–378.

scriptures. He notes that the verse, “We did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship us”<sup>125</sup> points to this purpose and explains that man will not truly worship his Lord unless he realizes his own servitude and the lordship of his Lord. Hence, it is necessary for man to come to know himself and his Lord. The purpose of sending prophets is to guide mankind in this direction. This purpose, Ghazālī maintains, can only be fulfilled in this world, and believes the statement attributed to the Prophet, “this world is the crop of the hereafter” is to be understood in this way. Hence, to preserve the world is an aim pursued for the sake of religion since it is a means to it. This preservation aims at protecting knowledge for people’s hearts, life for their bodies, and properties for their owners. He takes the preservation of these three as the necessary purpose of all divine laws. In his view, it is inconceivable to find any disagreement between various religions in this regard. Ghazālī concludes, [that it is not permissible for] God does not appoint a prophet to instruct people in their religious and worldly affairs and at the same time command them to do things that prevent them from acquiring knowledge of Him and his messengers or ask them to ruin lives and properties.<sup>126</sup> In other words, according to Fayḍ, following Avicenna, Ghazālī and Ṣadrā, messengers do not only serve a “spiritual” or “moral” function; they are also lawgivers who communicate to each community the codes of conduct that are most conducive to its wellbeing.

In concluding his discussion regarding the necessity of God’s representatives for mankind’s guidance, Fayḍ notes that the ultimate purpose for sending prophets and instituting divine laws is to use knowledge from the unseen world for the benefit of this world, to steer mankind toward God, subordinating animal instincts to the intellect, and seeing the world as a passage to reaching lasting bliss in the hereafter. He argues that even without divine laws, people would still be able to survive as long as there is a legislature that regulates their essential societal relations even if this legislature is instituted through the dominance of political sovereign authorities, “as it is the case today in many places”, he remarks, where people’s affairs are organized not in accordance with divine laws but rather through the dictates of those in power.<sup>127</sup>

He argues that although engaging in worldly affairs is accidental rather than essential to a prophet’s vocation, reflecting on the divine commands/laws (*sharī’a*) set forth by the prophets indicates that these laws are not bereft of anything that would contribute to strengthening the highest aspects of men including their worldly affairs. He quotes a relevant passage from Ṣadrā’s *Shawāhid al-rubūbiyya* where he states, “a body-politic/regime” (*siyāsa*) separate from the *sharī’a* is akin to a body without a soul”.<sup>128</sup> In *Anwār al-ḥikma* Fayḍ quotes the rest of Ṣadrā’s statement where he cautions the kings who think the established social order is only due to their domination that mere reliance on their sovereign power without implementing the *sharī’a*, shall eventually turn the current of life against them undermining their sovereignty in order to bring back to life what they had caused to perish.<sup>129</sup>

Fayḍ’s argument for the superiority of laws instituted by prophets versus those established by ruling sovereigns stems from his belief in the prophets’ inerrancy (*iṣma*). As it was mentioned above, Fayḍ defines prophets as individuals selected by God who receive revelations from Him either through

<sup>125</sup> Qur’an 51:56.

<sup>126</sup> *Ilm al-yaqīn*, 459–60. He is quoting from Ghazālī’s *Iḥyā’*, vol. 4, “Kitāb al-tawba” (section 2).

<sup>127</sup> This point was reiterated by Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī in his *Sharḥ al-ishārāt* (Tehran, 1375 Sh), 3:374.

<sup>128</sup> *Ilm al-yaqīn*, 463.

<sup>129</sup> See *Anwār al-ḥikma*, 281.

direct communication with God, via the intermediary of angels, or an inspiration vouchsafed in their hearts.<sup>130</sup> According to Fayḍ, the prophets are also distinguished from other humans by the attribute of inerrancy. A contentious topic among both Sunni and Shi'i thinkers, the inerrancy of the prophets, and for the Shi'is, the Imams, has generated continuous theological discussions.<sup>131</sup> Fayḍ's stance accords with mainstream Shi'i theology: It is necessary for the person of the prophet to be removed from moral defects such as jealousy and greed, and be immune from committing either minor or major sins, intended or unintended. He remarks that the sins that have been attributed to the prophets and Imams in the Qur'an and scriptural reports are subject to *ta'wīl* and must not be taken at face value (would be useful to provide his commentaries in *al-Šāfi* on some of such passages).<sup>132</sup> Had the prophets not been inerrant the possibility of errors in communicating the revelation or commanding people to do erroneous or reprehensible acts would remain open.

Fayḍ next addresses the question how a true prophet is to be distinguished from an imposter?<sup>133</sup> In his view, miracle and wisdom are the two signs corroborating a person's claim that he is a prophet sent by God. Whereas miracles persuade the masses, wisdom convinces the elites. He alludes to Ghazālī's view that the prophet's greatest miracles are their knowledge and wisdom, which are saved from the intellectual elite. Ordinary people, however, are enamored by the miracles perceived by the senses.<sup>134</sup> Fayḍ explains that whenever extraordinary acts are performed by two claimants, if one of them embodies sublime moral characteristics and the other exhibits blameworthy qualities, the source of the first person's miracles is God and the second person's Satan.<sup>135</sup> He notes that due to their opposing sources (one divine the other satanic), whereas the prophets are capable – through God – to perform any sort of miracle, the imposters' miracles are limited. The Qur'an, for Fayḍ, is both the greatest miracle brought forth by Muḥammad as well as the proof of his wisdom, and hence, of his prophethood.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> *Ilm al-yaqīn*, 464.

<sup>131</sup> For Sunni views on the inerrancy of the prophets see classical study of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *ʿIṣmat al-anbiyā'* (Cairo, 1986); cf. Shahab Ahmed, "Ibn Taymiyyah and the Satanic Verses", *Studia Islamica* 87 (1998), 67–128. For a Shi'i exposition see al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *Tanzīh al-anbiyā'*, ed. Fāṭima Qāḍī-Shi'ār (Tehran, 1422).

<sup>132</sup> *Ilm al-yaqīn*, 474–6.

<sup>133</sup> There is a sub-genre in Islamic theology dedicated to the proofs of prophecy. On proofs for prophecy in Islamic thought see, Sarah Stroumsa, "The Signs of Prophecy: The Emergence and Early Development of a Theme in Arabic Theological Literature", *The Harvard Theological Review* 78:1–2 (1985), 101–114; For a recent study see Mareike Koertner, "*Dalā'il al-Nubuwwa* Literature as Part of the Medieval Scholarly Discourse on Prophecy", *Der Islam* 95,1 (2018), 91–109.

<sup>134</sup> *Ilm al-yaqīn*, 468–9.

<sup>135</sup> *Ilm al-yaqīn*, 467–8. In upholding the examination of the claimants' moral characteristics as proof of their prophethood, Fayḍ diverges from Ghazālī who in line with Ash'arī thinking holds that humans have knowledge of good and evil only through the revelation brought forth by the prophets. In classical Ash'arī theology, the miracle is the only way the claims of a true prophet are distinguished from those of an imposter. Griffel has examined the Ash'arī perspective by focusing on Ghazālī's views on the proofs for prophethood in "Al-Ghazālī's Concept of Prophecy", *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 14 (2004), 101–144; also see his *Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology* (Oxford, 2009), 288; On prophecy and the evidence (*ithbat*) for prophecies in Ash'arī theology cf. Daniel Gimaret, *La doctrine d'al-Ash'arī* (Paris, 1990), 453–67; T. Fahd, "Nubuwwa" in EI<sup>2</sup> and Josef van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra. Eine Geschichte des religiösen Denkens im frühen Islam*, 6 vols. (Berlin and New York, 1991–97), 4:112f., 638–44.

<sup>136</sup> *Ilm al-yaqīn*, 666–74.

## 4.2. The Perfect Man and the Seal of Prophets

The Qur'an is replete with mentions of prophets besides Muḥammad. Not only the Qur'an acknowledges previous prophets and scriptures, their stories are central to Muḥammad's message.<sup>137</sup> Adam is distinguished from other prophets by being the first person to whom prophethood was bestowed; Muḥammad is distinguished from his predecessors by being the last.<sup>138</sup> "Muḥammad is not the father of any man among you, but the Messenger of God, and the Seal of the Prophets", states the Qur'an.<sup>139</sup> Accepting Muḥammad as the final prophet sent to mankind, Fayḍ proceeds to explain why the cycle of prophethood is sealed after him. According to Fayḍ, beginning with the first prophet Adam, prophethood gradually and step by step underwent a process of evolution and perfection, which eventually reached its culmination in the last prophet, Muḥammad.<sup>140</sup>

For the Shi'is, the sealing of prophets is not tantamount with the sealing of divine guides. Within Fayḍ's theological framework, although Muḥammad is the last prophet, he is not the last perfect man. This is due to two interrelated elements imbedded in Fayḍ's conceptualisation of God's relation to mankind:

1. To consider Muḥammad the last perfect man would mean that after his passing there has been an impediment in God's self-disclosure since the name "Allāh", which represents the entirety of all the divine names, has found no manifestation in the world. To note again, according to Fayḍ, every divine name has a locus of manifestation in the created world; the world will cease to exist once divine names find no locus of manifestation in it. Considering Muḥammad the last perfect man would result in holding that the earth has been bereft of God's fullest manifestation for the past 1400 years. This belief is tied to another belief underlying Fayḍ's cosmology according to which the entire creation was brought into existence for the sake of the perfect man. The perfect man is the purpose of creation; had it not been for him the earth would cease to exist since its purpose would have been fulfilled. Considering the world is still in existence illustrates that there is still a person on earth who is the full embodiment of all the divine names and for whose sake the world was created.

2. Due to God's transcendence and mankind's limitations, God does not directly communicate to human beings; rather He manifests himself in creation through his names and provides guidance via his representatives. The perfect man is the embodiment of God's names and the channel through which guidance reaches mankind. This guidance always involves a representative who on God's behalf

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<sup>137</sup> Nicolai Sinai, *The Qur'an: A Historical-Critical Introduction* (Edinburgh, 2017), chapters 3 and 6.

<sup>138</sup> Aḥmad Pākatchī and 'Alirezā Ebrāhīm, "Khātamiyat", in DMBI, 21:582–591; David S. Powers, "The Finality of Prophecy", in Adam J. Silverstein and Guy G. Stroumsa (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Abrahamic Religions* (Oxford, 2015), 254–270; Yohanan Friedmann, "Finality of Prophethood in Sunni Islam", *JSAI* 7 (1986), 177–215; idem, *Prophecy Continuous: Aspects of Aḥmadi Religious Thought and Its Medieval Background* (Berkeley, 1989), 49–93; H. Bobzin, "The 'Seal of the Prophets': Towards an Understanding of Muḥammad's Prophethood", in A. Neuwirth, N. Sinai, M. Marx (eds.), *The Qur'ān in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qur'ānic Milieu* (Leiden, 2010), 565–583; Josef van Ess, "Das Siegel der Propheten: die Endzeit und das prophetische im Islam", in M. Riedl & T. Schabert (eds.), *Propheten und Prophezeiungen* (Berlin, 2005), 53–75.

<sup>139</sup> Qur'an, 33:40. This verse has been subject to extensive discussions amongst Muslim exegetes and theologians. For a recent study see Uri Rubin, "The Seal of the Prophets and the Finality of Prophecy: On the Interpretation of the Qur'ānic Sūrat al-Aḥzāb (33)", in *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 164/1 (2014), 65–96.

<sup>140</sup> *al-Kalimāt al-maknūna*, 189–190.

instructs humanity in wisdom. Muḥammad, according to Muslims, is the seal of the prophets and the Qur'an revealed to him is the last revelation sent to mankind. In Fayḍ's view, it is precisely because Muḥammad is the seal of the prophets that the presence of perfect men does not cease to continue after him. Fayḍ's conceptualisation of the Imams as God's representatives succeeding the Prophet brings together three elements: (1) God's continuous self-disclosure, as long as this world exists, in the person of the perfect man; (2) God's attribute of mercy in providing mankind with necessary guidance for welfare in this life and felicity in the hereafter; (3) and mankind's continuous need for guidance.

## §5. The Perfect Man as the Imam

Despite their differences, Shi'is of various affiliations all subscribe to a common narrative distinctive to their tradition. According to that narrative, since God is merciful and cares about his creatures, He has provided them with the necessary guidance for their flourishing in this life and felicity in the hereafter. This guidance is available to them through the teachings revealed to his chosen messengers. Muslims are informed in the Qur'an that Prophet Muḥammad is the last bearer of revelations, and that after him the cycle of prophecy is sealed. The function of the prophets, however, is not merely to transmit the revelation but also to convey its meaning.<sup>141</sup> For this reason, the Prophet was acknowledged as the supreme interpreter of the Qur'an, and during his lifetime the community sought his counsel for explaining difficulties faced in understanding a particular word or passage.<sup>142</sup> Moreover, in addition to the signs that invite people to faith and admonish them regarding the consequences of unbelief, the Qur'an contains decrees that relate to the communal life. In order to carry these decrees there needs to be a person who is charged with the authority to execute God's commands. During the Prophet's lifetime, he was the sole legitimate authority to interpret the Qur'an and execute its commands. As the Prophet's eyes closed in the spring of 632, a question inevitably arose as to what ensures the true interpretation and implementation of the Qur'an in the absence of the Prophet.

The overwhelming majority of Shi'is and Sunnis both agree that although the Qur'an is essential, on its own it is not sufficient for guidance.<sup>143</sup> This view stems from four interrelated beliefs:

1. Among the functions of the Prophet stated in the Qur'an is to recite the revelations to his audience, to purify them, and to teach them the scripture and wisdom.<sup>144</sup> The Prophet is also asked to elucidate the revelation.<sup>145</sup> This elucidation was necessary since at times some would fail to understand what was being recited to them. God's guidance to mankind, therefore, would remain incomplete had the revelation of the Qur'an not been accompanied with the Prophet's instructions and elucidations of it.

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<sup>141</sup> Qur'an 2:151, 3:164, 62:2, 2:231, 4:113, 16:44.

<sup>142</sup> The earliest extant commentaries on the Qur'an as well as the hadith literature are replete with examples of questions posed to the Prophet by his Companions and his answers to them.

<sup>143</sup> For an early discussion concerning the insufficiency of the Qur'an see Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi'i, "Jimā' al-'ilm" in *al-Umm*, ed. Maḥmūd Maṭrajī (Beirut, 1996), 7:460–477.

<sup>144</sup> Qur'an 2:151, 3:164, 62:2, 2:231, 4:113.

<sup>145</sup> Qur'an 16:44: "We have sent down the message to you [Prophet] too, so that you can explain to people what was sent for them, so that they may reflect".

2. In addition to the Qur'an, corroborated reports (*mutawātir*) attributed to the Prophet state that during the sermon he delivered on his last pilgrimage to Mecca he asked his followers to adhere – in addition to the Qur'an – to another source. The genesis of the Sunni and Shi'i divergence is retraced to their different recordings and interpretations of this statement known as *al-thaqalayn* ("the two weighty things").<sup>146</sup> Sunni versions have recorded two nearly identical versions with a slight and yet consequential difference. In one version, quoted by Ibn Hishām (d. 218/833) in his biography of the Prophet, it is stated: "I have left with you something clear; if you hold fast to it, you will never fall into error – the book of God and the practice of His Prophet".<sup>147</sup> Al-Tirmidhī (d. 279/892) provides the second version: "Indeed, I am leaving among you that which if you hold fast to them, you shall not be misguided after me. One of them is greater than the other: The Book of God which is a rope extended from the sky to the earth and my progeny the people of my house (*'itratī ahl baytī*).<sup>148</sup> They shall not part with each other until they meet at the pool [of paradise]. Thus, look at how you deal with them after me".<sup>149</sup> Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) and Muslim ibn Ḥajjāj (d. 261/875) had also recorded similar reports in their hadith compilations.<sup>150</sup>

Between these two contrasting versions, it was the first where the Qur'an is paired with the Prophet's Sunna that found traction in Sunni theology and jurisprudence.<sup>151</sup> As for the Shi'i sources, it was the second version wherein the Qur'an is paired with the Prophet's progeny that formed the cornerstone of Shi'i religiosity.<sup>152</sup> Regardless of which version of this statement was indeed uttered or what understanding of it was intended, the vital issue for both Shi'i and Sunni scholars is that the Qur'an must be complemented with another source of knowledge: the Imams for Shi'is and for Sunnis the Prophet's Sunna as reported by his companions.

3. Muslims agree that the Prophet was sent not just to the Arabs but to all humanity; his mission was not limited to his own era or lifetime but rather extends to all who are born after his passing and stretches until the Day of Resurrection. The issues facing mankind, however, are constantly in flux. Changes in circumstances and human relations pose new questions whose answers are not found in the Qur'an alone. Just as the percepts outlined in the Qur'an were essential to regulating human affairs, sources besides the Qur'an are needed to address new issues pertaining to codes of conduct and laws. Hence, Fayḍ quotes a report attributed to Imam al-Ṣādiq where it is stated, until the day of resurrection

<sup>146</sup> On *ḥadīth al-thaqalayn* see Farāmarz Ḥāj Manūchihri, "thaqalayn, ḥadīth", in DMBI, 17:73–79; for all the sources of this hadith see the anonymous compilation *Kitāb allāh wa ahl al-bayt fī ḥadīth al-thaqalayn* (Qumm, 1388/2009). For the differences between the Sunni and Shi'i interpretations of the *thaqalayn* hadith see *The Study of Shi'i Islam*, 152–5.

<sup>147</sup> Muḥammad ibn Ishāq, *The Life of the Prophet Muḥammad*, trans. A. Guillaume (Oxford, 1955), 651, with slight modifications.

<sup>148</sup> On the concept of *ahl al-bayt* see I. Goldziher, C. van Arendonk, and A.S. Tritton, "Ahl al-Bayt", in EI<sup>2</sup>; 'Alī Rafī'i, "Ahl-i bayt", in DMBI, 10:465–7.

<sup>149</sup> al-Tirmidhī, *Sunnan*, Book 49, h. 4157.

<sup>150</sup> Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, 15 vols. ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shakir (Cairo, 1949–1958) 3:14; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Book 44, H. 55. In Muslim's version, the *ahl al-bayt* are identified as "Alī and the offspring of 'Alī, 'Aqil and the offspring of 'Aqil and the offspring of Ja'far and the offspring of 'Abbās".

<sup>151</sup> On the authority of Sunna see G.H.A Juynboll and D.W. Brown, "Sunna", in EI<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>152</sup> For the second version in early Shi'i sources see *al-Kāfi*; *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt*, *al-Maḥāsin*, al-'Ayyāshī's *Tafsīr*. It is to be noted that the first version also appears in Shi'i sources. Whereas the content of the Sunna is sought out in the hadith; for the Shi'is the prophetic family is sought out in a living person.

there shall be a “*ḥujja*” (i.e., Imam) amongst people who knows the *ḥarām* and the *ḥalāl* and invites people to the path of God.<sup>153</sup>

4. Even if none of the above factors were present, the Qur’an is a complex text. Different readers interpret the Qur’an differently. The history of the Qur’an’s commentary tradition is a testament to wide-ranging disagreements. These disagreements have led to diverging sects (Shi‘i and Sunni), theological systems (Shi‘i, Ash‘arī, Mu‘tazilī, Ḥanbalī), and legal frameworks (Ḥanafī, Mālikī, Shāfi‘ī, Ḥanbalī, Zāhirī, Uṣūlī, Akhbārī). Disagreements were present during the twenty-two years of Muḥammad’s prophecy. The Qur’an asks its audience to resolve their disagreements by referring them to God and the Messenger.<sup>154</sup> People have not ceased to disagree with each other after the Prophet’s passing. Not only disagreements have not abated they have indeed become intensified. The Qur’an describes itself as a “clear statement” (3:138), the “criterion” (25:1), a “manifest light” (4:174), a “manifest book” (43:2), “a revelation in clear Arabic” (16:103), the “guidance for the worlds” (3:96), “healing for what is in hearts” (10:57), and “revealed as guidance for mankind, clear messages giving guidance and a criterion” (2:185). At the same time, however, the Qur’an also states that “We have explained Our revelations to those who take heed” (6:126), “a Book whose verses are made distinct as a Qur’an in Arabic for people who understand, giving good news and warning. Yet most of them turn away and so do not hear” (41:2–4), and that “this is a revelation that is clear to the hearts of those endowed with knowledge” (29:49).

These considerations lead us to the chief aspect of Fayḍ’s view of the relation between revelation and guidance: Although the Qur’an is the word of God, it only *becomes* the manifest light, the clear statement, guidance for the worlds, and the criterion between truth and falsehood in the hands of those who understand its signs in true knowledge. Left in the hands of the ignorant, the Qur’an doesn’t actualize its infinite potential; the same book that is healing and mercy for the believers, “as for those who disbelieve, it only increases their loss” (17:82); “through it [i.e., the Qur’an] He makes many goes astray and leads many to the right path” (2:26). Where is the source of true knowledge? Who are those who correctly understand the Qur’an? Fayḍ answers these questions in his exegetical work on the Qur’an.

### 5.1. The Perfect Man and the Qur’an

*Al-Ṣāfi fī tafsīr kalām allāh al-wāfi* represents Fayḍ’s attempt at providing a comprehensive commentary on the Qur’an.<sup>155</sup> Every work of commentary bears its author’s acknowledgment that the Qur’an is not self-explanatory; had it been so commentary would be superfluous. Two overarching beliefs direct Fayḍ’s exegetic endeavors:

First, the Qur’an provides mankind with complete guidance in all matters. This belief is chiefly predicated on two verses: “We have sent the Scripture down to you explaining everything” and “We have left nothing from the book”.<sup>156</sup> Further support for this view of the Qur’an is found in the hadith

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<sup>153</sup> *‘Ilm al-yaqīn*, 515.

<sup>154</sup> “If you are in dispute over any matter, refer it to God and the Messenger, if you truly believe in God and the Last Day: that is better and fairer in the end” (4:59). Another verse often quoted in this context is 4:65.

<sup>155</sup> *Al-Ṣāfi fī tafsīr kalām allāh al-wāfi*, ed. Ḥusayn al-A‘lamī (Tehran, 1415), 5 volumes.

<sup>156</sup> Qur’an 16:89 and 6:38.

literature. Fayḍ commences the introduction to *al-Ṣāfi* with a section titled “On Adhering to the Qur’an and the Delineation of Its Excellence”. In this section, he quotes seven statements attributed to the Prophet and the Imams concerning the virtues of the Qur’an. In one report, the Prophet states that the Qur’an distinguishes guidance from deviance, clarity from perplexity, and light from darkness. “In the Qur’an”, the Prophet is reported to have stated, “is the perfection of your religion”. In another report, the Prophet states that God illuminates whoever acquires light from the Qur’an, guards against sin whoever orders his affairs by the Qur’an and saves whoever cleaves to the Qur’an.<sup>157</sup> According to these verses and hadiths, the Qur’an, as the last scripture sent to mankind, contains complete guidance.

Second, while the Qur’an provides mankind with complete guidance in all matters, this guidance is not self-explanatory. This belief is based on the view that the Qur’an is open to numerous interpretations and not everyone who reads the letters of Qur’an is able to fully understand their meanings. The virtues of the Qur’an mentioned in the above verses and hadiths as a complete book that saves its adherents from sin and error become actualized when the Qur’an is understood as intended by God. The Qur’an, Fayḍ explains, is a complex text. Its complexity stems from the fact that the words found in the Qur’an are imbedded in various contexts. Hence, while presenting the Qur’an as the ultimate guide for mankind, he points out that that the Qur’an does not provide the required contextual information needed for fully comprehending its meaning. He writes,

The Qur’an is comprised of *nāsikh* and *mansūkh*, *muḥkam* and *mutashābih*, *khāṣṣ* and ‘*āmm*, *mubayyan* and *mubham*, *maqṭū‘* and *muṣūl*, *farā’id* and *aḥkām*, *sunnan* and *ādāb*, *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām*, ‘*azīma* and *rukḥṣa*, *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin*, *ḥadd* and *maṭla‘*. No one knows the differences between all these except those in whose house the Qur’an was revealed, and they are the Prophet and his household.<sup>158</sup>

Fayḍ’s discourse on the doctrine of imamate is representative of the Shi’i tradition.<sup>159</sup> According to the Shi’i tradition, the same factors that necessitate the need for messengers also necessitate the need for Imams. This need stems from the belief that scriptures brought forth by the messengers, on their own, do not suffice people as sources of guidance without the assistance of those with knowledge of how these sources must be understood. Although there are no more messengers and scriptures after the Prophet, the Qur’an as God’s Word needs to be properly understood in order to fulfill its guiding purpose.

As previously mentioned, Shi’i and Sunni scholars both agree that although the Qur’an is essential for guidance, on its own, it is insufficient.<sup>160</sup> Sunnis complement the Qur’an with the Prophet’s *sunna* (tradition); the Shi’is pair the Qur’an with the Prophet’s *‘itra* (progeny).<sup>161</sup> As with Sunnis, the

<sup>157</sup> *Al-Ṣāfi*, 1:32.

<sup>158</sup> *Al-Ṣāfi*, 1:8.

<sup>159</sup> For an insightful discussion of why the interpretability of the Qur’an necessitates the need for an inerrant guide see Ibn Bābūya, *Ma‘ānī al-akhbār*, ed. ‘Alī Akbar al-Ghaffārī (Qom, 1431), 232–237.

<sup>160</sup> There have been Sunni and Shi’i scholars who have attempted to articulate a sola-Qur’an theological framework. Their endeavors, however, has not met with much success. For a recent study of the sola-Qur’an movement in modern India see Ali Usman Qasmi, *Questioning the Authority of the Past: The Ahl al-Qur’an Movements in the Punjab* (Karachi, 2011).

<sup>161</sup> For an early Imāmī exposition of *ḥadīth al-thaqalayn* and the phrase *‘itra* mentioned therein see Ibn Bābūya, *Ma‘ānī al-akhbār*, ed. ‘Alī Akbar al-Ghaffārī (Qumm, 1431), 186–190.

Prophet's tradition is also of paramount importance for Shi'is. The difference is that whereas for the majority of Sunnis the prophetic tradition acquires its content from the reports attributed to the Prophet by his Companions, for the Shi'is the tradition's acquires its content from the Prophet's progeny, the Imams.<sup>162</sup> According to this view, and this is where Shi'i theology departs from its Sunni counterpart, God has designated the Imams as the divinely ordained guide for interpreting the Qur'an and the Prophet's *sunna* and executing their commands.<sup>163</sup> The Imam is necessary at all times as a guide for Muslim community. What sets the Imams apart from the other believers is the same factor that distinguishes the prophets from their followers. Similar to the prophets, the Imams are inerrant and immune from error in their understanding of the revelation.<sup>164</sup> From Fayḍ's standpoint,

It is necessary that the Imam be the most excellent individual of the community, and closest of them to God; all the excellent characteristics that are found disparage in others must be unified in him such as knowledge of God's Book, the Prophet's tradition, understanding of God's religion, striving in God's path, and eagerness for what is with God and detachment from what is with God's creatures. The Imam must be inerrant (*ma'ṣūm*) of any shortcoming, deviance, crookedness, and error in word and deed; he must also be removed and unstained from judging based on his personal preference or desire for the world.<sup>165</sup>

According to Fayḍ, the Imam's existence is an act of grace (*lutf*) on God's part since without him the divine commands (*sharī'a*) and the majority of religious decrees and major tenets of Islam such as *jihād*, commanding the right and forbidding the wrong,<sup>166</sup> and court rulings/precepts would be rendered invalid, and as a result, their intended benefit for mankind will be annulled.<sup>167</sup>

Furthermore, the need for an Imam is connected with humans' resurrection and restoration to life. On the day of judgment, the conduct of every human shall be judged, and his actions weighed.<sup>168</sup> The Qur'an continuously warns mankind that there shall be a requital (*jizā'*) and a reckoning (*ḥisāb*) for their good and evil deeds: "Everything in the heavens and the earth belongs to God. He will repay

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<sup>162</sup> On the conceptualisations of the Companions as authoritative sources of knowledge see Etan Kohlberg, *In Praise of the Few: Studies in Shi'i Doctrine and History*, ed. Amin Ehteshami (Leiden, 2019), Chapters 1–8.

<sup>163</sup> For a comprehensive historical study of the difference between Shi'is and Sunnis concerning the leadership of the Muslim community after the Prophet's death see W. Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad: A Study of Early Caliphate* (Cambridge, 1998). For a study of the caliphs' roles as political and religious authorities see Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds, *God's Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam* (Cambridge, 1986). It is to be noted that as with some of Crone's other writings, this book also suffers from a number of historiographical shortcomings.

<sup>164</sup> In a statement attributed to the fourth Imam, 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn (d. 95/713), inerrancy is described in the following: "He [i.e., the inerrant Imam] cleaves to God's [saving] rope and God's rope is the Qur'an; these two do not depart from each other until the Day of Resurrection. The Imam guides to the Qur'an and the Qur'an guides to the Imam. And this is God's saying: 'This Qur'an does indeed guide to the straightest way' (17:9)". Fayḍ, *Ilm al-yaqīn*, 502–3. On the concept of inerrancy see, W. Madelung and E. Tyan, "Iṣma", in EI<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>165</sup> *Ilm al-yaqīn*, 502.

<sup>166</sup> For an overview of Imāmi positions in this regard see Michael Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge, 2001), 252–304.

<sup>167</sup> *Ilm al-yaqīn*, 501.

<sup>168</sup> For a collection of recent studies on the concepts of the afterlife in Islamic thought see Sebastian Günther and Todd Lawson (eds.), *Roads to Paradise: Eschatology and Concepts of the Hereafter in Islam*, 2 volumes (Leiden, 2017).

those who do evil according to their deeds, and reward, with what is best, those who do good”;<sup>169</sup> “Whoever has done an atom’s-weight of good will see it whoever has done an atom’s-weight of evil will see that”.<sup>170</sup> Hence, human beings are considered responsible for their conduct in this life, and their deeds have consequences on their state in the afterlife. This judgement, requital and reckoning, however, carries force when man is given knowledge of good and evil. Whether he acts on this knowledge, ignores it, or opposes it is a different matter. In this context, the pivotal point is that to punish or reward a person’s actions regardless of whether or not he performed them with knowledge seems not to accord with the descriptions provided for Allāh in the Qur’an as a beneficent, merciful, just, and wise God. It is for this reason that prophets are sent to mankind as conduits of God’s revelations to impart to people the knowledge of good and evil and provide them with codes of conduct. It is only after this knowledge has been bestowed to them that they are considered responsible for their deeds and have no excuse in forsaking God’s commands.<sup>171</sup> Considering that the Qur’an is subject to numerous interpretations many of which disagree or contradict one another, goes Fayd’s argument, after the Prophet’s passing there have to be guides whose understanding of the Qur’an is free from error.

Various strands of Shi’i Islam are tied together with this shared conviction in the necessity of a divinely chosen figure to explicate the Qur’an. According to this view, these guides are the Imams of the Prophet’s progeny who are purified of all shortcomings<sup>172</sup> and aided with divine knowledge. Their function is to safeguard the believers against errors in understanding the Qur’an. It is maintained that without such a guide the Qur’an remains silent. In a sermon attributed to Imam ‘Alī it is stated:

This light by the means of which we are guided, this Qur’an which you asked to speak, and which will not speak. It is me who will inform you concerning it, what it contains of the knowledge of the future, of the teaching of the past, of the healing of your sufferings and of the setting in order of your relationships.<sup>173</sup>

In another report, Imam al-Ṣādiq is reported to have stated, “the Qur’an does not speak but Muḥammad and his house speak the Qur’an”.<sup>174</sup> Hence, the Shi’i tradition, from its inception, draws a clear distinction between the letter and the meaning of the Qur’an. Whereas the letter is available to everyone, the meaning is not and must be sought out from those endowed with knowledge. A report attributed to the Prophet makes this issue explicit: “There is a person among you who will fight for the

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<sup>169</sup> Qur’an 53:31.

<sup>170</sup> Qur’an 99:7–8.

<sup>171</sup> Referring to Muḥammad and the previous prophets such as Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, Solomon, David, and Moses, the Qur’an states: “They were messengers bearing good news and warning, so that mankind would have no excuse before God, once the messengers had been sent: God is almighty and all wise” (4:165).

<sup>172</sup> In this regard, Shi’i exegetes often refer to the following verse: “God wishes to keep uncleanness away from you, people of the House, and to purify you thoroughly” (33:33). Nearly all the extant early exegetical writings point out that *ahl al-bayt* refers to the *ahl al-kisā*, namely Fāṭima, ‘Alī, al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusayn. For an overview of exegetical writings on this verse with reference to *ahl al-bayt* see al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-bayān*, ed. M. M. Shakir and A. M. Shakir (Cairo, 1373–1388), 22:5–7. For *ahl al-kisā* see Farhad Daftary, “Ahl al-Kisā”, in EI<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>173</sup> From *Nahj al-Balagha* (sermon no. 157) compiled by al-Sharīf al-Raḍī (d. 406/1015). Translation from *The Study of Shi’i Islam*, 117.

<sup>174</sup> al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 110 volumes (Beirut, 1403), 23:197–9, h. 29.

interpretation (*ta'wīl*) of the Qur'an just as I myself fought for its revelation (*tanzīl*), and this person is 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib".<sup>175</sup> The Imam's role, therefore, is to *ta'wīl* (interpret) the *tanzīl* (letter) of the Qur'an. For Fayḍ, as for all Shi'is, it is the Imams' divine knowledge that elevates them to be the only reliable sources for understanding the Qur'an and living a life guided by its teachings. Without divine guidance, any understanding of the Qur'an is incomplete and prone to error. The guiding role of the Imams is crystalized in a famous saying attributed to the Prophet: "The likeness of my family among you is like Noah's ark; whoever comes aboard will be saved and whoever remains behind will be drowned".<sup>176</sup>

## 5.2. The Twelve Perfect Men Succeeding the Prophet

According to Fayḍ, the phenomenon of successorship is not specific to Muḥammad; all the prophets and messengers preceding Muḥammad also had successors. Quoting from Ibn Bābūya's *Kamāl al-dīn*, he provides a genealogy of previous prophets' successorship beginning from the first successor, (*waṣī*) Adam's son Seth,<sup>177</sup> and ending with Muḥammad's successors.<sup>178</sup> Fayḍ quotes a hadith wherein is stated that as the Jews had twelve tribes (*asbāt*) and Jesus twelve apostles, Muḥammad has twelve *awṣiyā*.<sup>179</sup> He maintains that every messenger banqueted his divine knowledge to his successor so that in this way guidance would endure after his passing. Citing three verses as evidence, Fayḍ writes that divine proof is exclusive to Abraham's family.<sup>180</sup>

The Shi'is all agree on this point. Disagreements between various Shi'i groups pertain to the identity of the Imams and not the necessity for them. For the Imāmī Shi'is, the distinctive mark of the Imam is his inerrant understanding of the Qur'an and prophetic tradition. A person's inerrancy, however, is not discerned from any outward sign and can be claimed by anyone. For this reason, a person's imamate is proven through his explicit designation by the Prophet or the preceding Imam.<sup>181</sup>

<sup>175</sup> For a study of this hadith see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "The Warrior of Ta'wīl", in *The Spirituality of Shi'i Islam: Beliefs and Practices* (London, 2011), 307–337. Bar-Asher, in stating a report from *Tafsīr al-'Ayyāshī* notes, "A famous Imami tradition, which is also cited in Sunni sources, ascribes the following words to Muhammad: 'There is one among you who will fight for the [correct] interpretation of the Qur'an just as I myself fought for its revelation, and he is 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib'. This tradition is one of many that elevates 'Alī's position as a Quran interpreter, a position shared by his descendants, the Imams". See, Meir M. Bar-Asher, *Scripture and Exegesis in Early Imāmī Shi'ism* (Leiden, 1999), 87–8.

<sup>176</sup> *Ilm al-yaqīn*, 900. Also quoted in Ibn Bābūya, *Amālī*, session 45, h. 18; idem, *Uyūn akhbār*, bāb 31, h. 10.

<sup>177</sup> Fayḍ quotes a report from *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt* where it is stated that 'Alī to Muḥammad is what Seth was to Adam (*Ilm al-yaqīn*, 538); in a famous hadith, also quoted in Sunni sources, the Prophet is reported to have stated that 'Alī to him is what Aron was to Moses except that 'Alī does not receive revelations and that after Muḥammad there are no prophets.

<sup>178</sup> *Ilm al-yaqīn*, 521–3. Amir-Moezzi, *The Spirituality of Shi'i Islam*, 163.

<sup>179</sup> *Ilm al-yaqīn*, 535–7. He accompanies this with a series of hadiths found in Sunni sources in which twelve leaders, caliphs, and amīrs are mentioned. See *Ilm al-yaqīn* 546–50. E. Kohlberg, "Waṣī", in EI<sup>2</sup>. For further information see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *The Spirituality of Shi'i Islam*; U. Rubin, "Prophets and Progenitors in the Early Shi'a Tradition", *JSAT* 1 (1979), 41–65.

<sup>180</sup> *Ilm al-yaqīn*, 531–4. Fayḍ quotes three verses as evidence: "God chose Adam, Noah, Abraham's family, and the family of 'Imran, over all other people, in one line of descent" (3:34); "We gave the descendants of Abraham the scripture and wisdom—and We gave them a great kingdom—but some of them believed in it and some turned away from it" (4:54), "Those are the ones to whom We gave the scripture, wisdom, and prophethood. Even if these people now disbelieve in them, We have entrusted them to others who do not disbelieve" (6:89).

<sup>181</sup> Fayḍ provides this explanation through a report attributed to the fourth Imam, 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn (d. 95/713). See his *Ilm al-yaqīn*, 502–3. In *Kalimāt maknūna*, he notes that the attributes and characteristics of the Imam are among the secret matters which no one is informed about them except God. The Imam's possession of these characteristics becomes known

According to Imāmīs, and here is where they depart from the Zaydī and Ismāʿīlī Shiʿīs, the only legitimate individuals to guide the believers are the twelve Imams who are the direct descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad through his daughter Fāṭima and his son-in-law and cousin ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib.<sup>182</sup> The line of the Prophet’s successors (*awṣiyāʾ*) starts in 11/632 with Imam ʿAlī (d. 40/660) and ends with Imam Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan al-Mahdī (b. 255/869).<sup>183</sup> According to the Shiʿī narrative, the Prophet before his death – in no uncertain terms – designated ʿAlī as his successor.<sup>184</sup> ʿAlī prior to his passing designated his sons al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn and each Imam descending from al-Ḥusayn’s progeny did the same until al-Mahdī who is the seal of the Imams.<sup>185</sup> Since the aim of this chapter is to provide an outline of Fayḍ’s theological thinking, we will not investigate the myriad historical considerations regarding the Prophet’s succession that have been a source of controversy among Muslims for the past fourteen centuries. It suffices for our purposes to point out Fayḍ’s historical narrative as well as his solutions for the challenges facing Shiʿīs and Sunnis alike in the face of the Prophet’s absence.

## §6. The Perfect Man of Today

To recapitulate, our investigation hitherto started from the premise that mankind is dependent on God for guidance; that this guidance reaches mankind through revelation; that prophets are the channels through which revelations are communicated to mankind; that the letter of the revelation only guides when its meanings are “correctly” understood; that to understand the revelation “correctly” involves elucidating its message; that such elucidation was provided by the Prophet during his lifetime; that the Prophet designated his progeny to continue this task of elucidating the revelation after his passing. The

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to others either through the reports coming from God or through inspiration (*ilhām*). Moreover, in contrast to his position in *ʿIlm al-yaqīn* that the Imam must be designated by the Prophet or a preceding Imam, in *Kalimāt maknūna* he writes, “Just as prophecy – which is the caliphate of God – cannot be established without proofs and performance of miracles, imamate, which also is the caliphate of God and the Messenger, cannot be established without proofs, performance of miracles or a designation (*naṣṣ*) from God and the Messenger” (*Kalimāt maknūna*, 204). As discussed in §4.1, similar to the majority of Muslim theologians Fayḍ holds that the authenticity of a person’s claim to prophecy is established by his performance of miracles. This, however, is not the case for proving a person’s imamate since miracles are exclusive to prophets. Even though the hadith literature (e.g. *Baṣāʾir al-darajāt*) provides examples of miracles/extraordinary acts attributed to the Imams, their imamate is not proven on the basis of their performance of such acts. Rather, the miracles are further confirmation of their supreme spiritual status. Fayḍ also mentions the Imams’ performance of miracles in *Qurrat al-ʿuyūn*, 163.

<sup>182</sup> On ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib’s biography and his role in Islamic civilization see the informative entry, Robert Gleave, “ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib”, in EI<sup>3</sup>; Multiple Authors, “ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib”, in DMBI, translated into English in *Encyclopaedia Islamica* (Brill Online). On the Ismāʿīlī conception of the imamate see W. Madelung, “Das Imamāt in der frühen ismailitischen Lehre”, *Der Islam* 37 (1961), 43–135.

<sup>183</sup> For a detailed historical overview of the lives and designations of the twelve Imams see: H. Modarressi. *Crisis and Consolidation in the Formative Period of Shiʿite Islam* (Princeton, 1993). For the differences between various Shiʿī affiliations on the issue of imamate see “imāmat”, in DMBI, 10:137–153.

<sup>184</sup> A major theme in Shiʿī discussions concerning the Prophet’s designation of ʿAlī is the event of Ghadīr al-Khummm. For a brief discussion see Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, “Ghadīr Khumm”, in EI<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>185</sup> For studies on the historical developments in Imāmī Shiʿism concerning the role and number of the Imams see the following three articles in Etan Kohlberg’s *In Praise of the Few: Studies on Shiʿi Doctrine and History*, chapters 10–12: “Imam and Community in the Pre-Ghayba Period”, “From Imāmiyya to Ithnā ʿashariyya” and “Early Attestations of the Term Ithnā ʿashariyya”.

inevitable question is: who is charged with elucidating the Qur'an today? The answer, as we saw in the succession line above, is Imam al-Mahdī. According to Fayḍ, the successor (*waṣī*) is “the *ḥujja* after the Prophet; he is the speaking Imam who provides the *ta'wīl* of the silent Qur'an; he preserves the *sharī'a* and executes the *ḥudūd*”.<sup>186</sup> This would mean that today, in the year 2018, the Shi'is are instructed in the Qur'an's meanings by their Imam and must adhere to the Sharī'a which he has preserved for them. Also, the Imam executes the law, which means everyone else is subordinate to his authority. Since the Imam is inerrant in his understanding the Qur'an and has inherited prophetic knowledge, his judgments are free from error. Hence, no one will be oppressed or unfairly treated under his rule. Is that the state of affairs today? A brief biography of al-Mahdī provides a clue as why this is not the case.

### 6.1. Finding Guidance During the Perfect Man's Absence

A survey of the Imams' succession line indicates that al-Mahdī was born in 255/869. He was the son of the eleventh Imam, al-Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī (232–260/846–874) and his Byzantine wife Narjis. Due to the ʿAbbāsid rulers' persecution of the Imam and his followers, to prevent any danger to al-Mahdī's life his birth was kept in secrecy. At his father's passing in 260/874, he was proclaimed the Imam at the age of five by his father's designation.<sup>187</sup> Concerning al-Mahdī's young age, Fayḍ quotes al-Mufīd who in his *al-Irshād* remarks that in this regard the Imam is similar to Yaḥyā (John the Baptist) who was endowed with wisdom at a young age and Jesus who became a prophet while still in the cradle.<sup>188</sup> According to Mufīd, reports concerning al-Mahdī's birth, concealment (*ghayba*) and his second coming were widespread prior to his birth. At his second coming, the Imam shall fill the earth with justice. A report attributed to the Prophet and found in both Shi'i and Sunni compilations states, “If the world were to remain in existence for only one more day, God shall extend that day so that a man from my descendants who has the same name as me will arise to fill the earth with justice as it shall be filled with injustice”.<sup>189</sup> A verse from the Qur'an is often considered pertinent to the mission of the awaited Imam: “My righteous servants shall inherit the earth”.<sup>190</sup> The Imam's second coming stems from his continuous concealment since 329/941.<sup>191</sup> Proclaimed as the twelfth and the last Imam, according to the Imāmī Shi'is, al-Mahdī has served as the Prophet's successor for the past 1144 years.

<sup>186</sup> *ʿIlm al-yaqīn*, 515–6.

<sup>187</sup> For the events concerning the succession of the eleventh Imam see Hussain Modarressi Ṭabāṭabā'i, *Maktab dar farāyand-i takāmul* (Tehran, 1388 Sh), 132–167.

<sup>188</sup> *ʿIlm al-yaqīn*, 937.

<sup>189</sup> *ʿIlm al-yaqīn*, 938. See Amīr-Moezzi for Shi'i and Sunni sources; on messianism in Abrahamic religions see; on messianism in Islam see; on messianism in Shi'i Islam see M.A. Amīr-Moezzi, “Islam in Iran vii. The Concept of Mahdī in Twelver Shi'ism”, in *EIR*, 14:136–143.

<sup>190</sup> Qur'an 21:105. This is the only direct quoted passage from the Bible (Psalm 37:29) in the Qur'an. On citations in the Qur'an from the Bible see Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic: The Scriptures of the 'People of the Book' in the Language of Islam* (Princeton, 2013), 55–6; for other similarly worded biblical passages in the Qur'an see Wilhelm Rudolph, *Die Abhängigkeit des Qorans von Judentum und Christentum* (Stuttgart, 1922), 9–17 and Heinrich Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen im Qoran* (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1961), 439–61.

<sup>191</sup> For primary sources on al-Mahdī's concealment see Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Nu'mānī, *al-Ghayba* (Beirut, 1434); Ibn Bābūya, *Kamāl al-dīn wa tamām al-ni'ma*, 2 vols. (Beirut, 1412); Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, *al-Ghayba*, ed. 'Alī Akbar Ghafari (Beirut, 1423). For a recent study which contextualizes the earliest extant sources, see Hassan Ansari, *L'imamat et l'Occultation selon l'imamisme Étude bibliographique et histoire des textes* (Leiden, 2017).

As these reports indicate, al-Mahdī's life and vocation differs from his predecessors. These differences are emphasized in the hadith literature. His life-trajectory, the reports state, resembles features from some of the previous messengers: the unusual circumstances of his birth resembles Moses,<sup>192</sup> the controversies concerning his concealment resemble those surrounding Jesus' crucifixion,<sup>193</sup> and the length of his years resembles Noah who stayed among his people for 950 years.<sup>194</sup> According to another report, in awaiting to emerge from his concealment and purging the earth from injustice al-Mahdī resembles Noah who for a long awaited God's punishment on the wrongdoers of his community. These and similar descriptions situate the dynamics of the Imam's concealment within a Qur'anic context.<sup>195</sup>

Whereas the previous Imams could be consulted in person, al-Mahdī is in concealment. What are the reasons, however, for the Imam's concealment? In Fayḍ's view, the concealment is due to people's shortcomings and the oppressive way they treated the previous Imams. The Imam cannot be directly consulted as long as the conditions due to which he went into concealment remain intact. In his view, the condition of concealment is similar to a situation in which God has sent a prophet to a community, but the community fails to acknowledge and follow this prophet. Their failure to acknowledge this person's prophecy is due to their own shortcomings rather than a reflection of any deficiency on God or the prophet's part.<sup>196</sup> Similarly, the Imam's concealment does not indicate God's shortcoming to prevent the concealment since the only thing incumbent on God is to provide people with an Imam who guides them in their affairs. People have the freedom to either obey or oppose the Imams. As with their treatment of the previous prophets, the majority of mankind oppose rather than obey. Nonetheless, Fayḍ is aware that the above reasons do not fully explain the Imam's concealment. Hence, he states that the wisdom of al-Mahdī's concealment is akin to the wisdom of Khidr's actions which became known to Moses only afterwards. Similarly, the wisdom of the concealment will also be revealed to people only after the Imam becomes manifest for everyone at his second-coming.<sup>197</sup> As for the believers, the concealment presents a test of their devotion to the Imam.<sup>198</sup> Although living during the concealment presents various challenges to the believers, because of these challenges they receive greater merits for their pious deeds and in this way, are consoled for the loss of the manifest "speaking" Qur'an.<sup>199</sup>

It is central to Fayḍ's understanding of the imamate that even in his concealment (*ghayba*) the Imam fulfills his role as the fullest manifestation of all the divine names and God's guiding proof on earth. This is so since Fayḍ, as with other Imāmī theologians, understands the concealment in terms of hiddenness rather than absence. He cites a report in which Imam Ṣādiq, upon being asked how people benefit from a hidden Imam, replies, "The same way they gain benefit from the sun when it is hidden

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<sup>192</sup> Similar to the circumstances surrounding Moses' birth (Q. 28:4–6), the ruling Muslim authorities feared al-Mahdī's birth and had been attempting to kill him attempted to kill the Imam.

<sup>193</sup> Qur'an 4:157–8.

<sup>194</sup> Qur'an 29:14: "We sent Noah to his people. He lived among them for fifty years short of a thousand".

<sup>195</sup> *Ilm al-yaqīn*, 956–61.

<sup>196</sup> In this context Fayḍ cites the following verse: "God did not wrong them; they wronged themselves" (Q. 30:9).

<sup>197</sup> *Ilm al-yaqīn*, 963.

<sup>198</sup> *Ilm al-yaqīn*, 954.

<sup>199</sup> *Ilm al-yaqīn*, 501. On the virtues of awaiting Mahdī see *Ilm al-yaqīn*, 988–9.

by the clouds”.<sup>200</sup> The cloud (*ghayba*) that covers the sun (the Imam) and prevents it from being fully manifest (*ẓāhir*) stems from people’s shortcomings and unworthiness of having a direct access to the Imam. For Fayḍ, the Imam’s hiddenness does not present an argument against God’s mercy, since by providing the function of the Imam, even an Imam in hiding, God has fulfilled to His creatures the fullest measure of mercy.

## 6.2. Is the Qur’an “Silent” Today?

The question that was raised earlier in regard to the guidance of the community after the Prophet’s death was also raised amongst the Shi’is after the concealment of the Twelfth Imam. Theologians articulated a variety of responses. Before exploring Fayḍ’s views regarding the authority of scriptural sources (the Qur’an and hadith) during the absence of a visible Imam who guides his followers towards the correct understanding of these sources, it is useful to first briefly present some of the prevalent ways in which Shi’i theologians had articulated a variety of responses to the dynamics set forth by al-Mahdī’s concealment.

In justifying the authority of the Imams’ extant statements as the supreme source of knowledge during the *ghayba*, throughout his writings Fayḍ repeats the hadith *of al-thaqalayn* like a mantra. In his view, whereas the Shi’is, after the passing of the Prophet, followed his last will and adhered to the “two weighty things” – the Qur’an and the Prophet’s progeny – Sunnis excluded the second weighty thing (i.e., *ahl al-bayt*) from their sources of knowledge and by doing so failed to fully understand the first weighty thing as well. Having excluded the *ahl a-bayt*, they sought to replace it with other sources of knowledge. The first source emphasized by Sunni scholars is the Sunna of the Prophet. The content of the Sunna is found in the reports attributed to the Prophet and transmitted by his companions and their successors. In Fayḍ’s view, the overwhelming majority of these reports are unreliable. He provides a familiar Shi’i narrative wherein in their understanding of the Qur’an Sunni exegetes are described as relying on the faulty foundations laid by the companions and their successors who either failed to correctly transmit and understand the sayings of the Prophet or sought to legitimize their own views by falsely attributing them to him. Fayḍ further argues that since the companions and the successors were not inerrant (and hence prone to mistake and sin), no privileged status must be ascribed to their views on the interpretation of the Qur’an, creeds or legal matters, and that their views do not carry any more inherent epistemic weight than anyone else’s.

Another challenge, he argues, faced by early Sunni scholars pertained to the relatively limited number of hadiths at their disposal: “All they possessed of the Messenger’s hadith concerning the *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām*, ordinances (*farā’id*) and precepts (*aḥkām*), is not but four-thousand hadiths according to what they themselves state. This amount, however, was insufficient for them. Hence, whenever something new occurred for which they had no hadith available, in order to form a precept, they would take recourse to their own personal opinion (*ra’y*) according to the principles they had devised for

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<sup>200</sup> *Ilm al-yaqīn*, 964.

themselves”.<sup>201</sup> The principle Fayḍ is referring to is *ijtihād*.<sup>202</sup> In his view, Sunni scholars legitimize the authority of *ijtihād* on the basis of a dubious hadith in which the Prophet is reported to have asked his companion Mu‘adh ibn Jabal how he judges and forms precepts to which he answers by taking recourse to the Qur’an and if the matter is not addressed there by taking recourse to the Sunna of the Prophet and if the matter is not addressed there by using his own *ijtihād*. In this hadith, the Prophet is reported to have approved Mu‘adh’s method. Fayḍ, however, quotes a series of verses he believes repudiate this approach and prove that the report must have been fabricated by later scholars as a means of justifying *ijtihād*.<sup>203</sup> The majority of Sunni scholars, however, accepted this hadith as authentic and began to develop a framework within which precepts could be formed by using their own *ra’y* and hence legitimizing *ijtihād*, *qiyās*, and *ijmā‘* as authoritative means for addressing new challenges. According to Fayḍ, there would have been no need for *ijtihād*, *qiyās*, and *ijmā‘* had Sunni scholars abided by the Prophet’s instruction and followed the Imams.

In his rejection of *ijtihād* and *ijmā‘*, Fayḍ is adhering to the Akhbārī framework initiated by Muḥammad Amīn Astarābādī (d. 1036/1627).<sup>204</sup> This framework centers on the belief that the precepts of Sharī‘a and religious creeds must only be received from God’s caliph. He remarks that God’s caliph is either a prophet or a *waṣī* who are both leaders of people and are divinely appointed (*mab‘ūth*) for the sake of the guidance and perfection of mankind and as the channel through which God’s emanations reaches mankind. He adds that the prophet and the *waṣī* are streams of the same source of knowledge and concludes:

Hence, it is incumbent on every Muslim to know God’s caliph and to follow (*taqlīd*) him in beliefs (*al-‘aqā’id*) and conduct (*al-‘amāl*) and to take everything he directly hears from the caliph’s mouth or *through the intermediary of reports transmitted to one by those one trusts*. He must believe in and act on the *muḥkam* report and as for the *mutashābih* report he must believe in it and assent to it according to its speaker’s intention until its true interpretation (*ta’wīl*) reaches him. Indeed, every individual in his beliefs and conduct is obligated according to the measure of his understanding and in light of his rank of his submission without making any claims concerning his obligations by using his own *‘aql* and without demanding any *dalīl* for them through his own thinking. This is because people’s temperaments differ and the faculty of thinking stems from temperament (*mizāj*). Thus, their views are different due to their different

<sup>201</sup> *Kalimāt maknūna*, 212. In his *Hidāyat al-abrār*, the Akhbārī scholar Ḥusayn al-Karakī (d. 1076/1665–66) had also alluded to the insufficiency of hadiths available to Sunni jurists as one of the underlying reasons for basing their legal methodologies on rational rather than scriptural grounds. See Devin Stewart, *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy* (Salt Lake City, 1998), 202–3. Considering that al-Karakī composed *Hidāyat al-abrār* in 1073/1662, Fayḍ’s remark precedes him by fifteen years.

<sup>202</sup> For an overview of the concept of *ijtihād* in Shī‘ī legal thought see, Aron Zysow, “Ejtehād”, in EIR, 8:281–286; A. Gorji and A. Pākatchī, “ijtihād”, in DMBI, 6:599–611; N. Calder, “Doubt and Prerogative. The Emergence of an Imāmī Shī‘ī Theory of Ijtihād,” *Studia Islamica* 70 (1989), 57–77; H. Modarressi, *An Introduction to Shī‘ī Law* (London, 1984), 2–61; idem, “Rationalism and Traditionalism in Shī‘ī Jurisprudence. A Preliminary Survey”, *Studia Islamica* 59 (1984), 141–58. For a more detailed examination see N. Calder, *The Structure of Authority in Imami Shī‘ī Jurisprudence* (unpublished PhD diss., University of London, 1980).

<sup>203</sup> *Kalimāt maknūna*, 212. The verses are: 17:36, 53:28, 7:33, 5:49, 42:10, 4:105.

<sup>204</sup> I will discuss Astarābādī and his views in Chapter Two.

temperaments and as a result their perceptions are different as are their judgments based on their perceptions.<sup>205</sup>

Fayḍ maintains that it is upon God's caliph to appoint his disciples as judges and teachers for people living in places away from him or when he is in concealment and cannot be directly consulted. He notes that this appointment is of two kinds: (1) specific appointment in which a manifest Imam would send governors and judges to various cities to act on his behalf or when he would send his distinguished learned disciples to teach those students in search of insight; (2) general appointment in which during the Imam's concealment learned scholars are designated the authority to issue rulings during the Imam's concealment.<sup>206</sup> He calls the Imam's general appointee *nā'ib al-‘āmm*.<sup>207</sup>

I say that during the concealment of the Imams – peace be upon them – the general appointee is not permitted to issue a ruling except by taking recourse to the hadiths of the Imams that have been recorded and that can be relied upon. It has been narrated in *al-Kāfī* with its *isnād* from al-Ṣādiq – peace be upon him – that he said: “Preserve your writings for indeed a day will come that you will need them”. There [in *al-Kāfī*] al-Ṣādiq tells Mufaḍḍal ibn ‘Umar, “Write [our statements] and spread your knowledge among your brethren; when death approaches leave them as inheritance to your sons because a time of ordeal will come upon people when they will find no solace except in their books”.<sup>208</sup> It is God's blessing on us and his *lutf* – and for him is praise more than the praise of those who praise him – is that he designated for us an Imam after an Imam who is visible to us and invisible to our enemies.<sup>209</sup>

Fayḍ explains that this situation continued for 260 years until the last Imam went into concealment. After that for a period of nearly seventy years the Imam was in communication with his followers through the intermediary of his four representatives.<sup>210</sup> He maintains that during these 330 years the

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<sup>205</sup> *Kalimāt maknūna*, 214–5.

<sup>206</sup> *Kalimāt maknūna*, 215–6.

<sup>207</sup> On an overview of this term and its history in Shi'i intellectual history see Saïd Amir Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam: Religion, Political Order, and Societal Change in Shi'ite Iran from the Beginning to 1890* (Chicago, 1984).

<sup>208</sup> Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, §17.10 and §17.11. This hadith was later used as a proof for the authority of *khavar al-wāḥid*. The argument goes as follows: the book's composer hears the hadiths from the Imam and records them in writing; hence, the *akhbār* found in the book reach future generations through one narrator (i.e., their composer); since *khavar al-wāḥid* is a *khavar* narrated by one composer, the *akhbār* contained in this book are all of the *wāḥid* status unless their *tawātur* can be established through some other means. The Imam would not inform Zurāra of the future significance of these books if he considered *āḥād* reports unauthoritative sources of knowledge. Therefore, the argument concludes, the Imam's word to Zurāra indicates that *āḥād* reports can stand as binding proof (*ḥujja*). It must be pointed out that this report is itself a *wāḥid* report and hence, according to the majority of Uṣūlis, does not provide knowledge.

<sup>209</sup> *Kalimāt maknūna*, 216–7; also, *Qurāt al-‘uyūn*, 231.

<sup>210</sup> On this period see Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation*; Saïd Amir Arjomand, “The Crisis of the Imamate and the Institution of Occultation in Twelver Shi'ism”, “Imam *Absconditus* and the Beginnings of a Theology of Occultation”, and “The Consolation of Theology: Absence of the Imam and Transition from Chiasm to Law in Shi'ism” in *Sociology of Shi'ite Islam* (Leiden, 2017), 41–120; W. Madelung, “Authority in Twelver Shi'ism in the Absence of the Imam”, in *La notion d'autorité au Moyen Age: Islam, Byzance, Occident* (Paris, 1982), 163–173. For a brief overview see, E. Kohlberg, “Safir: 1. In Shi'ism”, in EI<sup>2</sup>.

Shi'is learned the exoteric and esoteric religious sciences from the only true sources of knowledge, the Imams. In this way, the Shi'is had no need to do *taqlīd* of anyone and hence were liberated from perplexity. According to Fayḍ, after this period of 330 years ended, the Shi'is took recourse to the *uṣūl* (hadith notebooks)<sup>211</sup> they had acquired from the Imams, which contained solutions to the majority of issues confronting people during the *ghayba* to the extent that there was seldom an issue for which a specific or general ruling was not found in the extant statements of the Imams. He writes that as for those issues for which either the Imams had not issued a ruling or if they had their rulings were no longer available in the extant hadiths, the Shi'is would suspend (*tawaqquf*) judgment on that matter. He explains that as for cases in which disagreeing or contradictory hadiths are found for the same issue Shi'i scholars would approach such hadiths by adhering to the principles set forth by the Imams.<sup>212</sup>

Fayḍ contrasts this approach with those scholars who derive rulings by using their personal opinion (*ra'y*) and on the basis of ambiguities (*mutashābihāt*) and according to the suppositions (*ẓunūn*) based on the laws set forth by Sunni scholars. He claims that for a long time Shi'i scholars adhered to the principles outlined above until they were proceeded by those who started to blend with Sunnis, adopted their methods and as a result made errors in deriving rulings.

They [i.e., Shi'i scholars] started to speak about matters that God and his prophet had not spoken about and delved into matters that God had removed the need for them to engage with. So, they spoke on the basis of *ra'y* and *ijtihād* and relied on things for which no permission was given. In this way, they abandoned the path of their ancient masters which was to only receive the *uṣūl* and *furū'* of their religion from the *ahl al-ʿiṣma* – peace be upon them – and they fell into the same erroneous path in regard to lawmaking (*tashrīʿ*) and disagreement [among themselves] for which they had faulted Sunnis.<sup>213</sup>

Fayḍ's conclusion is that both in the *uṣūl* and *furū'* the Shi'is must only rely on the Imam; when the Imam is present by directly consulting him and when he is in concealment by relying on the Imams' extant statements. Even though Fayḍ is fierce in his rejection of *ijtihād*, he is not categorical. He draws a distinction between undertaking *ijtihād* in deriving rulings from the Qur'an and Sunna versus engaging with *ijtihād* in relation to what pertains to the rulings found in the Qur'an and Sunna. He provides determining the direction and times of the obligatory prayers, identifying the poor who

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<sup>211</sup> On the concept of *uṣūl* see Etan Kohlberg, "Al-uṣūl al-arba'umī'a", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 10 (1987), 128–166 and Ḥusayn al-Jalālī, *Dirāsa ḥawl al-uṣūl al-arba'umī'a* (Tehran, 1394/1974).

<sup>212</sup> Fayḍ outlines these principles in his *uṣūl al-fiqh* work titled *Safīnat al-najāt*.

<sup>213</sup> *Kalimāt maknūna*, 217. In his *al-Ḥaqā'iq fi maḥāsīn al-akhlāq*, composed in 1090/1670 a year before his death, Fayḍ argues that latter Shi'i scholars initially adopted *ijtihād* as a means of responding to the spurious points raised by their opponents, for addressing new issues they faced, and in order to illustrate to their opponents that they are also informed about the subtleties of this science (i.e., *uṣūl al-fiqh*). He notes that gradually Shi'i scholars got entangled in dealing with minute matters, lost sight of the initial purpose that prompted their engagement with *ijtihād* and began to practice it for its own sake. He concludes that this error, however, does not place them among the misguided group (i.e., Sunnis) since despite their adherence to *ijtihād* they have done the Shi'is a great service in their attempt to promulgate the Shi'i faith and remove the need for *taqīyya* for a large number of people living in distant lands (*al-Ḥaqā'iq fi maḥāsīn al-akhlāq*, ed. Muḥsin 'Aqīl (n.pl., 1409/1989), 21–2). He provides a similar view in *Kalimāt al-tarīfa*, ed. by 'Alī Jabbār Golbāghī (Tehran, 1387 Sh), 47–8 and 51–2.

receive the *zakāt*, and identifying the general appointee (*nā'ib al-‘āmm*) of the Imam as examples for which *ijtihād* is permitted. But as for the rulings of the *sharī'a* themselves, their source is exclusive to the revelatory sources of the Qur'an and Sunna.<sup>214</sup>

Instead of engaging with *ijtihād* in order to interpret the ambiguous passages of the Qur'an and Sunna, Fayḍ's guiding principle is to understand the *mutashābih* by the available and relevant *muḥkam* passages. He quotes a report attributed to the eighth Imam, al-Riḍā, as proof for this approach:

Whoever refers the ambiguous [verses] of the Qur'an to its clear [verses] has been guided to the straight path. He then added: So are in our statements, ambiguities similar to the ambiguities of the Qur'an. Hence, refer the ambiguities of our statements to their clear [statements]; do not follow their ambiguities without their clear statements or you will go astray.<sup>215</sup>

Fayḍ writes that whereas there is agreement regarding the meaning of "clear" (*muḥkam*) passages, such agreement is lacking for "ambiguous" (*mutashābih*) passages. He adds that what is considered "clear" for a community might be judged "ambiguous" for another and vice versa, and notes that is due to this fact that Imam al-Ṣādiq considered "ambiguous" as that which is ambiguous to he who is ignorant of its meaning.<sup>216</sup> To recall, Fayḍ argues that one is only obligated regarding matters for which he has conclusive knowledge and as for those matters he is ignorant about he must leave them aside. He quotes a statement attributed to al-Ṣādiq in which rulings are divided into three categories: those whose correctness is clear, which must be acted upon, those whose incorrectness is clear, which must be avoided, and those whose correctness or incorrectness is difficult to determine, and their knowledge must be left to God and his messenger. The Imam then quotes the Prophet as saying that there is a clear *ḥalāl* and a clear *ḥarām* and then there are ambiguities between these two; whoever abandons the ambiguities is saved from the *muḥarramāt* and whoever receives them commits the *muḥarramāt* and he shall perish because he acted on something for which he had no knowledge.<sup>217</sup>

Fayḍ writes that despite the fact that this hadith is *mustafīḍ* among Muslims,<sup>218</sup> accords with the Qur'an and agrees with conscience (*wujḍān*), a great number of jurists, both Sunni and Shi'i, have opted for interpreting (*ta'wīl*) the ambiguities according to their own views. In his view, considering that many "ambiguous" passages do not have accompanying "clear" passages that could be used in order to grasp their intended meanings, jurists often refer one "ambiguous" to another one and in this way engage in *ẓann* and issue rulings for which they have no knowledge.<sup>219</sup>

Fayḍ traces the genesis of all religious disagreements among Muslims to their desire to engage with ambiguities. The correct approach, however, would have been to remain silent concerning those ambiguous matters for which God has kept silent. In this way, all disagreements would have been

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<sup>214</sup> *Kalimāt maknūna*, 218. In *Qurrat al-‘uyūn*, an abridged version of *Kalimāt maknūna* written three decades later, he removes *nā'ib al-‘āmm* as examples for which *ijtihād* is permitted (*Qurrat al-‘uyūn*, 161).

<sup>215</sup> *Kalimāt maknūna*, 221; *al-Ṣāfi*, 2:491, commentary on (3:7).

<sup>216</sup> *Qurrat al-‘uyūn*, 162.

<sup>217</sup> *Kalimāt maknūna*, 221–2.

<sup>218</sup> *Mustafīḍ* hadiths are those that were initially of the *wāḥid* status but were later transmitted by such a large number of scholars to validate them as probative.

<sup>219</sup> *Kalimāt maknūna*, 222.

resolved. Fayḍ maintains that there is a wisdom and two benefits in the silence and vagueness regarding the ambiguities: First, the mindful believer who is cautious in his religion and stays away from going around the fire for the fear of falling into it is distinguished from the unmindful person who dares to play with the fire and does not fear being harmed by it. Second – and as we shall see in Chapter 3, this point is consequential for Fayḍ’s overall theological and jurisprudential framework – keeping silence regarding the ambiguities expands the sphere of obligations (*taklīf*) for people by establishing *takhyīr* concerning numerous rulings. This is because in cases where there is no “clear” ruling to refer the ambiguities to it, people are free to choose the course of action they deem most suitable. Fayḍ remarks that the majority of rulings fall under the category of *takhyīr*. He argues that concerning disagreeing reports the Imams asked their followers to choose the report they believe to be true without rejecting the other reports as false.<sup>220</sup> Hence, he argues, when no clear ruling is available, people are free to choose, in a spirit of submission and according to the best of their ability, from the available ambiguous reports the rulings they deem correct. According to Fayḍ, the permissibility of *takhyīr* indicates God’s mercy on people.<sup>221</sup> He concludes that in this way there will be different levels of obligation due to people’s different levels of intelligence (*‘aql*) and knowledge (*ma’rifā*), and notes that perhaps those matters whose ruling we do not know are more than those whose ruling we know.<sup>222</sup>

Fayḍ reiterates the same argument thirty years later in *Qurrat al-‘uyūn*: “Since for passing on a ruling one must have conclusive knowledge, it is right that for issues for which one lacks conclusive knowledge to take refuge in saying, ‘I don’t know’, which itself is half of knowledge”. Hence, he concludes, it is wrong to believe in something that one does not know through proof (*burhān*) and is only an expression of *ra’y*, whether in creed or conduct. Since one is not taken to task for things one is ignorant about, one should not use one’s own *ra’y* and act on it and not imitate those whose views are unreliable. According to Fayḍ, the correct approach is to adopt *iḥtiyāt* concerning matters for which no reliable hadith is available and to adopt *takhyīr* in cases where disagreeing hadiths are available. If abiding by *iḥtiyāt* is too burdensome, *takhyīr* is the path to follow. He notes that for all matters concerning which it is necessary to have knowledge, there is a path for everyone to acquire this knowledge; if the path of knowledge is not paved for other matters that indicates acquiring knowledge about them is not necessary.<sup>223</sup>

## §7. Conclusion

Throughout his writing career, Fayḍ adheres to the theological views he develops during his youth in *Ilm al-yaqīn*. There was, however, a change of emphasis on certain themes in the later phase of his life.

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<sup>220</sup> In dealing with disagreeing reports, Fayḍ is against the principle according to which the seemingly disagreeing reports are complimentary and that in such cases a concord must be establishing between the disagreeing reports through *ijtihād*. In his view, a person is free to choose one report over another without attempting to establish concordance between them (*al-Ḥaqā’iq fī maḥāsīn*, 23). Hence there is no need for *ijtihād* to resolve disagreements since one can simply choose between one of the two and act on that one even though they are disagreeing (*Safīnat al-najāt*, 26).

<sup>221</sup> In *Kalīmāt al-ṭarīfā* (as well as in the preface to *Mafātīḥ al-sharā’i’*), Fayḍ notes that if practicing *iḥtiyāt* burdens one with difficulties, *takhyīr* can be practiced since God does not wish to burden his people. See *Kalīmāt al-ṭarīfā*, 41–2.

<sup>222</sup> *Kalīmāt maknūna*, 222–3.

<sup>223</sup> *Qurrat al-‘uyūn*, 159.

For instance, whereas in *Kalimāt al-maknūna* he closely follows Ibn ‘Arabī’s doctrine of the perfect man (*insān al-kāmil*), in *Qurrat al-‘uyūn*, an abridgment of the former composed thirty years later, he replaces *insān al-kāmil* with *insān al-ma‘šūm*. His overall conceptual framework, however, remains largely indebted to the Shi‘i interpreters of Ibn ‘Arabī such as Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī (d. c. 787/1385), Ibn Abī Jumhūr (d. 906/1501), and Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī (d. 1045/1640).<sup>224</sup> Besides the doctrine of *insān al-kāmil*, Fayḍ’s views on the centrality of scriptural reports and the criteria used for determining their authenticity is to a large extent an elaboration of the ideas set forth by Muḥammad Amīn Astarābādī (d. 1036/1627), the founder of the Akhbārī movement.<sup>225</sup> During a time of prevalent rationalist approaches to Qur’an exegesis and hadith authenticity—present in the works of al-Mufīd and al-Murtaḍā and continuing in figures such as al-Ḥillī and Shahīd Thānī—Astarābādī’s thought provided an alternative schema to a minority group of scholars who believed the Imams’ extant hadiths had been marginalized at the expense of excessive intellectualization. Astarābādī argued that the Imams’ surviving statements provide the Shi‘is with a reliable and sufficient guide concerning matters pertinent to knowledge and conduct. In his view, without the Imams’ reports, the Qur’an as well as the Prophet’s statements are unintelligible.<sup>226</sup> Hence, during the *ghayba*, the Imams’ statements can be relied on with “certainty” and must be enacted by their followers without taking recourse to *ijtihād*.<sup>227</sup> As I will discuss in Chapters 3 and 4, although Fayḍ receives Astarābādī’s ideas with enthusiasm, his stance towards Astarābādī’s views is accompanied with a series of major criticisms.<sup>228</sup> Despite their differences, Fayḍ took from the Akhbārīs themes and terminologies that became prominent in his later writings. The most consequential of these themes were his rejection of independent legal reasoning (*ijtihād*) and the authority of consensus (*ijmā‘*) along with upholding the Imams’ hadiths as the supreme source of knowledge and the sole legitimate means of determining right conduct.

Fayḍ’s emphasis on the Imams’ extant reports of the Imams does not come at the expense of a categorical acceptance of *all* the reports attributed to them. Indeed, in his various writings he warns against relying on unreliable reports. Whereas in this chapter I explored Fayḍ’s theological efforts to establish the authority of the scriptural reports, in Chapter 3, I will approach Fayḍ as a compiler of scriptural reports. I will explore his approach to Shi‘i hadith corpus and situate him within the larger context of the Safavid hadith discourse. In pursuing this line of inquiry, I intend to disclose the contours of Fayḍ’s conceptualisation of hadith “authenticity” and the principles that directed his compilation

<sup>224</sup> For a study of Ibn Abī Jumhūr see, Sabina Schmidtke, *Theologie, Philosophie und Mystik im zwölfterschiitischen Islam des 9.-15. Jahrhunderts: Die Gedankenwelten des Ibn Abī Ğumhūr al-Aḥsa‘ī (um 838–1434/35 - nach 906–1501)* (Leiden, 2000). On Shi‘i scholars’ conceptualisations of *insān al-kāmil* and their incorporation of Ibn ‘Arabī’s views see Sajjad Rizvi, “Seeking the Face of God: The Safavid *Ḥikmat* Tradition’s Conceptualisation of *Walāya Takwīniyya*”, in *The Study of Shi‘i Islam* (London, 2014), 391–410.

<sup>225</sup> I discuss Astarābādī’s ideas in Chapter 2. For a concise overview of the Uṣūlī-Akhbārī approaches see Robert Gleave, “Akhbārīyya and Uṣūlīyya”, in EI<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>226</sup> Even though Fayḍ’s entire exegetic project in *al-Šāfi* is predicated on the idea that the Qur’an must be understood through the statements of the Imams, he differs from Astarābādī in a major way. For Astarābādī and some of his followers, the Qur’an can *only* be understood through the Imams’ extant reports. Fayḍ, however, maintains that the clear verses (*muḥkamāt*) of the Qur’an can be understood by anyone competent in Arabic but the ambiguous passages (*mutashābihāt*) can *only* be understood through the Imams. The ambiguous passages of the Qur’an must be understood by the Imams’ clear statements.

<sup>227</sup> For an elaborate study of Astarābādī and his influence on the Akhbārī movement see Robert Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam: The History and Doctrines of the Akhbari Shi‘i School* (Leiden, 2007).

<sup>228</sup> For a study of Fayḍ’s criticisms of Astarābādī see E. Kohlberg, “Aspects of Akhbari Thought”, 133–143.

processes. Before undertaking this inquiry, in the next chapter, I will present an episodic history of the main figures and currents in the Safavid hadith discourse. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries present one of the most productive periods in hadith scholarship in Shi'i intellectual history. As an inheritor and active participant in this period, Fayḍ's ideas on hadith authenticity and hermeneutics are better understood when they are studied in the larger context of Safavid hadith discourse. Hence, Chapter 2 is dedicated to five scholars whose writings played an instrumental role in shaping the Shi'i hadith scholarship that Fayḍ inherits and to which he contributes.

## Chapter 2

### The Four Books and the Safavid Hadith Discourse

#### §1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I examined Fayḍ's theological and mystical writings with the aim of disclosing the contours of his conceptualisation of the role of hadith in Shi'i theology and hermeneutics. I argued that the authority Fayḍ designates to hadith stems from his conceptualisation of three interrelated issues that constitute the pillars of his theology: God's relationship to mankind, the role of the divine guides in mediating this relationship, and the dynamics of this relationship during the absence (*ghayba*) of a divine guide. Central to Shi'i hermeneutics is the belief that without access to a divinely-appointed guide, the Qur'an cannot be correctly understood. A distinction is drawn between the "silent" Qur'an (i.e., the letter) and the "speaking" Qur'an (i.e., the spirit).<sup>1</sup> According to this view, since the Qur'an, as God's word, was addressed to the Prophet, only he knows its intended meaning. Shi'i tradition maintains that the Prophet passed on his knowledge of the Qur'an to 'Alī, and through him to future Imams. Hence, after the Prophet, only the Imams have comprehensive knowledge of the Qur'an and stand as its speaking voice. The Shi'i tradition also maintains that the twelfth Imam, al-Mahdī, due to fear for his life, went into concealment to return at the end of times. As a result, the Shi'is are left with no manifest guide for acquiring conclusive knowledge of the "silent" Qur'an's meanings. I explained that in Fayḍ's view, in the face of the last Imam's absence, the extant scriptural reports (*akhbār*) attributed to the Prophet and the Imams stand as the ultimate source of knowledge for understanding the Qur'an and implementing its precepts. Next, I delineated the justifications he provides as support for upholding this view. I noted that Fayḍ's assertion of the supremacy of scriptural reports over other sources of religious knowledge (e.g., *'aql*) is concurrent with his discussion concerning the historical authenticity of such reports. These discussions culminated in his decade-long project of compiling what in his view would stand as the most authoritative Shi'i hadith compendium.

Fayḍ's compendium, *al-Wāfi*, reflects the theological and hermeneutical discussions that had engulfed Shi'i intellectual scene throughout the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. At the center of these discussions was the question of hadith authenticity. Fayḍ's project in *al-Wāfi* and the ideas that direct his compilation methods are better understood when studied within the context from which they emerged. Therefore, before examining *al-Wāfi* and its contribution to Shi'i hadith scholarship, in this chapter, I investigate the developments that preceded and informed Fayḍ's views on hadith authenticity. The following sections present an episodic history of the hadith developments during the century preceding *al-Wāfi*'s compilation. A recurrent theme in these developments pertains to the various receptions of the Four Books as the most authoritative sources of Imāmī hadith amongst the scholars of sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. My investigation will primarily focus on five figures whose ideas proved particularly influential in shaping the Safavid hadith discourse—al-Shahīd al-Thānī, al-Ḥārithī, Ḥasan al-Āmilī, Bahā'ī, and Astarābādī. In examining the views of these scholars, this

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<sup>1</sup> *Al-Qur'ān al-ṣāmit/al-Qur'ān al-nāṭiq*

chapter aims to acquaint the reader with the context within which Fayḍ's approach to hadith compilation and hermeneutics took shape, and eventually culminated in *al-Wāfi*.

## §2. al-Shahīd al-Thānī and the Four “Best” Hadith Books

In a recent article, Hassan Ansari and Mohammad-Ali Amir-Moezzi argue that Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī (d. 966/1559), hereon referred to as al-Shahīd al-Thānī,<sup>2</sup> is the first scholar to designate a privileged status to the Four Books.<sup>3</sup> Their position has remained unchallenged. Shahīd Thānī's remarks on these four compilations is found in a book titled *al-Riʿāya fi ʿilm al-dirāya*. Composed a few years before his death, *al-Riʿāya* represents Shahīd Thānī's most comprehensive articulation of his approach to hadith authority and authentication.

Reports – whether they be *mutawātir* or *āḥād*, authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) or otherwise – are not limited to a specific number such that no more could be added. This is because there might be other reports available to people that have not made it into [available] collections (*al-jāmiʿ*).<sup>4</sup> And whoever exaggerates about having tracked down all the reports and having limited them to a specific number – such as Aḥmad [ibn Ḥanbal] who stated that “the number of authentic hadiths are a little less than seven-hundred-thousand” – it [his calculation] is only based on the reports that had reached him, supposing one would even grant that [calculation is correct].<sup>5</sup> It is even more far-fetched to limit the number of hadiths among our companions [i.e., the Shiʿis] due to the greater number of those who have transmitted reports from the Imams. The hadith sources of the early [Imāmī] scholars had come to consist of four-hundred compilations composed by four-hundred compilers. They called these compilations the foundational sources (*uṣūl*) and it was upon these sources that they relied. Eventually, however, conditions led to the majority of these sources vanishing. A group of scholars collected abridged versions of these *uṣūl* in specific books, which to a great extent are accessible to us. From these, the best (*aḥsan*) collections are *al-Kitāb al-Kāfi* by Muḥammad ibn Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī and *al-Tahdhīb* of Shaykh Abī Jaʿfar al-Ṭūsī. Neither of these two books is sufficient on its own since the first includes more on the sciences of hadith and the second includes more hadiths that pertain to the rulings of Shariʿa. As for *al-Istibṣār*, it is, in general, of more limited scope than *al-Tahdhīb*, and hence the latter makes the former superfluous, even if *al-Istibṣār* is distinguished by investigating [the

<sup>2</sup> Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī is commonly referred to in the Shiʿi tradition as al-Shahīd al-Thānī due to his execution on charges of heresy by the Ottomans in 965/1558. On Shahīd Thānī see Devin J. Stewart, *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy*, 86–92; idem, “The Ottoman Execution of Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī”, *Die Welt des Islams* 48.3 (2008), 289–347.

<sup>3</sup> M. A. Amir-Moezzi and Hassan Ansari, “Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī (m. 328/939–40 ou 329/940–941) et son *Kitāb al-Kāfi*: Une introduction”, *Studia Iranica* 38.2 (2009), 227. It is to be noted that prior to Shahīd Thānī, these four collections were singled out by Ibn Abī Jumhūr al-Aḥsāʾī (d. after 906/1501). He refers to them as the “four foundational sources” (*al-uṣūl al-arbaʿa*) and describes them as examples of verified sources and credible [hadith] books. See *Kāshifāt al-ḥāl ʿan aḥwāl al-istidlāl* (Qom, 1416), 89–92.

<sup>4</sup> Any compilation claiming to include all the reports.

<sup>5</sup> Since it is possible that some reports did not reach him and hence are not included in his numbering of authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) reports.

issue of how] to harmonise conflicting reports, since that is a topic extraneous to hadith per se.<sup>6</sup> *Man la yahḍuruhu al-faqīh* is also a decent book except that in most cases it does not include anything more than what is already found in *al-Kāfī* and *al-Tahdhīb*. In any case, our reports are not confined to these books; but those hadiths that are excluded from them are no longer preserved (*maḍbūṭ*) and the jurist is not obligated to look for them.<sup>7</sup>

Shahīd Thānī prefaces his remarks on the Four Books by first cautioning against drawing well-defined boundaries for the hadith corpus. In his view, limiting the corpus by setting a specific number for the transmitted hadiths – as Ibn Ḥanbal did – is unjustifiable since reports were initially transmitted orally; this leaves open the possibility for certain reports to have been lost or not transmitted to everyone. This possibility, he adds, is greater for the Shiʿis due to the larger number of their narrators who, for over two centuries, transmitted reports from their Imams. Next, he proceeds to address the transformation of the hadiths from oral to textual sources. He explains that during the formative period, Shiʿi scholars had composed “four-hundred foundational sources” (*al-uṣūl al-arbaʿumīʿa*) containing the Imams’ reports.<sup>8</sup> He notes that these sources, however, gradually disappeared.

According to Shahīd Thānī, at a later stage, these “four-hundred foundational sources” were incorporated into abridged collections out of which the four sources of *al-Kāfī*, *al-Tahdhīb*, *al-Istibṣār* and *al-Faqīh* stand out. Although he refers to four titles, he specifically singles out *al-Kāfī* and *al-Tahdhīb* as the “best” extant Imāmī compilations and considers *al-Istibṣār* and *al-Faqīh* as complimentary rather than essential sources. He is neither precise in outlining the features that make these books the “best” compilations nor does he mention other possible contenders. He notes, however, that although the Imams’ reports are not limited to what is found in these four books, what has been left out from them is no longer available. He concludes that these four compendia suffice jurists in forming their rulings and they are not obligated to search for other reports.

Notice that “*al-kutub al-arbaʿa*”, the phrase most associated with these four compendia, is not mentioned in the above passage. Nevertheless, this phrase does appear in a number of Shahīd Thānī’s licenses (*ijāzāt*) to his students.<sup>9</sup> In his *ijāza* to ‘Atā’ Allāh ibn Ḥasan al-Ḥusaynī al-Mūsawī, dated 950/1543, he refers to “*kutub al-ḥadīth al-arbaʿa*” as “pillars of religion (*arkān al-dīn*) and foundations of certainty (*asās al-yaqīn*)”.<sup>10</sup> In his *ijāza* to Tāj al-Dīn ibn Hilāl al-Jazāʾirī, dated 964/1557,<sup>11</sup> he describes “*al-kutub al-arbaʿa*” as the “foundational sources of the hadith” (*uṣūl al-ḥadīth*) and the “document of the [Shiʿi] sect” (*sanad al-madhhab*).<sup>12</sup> He uses the same phrase in his *ijāza* to ‘Alī ibn Ṣāʾigh al-Ḥusaynī

<sup>6</sup> Meaning that Ṭūsī’s aim is to resolve the seemingly conflicting reports that are already found in *al-Tahdhīb*, and hence, *al-Istibṣār* does not represent a new hadith compilation.

<sup>7</sup> Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī, *Sharḥ al-bidāya fi ʿilm al-dirāya* (Qom, 1390 Sh), 17–18.

<sup>8</sup> Etan Kohlberg, “*al-Uṣūl al-arbaʿumīʿa*”, *JSAI* 10 (1987), 128–166, reproduced in his forthcoming *In Praise of the Few: Studies in Shiʿi Thought and History* (Leiden, 2019), Chapter 21. Also see Ḥusayn al-Jalālī, *Dirāsa ḥawl al-uṣūl al-arbaʿumīʿa* (Tehran, 1394).

<sup>9</sup> On *ijāza* as license for hadith transmission see Devin Stewart, “Ejāza”, in *EIR*, 8:273–275; G. Vajda, I. Goldziher and S. A. Bonebakker, “Idjāza”, in *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 3:1020–22.

<sup>10</sup> Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī, *Mawsūʿat al-Shahīd al-Thānī* (Qom, 1434/2013), 4:413.

<sup>11</sup> Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī, *Mawsūʿat al-Shahīd al-Thānī*, 4:433.

<sup>12</sup> Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī, *Mawsūʿat al-Shahīd al-Thānī*, 4:432.

al-Mūsawī dated 958/1551.<sup>13</sup> In another *ijāza*, dated 957/1550, he describes *kutub al-ḥadīth al-arbaʿa* as “sustainers of faith (*ʿimād al-īmān*) and foundations of the pillars of Islam (*asās daʿāʾim al-islām*)”.<sup>14</sup> These descriptions express Shahīd Thānī’s deep reverence for the Four Books and their centrality in Shiʿi thought.<sup>15</sup>

Shahīd Thānī’s reference to these four collections is mentioned in a particular context where he discusses the various types of *āḥād* reports. Following a nine-century old tradition, he divides all reports into *mutawātir* and *wāḥid*.<sup>16</sup> Any report not considered *mutawātir* is *wāḥid*. According to this view, a report is *wāḥid* when it fails to engender immediate knowledge in its recipients. This failure stems from the hearers’ uncertainties regarding the reporters’ truthfulness. The recipients, however, can acquire knowledge from a *wāḥid* report by subjecting it to discursive investigation (*naẓar*) in order to ensure the reporters are trustworthy and the report was not fabricated. Had the report been *mutawātir*, the argument goes, there would be no uncertainty involved. *Mutawātir* reports, by contrast, engender necessary knowledge in their recipients and remove the need for investigation. A report is *mutawātir* when it is reported by such a large and diverse number of narrators that the possibility of collusion on their part is eliminated.<sup>17</sup> In order for a *mutawātir* report to engender necessary knowledge, the transmitters must themselves have necessary knowledge – through direct observation/sense-perception – concerning what they are reporting about. For this reason, Shahīd Thānī insists the requirement of *tawātur* must be fulfilled in every link within the transmission chain; beginning with those who directly heard the Prophet or the Imams’ statements, all the way to the last group transmitting them to others. He argues that even if a report was genuinely *mutawātir* at the beginning of its transmission, it ceases to be considered as such if at any point in its transmission the narrators pass on the reports to others via intermediaries who lack necessary knowledge of the report’s purport.<sup>18</sup>

Shahīd Thānī next divides the *mutawātir* reports into two categories: those that are *mutawātir* in their wording (*al-laḥẓī*) and those that are *mutawātir* in communicating the meaning (*al-maʿnawī*). He points out that except for one report, scholars are hard-pressed to provide instances of a *mutawātir* report that contains the precise wording of the Imams’ statement.<sup>19</sup> Besides this single report, he

<sup>13</sup> Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī, *Mawsūʿat al-Shahīd al-Thānī*, 4:422.

<sup>14</sup> Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī, *Mawsūʿat al-Shahīd al-Thānī*, 4:419.

<sup>15</sup> Shahīd Thānī’s predecessors had also presented the compendia of Kulaynī, Ibn Bābūya, and Ṭūsī in a special light. For instance, Muḥammad ibn Makkī (d. 786/1385), known as al-Shahīd al-Awwal, had singled out *al-Kāfi*, *al-Faqih*, and *al-Tahdhīb*. See Shahīd Awwal, *Dhikra al-Shīʿa fī aḥkām al-Sharīʿa* in *Mawsūʿat al-Shahīd al-Awwal* (Qom, 1435), 5:7–8.

<sup>16</sup> Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī, *Sharḥ al-bidāya fī ʿilm al-dirāya*, 12. For secondary sources on the *mutawātir*/*wāḥid* distinction see, Aron Zysow, *The Economy of Certainty: An Introduction to the Typology of Islamic Legal Theory* (Atlanta, 2013), 7–48; Bernard G. Weiss, *The Search for God’s Law: Islamic Jurisprudence in the Writings of Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī* (Salt Lake City, 2010), 252–321; idem, “Knowledge of the Past: The Theory of ‘Tawātur’ According to Ghazālī”, *Studia Islamica* 61 (1985), 81–105; Wael Hallaq, “The Authenticity of Prophetic Ḥadīth: A Pseudo-Problem”, *Studia Islamica* 89 (1999), 75–90; G.H.A. Juynboll, “Khabar al-Wāḥid”, in EI<sup>2</sup>; idem, “Tawātur”, in EI<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> Muslim theologians often divide knowledge into two kinds: necessary and acquired. Whereas necessary knowledge is that which the knowing person is unable to disavow in his soul, acquired knowledge can be disavowed due to doubts or objections arising in the person’s soul concerning the validity of what he takes as knowledge.

<sup>18</sup> Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī, *Sharḥ al-bidāya fī ʿilm al-dirāya*, 13–4. The reverse is also true, a report might be considered *mutawātir* now but examining its *sanad* indicates that at the initial stages it was not *mutawātir*.

<sup>19</sup> The only available report is the following statement attributed to the Prophet: “Whoever intentionally attributes a lie to me his place will be filled with the Fire”. See, *Sharḥ al-bidāya fī ʿilm al-dirāya*, 15.

considers the Qur'an to be *mutawātir* in its wording. He mentions, however, that reports *mutawātir* in meaning are available regarding principle matters of conduct (*uṣūl al-sharā'i*) such as the obligation to perform daily prayers, the number of prayer cycles, the *zakāt* payment, and the pilgrimage to Mecca.<sup>20</sup> Hence, Muslims are obligated to perform seventeen prayer-cycles every day since they have necessary knowledge that the Prophet instructed them to perform their prayers in this manner. The source of their necessary knowledge is the reports whose *mutawātir* status guarantee their authenticity. It is to be noted, however, that nearly none of the extant reports attributed to the Prophet and Imams are *mutawātir*. As mentioned above, any report not considered *mutawātir* is called *khavar al-wāḥid*. Although linguistically *khavar al-wāḥid* means the report of only a single reporter, in its technical usage a report is *wāḥid* when it does not engender necessary knowledge even if it is narrated by more than one reporter.

As Shahīd Thānī explains, while all Imāmī scholars consider acting on *mutawātir* reports to be obligatory, there are disagreements amongst them regarding the authority of *āḥād* reports as sources of action. Some scholars such as al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā (d. 436/1044) have categorically prohibited acting on *āḥād* reports because in their view action must only be taken on the basis of knowledge, which is something only *mutawātir* reports provide. Since the authenticity of *āḥād* reports cannot be established with certainty, they provide their recipients with *ẓann* rather than knowledge, and hence, do not stand as authoritative sources for action. Al-Murtaḍā's view, however, has remained a minority position amongst Shi'i scholars. Shahīd Thānī explains that those who in principle consider acting on *āḥād* reports to be legitimate, "as the majority of later scholars do", do not grant a categorical permission to act on just any *wāḥid* report. In their view, a *wāḥid* report can serve as basis for action only after its reliability has been established. There are, however, disagreements between these scholars regarding what constitutes a reliable *wāḥid* report.

According to Shahīd Thānī, the only means to establish a report's reliability is through its chain of transmission (*sanad*); the content (*matn*) on its own has no bearing in this regard.<sup>21</sup> In his view, *sanad* analysis illustrates that all reports belong to either one of the following four categories: (1) *ṣaḥīḥ*: reports with unbroken chain of transmission from the last transmitter back to the Prophet or an Imam; the narrators appearing in the chain must all be trustworthy (*ādil*) and Imāmī.<sup>22</sup> (2) *Ḥasan*: reports retraced back to the Imam in an unbroken chain of transmission and narrated by Imāmī transmitters whose character has been praised (*mamdūḥ*) even though their *'adāla* or trustworthiness as transmitters has not been explicitly mentioned.<sup>23</sup> (3) *Muwaththaq*: reports narrated by trustworthy non-Imāmī

<sup>20</sup> Zayn al-Dīn al-Āmilī, *Sharḥ al-bidāya fi 'ilm al-dirāya*, 14.

<sup>21</sup> Zayn al-Dīn al-Āmilī, *Sharḥ al-bidāya fi 'ilm al-dirāya*, 18.

<sup>22</sup> Shahīd Thānī was thoroughly familiar with Ibn Ṣalāḥ's text. In providing this definition of authenticity he departs from Ibn Ṣalāḥ in two respects: (1) requiring all the transmitters be Imāmī; (2) not excluding a report from the *ṣaḥīḥ* category regardless of how anomalous (*shādh*) its content might be if the above requirements regarding its transmission chain have been fulfilled. For Ibn Ṣalāḥ, however, if a report's content is *shādh* or *mu'allal*, the report is not *ṣaḥīḥ*. Shahīd Thānī does mention, however, that only those authentic reports that do not have *shādh* content or other reports contradicting them that must be acted on (*al-Ri'āya*, 126). Nevertheless, he maintains that authentic as a technical term only pertains to the transmission chain (*al-Ri'āya*, 166). For a brief overview of Ibn Ṣalāḥ's method of isnād analysis see, Erik Dickinson, "Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ al-Shahrazūrī and the *Isnād*", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 122.3 (2002), 481–505.

<sup>23</sup> Shahīd Thānī and his followers question Ibn Bābūya's status as a transmitter since he is not described as *thiqa* in the *rijāl* literature. In their view, it is the information provided in the *rijāl* books that determines a transmitter's status.

transmitters in an unbroken chain. (4) *ḍaʿīf*: reports that do not fall under any of the above three categories.<sup>24</sup> Within this framework, a report with trustworthy and Imāmī transmitters would still be considered “weak” (*ḍaʿīf*) if any defect such as a missing link is detected in the transmission chain.<sup>25</sup>

Shahīd Thānī notes that his understanding of what constitutes authentic differs from the way authenticity is defined in the Sunni tradition. According to Sunni scholars, he writes, a report is authentic when it is retraced back to the Prophet in continuous chains of transmission; the transmitters are all trustworthy (*ʿadl*) (i.e., they do not fabricate reports) and are thoroughly diligent (*dābiṭ*) in the manner they record the reports and pass them on to others. Lastly, according to Sunni scholars, a report is authentic when it is protected against any anomalies (*shudhūdh*) and *ʿilla* in its content.<sup>26</sup> Shahīd Thānī proceeds to examine each of these requirements:

Their definition of *ʿadl* includes all the Muslim sects. Hence, they accept the report transmitted by an adversary as long as he is *ʿadl*, his adversary does not reach to the level of unbelief (*kufṛ*) and is not a heretic who narrates what supports his heresy. This is according to their best position [on this matter]. As a result [of this position], Sunnis have a larger number of authentic reports than we do. Moreover, in deciding the transmitter’s probity (*ʿadāla*), they rely only on the lack of an apparent *fisq* in the transmitter and proceed on the basis of a Muslim’s apparent state.<sup>27</sup> Thus, the reports that are *ḥasan* and *muwaththaq* for us, are authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) for them given the reports be safe from the above two impediments [that prevent a report from being considered authentic].<sup>28</sup> And through the requirement “protection from anomalies” they shun the report of a trustworthy narrator (*thiqa*) whose report opposes what people have transmitted. In this case, the trustworthy narrator’s report is not authentic. By “*illa*” they mean the hidden matters present in a report that discredit it, and only a person who is expert in this skill is able to identify/bring out these hidden matters. Our colleagues (i.e., Shiʿi scholars), however, do not give credence to anomalies and *ʿilla* in their definition of authenticity. The difference [between these two views] is only in terminology since in some cases Sunnis accept *shādh* and *muʿallal* reports [even though according to their definition they should not] and in some cases we do not accept such reports although they are included in our definition of authenticity.<sup>29</sup>

Having explained the ways in which his definition of authenticity differs from Sunni scholars, he proceeds to discuss some of his differences with Shiʿi scholars. According to Shahīd Thānī, some of his predecessors would designate authenticity to any report whose transmission path, in their view, is clear of any discrediting objections (*taʿn*) even if its chains of transmission contains *irsāl*, *qatʿ*, or non-Imāmī

<sup>24</sup> Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī, *Sharḥ al-bidāya fi ʿilm al-dirāya*, 21–6.

<sup>25</sup> A report that does not include the name of its original transmitter in its *sanad* is called *mursal*. Shahīd Thānī prohibits acting on *mursal* reports. In his view, considering the appearance of weak (*ḍaʿīf*) narrators in numerous chains of transmission, any unidentified narrator in the chain could very well be a “weak” narrator.

<sup>26</sup> Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī, *Sharḥ al-bidāya fi ʿilm al-dirāya*, 22.

<sup>27</sup> Meaning that they do not attend to the possibility of hypocrisy.

<sup>28</sup> The two impediments are that the reports are retraced back all the way to the Prophet in continuous chains of transmission and the narrators are all judged to be trustworthy.

<sup>29</sup> Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī, *Sharḥ al-bidāya fi ʿilm al-dirāya*, 22.

narrators. He explains that this conception of authenticity has led some scholars to consider the narrated reports of Ibn Abī ‘Umayr (d. 217/822–3) – a highly revered companion – to be authentic even though his reports are *mursal*, meaning the narration does not include the name of its original transmitter.<sup>30</sup> Muḥammad ibn Makkī (d. 786/1385), also known as al-Shahīd al-Awwal, was amongst such scholars. He designated the authentic status to Ibn Abī ‘Umar’s reports despite their defective transmission chains. According to Shahīd Awwal, it is known that Ibn Abī ‘Umayr – as a narrator whose trustworthiness is firmly established – would refrain from transmitting reports from discredited individuals (*majrūh*) and would only transmit *mursal* narrations from trustworthy transmitters.<sup>31</sup> Shahīd Thānī, however, disagrees with this approach to hadith authentication. In his view, a report’s chain of transmission is the only means of establishing its veracity. A report’s defective transmission chains cannot be remedied by invoking anything external to it even if defects such as *irsāl* are committed by an Imam’s most prominent companion such as Ibn Abī ‘Umar. As we shall see, this is the most consequential feature of Shahīd Thānī’s approach to hadith authentication and one that will be in the core of Akhbārī scholars’ refutations of him.

Shahīd Thānī was not the first Imāmī scholars to advocate the fourfold division. Prior to him, Aḥmad ibn Ṭāwūs (d. 673/1274–5) and Ḥasan al-Ḥillī (d. 726/1325) had also applied this division to Imāmī hadith corpus.<sup>32</sup> Their successors, such as Ibn Makkī followed them in this matter.<sup>33</sup> Shahīd Thānī’s views, however, differ from his predecessors in a few pivotal issues. Aware of his disagreements, he discusses some of them in *al-Ri‘āya*. He is particularly critical of Ṭūsī who, according to Shahīd Thānī, “categorically” sanctioned acting on *ḥasan* reports. Shahīd Thānī also criticizes Ṭūsī for acting on *shādh* reports<sup>34</sup> and argues that numerous *mu‘allal* reports are found in *Tahdhīb* both in its transmission chain and text (*matn*).<sup>35</sup> He also claims that Ṭūsī on numerous occasions accepts the reports of non-‘*ādil* reports without providing an explanation,<sup>36</sup> and at times even forms a ruling merely on the basis of a weak report.<sup>37</sup> This, he notes, is in contrast to the majority of scholars such as Ḥasan ibn Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī who categorically reject acting on sound (*ḥasan*) reports. Shahīd Thānī points out that while many scholars categorically reject acting on credible (*muwaththaq*) and weak (*ḍa‘īf*) reports out, some later scholars, such as al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ḥillī in *al-Mu‘tabar* and Shahīd Awwal in *Dhikra*, have justified acting on not only *ḥasan* but also *muwaththaq* and *ḍa‘īf* reports if these reports are accompanied by supporting evidence, which in their view, is when acting on the content of these

<sup>30</sup> For a summary of various positions regarding the authority of *mursal* reports amongst Shi‘i and Sunni scholars see Ḥasan Ibn Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī, *Nihāyat al-wuṣūl ilā ‘ilm al-uṣūl* (Qom, 1425/2004), 3:459–70. For an early discussion on *mursal* reports see, Muḥammad Ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi‘ī, *The Epistle on Legal Theory* (New York, 2013), 326–335. Mīr Dāmād notes that Ibn Abī ‘Umayr’s status is akin to Sa‘īd ibn al-Musayyib (d. 93/712 or 94/713), Ibrāhīm al-Nakha‘ī (d. 96/715), al-Sha‘bī (d. between 100/718 and 110/729), and Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728–29) in the Sunni tradition. See Mīr Dāmād, *al-Rawāshiḥ al-samāwiyya* (Qom, 1422), 255.

<sup>31</sup> Shahīd Awwal, *Dhikra al-Shi‘a fī aḥkām al-Shari‘a* in *Mawsū‘at al-Shahīd al-Awwal* (Qom, 1435/2014), 5:13.

<sup>32</sup> Zayn al-Dīn al-‘Āmilī, *Sharḥ al-bidāya fī ‘ilm al-dirāya*, 27–30.

<sup>33</sup> Shahīd Awwal, *Dhikra al-Shi‘a fī aḥkām al-Shari‘a* in *Mawsū‘at al-Shahīd al-Awwal* (Qom, 1435/2014), 5:12–3.

<sup>34</sup> Zayn al-Dīn al-‘Āmilī, *Sharḥ al-bidāya fī ‘ilm al-dirāya*, 27.

<sup>35</sup> Zayn al-Dīn al-‘Āmilī, *Sharḥ al-bidāya fī ‘ilm al-dirāya*, 53.

<sup>36</sup> Zayn al-Dīn al-‘Āmilī, *Sharḥ al-bidāya fī ‘ilm al-dirāya*, 68.

<sup>37</sup> Zayn al-Dīn al-‘Āmilī, *Sharḥ al-bidāya fī ‘ilm al-dirāya*, 27, 29, 72.

reports is widespread (*mashhūr*) among the Shi'is.<sup>38</sup> He writes that some scholars have even designated precedence to such reports over an authentic report when acting on its content has not been found to be widespread (*mashhūr*).<sup>39</sup>

In addition to the scholars' widespread acting on the purport of a report, he notes that some Imāmī scholars have provided the following justifications for acting on non-*ṣaḥīḥ āḥād* reports: (1) if the report is widely transmitted (*shuḥrat riwāya*), meaning that it has been numerously transmitted in various sources with the same wording or that it has been transmitted with varied wording that are close in meaning; or (2) if the report is widely acted upon (*shuḥrat futwā*), meaning that in their legal books jurists have issued rulings on the content of this report; this is due to their strong suspicion (*quwat al-ẓann*) that the narrator of such report is truthful since the report has been widely acted upon even though the report's transmission path is defective and without the *shuhra* would be considered weak and set aside. The *shuhra*, however, is believed to remedy the report's defective transmission path. This is similar, the argument goes, to the way that the views of Abū Ḥanīfa, Shāfi'ī, Mālik, and Ibn Ḥanbal become known to others through what has been transmitted of their views by their followers even though these reports are neither *mutawātir* nor reliable in their transmission.<sup>40</sup>

In contrast to these scholars, Shahīd Thānī steadfastly adheres to his core principle that the only means of establishing a report's credibility is through its transmission chain; no external supporting evidence redeems a report's defective transmission chain. This leads Shahīd Thānī to designate as *ḍa'īf* a large number of reports narrated by the Imams' most prominent companions due to the occurrence of *irsāl* in the transmission chains. He expands the category of *ḍa'īf* to include *muḍmar* reports as well as those with common narrators. According to this authentication method, a great number of the reports narrated in the Four Books fall short of the authentic status. For instance, after examining the transmission chains of the reports narrated in *al-Kāfī*, Shahīd Thānī concludes that 5072 reports fall under the authentic category, less than a third of Kulaynī's narrated reports.<sup>41</sup> His assessment is particularly intriguing since he considers *al-Kāfī* as a book "whose likeness is not found in this world"<sup>42</sup> and describes it as "a book in hadith that nothing like it has been compiled in Islam".<sup>43</sup> Hence, despite considering *al-Kāfī* along with three other books as the "best" Imāmī hadith compilations and as "*arkān al-dīn, asās al-yaqīn, sanad al-madhhab, 'imād al-īmān, and asās da'ā'im al-islām*", not every report narrated in them is authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*); in fact, most of the reports narrated in them lack authority to be used in determining conduct.

<sup>38</sup> al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ḥillī, *al-Mu'tabar fī sharḥ al-mukhtaṣar* (n.pl, 1364), 1:29–30; Shahīd Awwal, *Dhikra*, 5:13.

<sup>39</sup> Zayn al-Dīn al-Āmilī, *Sharḥ al-bidāya fī 'ilm al-dirāya*, 27.

<sup>40</sup> Zayn al-Dīn al-Āmilī, *Sharḥ al-bidāya fī 'ilm al-dirāya*, 29.

<sup>41</sup> Baḥrānī, *Lu'lu'at al-baḥrayn* (Manama, 1429/2008), 376–7. He notes that 144 are *ḥasan*, 1429 are *muwathaq*, and 9485 are *ḍa'īf*.

<sup>42</sup> Zayn al-Dīn al-Āmilī, *Mawsū'at al-Shahīd al-Thānī*, 4:422.

<sup>43</sup> Zayn al-Dīn al-Āmilī, *Mawsū'at al-Shahīd al-Thānī*, 4:414.

### §3. al-Ḥārithī and the “Five” Hadith Sources

Shahīd Thānī completed *al-Ri‘āya* in 959/1552.<sup>44</sup> In this work, he provides commentaries on his earlier text *al-Bidāya fī ‘ilm al-dirāya*, which represents the earliest extant Imāmī text exclusively dedicated to the hadith sciences.<sup>45</sup> A year later, his disciple Ḥusayn ibn ‘Abd al-Ṣamad al-Ḥārithī (d. 984/1576) accompanied *al-Ra‘āya* with a similar text entitled *Wuṣūl al-akhyār ilā uṣūl al-akhbār*.<sup>46</sup> Shahīd Thānī described Ḥārithī as his “advanced student”, “companion” and “friend”.<sup>47</sup> The two had spent decades together and traveled to cities such as Cairo, Mecca, Istanbul, and Iraq where they studied with Sunni and Shi‘i scholars.<sup>48</sup> Ottoman authorities’ ever-increasing persecution of the Shi‘i communities of Jabal al-‘Āmil – which culminated in Shahīd Thānī’s execution in 966/1558 – compelled Ḥārithī to emigrate to Iran. It was upon his arrival that he composed *Wuṣūl al-akhyār* around 960/1552–3.

While *al-Ri‘āya* and *Wuṣūl al-akhyār* have a lot in common, there are a few noticeable differences between the two books. Ḥārithī prefaces *Wuṣūl al-akhyār* with a lengthy introductory section containing theological and historical discussions on matters ranging from the significance of hadith as a source of guidance, the biographies of the Prophet and the Imams, and the status of the Prophet’s companions as transmitters of his Sunna, to the shortcomings of the Sunni hadith corpus.<sup>49</sup> As Stewart has remarked, the inclusion of this introduction is an expression of the widely different contexts in which *al-Ri‘āya* and *Wuṣūl al-akhyār* were written.<sup>50</sup> Free from the fear of persecution, Ḥārithī outlines the reasons why the Shi‘is do not give credence to the reports transmitted by such companions as Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān, ‘Ā’isha, and Mu‘āwiya, all of whom except the last are highly revered in the Sunni tradition.<sup>51</sup> He also criticises the authenticity of the Sunni hadith compilations including the two most authoritative sources, the *Ṣaḥīḥ* compendia of Bukhārī and Muslim.<sup>52</sup> Stewart notes that the absence of such discussions in *al-Ri‘āya* might be due to its author’s residence in Jabal

<sup>44</sup> In an *ijāza* to Aḥmad ibn Shams al-Dīn al-Ḥillī, dated 961, he refers to this book as *al-Ra‘āya fī ‘ilm al-dirāya*. See Zayn al-Dīn al-‘Āmilī, *Mawsū‘at al-Shahīd al-Thānī* (Qom, 1434/2013), 4:428.

<sup>45</sup> In this work, Shahīd Thānī provides commentaries on his earlier text *al-Bidāya fī ‘ilm al-dirāya*, which represents the first extant Imāmī text exclusively dedicated to the hadith sciences (al-Ḥurr al-‘Āmilī, *Amal al-āmil* (Qom, 1362), 1:86). Sunni works had long been written on this topic. Noteworthy examples include the following: *al-Muḥaddath al-fāṣil bayn al-rāwī wa al-wā‘ī* by al-Ḥasan al-Rāmhurmuzī (d. 360/971); *Ma‘rifat ‘ulūm al-ḥadīth* by al-Ḥākim al-Nayshāpūrī (d. 405/1014); *al-Kifāya fī ma‘rifat al-uṣūl ‘ilm al-rivāya* by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071); *Muqaddima fī ‘ulūm al-ḥadīth* by Ibn Ṣalāḥ al-Shahrazūrī (d. 643/1245); *Nukhbat al-fikr fī muṣṭalah ahl al-athar* by Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī (d. 852/1449); *Tadrib al-rāwī* by Jalāl al-Dīn Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505).

<sup>46</sup> On Ḥārithī’s biography see Stewart, *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy*, 92–4; idem, “The First *Shaykh al-Islām* of the Safavid Capital Qazvin”, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 116 (1996), 387–405; idem, “An Episode in the ‘Āmilī Migration to Safavid Iran: The Travel Account of Husayn b. ‘Abd al-Samad al-‘Āmilī”, *Iranian Studies* 39 (2006), 481–509; idem, “Ḥusayn b. ‘Abd al-Ṣamad al-‘Āmilī’s Flight from Lebanon to Iraq”, *Shii Studies Review* 3 (2019), 59–106.

<sup>47</sup> In his *ijāza*, dated 941/1534, Shahīd Thānī describes Ḥārithī in elevated terms. See Zayn al-Dīn al-‘Āmilī, *Mawsū‘at al-Shahīd al-Thānī*, 4:383–410; Afandī, *Riyāḍ*, 2:164–4.

<sup>48</sup> Ḥurr al-‘Āmilī, *Amal al-āmil*, 1:74; Devin Stewart, “The First *Shaykh al-Islām* of the Safavid Capital Qazvin”, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 6 (1996), 388.

<sup>49</sup> Ḥusayn ibn ‘Abd al-Ṣamad al-Ḥārithī, *Wuṣūl al-akhyār ilā uṣūl al-akhbār* (Karbala, 1436/2015), 39–123.

<sup>50</sup> Stewart, “Genesis”, 174–5.

<sup>51</sup> On the status of Mu‘āwiya as a hadith transmitter in the Sunni tradition see Etan Kohlberg, *In Praise of the Few: Studies in Shi‘i Thought and History*, chapters 1–2.

<sup>52</sup> al-Ḥārithī, *Wuṣūl al-akhyār*, 87–119.

‘Āmil under the Sunni rule whereas Ḥārithī was writing in Safavid Iran, and immune from persecution could freely express his views.<sup>53</sup> Another possibility is that Shahīd Thānī had aimed to only address matters in *al-Ri‘āya* that directly pertain to the Imāmī tradition rather than providing his critiques of the Sunni hadith corpus or engage in the theological and historical discussions regarding the authority of the Imams found in Ḥārithī’s *Wuṣūl*. In the preface to *al-Ri‘āya* that he notes that he has chosen to write a concise treatise so as to facilitate its memorisation. “People’s disposition in our time”, he writes, “does not bear the many burdens of knowledge, especially concerning *‘ilm dirāyat al-ḥadīth*”.<sup>54</sup>

Ḥārithī describes the science of hadith in a more elevated manner than what is found in *al-Ri‘āya*. He notes that some scholars have stated that every religion has its knights and the knights of this religion are *aṣḥāb al-asānīd*. Without identifying his sources, he adds that according to some scholars, there is no innovator (*mubtadi‘*) in this world except that he has enmity for *ahl al-ḥadīth*. This is followed by another statement in which *ahl al-ḥadīth* are contrasted with *ahl al-ilḥād*: it is said that nothing is more burdensome and loathsome to the infidels (*ahl al-ilḥād*) than hearing the hadith and its narration.<sup>55</sup> It is worth noting that these sayings are all taken from Sunni sources and are absent in Shi‘i hadith collections.<sup>56</sup>

Having emphasized the importance of hadith, Ḥārithī groups them into either *mutawātir* or *wāḥid*. Following Shahīd Thānī, he classifies all *wāḥid* reports into four categories.<sup>57</sup> Since a report’s chains of transmission is the only means of establishing its veracity, *‘ilm rijāl* is considered to be of paramount importance. *Rijāl* books contain biographical information on numerous hadith narrators; it is in these works that the transmitter’s status is discussed and determined. Ḥārithī cites the *Rijāl* of Ibn Dāwūd al-Ḥillī (d. 707/1307–8) as the best book in this genre and also names *al-Fihrist* of Ṭūsī as a beneficial companion source.<sup>58</sup> While agreeing with the merit of Ibn Dāwūd’s work, Shahīd Thānī seems to have favored al-Kashshī’s *Rijāl* and *Khulāṣat al-aqwāl* of Ibn Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī. He describes al-Kashshī’s *Rijāl* as the source to study for learning about the true status of hadith transmitters and remarks that *Khulāṣat al-aqwāl* is indeed a summation (*khulāṣa*) of the science of *rijāl*.<sup>59</sup> Besides these two sources, he adds that the books of Ibn Ghazā’irī, Najāshī, and Ṭūsī provide all that is necessary for establishing whether a reporter has been validated or invalidated in his transmissions. He cautions that despite their usefulness, it is incumbent on every scholar expert in the science of *rijāl* to undertake further investigation regarding what is found in these books and refrain from merely following their authors’ verdicts. According to Shahīd Thānī, he has adopted this approach in his own writings.<sup>60</sup>

According to Shahīd Thānī, a report is authentic when its transmission chain is uninterrupted and retraced all the way back to the Imams by trustworthy and Imāmī transmitters. In his view, a report’s *shādhdh* and *mu‘allal* content do not undermine its authenticity status. Ḥārithī, however,

<sup>53</sup> Although Shahīd Thānī’s dissimulation (*taqiyya*) did not prevent his execution.

<sup>54</sup> Zayn al-Dīn al-‘Āmilī, *Sharḥ al-bidāya fī ‘ilm al-dirāya*, 5–6.

<sup>55</sup> al-Ḥārithī, *Wuṣūl al-akhyār*, 175.

<sup>56</sup> al-Ḥārithī, *Wuṣūl al-akhyār*, 175 (footnotes 1–3).

<sup>57</sup> al-Ḥārithī, *Wuṣūl al-akhyār*, 86.

<sup>58</sup> al-Ḥārithī, *Wuṣūl al-akhyār*, 168.

<sup>59</sup> Zayn al-Dīn al-‘Āmilī, *Sharḥ al-bidāya fī ‘ilm al-dirāya*, 66–7.

<sup>60</sup> Zayn al-Dīn al-‘Āmilī, *Sharḥ al-bidāya fī ‘ilm al-dirāya*, 66. The editors of Shahīd Thānī’s *Masālik al-aḥkām* provide a useful index of where his *rijāl* assessments concerning particular transmitters are discussed in the text. See Zayn al-Dīn al-‘Āmilī, *Masālik al-aḥkām ilā tanqīḥ sharā’i‘ al-islām* (Qom, 1429), 16:285–301.

slightly modifies Shahīd Thānī's definition of authenticity. He writes that a report is authentic when in addition to satisfying the aforementioned requirements concerning its transmission chain, its content is not judged to be *shādh* or *mu'allal*.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, he requires that the transmitters, in addition to be 'ādil and Imāmī, also be *ḍābiṭ*.<sup>62</sup> By the last quality, he means that the reporters must be known for their diligence in accurately preserving the Imams' reports both when they are orally transmitting them to others as well as when they record them in writing. Shahīd Thānī does not explicitly mention the attribute of *ḍābiṭ* in his definition since for him being trustworthy encompasses the attribute of *ḍābiṭ*. He writes that those who explicitly mention *ḍābiṭ* in their definition either do so to emphasise the critical importance of due diligence in preserving the reports or they are simply following a well-established trend (*āda*) in defining authenticity.<sup>63</sup>

Ḥārithī and Shahīd Thānī also differ over the question of *mutawātir* reports. Shahīd Thānī, as discussed above, considers only a single report, besides the Qur'an, to be *mutawātir* in wording: "Whoever intentionally attributes a lie to me [i.e., the Prophet] his place will be filled with the Fire". Ḥārithī, while acknowledging that reports *mutawātir* in wording are rare, designates this status to a greater number of reports. In his view, besides the Qur'an, the reports concerning the prayer direction toward Mecca, daily prayers and the number of their cycles, the pilgrimage to Mecca, and the *zakāt* payment are also *mutawātir* in wording. He contrasts these reports with those *mutawātir* in meaning, which according to Ḥārithī are more numerous. He provides as examples reports about the gallantry of 'Alī and generosity of Ḥātim.<sup>64</sup> In Shahīd Thānī's view, however, reports regarding the obligation to perform daily prayers, the number of prayer cycles, the *zakāt* payment, and the pilgrimage to Mecca are *mutawātir* in meaning rather than in wording.<sup>65</sup> They also disagree over the *mutawātir* status a report of pivotal importance to the Shi'i tradition: the Prophet's designation of 'Alī as his successor in the event of al-Ghadīr. Ḥārithī considers the report of Ghadīr to be *al-mutawātir al-laḥẓī*.<sup>66</sup> Shahīd Thānī, however, considers 'Alī's designation an instance of *al-mutawātir al-ma'nawī*. He writes that as al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā has explicated, although each of the reports concerning the event of Ghadīr is *wāḥid* on its own, the totality of all these reports concerning this event establish it as *mutawātir*.<sup>67</sup> In this way, they are similar to the *mutawātir* reports informing of 'Alī's gallantry, which although are not *mutawātir* in wording are *mutawātir* in meaning.<sup>68</sup>

Shahīd Thānī and Ḥārithī are both of the view that *mutawātir* reports engender necessary knowledge in their recipients. Necessary knowledge is that which the recipient is unable to disavow in his soul. But if the Prophet's statement about 'Alī's succession is *mutawātir*, would not then all Muslims have necessary knowledge about it? The majority of Muslims, however, do not consider 'Alī as the only legitimate successor to the Prophet. This would seem to undermine Ḥārithī's assertion that not only are

<sup>61</sup> Sunni scholars had insisted to include these two requirements in their definitions of *ṣaḥīḥ*. See Ibn Ṣalāḥ, *Ulūm al-ḥadīth* (Beirut, 1406), 11–2.

<sup>62</sup> al-Ḥārithī, *Wuṣūl al-akhyār*, 135.

<sup>63</sup> Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī, *Sharḥ al-bidāya fi 'ilm al-dirāya*, 68–9.

<sup>64</sup> al-Ḥārithī, *Wuṣūl al-akhyār*, 133.

<sup>65</sup> Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī, *Sharḥ al-bidāya fi 'ilm al-dirāya*, 14.

<sup>66</sup> al-Ḥārithī, *Wuṣūl al-akhyār*, 134.

<sup>67</sup> Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī, *Sharḥ al-bidāya fi 'ilm al-dirāya*, 14–5. Shahīd Thānī notes that al-Murtaḍā has discussed this issue in a treatise titled *al-Tabbāniyyāt*.

<sup>68</sup> Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī, *Sharḥ al-bidāya fi 'ilm al-dirāya*, 11.

the reports of Ghadīr *mutawātir*, they are also *mutawātir* in wording. Being aware of this objection, he provides the following explanation: a report is *mutawātir* once it provides necessary knowledge, is based on sense-perception (*maḥsūs*) rather than abstraction, and is not preceded by any confusion (*shubha*) or blind following (*taqlid*) of its recipients. If these three conditions are fulfilled, *mutawātir* reports engender necessary knowledge in the recipients. He notes that unbelievers deny the report's concerning the Prophet's performance of miracles even though these reports are *mutawātir*. Similarly, the adversary of the Shi'is deny the reports of 'Alī's designation as the Imam despite the reports' *mutawātir* status.<sup>69</sup> His conclusion is, the recipients' prejudice prevents a *mutawātir* report to engender necessary knowledge in them since the recipients do not wish the reports to be true.

Another difference between *Wuṣūl* and *al-Ri'āya*, which is of more significance to the topic of this chapter, is Ḥārithī's position concerning the most authoritative sources of Imāmī hadith. As we saw above, Shahīd Thānī singles out *al-Kāfī*, *al-Tahdhīb*, *al-Istibṣār*, and *al-Faqīh* as the "best" compilations, and collectively refers to them as "*al-kutub al-ḥadīth al-arba'a*". Ḥārithī, however, designates this status to five compilations he refers to as "*al-uṣūl al-khamsa*".

Our five sources - *al-Kāfī*, *Madīnat al-'ilm*, *al-Faqīh*, *al-Tahdhīb*, *al-Istibṣār* - contain most of the hadiths narrated to us from the Prophet and the infallible Imams as well as their most important hadiths which only few people might oppose. They collected hadiths, authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) or otherwise, which included rulings pertaining to knowledge and conduct, traditions, customs, sermons, supplications, Qur'an commentaries and elevated morals what is almost innumerable and besides them nothing is found.<sup>70</sup>

In addition to the above four titles, Ḥārithī presents *Madīnat al-'ilm* as the fifth authoritative source of hadith. He cites Ibn Bābūya as the author of *Madīnat al-'ilm* and *al-Faqīh* and describes him, among other things, as a man perceptive in *fiqh* and *rijāl* as well as in the rational and transmitted sciences.<sup>71</sup>

Two things are intriguing about Ḥārithī's inclusion of *Madīnat al-'ilm*. First, this work, said to have been compiled by Ibn Bābūya, is no longer extant; Ḥārithī's son, Bahā' al-Dīn al-'Āmilī (d. 1030/1621) seems to have been the last person to have had access to it.<sup>72</sup> Second, despite its availability to Shahīd Thānī, he excludes *Madīnat al-'ilm* from the list of the "best" Imāmī compilation.<sup>73</sup> In a lengthy *ijāza*,<sup>74</sup> dated 941/1534, he confers to Ḥārithī his permission to transmit the books of hadith such as "*al-Tahdhīb*, *al-Istibṣār*, *al-Faqīh*, *Madīnat al-'ilm*, *al-Kāfī*, and the others".<sup>75</sup> He also mentions *Madīnat al-'ilm* in his *ijāza* to 'Atā' Allāh ibn Ḥasan al-Ḥusaynī al-Mūsawī, dated 950/1543. Intriguingly, in the same

<sup>69</sup> al-Ḥārithī, *Wuṣūl al-akhyār*, 133–4.

<sup>70</sup> al-Ḥārithī, *Wuṣūl al-akhyār*, 121.

<sup>71</sup> al-Ḥārithī, *Wuṣūl al-akhyār*, 122. It's not clear why al-Ḥārithī considers Ibn Bābūya to be perceptive in the rational sciences since he neither composed any works that would normally be classified under the rational sciences nor was he known among his contemporaries and immediate successors to be particularly apt at them. In fact, his contemporaries such as al-Mufid and al-Murtaḍā faulted him for his lack of expertise in the rational sciences. See Modarressi, *Introduction*, 40–2.

<sup>72</sup> Bahā' al-Dīn 'Āmilī, "*al-Wajīza*" in *Ḥabl al-matīn*, 1:29–30.

<sup>73</sup> The prominent 'Āmilī scholar, Shahīd Awwal, also refers to *Madīnat al-'ilm*. See, Shahīd Awwal, *Dhikra al-Shī'a fī aḥkām al-Sharī'a* in *Mawsū'at al-Shahīd al-Awwal* (Qom, 1435/2014), 5:23.

<sup>74</sup> Zayn al-Dīn al-'Āmilī, *Mawsū'at al-Shahīd al-Thānī*, 4:383–410.

<sup>75</sup> Zayn al-Dīn al-'Āmilī, *Mawsū'at al-Shahīd al-Thānī*, 4:408.

*ijāza* he refers to “*kutub al-ḥadīth al-arba‘a*” as “pillars of religion (*arkān al-dīn*) and grounds of certainty (*asās al-yaqīn*)”.<sup>76</sup> It is only when Shahīd Thānī is listing Ibn Bābūya’s collections besides *al-Faqīh* (*al-‘Illal*, *al-Amālī*, and *Thawāb al-‘amāl*) that he refers to *Madīnat al-‘ilm*.<sup>77</sup> A reason for this exclusion could stem from the content of *Madīnat al-‘ilm*, which from the little that is known of it seems to have included reports pertaining to doctrinal (*uṣūl*) topics. Ibn Bābūya himself refers to *Madīnat al-‘ilm* in his book *al-Tawḥīd* and asks his readers to consult it for more detailed information. Considering that *al-Tawḥīd* is a hadith collection pertaining to the *uṣūl*, it is likely that *Madīnat al-‘ilm* contained reports pertaining to either the *uṣūl* or both *uṣūl* and *furū‘*.<sup>78</sup>

Mirza ‘Abd Allāh Iṣfahānī (d. 1130/1718), in his work bio-bibliographical dictionary of Imāmī scholars titled *Riṣāḥ al-‘ulamā’ wa ḥiyāḍ al-fuḍalā’*, provides a number of observations concerning Ibn Bābūya’s *Madīnat al-‘ilm*. According to Iṣfahānī, some have argued that *Madīnat al-‘ilm* was a hadith compendium containing all of Ibn Bābūya’s transmitted reports. He finds this position untenable. First, he argues, those who maintain this view have not provided any supporting evidence; second, ‘Allāma Ḥillī in his *Muntahā* quotes a report from *Madīnat al-‘ilm* that is not found in any of Ibn Bābūya’s writings. This proves to Iṣfahānī that *Madīnat al-‘ilm* contained materials besides what is found in Ibn Bābūya’s extant hadith collections. Next, he refers to Ḥārithī’s remark in *Wuṣūl* concerning *al-uṣūl al-khamsa*. In Iṣfahānī’s view, this reference is an evidence that al-Ḥillī’s successors also had access to this book. He then mentions that from what Ḥārithī’s son, Bahā’ al-Dīn al-‘Āmilī says about *Madīnat al-‘ilm*, it seems the book was not available to him. This is despite Iṣfahānī’s remark that he personally heard from Bahā’ī that when he lived in Jabal ‘Āmil he had seen *Madīnat al-‘ilm*. Iṣfahānī, however, proposes that Ḥārithī might have lost the book in one of his travels. Iṣfahānī himself claims that in his trip to Mazandaran he saw some reports from *Madīnat al-‘ilm* written in the back of another book by Bahā’ī’s student or student of his student.<sup>79</sup> Iṣfahānī’s remarks concerning *Madīnat al-‘ilm* did not prove conclusive. Nearly two centuries later, Muḥammad Bāqir Khwānsārī (d. 1313/1895–96), a well-known Qajar scholar, questioned Ḥārithī’s access to the book altogether. He writes that from the times of ‘Allāma Ḥillī and Shahīd Awwal, scholars had persistently searched for *Madīnat al-‘ilm* without any success. Furthermore, he considers it impossible for Ḥārithī to have had access to *Madīnat al-‘ilm* since if that were the indeed true Fayḍ, Majlisī, and Ḥurr ‘Āmilī would have used the book. He concludes, either the whereabouts of this book is altogether remains unknown or it was not an important work to be preserved and hence is no longer available.<sup>80</sup>

In any case, Ḥārithī is the only person to present *Madīnat al-‘ilm* amongst the most foundational sources of Imāmī hadith. As we shall see in the proceeding pages, Ḥārithī’s contemporaries and successors, similar to Shahīd Thānī, do not present *Madīnat al-‘ilm* as a foundational source and content themselves with the Four Books. Despite these and other minor differences, Ḥārithī in principle adheres to Shahīd Thānī’s overall system. His move to Iran left an enduring impact on Safavid intellectual developments in the sixteenth century. He continued to promulgate Shahīd Thānī’s teachings amongst

<sup>76</sup> Zayn al-Dīn al-‘Āmilī, *Mawsū‘at al-Shahīd al-Thānī*, 4:413.

<sup>77</sup> Zayn al-Dīn al-‘Āmilī, *Mawsū‘at al-Shahīd al-Thānī*, 4:414.

<sup>78</sup> On the *Madīnat al-‘ilm*, see Ṭīhrānī, *Dharī‘a*, 20:251–53; Etan Kohlberg, *A Medieval Muslim Scholar at Work* (Leiden, 1992), 240–41.

<sup>79</sup> ‘Abd Allāh Iṣfahānī, *Riṣāḥ al-‘ulamā’ wa ḥiyāḍ al-fuḍalā’* (Qom, 1401), 5:120–21.

<sup>80</sup> Muḥammad Bāqir Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt fi aḥwāl al-‘ulamā’ wa al-sādāt*, 7:65.

Safavid scholars, was put in charge of important official posts by royal decree and played an instrumental role in the revival of hadith in Iran through his own writings as well as training a series of influential students.

#### §4. Ḥasan al-‘Āmilī and the Four “Privileged” Books

Besides his writings and students, Shahīd Thānī left the Shi‘i scholarly tradition with another gift, his son Ḥasan ibn Zayn al-Dīn al-‘Āmilī (d. 1011/1602). Shahīd completed *Bidāya* and its commentary in the November of 959/1552; less than two months after his son’s birth in September. Seven at the time of his father’s execution in 966/1558,<sup>81</sup> Ḥasan ‘Āmilī received his initial training through his father’s disciples, chief among them Ḥārithī. In 983/1575, he acquired an *ijāza* from Ḥārithī who had received his own *ijāza* from Ḥasan’s father.<sup>82</sup> In his twenties, he journeyed to Najaf to study with Aḥmad Ardabīlī (d. 993/1585) who was amongst the most prominent scholars of the time.<sup>83</sup> Ḥasan ‘Āmilī is chiefly remembered for his treatise on legal theory titled *al-Ma‘ālim al-uṣūl wa al-malādhidh al-mujtahidīn*. Completed in 994/1586,<sup>84</sup> *al-Ma‘ālim* was used as a textbook in Shi‘i seminaries for over two centuries.<sup>85</sup> In addition to *Ma‘ālim*, he outlines his views on the issue of hadith authenticity in another work *Muntaqā al-jumān fi al-aḥādīth al-ṣiḥāḥ wa al-ḥisān*. A compilation of what al-‘Āmilī deems as authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) and sound (*ḥasan*) reports on matters pertaining to acts of worship,<sup>86</sup> *Muntaqā* represents the application of the principles he had developed in *al-Ma‘ālim*. Completed in 1006/1597,<sup>87</sup> *Muntaqā* marks a significant episode in the intellectual developments within Shi‘i scholarly circles on the issue of hadith authenticity. Its composition falls between two other pivotal episodes: Shahīd Thānī’s completion of *Bidāya* in 959/1552 and the emergence of its anti-thesis, *al-Fawā’id al-madaniyya*, written in 1031/1622 by Muḥammad Amīn Astarābādī.

*Muntaqā* is prefaced with a lengthy introduction arranged in twelve sections. According to Ḥasan ‘Āmilī, what prompted him to compile this book is the withering away of the hadiths and a lack of attention to their importance. Lack of dedication to the discipline of hadith has led to increasingly numerous mistakes, manuscript distortion (*taṣḥīf*), alterations and forgeries (*taḥrīf*). He remarks that this negligence is particularly troubling since the hadiths serve as the primary source of legal rulings.<sup>88</sup> He warns that this lax attitude is in conflict with the ways of the ancient scholars. He argues that some scholars, instead of taking heed of the intricate matters pertaining to the hadith corpus, have engaged in widening the scope of reliable hadiths. They quote in their books what according to their mere opinions are reliable reports without taking into consideration the difference between authentic

<sup>81</sup> Ḥurr ‘Āmilī, *Amal al-āmil*, 1:63.

<sup>82</sup> Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī quotes this *ijāza* in *Biḥār al-anwār* (Qom, 1388 sh.), 108:204. According to Majlisī, in the same year al-Ḥārithī also granted an *ijāza* to Mīr Dāmād. See *Biḥār al-anwār*, 109:247.

<sup>83</sup> Afandī, *Riyāḍ*, 1:326–341. Muḥsin al-Amīn, *A’yān al-Shi’a* (Beirut, 1403), 5:92–99.

<sup>84</sup> Āqā Buzurg Ṭihrānī, *al-Dharī’a* (Beirut, 1403), 6:83.

<sup>85</sup> Āqā Buzurg Ṭihrānī, *al-Dharī’a*, 6:83; Muḥsin al-Amīn, *A’yān al-Shi’a*, 10:352.

<sup>86</sup> Acts of worship or *‘ibādāt* refer to ritual cleansing (*al-ṭahāra*), prayer (*al-ṣalāt*), almsgiving (*al-zakāt*, *al-khums*, *al-ṣadaqa*, *wa fi’l al-ma’rūf*), fasting and marriage (*al-ṣiyām wa al-i’tikāf*), and pilgrimage (*al-ḥajj*).

<sup>87</sup> Ḥasan ibn Zayn al-Dīn al-‘Āmilī, *Muntaqā al-jumān fi al-aḥādīth al-ṣiḥāḥ wa al-ḥisān* (Qom, 1363 sh.), 3:483.

<sup>88</sup> Ḥasan ‘Āmilī, *Muntaqā*, 1:2.

(*ṣaḥīḥ*) and weak (*ḍaʿīf*) sources and do not bother to distinguish between sound (*sālim*) and defective (*saqīm*) transmission chains. Rather, they chiefly trust the sources simply by relying on what they take to be trustworthy indicants (*qarāʾin*) and minor allusions (*amāra*) that imply accepting what according to ʿĀmilī are “weak” transmissions.<sup>89</sup> *Muntaqā* represents Ḥasan ʿĀmilī’s effort to counter this current. Its reputation is due to Ḥasan ʿĀmilī’s decision to only rely on authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) and sound (*ḥasan*) reports.

For the most part, Ḥasan ʿĀmilī continues Shahīd Thānī’s approach to hadith authentication, albeit with some modifications. Similar to his father, he adheres to the fourfold stratification (what he calls, “*uṣūl al-ḥadīth*”).<sup>90</sup> Likewise, he believes that a report’s authenticity is determined only on the basis of its transmission chains and regardless of its content; this contrasts with his teacher Ḥārithī who takes a report’s content also into consideration for determining its status.<sup>91</sup> He is aware that the fourfold division is a comparably recent development in Imāmī intellectual history. He points out that earlier scholars adhered to a two-fold division: authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) and weak (*ḍaʿīf*). According to Ḥasan ʿĀmilī, authentic was any report whose attribution to the Imams was established.<sup>92</sup> He notes that before ʿAllāma Ḥillī, only Ibn Ṭāwūs had adhered to the fourfold division and that before him, Imāmī scholars had not used this terminology.<sup>93</sup> He argues that the two-fold division, however, is no longer beneficial for determining a report’s authenticity. This is because earlier scholars – due to their proximity to the period during which the reports were transmitted by the Imams’ immediate companions – had access to extra pieces of evidence for establishing a report’s credibility that are no longer available to later scholars. What separates recent scholars from their earliest predecessors is that the gap of time between the two groups has led to “the closing of the door of trust” for later scholars. Whereas the early scholars could verify the authenticity of hadiths through tangible means,<sup>94</sup> the later scholars are only left with the traces of what the earlier generations have left behind. “They enjoyed with the eye”, he writes, “and our share is the trace they have left behind”.<sup>95</sup> Hence, the later scholars have devised certain methods of verification to ensure that the surviving reports are indeed authentic.

For Ḥasan ʿĀmilī, *sanad* analysis is the only means of establishing a report’s veracity;<sup>96</sup> a report is authentic when there are no defects in its transmission chains such as *idṭirāb*, *irsāl*, or *qaṭʿ* and when all the transmitters are morality upright (*ʿadl*).<sup>97</sup> He defines moral probity (*ʿadāla*) as the quality in a person’s self (*nafs*) that prevents him from committing major sins or insisting on committing minor sins and from the things that negate *muruwat*.<sup>98</sup> It is assumed that the presence of these qualities in a person prompt him to be truthful in his transmissions. He explains that a report is authentic once its chains of transmission is continuously retraced back to the Infallible by morally upright (*ʿādil*) and

<sup>89</sup> Ḥasan ʿĀmilī, *Muntaqā*, 1:2.

<sup>90</sup> Ḥasan ʿĀmilī, *Maʿālim al-uṣūl* (Qom, 1374), 296–7.

<sup>91</sup> Ḥasan ʿĀmilī, *Muntaqā*, 1:6–8.

<sup>92</sup> Ḥasan ʿĀmilī, *Muntaqā*, 1:13.

<sup>93</sup> Ḥasan ʿĀmilī, *Muntaqā*, 1:14.

<sup>94</sup> Such as having direct access to the Imams, hearing the hadiths in person from highly regarded companions of the Imams, or reading them in the foundational sources whose reliability had been firmly established.

<sup>95</sup> Ḥasan ʿĀmilī, *Muntaqā*, 1:3.

<sup>96</sup> Ḥasan ʿĀmilī, *Muntaqā*, 1:2.

<sup>97</sup> Ḥasan ʿĀmilī, *Muntaqā*, 1:15.

<sup>98</sup> Ḥasan ʿĀmilī, *Maʿālim*, 278.

diligently accurate (*ḍābiṭ*) narrators; these conditions must be met in every link within the chains.<sup>99</sup> His definition for hadith authenticity differs from his father's in three respects. First, he does not explicitly mention Imāmī as a requirement since in his view *ʿādil* by definition only means trustworthy Imāmī narrators. Second, in contrast to his father, and in agreement with his teacher Ḥārithī, Ḥasan ʿĀmilī inserts *ḍābiṭ* as a requirement for narrators of authentic reports. This is because a transmitter can be Imāmī and trustworthy yet not be a diligent in his transmission of hadiths to others (e.g., an *ʿādil* narrator with defective memory). Finally, he altogether excludes the issue of *shādhdh* and *muʿallal* content from his definition.<sup>100</sup>

Ḥasan ʿĀmilī differs from Shahīd Thānī (and Ḥārithī) in another significant respect. In his view, a reporter's probity (*ʿadāla*) can be established by direct association with the transmitter and diligent examination of his character in order to ensure his veracity, the reporter's widespread reputation as a trustworthy transmitter amongst scholars, the attestation of numerous strong supporting evidence (*qarāʾin*),<sup>101</sup> or verification of those who have knowledge of the reporter's character. The first option is only available to those with direct access to the transmitter. However, if the transmitter has died or is alive but not accessible by some of his contemporaries, his veracity can only be established through any of the remaining three options.<sup>102</sup> Now the question is, how many people are needed in order to establish that a reporter is indeed trustworthy? Whereas Shahīd Thānī requires one individual, Ḥasan ʿĀmilī requires two.

According to Shahīd Thānī, a narrator's truthfulness is established through direct association with the transmitter and astute examination of his character in order to discern his veracity, the verification of a single truthful individual with knowledge of the reporter's character, or the reporter's widespread reputation as a trustworthy transmitter amongst scholars. Since the first option is only available to those who had direct access to the transmitters, he focuses on the last two options. He provides Kulaynī as an example of a hadith master whose trustworthiness is so widely known that there is no need to establish it through the testimony of others. This is because, he writes, in addition to probity (*ʿadāla*), Kulaynī's trustworthiness (*thiqa*), exactitude in transmission (*ḍabt*), and piety (*waraʿ*) have been widely known in every generation.

Shahīd Thānī argues that for other transmitters whose truthfulness is not widespread, their veracity must be established before their reports are accepted. In his view, numerous reporters preceding hadith masters such as Kulaynī fall into this category and it is through this group of transmitters that the reports found in hadith compendia are often narrated. He then explains that the most widespread position amongst both Sunni and Shiʿi scholars is that the veracity of a transmitter is established through the testimony of a single truthful witness. He remarks in passing that some scholars disagree with this position and argue that a transmitter's veracity is established on the basis of two rather than one testimony. Without explicitly rejecting this view, Shahīd Thānī notes that the testimony of a single witness suffices for ascertaining the veracity of past transmitters.<sup>103</sup> He provides two reasons

<sup>99</sup> Ḥasan ʿĀmilī, *Maʿālim*, 296.

<sup>100</sup> Ḥasan ʿĀmilī, *Muntaqā*, 1:5. Shahīd Thānī had argued that a report is authentic regardless its content; Ḥārithī had maintained that a report with *shādhdh* content should not be deemed authentic.

<sup>101</sup> Notice that Shahīd Thānī does not mention this criterion.

<sup>102</sup> Ḥasan ʿĀmilī, *Maʿālim*, 281.

<sup>103</sup> Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī, *Sharḥ al-bidāya fi ʿilm al-dirāya*, 72.

for this position: (1) since reportage (*riwāya*) is weaker in precedence than bearing witness (*shahāda*) in the court of law the same standard should not be used for establishing the reporters' veracity;<sup>104</sup> (2) since a report, if judged to be authentic, is accepted even if it be narrated by a single transmitter, one assertion should also be sufficient to establish the veracity of the report's narrator (given that this assertion is not undermined by other assertions).<sup>105</sup> This is because the assertion of the transmitter's truthfulness is secondary to the report's veracity and the requirement placed for what is secondary (*far'*) cannot exceed the requirement placed for what is primary (*aṣl*) to it. He illustrates his point by an example: although in the case of adultery the veracity of the witnesses brought to the court is established through two testimonies, for proving that a person has indeed committed adultery four witnesses are required.<sup>106</sup> In his view, just as it would be strange to require four assertions to determine the veracity of a witness and require two for charging an adulterer, it would be mistaken to require two testimonies for establishing the reporter's truthfulness but accept his report as authoritative even though it has been narrated by a single transmitter.

Ḥasan 'Āmilī finds these arguments unconvincing, however, he is aware that his position is in the minority. He notes that Ḥillī in his *uṣūl al-fiqh* works such as *Tahdhīb* and *Nihāya* claims that the majority of Imāmī scholars adhere to the position that the assertion of a single 'ādil individual is sufficient for proving a transmitter's veracity.<sup>107</sup> In contrast to this position, he requires the testimony of two 'ādil individuals and calls al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ḥillī (d. 676/1277) his precursor in this regard.<sup>108</sup>

As discussed earlier, those who maintain that the assertion of one trustworthy person is sufficient, argue that if *khābar al-wāḥid* itself has authority although it has been transmitted by one narrator, then one testimony should also be sufficient to establish this reporter's veracity. If two individuals are needed, those who advocate this position should likewise only accept the *āḥād* reports narrated by two transmitters. Ḥasan 'Āmilī seeks to refute this view: a report is considered authentic because it is narrated by a truthful narrator ('*adāla*) and not because of an assertion concerning the narrator's truthfulness (*ta'dil*). The latter is secondary to the former and not vice versa. The *aṣl*, therefore, is '*adāla* rather than *ta'dil*. He further argues that even if he were to grant his opponents that *ta'dil* has precedence over '*adāla*, their argument would still not hold. This is because the justification they provide for requiring only one individual – that the requirement placed for what is secondary cannot exceed the requirement placed for what is primary to it – presents an instance of *qiyās* (analogy) and *qiyās* is not sanctioned in Imāmī law. He argues that his counterparts justify their view only on the basis of the principle that *far'* in *aḥkām al-sharī'a* is always secondary to *aṣl*. They commit *qiyās*, however, when they claim that this principle must hold in this case as well.

Having criticised this position, Ḥasan 'Āmilī proceeds to elaborate his own.<sup>109</sup> His argument for adding this additional requirement is that since a report's reliability is determined by the information

<sup>104</sup> Zayn al-Dīn al-'Āmilī, *Sharḥ al-bidāya fī 'ilm al-dirāya*, 67.

<sup>105</sup> He provides the same argument for establishing a reporter's deceitfulness: just as the assertion of a single truthful person establishes a reporter's truthfulness, a single truthful assertion establishes his deceitfulness.

<sup>106</sup> Zayn al-Dīn al-'Āmilī, *Sharḥ al-bidāya fī 'ilm al-dirāya*, 75.

<sup>107</sup> He was followed in this view by Shahīd Awwāl. See Shahīd Awwāl, *Dhikra al-Shī'a fī aḥkām al-Sharī'a* in *Mawsū'at al-Shahīd al-Awwāl* (Qom, 1435/2014), 57.

<sup>108</sup> Ḥasan al-'Āmilī, *Ma'ālim al-uṣūl* (Qom, 1374), 281; idem, *Muntaqā*, 116. For al-Muḥaqqiq's view see *al-Ma'ārij al-uṣūl*, (Qom, 1423), 150.

<sup>109</sup> For Ḥasan 'Āmilī's detailed exposition see §2 of *Muntaqā*'s introductory section, 116–23.

provided in the *rijāl* books regarding the transmitters appearing in the chains of transmission, this information must be affirmed by at least two *rijāl* scholars who bear witness to the transmitters' reliability. His demand for the minimum number of two witnesses (rather than a higher number) stems from a passage in the Qur'an according to which the judge is obligated to issue a verdict when a claim brought to the court is supported by two witnesses. In the same way that court testimonies offered by only one witness would not carry weight for the judge, likewise the minimum number of two must be fulfilled in order for the veracity of the narrator to be established.<sup>110</sup> He argues that the testimony of a single witness, on its own, is insufficient for acquiring knowledge concerning the transmitter's veracity. To have knowledge, however, is the prerequisite for considering a transmitter as trustworthy and acting on his report. He notes that although the testimony of two witnesses also does not provide conclusive knowledge of the transmitter's veracity, since the Qur'an has set the minimum number for court witnesses at two, this number is sufficient.<sup>111</sup> Otherwise, the status of the narrators is solely based on the testimony of a single individual, and as a result does not provide certainty. As Ḥasan 'Āmilī points out, this argument has precedence in the thirteenth century. It was Muḥaqqiq Ḥillī who first required that a reporter's truthfulness must be attested to by at least two other truthful individuals.<sup>112</sup> In this he differs from his father Shahīd Thānī who is not insistent on requiring two testimonies. Although Shahīd Thānī does not set a required number and notes that most scholars consider one testimony to be sufficient,<sup>113</sup> he does consider the testimony of two witnesses to be a valid means of establishing veracity.

This disagreement between Ḥasan 'Āmilī and his predecessors regarding the criteria for probity ('*adāla*) has significant implication regarding the scope of authentic reports. Whereas Shahīd Thānī, following Ibn Ṭāwūs and al-Ḥillī, had divided the reports into four categories and accepted only authentic reports as authentic, Ḥasan 'Āmilī while abiding by the fourfold division, adds a modification to the category of authentic reports, and in practice, introduces a fivefold division. He divides authentic reports into *ṣaḥīḥ a'alā'ī* and *ṣaḥīḥ mashhūr*. As for the former, they are those reports whose transmitters' veracity is attested to by at least two *rijāl* scholars; the latter are *mashhūr* since their transmitters' veracity is asserted only by a single individual. Ḥasan 'Āmilī's adopted criterion renders few reports the highest degree of reliability and as a result does not designate authentic status to many reports that are considered as such by later scholars.<sup>114</sup>

Having outlined his method for determining hadith reliability, Ḥasan 'Āmilī turns to the hadith sources he will use to compile *Muntaqā*. He remarks that, in compiling the *Muntaqā*, he relies only on the reports narrated in the Four Books. This is because, he explains, specifically these four books enjoy excessive attention amongst recent scholars due to how excellent they find them (*li-mā ra'aw lahā min al-maẓiyya*). As a result, these four compilations have been "privileged" over many other well-known and available hadith books (*ustu'thirat min bayn kutub ḥadīth 'alā kathratihā bi al-wujūd wa al-ma'lūmiyya*).<sup>115</sup> These scholars included his father and two of his teachers, Ḥārithī as well as Ardabīlī

<sup>110</sup> Ḥasan 'Āmilī, *Muntaqā*, 1:16 and *Ma'ālim*, 282.

<sup>111</sup> Ḥasan 'Āmilī, *Muntaqā*, 1:16 (this issue is discussed in the second *Fā'ida*, 16–23). Also see, Ḥasan al-'Āmilī, *Ma'ālim al-uṣūl* (Qom, 1374), 281–4. He provides the same argument for discrediting (*jarḥ*) a narrator as unreliable (*Ma'ālim*, 284).

<sup>112</sup> al-Muḥaqqiq's view see *al-Ma'ārij al-uṣūl* (Qom, 1423), 150.

<sup>113</sup> Ḥārithī also points this out in his *Wuṣūl*, 279.

<sup>114</sup> Ḥasan 'Āmilī, *Muntaqā*, 1:22–3.

<sup>115</sup> Ḥasan 'Āmilī, *Muntaqā*, 1:2.

who in two of his works – *Majmaʿ al-fāʿida wa al-burhān* and *Zubdat al-bayān* – had made reference to “the four books”.<sup>116</sup> Ḥasan ʿĀmilī, however, is the first scholar to use the phrase “*al-kutub al-arbaʿa*” in *ʿulūm al-ḥadīth* discussions.<sup>117</sup> Whereas his father had singled out the Four Books as the “best” Imāmī hadith compilations, Ḥasan ʿĀmilī describes them as the later scholars’ “preferred” compilations. It is the privileged status designated to these four compilations by Imāmī scholars that sets them apart from other available hadith works. It is noteworthy that despite having received an *ijāza* from Ḥārithī that licensed him to transmit hadith, Ḥasan ʿĀmilī makes no mention of *Madīnat al-ʿilm* as a foundational source of Shiʿi hadith.

In addition to their widespread use, he provides another reason for limiting *Muntaqā* to the reports found in the Four Books. According to Ḥasan ʿĀmilī, these are the only available hadith books whose attribution to their respective compilers is generally well-attested (*tawātur ijmālī*) and for which there is *qarāʾin ḥāliyya* (circumstantial evidence) that their content is known to have been correctly transmitted. By the correctness of content, he does not mean that whatever is contained in the Four Books is authentic; rather, he means that nothing has been lost or added to these books that their compilers had not intend. For instance, it is known through *tawātur ijmālī* that it was Kulaynī who wrote *al-Kāfi*, and through *qarāʾin ḥāliyya* we know its content was indeed gathered by him. “This is the reason why we have limited ourselves to the Four Books. Although other hadith books are available since *tawātur ijmālī* does not apply to any of them”.<sup>118</sup> Ḥasan ʿĀmilī’s compilation, therefore, is comprised of authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) and sound (*ḥasan*) pertaining to the acts of worship that are found in the Four Books. Hence the title, *Muntaqā al-jumān fī al-aḥādīth al-ṣiḥāḥ wa al-ḥisān* (Select Pearls on Authentic and Reliable Reports). His reason for including authentic reports are clear. But why does he designate authority to sound reports as sources of action? He justifies their inclusion by maintaining that sound reports can be acted on if they are accompanied by supporting evidence (*qarīna*) that proves their credibility.<sup>119</sup>

Ḥasan ʿĀmilī’s framework is further adopted by Muḥammad al-Mūsawī al-ʿĀmilī (1009/1600).<sup>120</sup> Besides their intellectual affinities, the two were bounded by blood; born three years earlier, Muḥammad was Shahīd Thānī’s grandson through Ḥasan’s sister.<sup>121</sup> The two studied together and were constant companions. Having studied under Shahīd Thānī’s prominent disciples including al-Ḥārithī, in 962/1555 they travelled to Najaf to study with Aḥmad Ardabīlī who left an enduring influence on

<sup>116</sup> Aḥmad Ardabīlī, *Majmaʿ al-fāʿida wa al-burhān* (6:56) and *Zubdat al-bayān* (p. 255).

<sup>117</sup> Ḥasan ʿĀmilī, *Muntaqā*, 1:2. As mentioned earlier, Shahīd Thānī does invoke this phrase in his *ijāzāt* but not in his book on the hadith sciences.

<sup>118</sup> Ḥasan ʿĀmilī, *Muntaqā*, 1:26–7. He provides this view also in *Maʿālim*, 291. Although he does not provide examples of which compilations he has in mind, it can be said that other extant hadith compendia, are either partly available (e.g., al-Barqī’s *Maḥāsīn*) or their attribution to a particular figure is disputed (*Baṣāʾir al-darajāt* attributed to Muḥammad ibn al-Ṣaffār).

<sup>119</sup> Ḥasan ʿĀmilī, *Muntaqā*, 1:4.

<sup>120</sup> Ḥurr ʿĀmilī, *Amal al-ʿamil*, 1:169; Afandī, *Riyāḍ*, 1:326–341.

<sup>121</sup> Ḥasan al-Ṣadr, *Takmilat ʿamal al-ʿamal*, 354. Muḥammad Mūsawī ʿĀmilī should not be confused with Ḥasan’s son, Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan ʿĀmilī (d. 1030/1621). On Ḥasan’s son see Afandī, *Riyāḍ*, 5:104–9. He adhered to the framework developed by his father and composed a comprehensive commentary on Ṭūsī’s *al-Istibṣār* titled, *Istiqṣāʾ al-iʿtibār fī sharḥ al-Istibṣār* (Mashhad, 1419). Currently published in seven volumes, *Istiqṣāʾ* analyses each report’s transmission chain, difficult vocabularies, and content.

them both.<sup>122</sup> Muḥammad ‘Āmilī is chiefly known in the Shi‘i tradition as “the author of (Ṣāhib) *Madārik*”. Titled *Madārik al-aḥkām fī sharḥ sharā’i‘ al-islām*, in this book he presents a commentary on al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ḥillī’s *Sharā’i‘ al-islām fī masā’il al-ḥalāl wa al-ḥarām*.<sup>123</sup> Completed in 998/1590, *Madārik* covers issues pertaining to the acts of worship (*‘ibādāt*).<sup>124</sup> In this, *Madārik* is similar to his uncle’s endeavor in *Muntaqā*, which had also covered the *‘ibādāt*. Shahīd Thānī had previously written a commentary on Ḥillī’s text entitled *Masālik al-aḥkām ilā tanqīḥ sharā’i‘ al-islām*. While he provides detailed commentaries on the transactions (*mu‘āmalāt*) section, his commentaries on the acts of worship are brief. Muḥammad ‘Āmilī takes up his grandfather’s task by exclusively focusing on the acts of worship. Muḥammad ‘Āmilī’s other work, *Nihāyat al-marām*, provides commentaries on the sections on marriage and divorce from al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ḥillī’s *al-Mukhtaṣar al-nāfi‘ fī fiqh al-imāmiyya*. Both of these books present Muḥammad ‘Āmilī’s attempt to base his legal views solely on what he considers as the most reliable form of *āḥād* reports, namely, *ṣaḥīḥ*. This contrasts with Ḥasan ‘Āmilī who had justified acting on *ḥasan* reports if they are accompanied by supporting evidence. In his commentaries on commenting on *Sharā’i‘ al-islām*, Muḥammad ‘Āmilī frequently points out the unreliability of the reports al-Ḥillī uses as support for his rulings. For instance, he rejects reports narrated by Sahl ibn Ziyād since he considered Sahl to be a “Sunni”.<sup>125</sup> This rejection is significant since Sahl appears in the chains of 2304 reports in the Four Books.<sup>126</sup> He similarly discredits Muḥammad ibn Sinān, transmitter of 797 reports in the Four Books,<sup>127</sup> because he considers Ibn Sinān to be an unreliable (*ḍa‘īf*) transmitter.<sup>128</sup>

Muḥammad ‘Āmilī’s assertion that a report’s veracity should only be determined on the basis of its chains of transmission,<sup>129</sup> that a transmitter’s probity is proved through the testimonies of at least two witnessed of recognized probity, and that only authentic reports must be acted on provoked the dissent of his contemporaries. Not all those who adhered to the fourfold division agreed with Shahīd Thānī, Ḥasan and Muḥammad ‘Āmilī. Their disagreements pertained either to the details of the framework or its application. An important representative of this departure is Bahā’ al-Dīn al-‘Āmilī.

<sup>122</sup> Hurr ‘Āmilī, *Amal al-āmil*, 1:167.

<sup>123</sup> On al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ḥillī and the influence of his *Sharā’i‘ al-islām* see Kohlberg’s brief and informative entry, “Najm al-Dīn Ḥelli”, in EIR, 7:169–170.

<sup>124</sup> Muḥammad al-Mūsawī al-‘Āmilī, *Madārik al-aḥkām* (Qom, 1410), 8:476. Numerous commentaries and marginalia have been written on *Madārik al-aḥkām*. Ṭīhrānī lists over 121 marginalia (see *al-Dharī‘a*, 6:196–231). Wāḥid Bihbahānī (d. 1206/1791) is amongst its best-known commentators (*al-Ḥāshiyā ‘alā Madārik al-aḥkām*, 3 vols. (Mashhad, 1419). See Hossein Modarressi, *Introduction to Shī‘i Law: A Bibliographical Study* (London, 1984), 84.

<sup>125</sup> Muḥammad al-‘Āmilī, *Madārik al-aḥkām*, 7:424.

<sup>126</sup> Abū al-Qāsim al-Khū‘ī, *Mu‘jam rijāl al-ḥadīth*, 8:341–2.

<sup>127</sup> al-Khū‘ī, *Mu‘jam rijāl al-ḥadīth*, 16:138.

<sup>128</sup> Muḥammad al-‘Āmilī, *Madārik al-aḥkām*, 1:50.

<sup>129</sup> It is to be noted that despite his *sanad*-centered approach to hadith authenticity, he does allow for consensus to redeem the content of a report with defective *sanad*. For instance, in commenting on a report he states that considering that the *sanad* includes Zaydī transmitters it cannot be acted on. “There would be, however, no objection [to this report]”, he writes, “if there was a consensus on this matter in such a way that it allows for no opposition”. See Muḥammad al-‘Āmilī, *Madārik al-aḥkām*, 2:85; also see 5:277–8.

## §5. Bahā'ī and the Four “Central” Books

An erudite and prolific author, Bahā'ī was born in 953/1547 in northern Lebanon. He was first and foremost educated by his father, Ḥārithī<sup>130</sup> who, in 971/1564, gave his son the permission to narrate hadith thirty years after he had received his own *ijāza* from Shahīd Thānī.<sup>131</sup> Due to the turbulence that had befallen the Shi'ī community of Lebanon, Bahā'ī emigrated to Iran at a young age. He rapidly progressed in his studies and by the age of thirty had already become the *shaykh al-islām* or the leading legal authority of Isfahan around 984/1576.<sup>132</sup> A man of letters, Bahā'ī wrote on a vast array of topics including law, legal theory, hadith, exegesis, adab, grammar, astronomy, and mathematics; he was also an accomplished poet in Persian and Arabic alike.<sup>133</sup> Bahā'ī's literary fame went far beyond Iran and his *Kashkūl* were widely the most widely popular books in the Sunni world.<sup>134</sup> Among his students were Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī (d. 1070), Sayyid Mājīd Baḥrānī, and Fayḍ Kāshānī all of whom played decisive roles in the Safavid hadith revival.

Bahā'ī's oeuvre indicates his persistent preoccupation with hadith. In addition to being a compiler and an interpreter of hadith, he also actively engaged in the discussions pertaining to the sciences of hadith initiated by Shahīd Thānī. Bahā'ī died in 1030/1621, nearly twenty years after Ḥasan 'Āmilī passing in 1011/1602–3. His writings on hadith during this period played a critical role in reorienting Shi'ī thinkers' approach from the framework articulated by Shahīd Thānī and his followers. Bahā'ī's criticisms are mild in tone and severe in content. He completes *Ḥabl al-matīn fī iḥkām aḥkām al-dīn* in 1007/1599.<sup>135</sup> Written a year after 'Āmilī's *Muntaqā*, this work is a commentary on more than 1000 reports pertaining to ritual cleansing and daily obligatory prayers.<sup>136</sup> The book is replete with *muwaththaq* reports, a major departure from his 'Āmilī predecessors who had considered such reports unreliable. Three years later, Bahā'ī composes *al-Wajīza* in 1010/1602; a treatise on the sciences of

<sup>130</sup> Bahā'ī presents his father as his teacher and point of reference in the “*al-ʿulūm al-sharʿiyya*”. See Bahā'ī, *al-Arbaʿun ḥadīthan* (Qom, 1431), 63.

<sup>131</sup> Afandī, *Riḡāḍ*, 5:166; Āqā Buzurg Ṭīhrānī, *Ṭabaqāt aʿlām al-shīʿa* (Beirut, 1971), 4:62.

<sup>132</sup> “A ṣayk-al-Eslām,” Brunner explains, “was appointed for every big city, and the ṣayk-al-Eslām of the Safavid capital assumed the role of *primus inter pares*. As the main function of this office was to enforce all matters of the Sharia (*ṣarīʿa*), especially to enjoin the good and prohibit the bad” (Rainer Brunner, “SHIʿITE DOCTRINE ii. Hierarchy in the Imāmiyya” in EIR). For more information on the post of *shaykh al-islām* see Rasūl Jafariyān, *Siyāsāt va farhang-i rūzgār-i ṣafavī*, 2 vols. (Tehran, 1388 sh.).

<sup>133</sup> On Bahā'ī's life and works see Etan Kohlberg, “Bahā' al-Dīn 'Āmilī” in EIR, 3:429–30; Stewart, “A Biographical Notice on Bahā' al-Dīn al-'Āmilī (d. 1030/1621),” *JAOS* 111 (1991), 563–71; idem, “Bahā' al-Dīn al-'Āmilī (1547–1621),” in Joseph E. Lowry and Devin J. Stewart (eds), *Dictionary of Literary Biography: Arabic Literary Culture, 1350–1850* (Wiesbaden, 2009), 27–48; idem, “*Taqīyya* as Performance: the Travels of Bahā' al-Dīn al-'Āmilī in the Ottoman Empire (991–3/1583–5),” *Princeton Papers in Near Eastern Studies* 4 (1996), 1–70; idem, “The Lost Biography of Bahā' al-Dīn al-'Āmilī and the Reign of Shah Ismaʿīl II in Safavid Historiography,” *Iranian Studies* 31 (1998), 177–205; Clifford E. Bosworth, *Bahā' al-Dīn al-'Āmilī and His Literary Anthologies* (Manchester, 1989); Andrew Newman, “Towards a Reconsideration of the ‘Isfahan School of Philosophy’: Shaykh Bahā'ī and the Role of the Safawid ‘Ulemā’,” *Studia Iranica* 15 (1986), 165–99; Saʿīd Nafīsī, *Aḥwāl va ashʿār-i fārsī-i Shaykh Bahā'ī* (Tehran, 1316 Sh/1937).

<sup>134</sup> Devin J. Stewart, “Kaškūl-e Ṣayk Bahā'ī,” EIR, 16:75–78.

<sup>135</sup> Āqā Buzurg Ṭīhrānī, *al-Dharīʿa*, 6:240–1.

<sup>136</sup> Although in introduction, Bahā'ī informs the reader that *Ḥabl al-matīn* will consist of four sections (*ʿibādāt*, *ʿuqūd*, *iqāʿāt*, and *aḥkām*), the book ends in discussing matters pertaining to obligatory prayers.

hadith, which he remarks was written with the purpose of serving as an introduction to *Ḥabl al-matīn*.<sup>137</sup> Next comes his influential *Mashriq al-shamsayn wa iksir al-sa'adatayn*, completed in 1015/1607.<sup>138</sup> *Mashriq* consists of four-hundred hadiths on ritual cleansing along with pertinent Qur'anic verses and Bahā'ī's own commentaries. It is in this book's preface that Bahā'ī contrasts his own views with Ḥasan 'Āmilī on a number of consequential issues. As we shall soon see, these criticisms are noted, appreciated, and quoted by Muḥammad Amīn Astarābādī, the founder of the Akhbārī movement.<sup>139</sup> Bahā'ī's other relevant book to discussions of hadith authenticity is a text on legal theory titled *Zubdat fi al-uṣūl al-fiqh* and completed in 1012/1603.<sup>140</sup> It is to be noted that prior to this period, Bahā'ī had composed a hadith compilation in 995/1587 titled *al-Arba'un ḥadithan*.<sup>141</sup> A thorough examination of Bahā'ī's views in these books requires a monograph. My aim in this section is to point out his similarities and divergences from his predecessors.

Bahā'ī, similar to Shahīd Thānī, Ḥārithī, and Ḥasan 'Āmilī, designates a privileged status to the Four Books. In *al-Wajīza*, he writes,

All of our hadiths – except in rare cases – are traceable back to our twelve Imams (God's peace on them all) and they trace the hadiths back to the Prophet (peace on him and his family) since their knowledge is attained from that niche...our ancient hadith transmitters (God be pleased with them) gathered those hadiths reaching them from our Imams (God's peace on them all) in Four-Hundred Books called the *uṣūl*. Afterwards, a group of later scholars (thank God for their efforts) assumed the task of gathering and arranging those books in order to consolidate them and make them accessible to the seekers of those reports. Hence, they compiled comprehensive and well-organized books and sources accurate and refined, which also contain the reports' transmission chains that connect them to the infallibles (God's peace on them). These books include *al-Kāfī*, *Man lā yaḥḍuruhu al-faqīh*, *al-Tahdhīb*, *al-Istibṣār*, *Madīnat al-ilm*, *al-Khiṣāl*, *al-Amālī*, *Uyūn al-akhbār*,<sup>142</sup> and others. The first are the Four Sources (*al-uṣūl al-arba'a*), which are the central works in these times.<sup>143</sup>

In *Mashriq al-shamsayn*, he provides the same description for the Four Books as the central works in these times. He proceeds to explain that in composing this book he will only rely on the authentic reports pertaining to *aḥkām al-shar'īyya* found in these four sources. In this way, he claims, his book stands as “a canon/law (*qānūn*) for the men of religion of the saved Imāmī sect, and an edict (*dustūr*) upon which legal experts (*mujtahid*) rely for deriving the important legal matters. I have devoted my

<sup>137</sup> Āqā Buzurg Ṭīhrānī, *al-Dharī'a*, 25:51.

<sup>138</sup> Bahā' al-Dīn 'Āmilī, *Mashriq al-shamsayn wa iksir al-sa'adatayn* (Mashhad, 1429), 480.

<sup>139</sup> Muḥammad Amīn Astarābādī, *Fawā'id al-madaniyya*, 120.

<sup>140</sup> Bahā' al-Dīn 'Āmilī, *Zubdat fi al-uṣūl al-fiqh* (Qom, 1423), 173.

<sup>141</sup> Āqā Buzurg Ṭīhrānī, *al-Dharī'a*, 1:425–6.

<sup>142</sup> The last four mentioned compilations are composed by Ibn Bābūya. In contrast to his father, Bahā'ī does not mention *Madīnat al-ilm* among the foundational sources even though he is the last person to claim to have had access to this book. It is to be noted that neither in his own writings and nor that of his father is there a single quotation from *Madīnat al-ilm*. Quotations from this book are found in Ibn Ṭāwūs, which are then cited in al-Majlisī's *Biḥār al-anwār*.

<sup>143</sup> Bahā' al-Dīn 'Āmilī, “*al-Wajīza*”, in *Ḥabl al-matīn*, 1:29–30.

utmost effort so that nothing *shādh* from the authentic legal reports is found in this book”.<sup>144</sup> Having stated that *Mashriq al-shamsayn* will only consist of authentic reports, next he considers the factors that constitute a report authentic.

According to Bahā’ī, whereas modern scholars divide the reports into four categories, the ancient scholars were not familiar with this fourfold division or terms such as sound (*ḥasan*) and reliable (*muwaththaq*). For them, a report was either authentic or unreliable (*ḍa‘īf*). A report would be considered authentic if it is accompanied by supporting evidence that establish its authenticity as the word of the Imam; an unreliable (*ḍa‘īf*) report would lack such supporting evidence.<sup>145</sup> Shahīd Thānī and Ḥasan ‘Āmilī had also drawn attention to the different standards of hadith authenticity prevalent amongst ancient and modern scholars.<sup>146</sup> Bahā’ī, however, provides a more detailed outline of the supporting indicants on which ancient scholars had relied.

In *Mashriq al-shamsayn* Bahā’ī outlines five of such indicants utilized by ancient scholars to establish a report’s authenticity: (1) if a report appeared in many of the “four-hundred foundational sources” that were narrated to them by their hadith masters (*mashāyikh*) in an unbroken chain of transmission all the way back to the Infallibles; (2) a report’s repeated appearance in one, two or more of the “four-hundred foundational sources” through different transmission paths (*ṭuruq*) and many credible transmission chains (*asānīd ‘adīda mu‘tabira*); (3) the appearance of a report in a source with a well-attested attribution to an individual whose truthfulness is a matter of consensus amongst the Imāmī community;<sup>147</sup> or there is a consensus that a report is authentic if certain individuals affirm it as such;<sup>148</sup> or there is a consensus that sanctions acting on the reports transmitted by certain individuals;<sup>149</sup> (4) a report is authentic if it appears in a book that has been presented to one of the Imams and the Imam has praised the book’s compiler. According to Bahā’ī, ‘Ubayd Allāh al-Ḥalabī’s book was presented to Imam al-Ṣādiq and the books of Yūnus ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān and Faḍl ibn Shadhān were presented to the eleventh Imam, al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī; (5) ancient scholars would accept a report to be authentic if it is found in any of the books that were widely considered trustworthy and relied upon by their predecessors. This acceptance did not depend on whether the book in question was compiled by an Imāmī such as Ḥarīz ibn ‘Abd Allāh Sijistānī or by a non-Imāmī such as Ḥafṣ ibn Ghiyāth al-Qāḍī.

Bahā’ī concludes that Ibn Bābūya, “head of the hadith transmitters”, abided by the ancient scholars’ methods and designated the authenticity to any report that through various means, such as the five outlined above, he established as reliable. He writes that it is due to this approach that Ibn Bābūya in the preface to *al-Faqīh* proclaims the authenticity of all the reports included in his

<sup>144</sup> Bahā’ al-Dīn al-‘Āmilī, *Mashriq al-shamsayn*, 20–1. He concludes the preface by stating that he will explain the intended meanings of these reports through the pertinent verses from the Qur’an.

<sup>145</sup> Bahā’ al-Dīn al-‘Āmilī, *Mashriq al-shamsayn*, 24–6.

<sup>146</sup> Ḥasan ‘Āmilī, *Muntaqā*, 1:3.

<sup>147</sup> Bahā’ī refers to example of Zurāra, Muḥammad ibn Muslim, and al-Fuḍayl ibn Yasār are examples of such individuals.

<sup>148</sup> He lists Ṣafwān ibn Yahyā, Yūnus ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān and Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Naṣr as such figures.

<sup>149</sup> He gives ‘Ammār al-Sābāṭī as the example of such figure. According to this view, a report transmitted by ‘Ammār would be considered authentic since there is a consensus to act on ‘Ammār’s transmitted reports. He notes that Shaykh Ṭūsī has provided examples of other such transmitters in his *Uddat al-uṣūl* and al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ḥillī has narrated them through Ṭūsī. For al-Muḥaqqiq see, *al-Mu‘tabar*, 1:60.

compilation and mentions that he has gathered the reports from well-known books that are considered reliable and serve as the point of reference.<sup>150</sup>

Having explained the method of ancient scholars, Bahā'ī turns to their successors. He points out that modern scholars departed from the ancient framework and replaced the twofold with a fourfold division. In his view, this development ensued from the time-gap that separated them from the early scholars. This gap, he remarks, had left damaging effects. He explains, since the Shi'is often lived under oppressive regimes, due to the fear of consequences, they were unable to disseminate and preserve their hadith heritage. This led to the gradual disappearance of many trustworthy texts. As a result, reports from reliable and unreliable sources got mixed together. Moreover, many of the supporting indicants that were available to ancient scholars and aided them in verifying the authenticity of numerous reports became lost to their successors. He concludes that faced with this situation, modern scholars perceived the need to devise a method (*qānūn*) in order to distinguish the unreliable from the reliable reports. "They devised this new terminology – thank God for their efforts – and in doing so they brought us closer to the distant past".<sup>151</sup> The new terminology Bahā'ī mentions refers to the division of reports into *ṣaḥīḥ*, *ḥasan*, and *muwaththaq*.

According to Bahā'ī, the first Shi'ī scholar to introduce this new approach was Ḥasan ibn Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī.<sup>152</sup> He argues that the introduction of the new verification method did not entirely efface the twofold division. He avers that modern scholars, despite the adoption of the fourfold division, would at times use the ancient scholars' criteria and take factors other than a report's transmission chain into consideration for determining the report's reliability. For instance, modern scholars deem the *mursal* narrations of some prominent companion such as Ibn Abī 'Umayr and Ṣafwān ibn Yaḥyā to be authentic even though judging only by their defective transmission chains these reports should be considered unreliable (*ḍa'īf*). But since, the argument goes, Ibn Abī 'Umayr and Ṣafwān ibn Yaḥyā are known to only narrate from trustworthy narrators, the *mursal* status of their transmissions does not render their reports unreliable (*ḍa'īf*). As another example, Bahā'ī provides the case of some non-Imāmī transmitters whose reports are considered authentic even though modern scholar's definition of authenticity sanctions only Imāmī transmitters.<sup>153</sup> As a concrete support for this position, Bahā'ī points to al-Ḥillī who despite being the first Imāmī scholar to advocate the fourfold division, in his book *al-Mukhtalaḥ* he gives credence to a report transmitted by a non-Imāmī.<sup>154</sup>

As a general rule, however, al-Ḥillī and his followers defined authentic as a report with a continuous chain of transmission where all the narrators are Imāmī and trustworthy.<sup>155</sup> His successors (such as, Shahīd Awwal, Shahīd Thānī, Ḥārithī and Ḥasan 'Āmilī) adopted the same definition albeit

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<sup>150</sup> Bahā' al-Dīn al-'Āmilī, *Mashriq al-shamsayn*, 26–30. In his marginalia on *al-Faqīh*, Bahā'ī provides a defense of Ibn Bābūya and the reliability of his transmissions. See Bahā' al-Dīn al-'Āmilī, *al-Ḥāshīyya 'alā kitāb Man lā yaḥḍuruḥu al-faqīh* (Qom, 1424/2003).

<sup>151</sup> Bahā' al-Dīn al-'Āmilī, *Mashriq al-shamsayn*, 30–31.

<sup>152</sup> As mention in the previous section, Ḥasan 'Āmilī considers al-Ḥillī's predecessor, Ibn Ṭāwūs as the first Imāmī scholar to adopt this method.

<sup>153</sup> Bahā' al-Dīn al-'Āmilī, *Mashriq al-shamsayn*, 31–2.

<sup>154</sup> Bahā' al-Dīn al-'Āmilī, *Mashriq al-shamsayn*, 34–5.

<sup>155</sup> Ḥasan al-Ḥillī, *Muntahā al-maṭlab fī taḥqīq al-madhhab* (Mashhad, 1429), 1:9–10.

with minor modifications.<sup>156</sup> In agreement with Ḥasan ‘Āmilī and in contrast to Ḥārithī, Bahā’ī does not hold that a report’s *shādh* content disqualifies it as authentic even if all the other requirements are fulfilled.<sup>157</sup> Bahā’ī’s understanding of hadith authenticity is identical with Ḥasan ‘Āmilī – the transmission chain must be continuous and the transmitters must be Imāmī, trustworthy, and *ḍābiṭ*. Agreeing with his father Ḥārithī, Bahā’ī argues that the definition of authenticity must require that in addition to being Imāmī and trustworthy, the transmitters must all be *ḍābiṭ*. He concurs with al-Ḥillī who in his *al-Nihāya fī uṣūl* presents *ḍabṭ* as the most important attribute required of a transmitter. Bahā’ī is aware that not all transmitters who Imāmī scholars deem to be reliable are explicitly described as *ḍābiṭ*. He remarks, if someone asks what should be done if *rijāl* scholars have described a transmitter as *thiqa* without explicitly mentioning that he was also a *ḍābiṭ*? He responds that whenever *rijāl* scholars describe someone as *thiqa* they mean that he is both ‘*adl* and *ḍābiṭ*. This is because no transmitter would be described as *thiqa* if he is known for committing errors in his transmission since in that case his transmissions could not be trusted; the point of describing someone as *thiqa*, however, is to indicate that his reports are trustworthy.<sup>158</sup> The issue of ‘*adl* leads him to take a position regarding an issue that since Ḥasan ‘Āmilī had become controversial: what is the criterion for establishing a reporter’s probity (‘*adl*)?

According to Bahā’ī, most Imāmī scholars demand the assertion of one truthful individual for determining a narrator’s truthfulness. A minority, he writes, demand two testimonies. As pointed out earlier, al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ḥillī and Ḥasan ‘Āmilī are amongst the minority who require two individuals since in their view assertions concerning another person’s moral probity is tantamount to bearing witness before a judge in court. According to this position, since the Qur’an considers a testimony valid once it is affirmed by at least two witnesses, a reporter’s probity is likewise established once two individuals testify to his probity. Bahā’ī disagrees with this position. Referring to “some of the excellent contemporary scholars”,<sup>159</sup> he writes they are wrong to require two testimonies since one assertion suffices to establish a reporter’s probity. In support of his position, Bahā’ī provides the arguments that Shahīd Thānī had already presented in *al-Ri’āya*.<sup>160</sup>

Bahā’ī accompanies these arguments with another major criticism that on the one hand Ḥasan ‘Āmilī considers a report to be authentic only when two or more individuals bear witness to the probity of its transmitters, yet the source that provides the accounts of the witnesses’ testimonies is the *rijāl* literature. Bahā’ī finds reliance on *rijāl* literature to be in conflict with the first criterion.

You are aware that the *rijāl* scholars whose books have reached us in this time all transmit the information provided in their books regarding the verification of the majority of transmitters from other sources. Hence, the agreement between two of them concerning the veracity of a particular reporter is of no use in deciding a report to be authentic unless it is proven that the

<sup>156</sup> Shahīd Awwal, *Dhikra*, 5:12–3; Shahīd Thānī, *al-Ri’āya*, 21; Ḥārithī, *Wuṣūl al-akhyār*, 135; Ḥasan ‘Āmilī, *Ma’ālim al-uṣūl*, 216; idem, *Muntaqā*, 1:4–8; Muḥammad al-‘Āmilī, *Madārik al-aḥkām*, 8:479.

<sup>157</sup> Bahā’ al-Dīn ‘Āmilī, “al-Wajīzat fī ‘ilm al-dirāya”, in *Ḥabl al-matīn iḥkām aḥkām al-dīn* (Mashhad, 1429), 1:22. Also see *Zubdat al-uṣūl* (Qom, 1425), 95.

<sup>158</sup> Bahā’ al-Dīn ‘Āmilī, *Mashriq al-shamsayn*, 35–40.

<sup>159</sup> Bahā’ al-Dīn ‘Āmilī, *Mashriq al-shamsayn*, 46.

<sup>160</sup> Bahā’ al-Dīn ‘Āmilī, *Mashriq al-shamsayn*, 40–5.

authors of these *rijāl* books also refrained from considering a reporter to be reliable on the basis of one truthful person. This, however, is very difficult to establish and indeed its opposite appears to be true since ‘Allāma [al-Ḥillī] in his books on jurisprudence has explicitly mentioned that the assertion of a single individual is sufficient. What is also gained from the views of al-Kashshī, al-Najāshī, al-Shaykh [al-Ṭūsī], Ibn Ṭāwūs, and others is that in announcing a transmitter as reliable or unreliable they would rely on the word of one individual. This is clear to anyone who has gone through their books.<sup>161</sup>

Hence, Bahā’ī argues, if one were to agree with the requirement of two witnesses, the *rijāl* books would not provide a firm basis for determining the veracity of those appearing in a report’s transmission chain even if there is agreement between two or more *rijāl* scholars concerning the probity of a particular transmitter. This is because, there is no guarantee that in composing their books, *rijāl* scholars enquired the testimony of two truthful individuals before they announced a particular transmitter as reliable or unreliable. In Bahā’ī’s view, the reverse in fact has been the case.

Bahā’ī’s disagreement with Ḥasan ‘Āmilī’s criterion of probity (*‘adāla*) is a minor issue compared to their diverging approaches to determining the reliability status of reports quoted in the Four Books. As discussed above, in Bahā’ī’s view, ancient scholars considered a report authentic when they were able to establish its authenticity through various pieces of evidence available to them. These pieces of evidence went beyond the reports’ transmission chains and the information provided in the *rijāl* books. He also notes that even modern scholars such as Ḥillī who adhere to the fourfold division, would “at times” allow for *exceptions*.<sup>162</sup> What is “at times” for Ḥillī, however, becomes “most of the times” for Bahā’ī.

From his predecessors, Ṭūsī in particular had a major influence on Bahā’ī’s view on hadith authenticity. Ṭūsī’s advocated framework in his *Istibṣār* and *Uddat al-uṣūl* allowed for the possibility that a report be authentic even if its transmission chain is defective, its transmitters are non-Imāmī, or its transmitters are deemed unreliable. He justified this position by arguing that besides a report’s chains of transmission, other supporting indicants can assist in establishing a report’s authenticity. For instance, he was in favor of using reports narrated by non-Imāmī transmitters, if such reports have accompanying support for their validity.<sup>163</sup> For a scholar who adheres to what Bahā’ī presents as the ancient scholar’s framework, it is a report’s *supporting indicants* and not only the status of its chains of transmission that determine its authenticity. This view is in stark opposition to the framework elaborated by Ḥillī and more specifically with the versions put forth by Shahīd Thānī and Ḥasan ‘Āmilī. Despite his approval of modern scholar’s development of the fourfold division, and his remark that the ancient model is no longer tenable, in practice Bahā’ī is to a great extent an advocate of the ancient model.<sup>164</sup> The crux of his disagreement with Shahīd Thānī and Ḥasan ‘Āmilī revolves around what has become known as *qawā’id ‘āmm tawthīq* or the rules of mass authentication. These rules refer to the

<sup>161</sup> Bahā’ al-Dīn ‘Āmilī, *Mashriq al-shamsayn*, 46–7.

<sup>162</sup> Bahā’ al-Dīn ‘Āmilī, *Mashriq al-shamsayn*, 32.

<sup>163</sup> Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, *Udda*, 1:154.

<sup>164</sup> In a recent article, Ahmad Pakatchi has noted Bahā’ī’s proclivities to the ancient method. See, Ahmad Pakatchi, “Naqd-i mu’tadil bar uṣūliyya nazd-i shaykh Bahā’ī”, in Ahmad Pakatchi, *Ta’āmulātī dar mabāḥiṭh-i farhang-i islāmī* (Tehran, 1993), 161–187.

supporting indicants that are used as evidence of a report's authenticity. Bahā'ī is amongst the first scholars since Ṭūsī to put a strong emphasis on non-*sanad* evidence and as a result authenticate numerous reports *en masse*. A few examples bring to surface Bahā'ī's differences with Shahīd Thānī and his followers.

In contrast to Ḥasan 'Āmilī's categorical rejection of *mursal* narrations, Bahā'ī justifies the reliability of a large number of such reports. According to Bahā'ī, the *mursal* narrations of Ibn Bābūya, similar to those of Ibn Abī 'Umayr, are authoritative.<sup>165</sup> This is because the veracity of these two individuals is so evident that the *mursal* status of their narrations does not render them unreliable. In his commentary on *al-Faqīh*, Bahā'ī states that more than a third of Ibn Bābūya's quoted reports in *al-Faqīh* – which he numbers at 2050 – are *mursal*. Nevertheless, he maintains that the *mursal* of the trustworthy transmitters are reliable, and such reports should not be disregarded simply due to their *mursal* status. This is, the argument goes, because the reliability of the transmitter has priority over the precision of the transmission chains. In Bahā'ī's view, since Ibn Bābūya is known as a reliable transmitter and has personally attested to the trustworthiness of his narrations in *al-Faqīh*, the reports narrated in this compilation are reliable despite the fact that more than a third of them are *mursal*.<sup>166</sup> The idea is that since Ibn Bābūya was a prominent hadith scholar he would not just narrate from anyone unless he believed the transmitter to be trustworthy. Hence, if certain reports in his compilation are technically *mursal*, that is not because Ibn Bābūya did not have access to a full transmission chains but because he was certain of the transmitters' veracity and did not perceive a need to cite the transmission chain in full.<sup>167</sup> Although such an argument had already been put forth concerning Ibn Abī 'Umar, Bahā'ī seems to be the first person who explicitly justifies relying on Ibn Bābūya's *mursal* reports. Shahīd Thānī considered only 1000 hadiths of *al-Kāfī* to be authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*); his estimate of *Faqīh* would be even lower since Ibn Bābūya is generally held in lower esteem than Kulaynī partly because he is not described as *thiqa* in *rijāl* literature (neither is he discredited). For Bahā'ī, however, the reliability of Ibn Bābūya reports are established through supporting indicants besides the reports' transmission chains.

Bahā'ī's position is in contrast with Ḥasan 'Āmilī who had argued against taking recourse to supporting indicants such as *shuhra* as a means of validating reports with defective transmission chains. In *Muntaqā*, he criticizes those who, while adhering to the fourfold division maintain that a report would be considered authentic if its transmission path is clear of discredits (*ṭa'n*) even if its chains of transmission contains *irsāl* or *qaṭ'*. It would be logical for those who advocate the two-fold division to argue this point but not those who advocate the fourfold model. Ḥārithī notes that such instances are rare and provides the example of the reports narrated by the prominent companion, Ibn Abī 'Umayr whose narrations are considered authentic even though they contain *irsāl* in their chains or *qaṭ'* in their *matn*.<sup>168</sup> Ḥasan 'Āmilī, similar to his father Shahīd Thānī, finds this argument unpersuasive and argues

<sup>165</sup> Bahā' al-Dīn al-'Āmilī, *Ḥabl al-matīn*, 1:59.

<sup>166</sup> Bahā' al-Dīn al-'Āmilī, *al-Ḥāshiyā 'alā kitāb man lā yaḥḍuruḥu l-faqīh* (Qom, 1424), 35–6.

<sup>167</sup> Mīr Dāmād provides the same argument in Ibn Bābūya's defense. He writes that when Ibn Bābūya quotes a hadith directly from the Imam and does not cite the intermediary transmitters, that means he had confidence (*jazm*) or a suspicion (*ẓann*) that the source of this report was indeed the Imam. Hence, he considers the narrators who have been eliminated from the chains of transmission to be morally upright (*'ādil*). Were this not the case, ruling in confidence to trace the report back to the Imam would go against his elevated stature and probity. See, Mīr Dāmād, *al-Rawāshih al-samāwīyya* (Qom, 1422), 255.

<sup>168</sup> Ḥārithī, *Wuṣūl al-akhyār*, 135–6; Muḥammad 'Āmilī, *Madārik*, 8:479.

that to concede to this position would render the fourfold division redundant.<sup>169</sup> The purpose of the fourfold division, is to distinguish the authentic reports from others based on the reliability of its transmission chain. If authenticity can also be applied to reports with defective transmission chain, then the fourfold division becomes superfluous (this approach would go against the very reason for which the fourfold division was put forth). Hence, Ḥasan ‘Āmilī *categorically* rejects *mursal* narrations regardless of whether or not the reporter is known for not transmitting *mursal* reports unless he considers the intermediary transmitter to be ‘*ādil*. He notes that his father Shahīd Thānī as well as ‘Allāma Ḥillī also adhered to this position. He notes that Ṭūsī had argued that if it is known that the transmitter only does *irsāl* from ‘*ādil* reporters, his narrations must *categorically* be accepted.

Ṭūsī had provided the following argument: what should be done when there are two conflicting hadiths and one of the two narrators cites the full transmission chains for his report and the other provides a *mursal* chain.<sup>170</sup> Whereas some would designate a categorical preference for the report with a *musnad* chain, Ṭūsī advocates a more nuanced position. In his view, in the case of *irsāl* we might be able to determine, on the basis of the status of the narrator, that he would not simply narrate a report from anyone. The assumption is that a transmitter of Ibn Abī ‘Umayr’s status would not narrate a *mursal* hadith from someone he did not have full confidence in his trustworthiness. In cases where the *mursal* hadith is narrated via highly esteemed narrators such as Ibn Abī ‘Umayr (d. 217/822–3), Ṣafwān ibn Yaḥyā (d. 210/836), and Aḥmad ibn Abī Naṣr Bazanṭī (d. 221/825–6), there is no reason to set aside the reports just because it is *mursal*. In such cases, their *mursal* reports can be trusted (“*mursalāt* Ibn Abī ‘Umayr are like the *mustanad* of others”).<sup>171</sup> Ṭūsī here says that their *irsāl* is accepted due to their canonized status in *fiqh*. But if the narrator is someone that we cannot easily trust, then we must suspend judgment (*tawaqquf*) unless there is supporting evidence that establishes the obligation to act on the report. In any case, *mursal* reports should not easily be set aside due to their defective transmission chains. According to Ṭūsī, since in proving the permission to act on *akhbār āḥād* we relied on the ‘*amal al-ṭā’ifa*; again, we see the *ṭā’ifa* acting on *khābar wāḥid musnad* as well as *khābar wāḥid mursal*. If someone objects to *khābar wāḥid mursal* he should also abandon *khābar wāḥid musnad* since the validity of both is established on the basis of ‘*amal ṭā’ifa*.<sup>172</sup>

Ḥasan ‘Āmilī, similar to Shahīd Thānī, finds this view unpersuasive. He argues, amongst the requirements for accepting a report as reliable is that its transmitters be ‘*ādil*; the only means to establish

<sup>169</sup> Ḥasan ‘Āmilī, *Muntaqā*, 1:12–3.

<sup>170</sup> Where did *mursal* hadiths come from? One reason is due to the narrators’ desire for refraining from providing their sources. In this way they could narrate a hadith without providing the evidence which could be subjected to examination in regard to the authenticity of its chain. This often stemmed from a narrator’s aim to fabricate a hadith. Another reason for *mursal* hadiths was due to challenges with reading the handwriting of old manuscripts. At times, later generations were unable to read the exact name of a narrator; instead of explicitly pointing to this difficulty they would drop the entire link in the chain and would replace it with “*an rajulun*” (from a man). An awareness of these challenges provided another incentive for preferring *sam’* over textual transmission because if there was *sam’* the narrator would have to cite the name of all the narrators in the chain. Interestingly, there are instances where we see that although in a later manuscript the chain contains “*an rajulun*”, in an older manuscript the name of the narrator is present.

<sup>171</sup> Some have retraced the doctrine of *aṣḥāb ijma’* to this passage. After the emergence of the Akhbārī movement in the sixteenth century, there has been a debate as to whether all the narrations of *aṣḥāb ijma’* are *thiqa* or whether both their *mashāyikh* and all the narrators appearing in the chains are *thiqa* as well. I will examine this issue in Chapter 3.

<sup>172</sup> Ṭūsī, *Uddat al-uṣūl*, 1:154–5.

this is through the transmission chain; if a transmitter is missing from the chain, there is no way to establish his veracity. Even if the truthfulness of the person who is transmitting from this unnamed person is well-established, that does not guarantee that he might not have made a mistake in considering this particular person to be *‘ādil*. This is because there are cases where an *‘ādil* person transmits from truthful as well as untruthful individuals. Hence, in contrast to what Ṭūsī argues, even if we grant that an *‘ādil* person only narrates from other *‘ādil* reporters, this is based on the *‘ādil* person’s belief that those whom he is narrating from are *‘ādil*. This belief, however, does not provide a sufficient ground for others to trust his judgements. Hence, Ḥasan ‘Āmilī concludes, Ṭūsī and ‘Allāma Ḥillī are wrong to argue that the *mursal* narrations of a renowned transmitter such as Ibn Abī ‘Umayr must be accepted. He maintains that if Ṭūsī and others hold Ibn Abī ‘Umayr narrate *mursal* reports only from *‘ādil* narrators only because Ibn Abī ‘Umayr has himself made this claim, then this claim is based on his testimony alone. As discussed earlier, for Ḥasan ‘Āmilī *‘adāla* must be established on the basis of at least two testimonies. But if, he continues, the knowledge that Ibn Abī ‘Umayr narrates *mursal* reports only from *‘ādil* transmitters is established on the basis of other means that establish he indeed does narrates only from trustworthy individuals, then this knowledge changes the status of his reports from *mursal* to *musnad*. Ṭūsī had argued that the validity of acting on the *mursal* reports of those known to transmit only from trustworthy individuals is established on the basis of *‘amal ṭā’ifa*. Ḥasan ‘Āmilī responds invoking *‘amal ṭā’ifa* for any particular position carries weight once it is established through consensus that the community indeed did act on the *mursal* reports of certain individuals and not on others. But such consensus, he concludes, is lacking in this case.

Another feature of Bahā’ī’s approach to the Four Books is his acceptance of a report’s *shuhra* among Imāmī scholars as evidence for its reliability.<sup>173</sup> This doctrine is known as *shuhra ‘amalī*: if it is well-known that the Imams’ companions acted on a given report it becomes reliable even if its chains of transmission is defective. Moreover, if it is well-known that the Imams’ companions refrained from acting on a report it loses its *hujja* even if its transmission chain is sound. To adhere to this doctrine has significant consequences on the scope of hadiths deemed authentic since *shuhra* is used in order to make up for the deficiencies found in the transmission chains that would otherwise render such reports unreliable. Bahā’ī’s take on this issue, however, is similar to Shahīd Awwal who on numerous occasions had invoked *shuhra* as a means of verifying unreliable reports.<sup>174</sup> This includes reports with *mursal* transmission chains as well as those with discredited transmitters. In his view, a well-known *ḍa’if* report has precedence over an authentic report that is not well-attested. He defends Ṭūsī’s reliance on non-Imāmī transmitted reports and argues that it was due to these reports’ *shuhra* that Ṭūsī sanctioned their use.<sup>175</sup> He avers, the criterion on acting on a report is its *shuhra* among Imāmī scholars and hence non-Imāmī transmitters do not render it unreliable. Shahīd Awwal’s successor, al-Muḥaqqiq ‘Alī al-Karakī (d. 940/1534) also designated precedence to *shuhra* over *sanad*.<sup>176</sup>

Bahā’ī’s advocacy of *shuhra* as a means of hadith authentication contrasts with Shahīd Thānī and Ḥasan ‘Āmilī. In their view, it is a report’s transmission chain and not scholars’ widespread reliance

<sup>173</sup> For instance, he argues that although ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Kathīr is deemed a *ḍa’if* narrator in the *rijāl* literature, his report is reliable since it is *mashhūr* among the Imāmis.

<sup>174</sup> Shahīd Awwal, *Dhikra*, 5:218.

<sup>175</sup> Shahīd Awwal, *Dhikra*, 5:16.

<sup>176</sup> Muḥaqqiq al-Karakī, *al-Kharājīyyāt*, 48, 79.

on it that determines its status; *shuhra*, no matter how widespread, does not remedy a *sanad*'s deficiency. As discussed in §1, Shahīd Thānī rejects *shuhra* *futwāyī* as a means of deciding a report's reliability. He argues that the rulings claimed as well-known today, were not considered as such prior to Ṭūsī. According to Shahīd Thānī, Ṭūsī's immediate successors, due to his hegemonic influence, blindly followed him as did the majority of later scholars except a minority such as Ibn Idrīs who criticized Ṭūsī's reliance on *āḥād* reports.<sup>177</sup> In Shahīd Thānī's view, what Ṭūsī's successors have claimed as *shuhra* are indeed Ṭūsī's own legal rulings, and as such are not authoritative. He notes that if *shuhra* reaches the level of consensus (*ijmā'*), then it verifies a report's reliability but even in that case it is the consensus rather than the report that serves as proof for action.<sup>178</sup> Hence, *shuhra* does not make up for deficient transmission chains. It is to be kept in mind that Shahīd Thānī and Ḥasan 'Āmilī's rejection of *shuhra* is not categorical. They allow for reliance on evidence from *shuhra* found amongst Imāmī scholars preceding Ṭūsī. This is because the scholars who were the Imams' companions or lived during the occultation up to Ṭūsī, due to their proximity to the Imams would not issue their rulings on the basis of reports they knew to be unreliable. It must be kept in mind that limiting the authority of *shuhra* to pre-Ṭūsī scholars severely restricts its scope as an authenticity-granting mechanism.

Bahā'ī plays an instrumental role in reorienting Shi'ī scholarship from *sanad* analysis to reliance on *shuhra* as means of hadith authentication. In contrast to Shahīd Thānī, Bahā'ī does not limit the means of determining a narrator's credibility to the information provided in the transmission chains (e.g., he considers the *mursal* narrations of Ṣadūq, Ibn Abī 'Umayr and *aṣḥāb ijmā'* as reliable). He argues that the narrations of non-Imāmī transmitters should not be categorically rejected, and therefore, designates *hujja* to *muwaththaq* narrations.<sup>179</sup> It is to be noted that from Ṭūsī to Bahā'ī, the majority of Imāmī scholars considered *muwaththaq* reports to lack authority. Al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ḥillī disagreed with Ṭūsī and in *al-Mu'tabar* deemed the reports narrated by non-Imāmīs as *ḍa'īf*.<sup>180</sup> 'Allāma Ḥillī, while agreeing with al-Muḥaqqiq, allowed certain exceptions for individuals such as 'Abd Allāh ibn Bukayr and Abān ibn 'Uthmān who although are non-Imāmī considering that their veracity is supported by the community's consensus, their reports must be considered trustworthy.<sup>181</sup> Ardabilī also agreed with 'Allāma Ḥillī on this issue. Bahā'ī, however, goes against this trend, and argues that the reasons provided for the authority of *wāḥid* reports are applicable to *ṣaḥīḥ*, *ḥasan*, and *muwaththaq* alike.<sup>182</sup> He does the same for the *ḍa'īf* reports that in his view are accompanied with indicants establishing the Imams as the sources of the reports.

In addition to de-emphasizing the importance of transmission chains and designating credence to other supporting evidence in establishing a report's authenticity, Bahā'ī also departed from some major *rijāl* principles of his predecessors. For instance, while he thinks the discredit of a transmitter by a non-Imāmī is not credible, he takes the crediting of a non-Imāmī as a supporting proof of a transmitter's truthfulness. This goes against the view of Shahīd Thānī and his followers who would consider both the credit and discredit to be unreliable since the person is not Imāmī and hence is not

<sup>177</sup> Zayn al-Dīn al-'Āmilī, *Sharḥ al-bidāya fī 'ilm al-dirāya*, 29.

<sup>178</sup> Zayn al-Dīn al-'Āmilī, *Rawḍ al-janān fī sharḥ irshād adhhān*, 1109.

<sup>179</sup> Bahā' al-Dīn 'Āmilī, *Mashriq*, 56–67/213–6; on non-Imāmī transmitters; *Mashriq*, 249; *Ḥabl al-matīn*, 11.

<sup>180</sup> al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ḥillī, *al-Mu'tabar*, 119, 62, 87, 210.

<sup>181</sup> Al-'Allāma al-Ḥillī, *Khulāṣat al-rijāl*, 106 and 202; *Mukhtalaf al-Shī'a*, 1:31 and 71; 'Āmilī, *Ma'ālim al-uṣūl*, 200.

<sup>182</sup> Bahā' al-Dīn 'Āmilī, *al-Wajīza*, 34.

‘*adl*.<sup>183</sup> Another example of Bahā’ī’s laxity is his view regarding the status of Ibrāhīm ibn Hāshim al-Qummī for whom no *ta’dil*, *tawthīq*, or even *madh* has been mentioned in *rijāl* literature.<sup>184</sup> How does Bahā’ī justify al-Qummī’s reliability? He argues that the description of al-Qummī as “the first person to promulgate hadith of the Kufans in Qom” is in itself the highest status of credibility.<sup>185</sup> In his monumental *rijāl* work, *Tanqīh al-maqāl*, ‘Abd Allāh Māmaqānī (d. 1351/1933) explains why many scholars have found this description – “the first person to promulgate hadith of the Kufans in Qom” – particularly significant. According to Māmaqānī, during al-Qummī’s time, if a transmitter would narrate a report from a discredited (*ḍa’if*) individual, others would cease to trust this transmitter and would even banish him from their city. He notes, transmitting from a *fāsiq* person or one with corrupt beliefs would prompt even a harsher reaction. This indicates, he concludes, that promulgating reports hadith amongst Qummī scholars – widely known for their stringent criteria for hadith authenticity – is an illustration of Ibrāhīm’s elevated stature even though he is not explicitly describes by *rijāl* scholars with terms such as *‘adāla* and *thiqa*.<sup>186</sup> Mīr Dāmād provides similar arguments concerning Ibrāhīm ibn Hāshim al-Qummī.<sup>187</sup>

One’s position on Ibrāhīm ibn Hāshim has major consequences on the status of reports found in *al-Kāfī*. From over sixteen thousand reports quoted in *al-Kāfī*, nearly a third have ‘Alī ibn Ibrāhīm al-Qummī (d. after 307/919) in their transmission chains.<sup>188</sup> ‘Alī was Ibrāhīm’s son and amongst Kulaynī’s hadith masters. A contemporary of the eleventh,<sup>189</sup> he was considered a trustworthy transmitter and was a celebrated teacher in Qom. To undermine Ibrāhīm would be to undermine ‘Alī’s status since it is chiefly through the father that his son’s transmissions reach others.<sup>190</sup> Shahīd Thānī is not hesitant in denying credibility to Ibrāhīm al-Qummī. He argues against those who consider Ibrāhīm as *thiqa* since in Shahīd’s view a narrator is *thiqa* once he is described as such in the *rijāl* literature. In his view, Ibrāhīm ibn Hāshim’s transmitted reports must be classified as sound (*ḥasan*) rather than authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*). He remarks, “many mistakes are made concerning Ibrāhīm ibn Hāshim’s hadith [status], and in particular in [al-Ḥillī’s] *Mukhtalaf al-Shi’a*”. He criticizes ‘Allāma Ḥillī for designating Ibrāhīm’s report as authentic and finds it strange that Shahīd Awwal and al-Muḥaqqiq al-Karakī have followed ‘Allāma in this regard.<sup>191</sup>

Despite his differences with Shahīd Thānī, Ḥārithī, and Ḥasan ‘Āmilī, Bahā’ī does not consider every single report quoted in the Four Books to be reliable. Not only many reports have defective transmission chains, but they also lack any sort of supporting evidence to justify their reliability. Nevertheless, Bahā’ī plays a critical role in deflecting the major criticisms raised by Shahīd Thānī and Ḥasan ‘Āmilī.

<sup>183</sup> Bahā’ al-Dīn ‘Āmilī, *Zubdat*, 98 onward.

<sup>184</sup> Najāshī, *Rijāl*, num. 18; Ṭūsī, *al-Fihrist*, num. 6.

<sup>185</sup> Bahā’ al-Dīn ‘Āmilī, *Ḥabl al-matn*, 58, 60. This description is found in Najāshī, *Rijāl* (num. 17); Ṭūsī, *Rijāl* (num. 30).

<sup>186</sup> ‘Abd Allāh Māmaqānī, *Tanqīh al-maqāl fi ‘ilm al-rijāl* (Qom, 1423), 5:72–101, particularly at 93–5.

<sup>187</sup> Mīr Dāmād, *al-Rawāshih*, 82–5.

<sup>188</sup> Khū’ī, *Mu’jam*, 18:54.

<sup>189</sup> Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation*, 20–30.

<sup>190</sup> In his *Mu’jam al-rijāl*, Khū’ī presents four *qarīna* for Ibrāhīm’s veracity as did Shūshtarī before him (*Qāmūs al-rijāl*, 1:333). ‘Abd Allāh Māmaqānī (d. 1351/1933) in his *Tanqīh al-maqāl* (1:39) provides 15 *qarīna*.

<sup>191</sup> Shahīd Thānī, *Masālik al-afḥām*, 6:345.

Bahā'ī was not alone in criticising the 'Āmili scholars' criteria of hadith authenticity. While he – an Arab living in Persia – was articulating his critiques of Shahīd Thānī and his followers, Muḥammad Amīn Astarābādī – a Persian living in Arabia – was lunching his repudiation of the Uṣūlī framework, albeit with more verve and confrontational tone than Bahā'ī.

## §6. Astarābādī and the Four “Authentic” Books

For more than three centuries, Astarābādī's name has been synonymous with the Akhbārī movement. During the past three decades, his life, thought and the movement he inspired have been subject to ongoing research.<sup>192</sup> European and American Islamicists have carried the greater part of this research. This contrasts with Astarābādī's reception in Iran, where due to polemical factors, studies on him are scant. These polemics stem from the monopoly of the Uṣūlī paradigm in Shi'ī scholarly and political institutions in Iran where Akhbārīs in general and Astarābādī in particular are systematically antagonized. An expression of this hostile attitude is found in the most recent edition of Astarābādī's magnum opus, *Fawā'id al-madaniyya*. Rather than providing readers with a critical edition of the text, *Fawā'id* is published along with a detailed denunciation of Astarābādī's positions, provided in the footnotes, by Nūr al-Dīn al-Mūsawī al-Āmili (d. 1062/1652) entitled *al-Shawāhid al-makkiyya fi madāhiḍ ḥujaj al-khayālāt al-madaniyya*.<sup>193</sup> This attitude, although still persistent, has started to become less pronounced. Two events from last year point to this direction: the recent Persian translation of Robert Gleave's monograph on Astarābādī and the Akhbārī movement as well as the publication of a critical edition of Astarābādī's Persian treatise, *Dānishnāmih-yi shāhī*.<sup>194</sup> In light of the available studies on Astarābādī, I will provide a brief overview of the main components of his rejection of the Uṣūlī

<sup>192</sup> On the Akhbārī movement in general, see the following sources: E. G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, 4 vols. (Cambridge, 1929), 4:374; Gianroberto Scarcia, “Intorno alle controversie tra Akbārī e Uṣūlī presso gli Imamiti di Persia”, *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 33 (1958): 211–50; Abdoljavad Falaturi, “Die Zwölfer-Schia aus der Sicht eines Schiiten: Probleme ihrer Untersuchung”, in E. Gräf (ed.), *Festschrift Werner Caskel* (Leiden, 1968), 62–95; Juan Cole, “Shi'ī Clerics in Iraq and Iran, 1722–1780: The Akhbārī-Uṣūlī Controversy Reconsidered”, *Iranian Studies* 18 (1985): 3–34; idem, *Roots of North Indian Shicisim in Iran and Iraq: Religion and State in Awadh, 1722–1859* (Berkeley, 1988), 17–22, 31–39; Etan Kohlberg, “Akbārīya”, in EIR, 1:716–18; idem, “Aspects of Akhbārī Thought in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries”, in *Eighteenth-Century Renewal and Reform in Islam*, ed. Nehemia Levtzion and John O. Voll (Syracuse, 1987), 133–60; Wilferd Madelung, “al-Akbārīya”, in EI<sup>2</sup>; Hossein Modarressi, “Rationalism and Traditionalism in Shi'ī Jurisprudence: A Preliminary Survey”, *Studia Islamica* 59 (1984): 148–58; idem, *An Introduction to Shi'ī Law: A Bibliographical Study* (London, 1984), 52–57; Andrew Newman, “The Development and Political Significance of the Rationalist (Uṣūlī) and Traditionalist (Akbārī) Schools in Imami Shi'ī History from the Third/Ninth to the Tenth/Sixteenth Century” (Ph.D. dissertation, UCLA, 1986); idem, “The Nature of the Akhbārī/Uṣūlī Dispute in Late-Safawid Iran. Part One: ‘Abdallāh al-Samāhijī's ‘*Munyat al-Mumārīsīn*’ and ‘Part 2: The Conflict Reassessed’”, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 15 (1992), 22–51, 250–61; Devin J. Stewart, *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy: Twelver Shi'ite Responses to the Sunni Legal System* (Salt Lake City, 1998), 175–208; Aron Zysow, *The Economy of Certainty: An Introduction to the Typology of Islamic Legal Theory* (Atlanta, 2013), 501–8; Robert Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam: The History and Doctrines of the Akhbārī Shi'ī School* (Leiden, 2007); idem, *Inevitable Doubt: Two Theories of Shi'ī Jurisprudence* (Leiden, 2000); “Akbārīyān”, in DMBI, 7:160; Ibrāhīm Bihishti, *Akbārīgari: tārikh va 'aqāyid* (Qom, 1390).

<sup>193</sup> Muḥammad Amīn al-Astarābādī, *Fawā'id al-madaniyya* (Qom: Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, 1426) with Nūr al-Dīn al-Mūsawī al-Āmili (d. 1062/1652 or 1068/1658) entitled *al-Shawāhid al-makkiyya fi madāhiḍ ḥujaj al-khayālāt al-madaniyya* in the footnotes.

<sup>194</sup> Robert Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam: The History and Doctrines of the Akhbārī Shi'ī School* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

framework in general and his rejection of the fourfold division in particular. I will also focus on his conceptualisation of the Four Books as Imāmī hadith “canons” rather than “collections”.

Astarābādī was born in the second half of the sixteenth century in Astarābād, northern Iran.<sup>195</sup> He travels to Iraq in his youth and, according to his own account, studies with Muḥammad ‘Āmilī, the author of *Madārik*. He describes Muḥammad ‘Āmilī as his “first teacher in the disciplines of hadith and *rijāl*”, and in 1007/1598 receives his *ijāza* from him.<sup>196</sup> He also spends four years in Shiraz where he studies jurisprudence under the supervision of Muḥammad al-Nassāba (d. 1019/1610–11). It is during this period that Astarābādī reads *Sharḥ al-‘Aḍudī*, which he regards as the best Sunni work on *uṣūl al-fiqh*.<sup>197</sup> Composed by the Shāfi‘ī jurist ‘Aḍud al-Dīn Ījī’s (d. 753/1355), this text is a commentary on the *Mukhtaṣar* of Ibn Ḥājib (d. 646/1249), and was widely read by Shi‘ī scholars.<sup>198</sup> It is unclear where Astarābādī stays and with whom he studies between this period in Shiraz and his permanent move to Arabia in 1015/1606 where he goes back and forth between Mecca and Medina. For over a decade he studies under Mirza Muḥammad Astarābādī (d. 1028/1619), a renowned *rijāl* scholar whom Astarābādī credits as the person who encouraged him to revive the Akhbārī path.<sup>199</sup> Astarābādī finishes his magnum opus, *Fawā'id al-madaniyya*, in Mecca in the winter of 1031/1622,<sup>200</sup> nearly five years prior to his death in 1036/1626–7.<sup>201</sup> It is in this work that he delineates his Akhbārī vision. His other major text, *Dānishnāmih-yi shāhī*, is composed in Persian and covers a vast array of theological and philosophical issues.<sup>202</sup>

In his various writings, Astarābādī’s overarching belief is that God has provided believers with necessary guidance in all matters until the Day of Resurrection; this guidance is found in the Qur’an and prophetic Sunna, which can only be correctly understood through the Imams’ instructions. During the Imam’s absence, the extant reports of the Imams, which Astarābādī thinks have been reliably transmitted, provide the keys for understanding the Qur’an and prophetic Sunna.<sup>203</sup> Moreover, Astarābādī maintains, whereas the Qur’an was addressed to the Prophet, the reports of the Imams were addressed to the people. Hence the Qur’an’s true meanings can only be understood by the Prophet and those to whom he bestowed knowledge, whereas it is possible for all human beings to understand the

<sup>195</sup> Astarābādī’s precise dates of birth and death are unknown. For his biography and a list of his written works see Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam*, 31–50; Hassan Ansari, *Tashayyū ‘Imāmī dar bastar-i taḥawwul: tārikh maktabhā va bavarhā dar irān va islām* (Tehran, 1390 sh./2012), 55–61; Etan Kohlberg, “Astarābādī, Moḥammad Amīn”, in EIR, 2:845–846. The city of Astarābād had a long and rich tradition of Shi‘ī scholarship. See C. E. Bosworth and S. Blair, “Astarābād”, in EIR, 2:838–39.

<sup>196</sup> Astarābādī, *Fawā'id*, 58–9. Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam*, 32. He quotes this from Astarābādī’s commentary on Ṭūsī’s *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām*.

<sup>197</sup> Astarābādī, *Fawā'id*, 265.

<sup>198</sup> On the centrality of *Sharḥ al-‘Aḍudī* among Shi‘ī scholars see Stewart in *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy*, 97–100. On Ījī’s life and thought see Joseph van Ess, *Die Erkenntnislehre des ‘Aḍudaddīn al-Īcī* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1966).

<sup>199</sup> Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam*, 33–5.

<sup>200</sup> Ṭīhrānī, *Dharī‘a*, 16/358, 4/433; Stewart, *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy*, 180–1; Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam*, 36.

<sup>201</sup> Some biographical accounts maintain that he died in 1033/1623–4. Regarding Astarābādī’s date of death see Stewart, *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy*, 181 (f. 22).

<sup>202</sup> Astarābādī dedicates this book as a gift to Muḥammad Qutb Shah, the ruler in Dakan from 1020/1611–2 to 1035/1626. He notes in the introduction that *Dānishnāmih* is to the Shi‘ī tradition what Rāzī’s book is for Sunnis. According to the editor, Astarābādī is most likely referring to Rāzī’s *al-Arba‘īn*. See Muḥammad Amīn Astarābādī, *Dānishnāmih-yi shāhī*, edited by Mahdi Ḥājīyān and ‘Alī Akbar Zāl-Pūr (Tehran, 1395 sh.), 66.

<sup>203</sup> Astarābādī, *Fawā'id*, 98–9.

reports of the Imams. Thus, the reports, in addition to being historically accurate, are also unambiguous in their meanings. Connected to Astarābādī's emphasis on the epistemic authority of the Imams' reports is his belief that reason (*'aql*) on its own is incapable to grasp the Qur'an's true meanings.<sup>204</sup>

In Astarābādī's view, the ultimate aim of all intellectual endeavors is to acquire knowledge of the 'beginning' (*mabda'*) and the 'return' (*ma'ād*). He notes that three distinct approaches – rationalist, ascetic, and scripturalist – have been articulated for acquiring this knowledge. Theologians and philosophers, he explains, both rely on thinking and discursive reasoning to seek knowledge. In their search theologians do not oppose the revelation, whereas philosophers refrain from setting this limit for their investigations. He notes that by philosophers he has in mind the Peripatetics who are followers of Aristotle. Ascetics, by contrast, seek to acquire knowledge of the beginning and the end through certain bodily and mental practices. Similar to theologians, some ascetics (which he calls *sharī'a*-abiding Sufis) do not adopt practices opposed by revelation; Astarābādī. Other ascetics, however, do not restrain themselves to revelation. He calls the latter group Illuminationist philosophers, who similar to Plato, pursue learning and teaching through asceticism. Scripturalist take a path different from theologians, philosophers, and ascetics. In their search for knowledge, they only rely on divinely designated infallible guides (prophets and imams). The followers of this approach, in any matter where there is a possibility that reason customarily makes mistakes, exclusively acquire their knowledge from the infallible Imams' extant reports. Astarābādī calls the adherents of this approach, Akhbārīs.<sup>205</sup>

According to Astarābādī, the complexities involved in understanding the Qur'an (e.g., *nāsikh/mansūkh*, *khāṣṣ/āmm*, *ẓāhir/bāṭin*) are absent when it comes to the Imams' reports. People can follow the Imams' explanations of the Qur'an since they are the addressees of the Imams,<sup>206</sup> and consequently are able to determine, for instance, when the Imams' statements must be understood literally and when they must be understood non-literally, or when the Imam is making a statement intended for all believers and when his statement is intended for a specific person.<sup>207</sup> However, in a few instances, Astarābādī implicitly suggests that certain passages of the Qur'an pertaining to doctrinal matters such as *tawḥīd* and *ma'ād* can be understood without the Imams' mediation.<sup>208</sup> Nevertheless, even for doctrinal matters the Imams serve as indispensable sources of knowledge. Regarding the doctrine of prophethood, for instance, Astarābādī asserts that people's knowledge of the truth of a person's claim to prophethood depends on a preliminary knowledge that God engenders in the hearts of his worshippers through inspiration and without them willing it. The Imams, he writes, teach this

<sup>204</sup> According to Astarābādī, "The *akhbār* from the pure Imams are transmitted in a widespread manner saying that it is forbidden to rely upon the thoughts of the intellect; it is forbidden to study the science of *kalām* and to teach it unless one is referring to the *kalām* derived from their [the Imams'] words". See *Fawā'id*, 571, translated by Gleave in *Scripturalist Islam*, 104.

<sup>205</sup> Astarābādī, *Dānishnāmih*, 67–8.

<sup>206</sup> Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam*, 73.

<sup>207</sup> Astarābādī, *Fawā'id*, 178–9. For overviews of discussions concerning the literal and non-literal senses of texts see Robert Gleave, *Islam and Literalism: Literal Meaning and Interpretation in Islamic Legal Theory* (Edinburgh, 2013); idem, "Conceptions of the Literal Sense (*Ẓāhir*, *Ḥaqīqa*) in Muslim Interpretive Thought", in Mordechai Z. Cohen and Adele Berlin (eds.), *Interpreting Scriptures in Judaism, Christianity and Islam: Overlapping Inquiries* (Cambridge, 2016), 183–203; idem, "Literal Meaning and Interpretation in Early Imāmī Law", in R. Gleave and K. Reinhart (eds.), *Islamic Law in Theory: Studies on Jurisprudence in Honor of Bernard Weiss* (Leiden, 2014), 231–255.

<sup>208</sup> Gleave, 73; Astarābādī, *Fawā'id*, 178–9; idem, *Dānishnāmih*, 138–42.

knowledge to people in its comprehensive form.<sup>209</sup> In other words, a person's knowledge of prophethood is partly inspired in him by God; without God's inspiration people would be unable to know whether or not a person is truly a prophet. In addition to this inspired knowledge, believers further expand their knowledge through coming into contact with the Imams' teachings who explain in detail what believers know in a general manner.

In Astarābādī's view, God likewise inspires in humans the knowledge of good and evil. It is due to Satan's insinuations that someone chooses evil over good. He argues that even though the goodness (*ḥusn*) and evilness (*qubḥ*) of human actions are intrinsic to them,<sup>210</sup> that is not so with an action's religious status such whether it is *ḥalāl* or *ḥarām*.<sup>211</sup> He writes, "While 'aql deems numerous actions to be reprehensible, religious law considers them *makrūh* rather than prohibited (*ḥarām*). Similarly, 'aql does not consider numerous actions to be terribly reprehensible but the religious law has categorically prohibited them".<sup>212</sup> Knowledge of an action's religious status is only acquired through revelation. Therefore, Astarābādī concludes, as far as deriving legal rules from revelation is concerned, only the Imams know the intended meanings of the Qur'anic passages.<sup>213</sup> This last issue is critical to Astarābādī's project. He is adamant that action, in the domain of the Shari'a, must only be taken on the basis of knowledge (*'ilm*). This view undermines a position that had been established among Imāmī scholars for over three centuries. Since Ibn Muṭahhar Ḥillī, Imāmī jurists had advocated the view that in the absence of knowledge action must be performed on the basis of *ẓann* (speculation/probability). According to his own remark, Astarābādī writes the *Fawā'id* to repudiate this view.

Astarābādī begin his preface to the *Fawā'id* by writing of his study of major works on legal theory. He remarks that having examined the juristic principles outlined in the *uṣūl* books authored by Shi'i and Sunni scholars, he presented what he had learned from these books to the transmitted reports attributed to the infallible Imams. At the end of his investigation, Astarābādī concludes, he found the principles set out by the jurists, "in numerous instances to go against the *mutawātir* hadiths [of the Imams]".<sup>214</sup> He states that having reached this realisation, he spent a long period in Medina reflecting on the hadiths, until "God opened the doors of truth concerning the two *uṣūl* [of *dīn* and *fiqh*], issues in *fiqh*, and other matters as a result of the blessings of the city of knowledge [i.e., the Prophet] and its doors [i.e., 'Alī]".<sup>215</sup> *Fawā'id al-madanīyya* is written after this experience and it contains his findings concerning the Imams' statements that pertain to *uṣūl al-fiqh*. He remarks that this book is written with the aim of refuting those who in determining divine commandments speak of *ijtihād* and *taqlīd* – "meaning the followers of *ẓann*".<sup>216</sup> As Astarābādī makes clear, it is Ibn Muṭahhar Ḥillī and his juristic framework that he has in mind when he refers to the followers of *ẓann*.

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<sup>209</sup> Astarābādī, *Dānishnāmih*, 135–7.

<sup>210</sup> Meaning an action's status as "good" or "evil" does not depend on what God says is says about it in revelation but can be known independently. This position was chiefly advocated by Mu'tazilī philosophers. On this topic see, Sophia Vasalou, *Moral Agents and Their Deserts: The Character of Mu'tazilite Ethics* (Princeton, 2008).

<sup>211</sup> Astarābādī notes that only a minority of Ash'arī thinkers such as Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashī and early Imāmī scholars adhere to this position. Astarābādī, *Dānishnāmeḥ*, 175.

<sup>212</sup> Astarābādī, *Dānishnāmih*, 173–5.

<sup>213</sup> Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam*, 74–5.

<sup>214</sup> Astarābādī, *Fawā'id*, 27–8.

<sup>215</sup> Astarābādī, *Fawā'id*, 28.

<sup>216</sup> Astarābādī, *Fawā'id*, 29.

According to Astarābādī, Ḥillī and his followers committed two cardinal mistakes. First, they categorized the Imams' extant reports into the fourfold division. He avers that the Imams commanded their companions to compile hadith books (*uṣūl*) for the sake of serving the Shi'is as the source of reference in their belief and conduct. In his view, the surviving hadiths serve a particularly critical role during the Greater Occultation since no manifest Imam is present to guide the community. He notes, however, that according to Ḥillī and his followers, the majority of the reports gathered in these compilations are not authentic (*ṣaḥiḥ*). "This position", Astarābādī writes, "stems from the limit of his mind and his hastiness in writing; he is among our companions like Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī is among the Sunnis".<sup>217</sup> In his view, Ḥillī's doubts regarding the authenticity of most hadiths is unfounded. Rāzī (d. 606/1210) had been derogatorily labeled as the "leader of the doubters" (*imām al-mushakkikīn*)<sup>218</sup>—Astarābādī extends this to Ḥillī.

Ḥillī's second mistake, in Astarābādī's view, consisted in legitimizing reliance on *ẓann* as a means of determining conduct. He writes that according to Ḥillī – in matters that do not pertain to the foundations of religion and *madhhab* – whenever incontrovertible proof is absent, God has obligated his worshipers to act on the jurists' *ẓann* despite the possibility that their *ẓann* regarding a particular ruling might be completely incorrect. He argues that Ḥillī's *ilm/ẓann* division leads to the *muqallid*'s acceptance of the rulings of a *mujtahid* who has derived his ruling, at times, in accordance with an opinion (*ẓann*), which the jurist himself is not "certain" to be indeed correct. Astarābādī concludes that numerous jurisprudential principles outlined in Sunni books, including reliance on *ẓann*, oppose the Imams' teachings as narrated in *mutawātir* reports;<sup>219</sup> for this reason, reliance on *ẓann* must be categorically rejected.

It was the indefinite character of *ẓann* that disconcerted Astarābādī. By dividing knowledge into 'certain' and 'uncertain', room was opened for disagreement between various jurists concerning the 'correct' derivations of law from the Qur'an and hadith. Each jurist had his own particular 'opinion' regarding what constitutes a 'correct' ruling. Although these post-Ḥillī jurists agreed about the fundamentals of creed, they would often disagree about the details of law. They did not, however, consider their disagreements to pose a danger. Each jurist was responsible for his own legal opinion, and the follower of each jurist – although not responsible for the 'correctness' or 'incorrectness' of his chosen jurist's rulings – was nonetheless responsible for the choice of his *mujtahid*. Since the Uṣūlī legal framework allows for the possibility of varying viewpoints, the only responsibility of the *muqallid* in addition to following the dictates of the *mujtahid* is to find a *mujtahid* who is considered knowledgeable and pious. In rejecting the *yaqīn/ẓann* dichotomy, Astarābādī seeks to set forth a framework for attaining legal rulings in which there are no widespread disagreements between various jurists, since the rulings of each jurist is based on the Imams' extant reports and hence 'certain' in their 'correctness'.

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<sup>217</sup> Astarābādī, *Fawā'id*, 30.

<sup>218</sup> Rāzī had given this title not because of his take on hadith but rather due to his objection to Avicenna's theory of cause and effect. See Goldziher, "Aus der Theologie des Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī", *Der Islam* 3 (1912), 213–247, at 223–225; Shihadeh, "The Mystic and the Sceptic in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī", in *Sufism and Theology*, ed. A. Shihadeh (Edinburgh, 2007), 101–122, at 109; idem, "Al-Rāzī's (d. 1210) Commentary on Avicenna's Pointers: The Confluence of Exegesis and Aporetics", in Khaled El-Rouayheb and Sabine Schmidtke (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Philosophy* (Oxford, 2016), 296–325, at 296; Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 116–120; Kraus, "Les controverses de Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī", 187–214.

<sup>219</sup> Astarābādī, *Fawā'id*, 31.

He writes, “Reason and revelation both demonstrate that the benefit of sending prophets and revealing scripture is to remove disagreement and disputes among the believers so that their lives in this world and the next might be in order. But if speculation is considered a permissible method of interpretation with regard to God’s rules of law, then this benefit is lost through the occurrence of disagreement and disputes, as is plainly observable”.<sup>220</sup> According to Astarābādī, it is only through adhering to the Imams’ reports that one is shielded from detrimental disagreements in matters of the law and committing blasphemy.<sup>221</sup>

Astarābādī provides two reasons for the inability of reason to settle disagreements. First, if reason was able to resolve disagreements, philosophers, theologians, and jurists who all claim to use reason would be of the same view and there would not be so many differences between them. Second, those who adhere to reason are of the opinion that logic is the only law/canon that protects one from making errors. He points out, however, that logic is immune from error in its syllogistic form (*ṣurat*) but not in its matter (*mādat al-mawād*). In Astarābādī’s assessment, the most that has been mentioned regarding what is contained in the syllogistic forms, is that primary propositions are divided into certainties (*qaṭ’iyyāt*) and speculatives (*ẓannīyāt*). It is known, however, that there is no law in logic through which its syllogistic matter can be determined to belong to the *qaṭ’iyyāt* or to the *ẓannīyāt*. Different thinkers consider different things to be self-evident (*badīhī*), which leads them to different conclusions. He concludes, the system of logic developed and adhered to by these thinkers is not itself in a position to address this question since it is only concerned with formal syllogistic relations and rules of deduction.<sup>222</sup>

Despite his skeptical assessment of reason’s autonomous power to discover truths about the world and God, Astarābādī is not against engaging in rational investigations. In his autobiographical remarks, he mentions that years of study led him to the conclusion that in the ranks of rational knowledge, the views of Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī and Qutb al-Dīn Rāzī as well as recent scholars such as Ījī, Taftāzānī, Sharīf Jurjānī and ‘Allāma Qūshchī<sup>223</sup> are correct while the views of Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī and Ṣadr al-Dīn Dashtakī are hollow.<sup>224</sup> He laments Persian scholars, despite their elevated perceptions, are prevented from acquiring necessary truths since from young age in their rational investigations they

<sup>220</sup> Astarābādī, *Fawā'id*, 129, translated by Devin Stewart in *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy*, 186.

<sup>221</sup> Astarābādī, *Fawā'id*, 128.

<sup>222</sup> Astarābādī, *Dānishnāmih*, 186–7.

<sup>223</sup> ‘Alī al-Qūshchī (d. 879/1474) was a well-known Sunni theologian and Ḥanbalī jurist; Qutb al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 766/1364) is chiefly known for his commentary on Suhrawardī’s *Ḥikmat ishrāq* as well as his work on the disagreements between Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī; A Shāfi‘ī jurist, ‘Aḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī (d. 753/1355) was born and raised in Shiraz. His theological summa, *Mawāqif* is amongst the most influential texts in Islamic intellectual tradition; Sa’d al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī (d. 793/1390); al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī was born in Gorgan and died in Shiraz in 816/1413; A Shi‘ī polymath from Khorasan, Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274) is considered an epoch-making figure in Shi‘ī intellectual history; Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī (d. 908/1502) and Sadr al-Dīn Dashtakī (d. 903/1497) were contemporaries and philosophical rivals both flourishing Shiraz. According to biographical accounts, Dashtakī was accused of involvement in political disturbances in the city and was murdered by the order of Shiraz’s Turkic ruler.

<sup>224</sup> In *Dānishnāmih* and *Fawā'id*, Astarābādī harshly criticises Dawānī and Dashtakī’s views and considers them opportunists. See *Fawā'id*, §4; and *Dānishnāmih*, 84–5. He writes that Dawānī should be called “*mushakkik*” rather than “*muḥaqqiq*”, which his followers often use to refer to him. For brief remarks on the lives and writings of Dawānī and Dashtakī see, Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Mehdi Aminrazavi (eds.), *An Anthology of Philosophy in Persia, Vol 5: From the School of Shiraz to the Twentieth Century* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 36–8 and 48–50.

widely take recourse to Jāmī's commentary on the *Kāfiya* of Ibn Ḥajīb and Dawānī's marginalia on *Tajrīd*'s commentary,<sup>225</sup> which in Astarābādī's view are deficient texts; Satan is dedicated to tricking believers, and these two texts serve that purpose. A good education, Astarābādī writes, consists of first dedicating oneself, from young age, to reading the books of Ibn Mālik, Ibn Hishām, and Khālid al-Azhārī.<sup>226</sup> Afterwards comes the study of hadith with the condition that all these disciplines are acquired from the experts rather independently. He recommends that those with refined perceptions, assuming they have extra time, should study Jurjānī's writings such as his marginalia on Qutb al-Dīn al-Rāzī's *Maṭālī'* [*al-anwār fī al-mantiq*]<sup>227</sup> and *Sharḥ-i qadīm* and his commentary on Ījī's *Mawāqif* as well as Qūshchī's commentary on Ṭūsī's *Tajrīd al-i'tiqād*. He concludes that if time does not permit, pursuing these matters is rationally reprehensible and religiously prohibited.<sup>228</sup> According to Astarābādī, reflecting on the Imams' statements hadith must take precedence over all else. Otherwise, engaging in these topics will only increase one's confusions and lead to endless disagreements.

At the same time, Astarābādī acknowledges that replacing the authority of reason with the Imams' hadiths will not entirely eliminate all disagreements. He writes that even though amongst the Akhbārīs there are no disagreements in theological and jurisprudential issues, they do at times disagree regarding legal matters that are due to conflicting reports found in the hadith corpus. He considers these disagreements as an expression of the Imams' grace towards their followers. Astarābādī then quotes a report attributed to Imam al-Ṣādiq in which it is stated that he intentionally passes on conflicting rulings to his followers; while some of the rulings express his genuine view, the rest stem from *taqiyya*. This is done, the Imam explains, as a means of shielding the Shi'is from the enmity of their opponents. In Astarābādī's view, this contrasts with the Uṣūlī scholars who not only disagree over legal issues but also disagree over theological and jurisprudential matters.<sup>229</sup>

He locates religious authority in the Qur'an and hadith and denies what he perceives as the jurists' self-proclaimed authority as mediators for discovering God's law. He argues against the theory of *nā'ib 'amm* (the general representative of the hidden Imam), which had been advocated by his predecessors such as 'Alī Karakī and Shahīd Thānī. According to this theory, during the Imam's concealment, the jurists are designated with the responsibility to implement the Sharī'a. This is a function that would have been fulfilled by the Imam himself had he been present. Responsibilities assumed by the Imam's general representative include formulation of the laws by jurists and their implementation by judges as well as collecting financial obligations such as *zakāt*, *khums*, *kharaj* (land tax) and managing religious endowments (*waqf*).<sup>230</sup>

Prior to the occultation, followers of the Imams did not have to take recourse to a *mujtahid*. All they needed was the inerrant Imam who would provide them with his inerrant legal rulings. But what

<sup>225</sup> *Kāfiya* is a manual of syntax containing examples from classical Arabic poetry. It was composed by Ibn Ḥajīb (d. 646/1249); 'Abd al-Rahmān Jāmī (d. 898/1492) wrote a commentary on this text titled, *Fawā'id wāfiya bi-ḥall mushkilāt al-kāfiya*, which become widely used in Iran.

<sup>226</sup> Jamāl al-Dīn Ibn Mālik (d. 672/1274) is the author of *al-Khulāṣa fī l-naḥw*, better known as the *Alfiyya*. Ibn Hishām (d. 761/1360) is the author of *Qawā'id al-i'rāb*, a textbook on grammar. Khālid al-Azhārī (d. 905/1499) was a prolific Egyptian scholar and the author of widely used textbooks and commentaries, especially in the field of grammar.

<sup>227</sup> Qutb al-Dīn al-Rāzī composed a commentary on *Maṭālī' al-anwār fī al-mantiq* written by Sirāj al-Dīn Urmawī (d. 682)

<sup>228</sup> Astarābādī, *Dānishnāmih*, 118–120.

<sup>229</sup> Astarābādī, *Dānishnāmih*, 72–3.

<sup>230</sup> Stewart, "The Genesis," 180.

should be done when the Imam is no longer accessible? Uṣūlī scholars such as Ḥillī had argued that during the occultation, a legal framework is needed to reach credible rulings when no inerrant Imam is within reach; otherwise all laws must be suspended until the Imam reappears. Astarābādī's aim is to bring back the pre-occultation framework in which the only *mujtahid* was the Imam and everyone else (including scholars) were *muqallid*. In order to achieve this aim, he relocates the authority from the jurists' *ijtihād* to the Imams' *akhbār*. It is only through the Imams, he maintains, that the Shi'is can reach legal rulings free from uncertainties. In his system, the *muḥaddith* replaces the *mujtahid*. Since he believes the Imams' extant hadiths suffice the Shi'is as sources of legal ruling, the most suitable person for forming legal mandates are those who are most expert in the science of hadith (*muḥaddithūn*), and not, as Uṣūlīs believe, those who are expert in the science of *fiqh* (*mujtahidūn*).<sup>231</sup> In Astarābādī's view, religious law is revealed through the Qur'an and the prophetic tradition, both of which must be understood through the Imams. Prior to the occultation, the manifest Imam elucidated the Qur'an and the Prophet's tradition; in his absence, guidance is found in the reports attributed to the Imams as gathered in the hadith compilations.

In addition to importing the *mujtahid/muqallid* and *ilm/ẓann* distinctions into Shi'i thought, Astarābādī considers consensus as another illegitimate tool used by post-occultation Imāmī scholars. Uṣūlī jurists, from al-Mufīd onward, had made consensus amongst the pillars of their legal hermeneutics.<sup>232</sup> According to these scholars, consensus is authoritative not because through it truth is discovered but because through it the hidden Imam's views are discovered. Since the Imam lives amongst people, a lack of dissenting views in the community indicates his approval of the community's consensus regarding a specific ruling.<sup>233</sup> Calling consensus a "Sunni invention",<sup>234</sup> Astarābādī argues that for early Imāmī scholars, consensus pertained not to an agreement amongst jurists regarding the correctness of particular ruling but rather to the community's consensus regarding the authenticity of a given report attributed to the Imams or the consensus of the early scholars regarding a specific ruling derived from the Imams' reports. During the occultation, Imams' rulings can only be accessed through their extant reports. This renders the Uṣūlī conception of consensus of no use.

In Astarābādī's view, Sunni scholars' incorporation of conjecture (*ẓann*), legal interpretation (*ijtihād*), and consensus (*ijmā'*) in their legal hermeneutics has resulted in a coherent system. He considers this coherence a consequence and product of Sunnis' rejection of imamate.

Some jurisprudential rules put forth by the Sunni Uṣūlīs only follow logically because they deny that the Prophet left for every age an entrusted infallible [guide], a recourse for all men, knowing, through divine inspiration (*waḥy*) rather than personal opinion (*ra'y*), everything the

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<sup>231</sup> For the roles of judges and jurists in Akhbārī thought see Robert Gleave, "The Qāḍī and the Muftī in Akhbārī Jurisprudence", in Peri Bearman, Wolfhart Heinrichs, and Bernard Weiss (eds.), *The Law Applied: Contextualizing the Islamic Shari'a* (London, 2008), 235–258.

<sup>232</sup> Stewart, *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy*, 155.

<sup>233</sup> As Stewart has pointed out, prior to Astarābādī, Shahīd Thānī had begun to question their predecessor's conception of consensus and its legitimacy as a legal source. He does not, however, advocate a categorical rejection of consensus. See Stewart in *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy*, 180–1.

<sup>234</sup> Astarābādī, *Fawā'id*, 181 and 225.

Muslim community would require until the Day of Resurrection, and because they denied the binding authority (*hujjiya*) of the hadiths transmitted from the Chaste Descendants.<sup>235</sup>

In his view, Shi'i scholars' adoption of Sunni legal framework, however, goes against the very foundation upon which Shi'i doctrines stand, namely the necessity of a divinely designated guide for interpreting the Qur'an and implementing its commands. Astarābādī argues that Shi'i scholars began to deviate from this central doctrine once they began to derive rulings by adopting Sunni legal hermeneutics. In his assessment, Ḥillī played a decisive role in this process.<sup>236</sup> Concerning Ḥillī's major text, *Tahdhīb al-wuṣūl ilā 'ilm al-uṣūl*, he writes, "It has become well known among the scholars that the *Tahdhīb* of al-ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī is an abridgment of the *Mukhtaṣar* of Ibn al-Ḥājab, which is an abridgment of the *Muntahā* of Ibn al-Ḥājab, which is an abridgment of the *Iḥkām* of al-Āmidī, which is an abridgment of the *Maḥṣūl* Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, which is an abridgment of the *Mu'tamad* of Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī".<sup>237</sup> Astarābādī's description of Ḥillī's text as a summation of Sunni texts is particularly telling since *Tahdhīb al-wuṣūl* had long become a standard textbook in the Shi'i curriculum for nearly three centuries.<sup>238</sup>

In Astarābādī's view, Ḥillī and his followers' adoption of Sunni ideas stems from Shi'i community's minority status. He writes that after the advent of the occultation, the Shi'is began to increasingly come under the dominance of the established Sunni order and its educational institutions. Bereft of institutions of their own, the talented young students started to attend Sunni schools, which meant reading their textbooks and learning their methodologies. According to Astarābādī, the first figure to depart from the Imams' teaching was Ibn Junayd al-Iskāfī (d. 381/991) who, influenced by Mu'tazilī theology and jurisprudence, advocated the use of *qiyās* as a legitimate means of deriving legal rulings.<sup>239</sup> He was followed by the theologian Ibn Abī 'Aqīl (d. fourth/tenth century). Astarābādī writes that Mufīd, due to heedlessness, considered the work of these two figures in a positive light, which led his students, Murtaḍā and Ṭūsī, to follow the same path. He writes that century after century, Imāmī scholars followed these figures until Ḥillī, who "was more experts in the sciences than his predecessors", fully incorporated the Sunni framework into Imāmī jurisprudence. Ḥillī's paradigm was then adopted and further refined by Shahīd Awwal, Shahīd Thānī, and 'Alī Karakī.<sup>240</sup>

Astarābādī writes that many Shi'i scholars who began to approach Imāmī jurisprudence within a Sunni paradigm were not conscious of the ways in which their thinking had been shaped by the dominant Sunni educational establishment. His aim is to decolonise Shi'i mind by reviving what in his view was the 'original' approach of Imāmī scholars to hadith prior to their indoctrination with Sunni paradigms. Rather than relying on the jurists' speculative methods, Astarābādī calls the Shi'is to exclusively rely on the extant sayings of their Imams. In his view, Imāmī jurists have imported these

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<sup>235</sup> Astarābādī, *Fawā'id*, 28–9, translated by Stewart in *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy*, 190.

<sup>236</sup> Stewart, *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy*, 100.

<sup>237</sup> Astarābādī, *Fawā'id*, 535, translated by Stewart in *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy*, 191. As Stewart notes, many Imāmī scholars did not seek to hide their thorough familiarity and participation in legal theories developed in the Sunni tradition. See *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy*, 61–109.

<sup>238</sup> *Tahdhīb*'s prominence in the Shi'i curriculum was eventually overshadowed by Ḥasan 'Āmilī's *Ma'ālim*, composed in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century. See Muḥsin al-Amin, *Khiṭaṭ Jabal 'Āmil* (Beirut, 1983), 188.

<sup>239</sup> For an overview on Shi'i views on *qiyās* see Robert Gleave, "Imāmī Shi'i Refutations of Qiyās," in B. Weiss (ed.), *Studies in Islamic Legal Theory* (Leiden, 2003), 267–293.

<sup>240</sup> Astarābādī, *Fawā'id*, 78–9, 123, 323–4; idem, *Dānishnāmih*, 69–70.

speculative methods from Sunni scholars, who having denied the Imams' authority had developed an alternative system of their own for deriving rulings. At the core of this system is *ijtihād*. Within this framework, Muslims are either a *mujtahid* or a *muqallid*; the latter are to follow the rulings dictated to them by the former. Astarābādī considers the distinction between *mujtahid* or a *muqallid* to be unfounded in Shī'ī Islam. He writes that for Akhbārīs, there is no place for *ijtihād* and *taqlīd* since in non-essential matters of religion action is exclusive to the Imams' reports and nearly everyone is capable to understand the reports on his own.<sup>241</sup> Hence, the authority designated to *mujtahid* must be replaced with that of *muḥaddith*. He writes that for Akhbārīs, the roles of *muftī* and *qāḍī* are exclusive to the Imams and Shī'ī scholars only narrate the Imams' rulings and edicts, and hence, they are only *muftī* and *qāḍī* in name and not in practice.<sup>242</sup> All Shī'īs must be *muqallid* of the Imams rather than the jurists; while the Imams are imitated due to their infallible knowledge of the Qur'an and prophetic Sunna, the jurists' views are based on speculation and hence not immune from errors. Shī'īs attain their knowledge of rules of conduct only from the Imams' extant reports, and especially from the Four Books.

Astarābādī's position hinges on proving that all the reports contained within the Four Books are 'authentic' (*ṣaḥīḥ*). Otherwise, he would face many of the same issues regarding hadith authenticity addressed by his predecessors such as Ḥillī and Shahīd Thānī. Rather than presenting the Four Books as collections of hadiths that include reliable as well as unreliable reports, Astarābādī pivots to canonisation. He does not articulate a system of *sanad* analysis that would rival Shahīd Thānī and his followers. His strategy is to establish that the Four Books do not acquire their canonicity from their quoted reports; rather, the reports acquire their authenticity from the Four Books. Thus, the Four Books are canons rather than mere collections of hadiths.

## § 6.1

Astarābādī's attempt to relocate religious authority from legal to hadith scholars, is linked to his rejection of the former's criterion of hadith authenticity. For over three centuries, the fourfold division had become the dominant method of hadith verification. He considers this method a heresy since it deviates from the ancient scholars' approach to hadith authenticity, which according to Astarābādī was based on the Imams' own teachings on this issue. He notes that Ḥasan 'Āmilī, a representative of the modern approach, was aware that for centuries the fourfold model had no place in Imāmī scholarship, and in *Muntaqā* points to the distinction between the ancient and modern understandings of *ṣaḥīḥ*.<sup>243</sup> Bahā'ī was another figure who attended to the differences between the ancient and modern scholars' criteria. Whereas for modern scholars transmission chains is the royal road to hadith authenticity, ancient scholars used all pieces of available evidence as a means of establishing a report's veracity. Bahā'ī praises modern scholars for devising the *sanad*-analysis method since, he explains, the ancient method is no longer tenable. As explained previously, despite his approval of the fourfold method, in practice Bahā'ī often departs from it and relies on the ancient method. Astarābādī had read Bahā'ī's writings, and on various occasions in the *Fawā'id* approvingly quotes his explanation in *Mashriq al-shamsayn* regarding ancient scholars' twofold division of reports. In contrast to Bahā'ī, however, he has

<sup>241</sup> Astarābādī, *Fawā'id*, 300.

<sup>242</sup> Astarābādī, *Dānishnāmih*, 198.

<sup>243</sup> Astarābādī, *Fawā'id*, 109–10.

no praise for modern scholars' adaptation of the fourfold division, and merely views it as a heresy borrowed from the Sunni tradition of hadith scholarship. Astarābādī's position is a result of his genealogy of the Uṣūlī jurisprudence in general and its approach to hadith in particular.

The Imams' companions, Astarābādī claims, all adhered to the Akhbārī path since the Imams had prohibited them to engage with the sciences of theology, rationalist jurisprudence and law. These companions, he writes, instead of engaging with endless disputes of scholars, learned these three sciences directly from the Imams. In turn, the companions, obeying the Imams' command, wrote down the Imams' teachings in books so that during the major occultation Shi'is can take recourse to them as the source of knowledge for correct belief and conduct. In his view, those books were passed on generation to generation in continuous and well-attested transmission chains (*mutawātir*) until they reached scholars such as Kulaynī whose *al-Kāfi* contains the Imams' instructions regarding the three sciences (i.e., theology, jurisprudence, and law). According to Astarābādī's historical narrative, the Akhbārī path was prevalent among the Shi'is during the minor and the early period of the major occultation. It only became a distinct school within Shi'i Islam after a group of Imāmī scholars began to deviate from their predecessors by infusing the Akhbārī path with elements taken from Sunni thought.<sup>244</sup>

Astarābādī considers 'Allāma Ḥillī – “or another man close to him”<sup>245</sup> – the first Shi'i scholar to advocate the fourfold division as the best means of authenticating the hadith.<sup>246</sup> He writes that Ḥillī's successors such as Shahīd Awwal, Shahīd Thānī, Ḥasan 'Āmilī, and Bahā'ī, all followed him in adopting this method.<sup>247</sup> Astarābādī juxtaposes these figures with Kulaynī, Ibn Bābūya and Ṭūsī—the compilers of the Four Books—whom he calls the “ancient Akhbārīs”.<sup>248</sup> In Astarābādī's view, the defining feature of ancient scholars was their adherence to the two-fold model. He avers that Sunni scholars categorized their hadiths into four categories because their *wāḥid* reports were bereft of supporting evidence establishing their authenticity. He writes that Ḥillī, due to heedlessness, did the same to Shi'i hadiths even though Kulaynī, Ibn Bābūya, Murtaḍā, and Ṭūsī had asserted that the community's consensus upholds the authenticity of the extant hadiths. The rift between the Akhbārīs and Uṣūlīs, he believes, begins at this juncture.<sup>249</sup>

Astarābādī undertakes what Bahā'ī was hesitant to do—explicit rejection of the fourfold model and its replacement with ancient scholars' two-fold division.<sup>250</sup> In line with what Bahā'ī had presented as ancient scholars' criterion, Astarābādī maintains that a report is authentic when it is surrounded by external evidence (*maḥfūf bi-qarīna*), which establish its authentic attribution to the Imam with

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<sup>244</sup> Astarābādī, *Dānishnāmih*, 68–9.

<sup>245</sup> Astarābādī, *Fawā'id*, 172–3.

<sup>246</sup> Modarressi and Stewart have both argued that Astarābādī is mistaken in claiming Ḥillī as the first figure to initiate the fourfold division into Shi'i hadith criticism. In their view, Ibn Ṭāwūs precedes Ḥillī in this regard. Ḥasan 'Āmilī's comment regarding Ibn Ṭāwūs supports this view. Although Modarressi and Stewart are correct that Astarābādī often gives the impression that he considers Ḥillī to be the first Imāmī scholar to adopt the fourfold division, as this passage illustrates, he leaves the room for earlier adaptations.

<sup>247</sup> Astarābādī, *Fawā'id*, 173.

<sup>248</sup> Astarābādī, *Fawā'id*, 111–2.

<sup>249</sup> Astarābādī, *Dānishnāmih*, 70–1.

<sup>250</sup> Astarābādī, *Fawā'id*, 104–5.

certainty (*qaṭʿ al-wurūd*).<sup>251</sup> Hence, in contrast to Shahīd Thānī and his followers, Astarābādī categorically rejects that it is a report's documentary evidence, as found in the transmission chain, that decides its authenticity. He argues that a report can still be considered authentic even if its transmission chain is *mursal* or its narrators have not been described as *ʿādil*, are non-Imāmī, known to be sinful (*fāsiq*), or have even been proven to be unreliable transmitters.<sup>252</sup> This is because, Astarābādī writes, Akhbārīs rely on the reports, both in the *uṣūl* and the *furūʿ*, as long as the reports are either *mutawātir* or their veracity is established by pieces of evidence that lead to the knowledge of their correct attribution to the Imams.<sup>253</sup>

What are these external means of authenticating a hadith? In the *Fawā'id* and *Dānishnāmeḥ*, Astarābādī outlines a series of supporting indicants that in his view establish the authenticity of the Four Books. His comments on hadith authenticity are scattered throughout these two texts. He does, however, make a sustained effort in the *Fawā'id* to provide a set of seven and a set of twelve reasons that in his view establish the authenticity of the Four Books.<sup>254</sup> There are some overlaps between these two lists. In the following, I will use these two passages as well as a number of Astarābādī's comments in *Dānishnāmeḥ* in order to sketch out the supporting indicants he provides for the authenticity of all the reports quoted in the Four Books. These can be classified into three categories as those indicants pertaining to the reliability of the process of hadith transmission, to the truthfulness of the transmitters involved in this process, and to the authenticity of existing compilations. I have numbered the indicants in brackets in order to facilitate Astarābādī's presentation.

Astarābādī first discusses the available evidence concerning the process of hadith transmission prior to the occultation. He writes,

[1] We have customary certainty that a group of the Imams' companions for a period of 300 years or more asked the Imams their opinions and then wrote them down; [2] We have customary certainty that these sources formed the basis of belief and action during the time before the collection of the Four Books; [3] Such is the wisdom of God and the kindness of the Prophet and the Imams to the Shi'is, that they would not allow the hadith to be lost, and the Shi'is to be without a source on which to base their action; [4] There are numerous reports that the Imams told their companions to write and publicise the Imams' legal decisions so that they might become the basis of the action for the Shi'is.<sup>255</sup>

He holds that the Imams' companions wrote down the hadiths in various books. A book that compiled all the hadiths its compiler had personally heard from the Imams was called an *aṣl*. In this way, Astarābādī maintains, numerous *uṣūl* were compiled from the time of Imam 'Alī to the beginning of the major occultation. Having explained his definition of what constitutes a hadith *aṣl*, he proceeds to argue for their reliable transmission. [5] He claims that the *uṣūl*, which had been codified (*mudawwan*) during the earlier Imams, were presented to the tenth and eleventh Imams and they pronounced them "all

<sup>251</sup> Astarābādī, *Fawā'id*, 107, 109.

<sup>252</sup> Astarābādī, *Fawā'id*, 106–7.

<sup>253</sup> Astarābādī, *Fawā'id*, 136–7.

<sup>254</sup> Astarābādī, *Fawā'id*, 176–8 and 371–7; translated in Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam*, 70–1 and 78–9.

<sup>255</sup> Astarābādī, *Fawā'id*, 371–3 (translated by Gleave in *Scripturalist Islam*, 78).

true”. [6] Furthermore, ancient scholars of the community formed a consensus that the hadiths contained within these *uṣūl* are all authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*), meaning that they all are reliably traced back to the Imams. This consensus, he explains, is valid since it includes the infallible Imam’s approval.<sup>256</sup>

Next, he makes a few general remarks regarding “truthful” transmitters.

[7] Amongst [the *qarā’in*] is that, on the whole, we are certain, due to circumstantial and spoken evidence, that a transmitter who is truthful in his transmission does not approve of fabrication, nor of transmitting something which has no clear evidence in his opinion. This is the case, even if he is someone with corrupt beliefs or someone who performs sinful practices. This type of evidence is common amongst the hadiths in our colleagues’ books;<sup>257</sup> [8] Amongst [the *qarā’in*] is that a learned, truthful and pious individual—in any book he might write as a guide for the people, and as a source for the Shi’is—always reports a transmitter’s source; or [he reports] what the transmitter relates, having the chance to reveal the character [of the transmitter, that is, whether he is truthful or not] or the transmission [whether it is acceptable or not] and whether one can deduce the Imams’ rulings with certainty [from the hadith].<sup>258</sup>

He then proceeds to present supporting indicants regarding specific transmitters. First, [9] the Imams themselves have on occasions announced certain narrators as trustworthy transmitters of their reports.<sup>259</sup> Second, [10] Astarābādī further maintains that Shi’i community has a consensus regarding the categorical authenticity of anything narrated by a group of eighteen particular transmitters.<sup>260</sup> He writes that the evidence for this consensus are the statements from the Imams that have reached us via *tawātur ma’nawī*.<sup>261</sup> From the above indicants he concludes, [11] “We are certain in a customary way” that most of the transmitters of our hadiths are reliable. We know this because reports have reached us which describe how unhappy they are with fabrication in hadiths”.<sup>262</sup>

His discussions regarding the reliability of the process and the truthfulness of the transmitters leads him to evaluate the authenticity of the existing hadith compendia. [12] According to Astarābādī, supporting evidence that establishes the authenticity of the Four Books is the compilers’ own testimonies.<sup>263</sup> The authors of the Four Books, he writes, “all bear witness together that the hadiths

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<sup>256</sup> Astarābādī, *Dānishnāmih*, 184.

<sup>257</sup> Astarābādī, *Fawā'id*, 177; Gleave, 70.

<sup>258</sup> Astarābādī, *Fawā'id*, 177; Gleave, 70–1.

<sup>259</sup> Astarābādī, *Fawā'id*, 178.

<sup>260</sup> I will provide a detailed presentation of the genealogy of the claimed consensus for the authenticity of these eighteen transmitters, collectively referred to as “*aṣḥāb al-ijmā'*” in the next chapter when I am analysing Fayḍ’s reception of Astarābādī’s views.

<sup>261</sup> Astarābādī, *Dānishnāmih*, 185.

<sup>262</sup> Astarābādī, *Fawā'id*, 377; Gleave, 79.

<sup>263</sup> Ibn Bābūya, for instance, in the preface to *Man lā yaḥḍuruḥu l-faqīh*, writes, “In this book, I did not wish to include all that has been narrated to me like the other authors who included [in their hadith collections] all that was narrated to them. Rather, my aim is to use the narrations that I’m certain and convinced – for whatever reason – to have been issued from the Infallibles and that I myself rely on in order to form legal rulings. Now, my belief about these reports’ authenticity is that this book stands as a proof (*ḥujja*) between me and my Lord – His name holy and His power exalted”. Ibn Bābūya then adds that the statements included in the collection are all gathered from well-known sources all of which are “trustworthy”. See, *Man lā yaḥḍuruḥu l-faqīh*, vol. 1, introduction.

found in their books are sound, or that they are taken from those sources which are agreed to be sound”.<sup>264</sup> [13] Furthermore, he argues, another piece of evidence for the authenticity of these four compilations is that the hadith found in different sources are consistent and support each other even though at times they relied on different transmission routes.<sup>265</sup> He takes this as an indication that the compilers only included those reports they were certain are authentic and refrained from transmitting dubious reports. [14] In addition to arguments from the compilers’ testimonies, and the consistencies between their compilations, Astarābādī also highlights what in his view are indicants establishing these compilers’ reliability and diligence in accurate hadith transmission. He writes, “Amongst [the *qarā’in*] is that [Kulaynī] always clings to the hadith from [a transmitter’s] source or in that [transmitter’s] version [of the source], even though he had the opportunity to turn to other sound reports”.<sup>266</sup> This indicates to Astarābādī that Kulaynī acted with diligence in his transmissions and guarded against refraining from rigorous standards for the sake of expedience.

Astarābādī provides similar arguments for Ṭūsī and Ibn Bābūya and argues that in cases where differences are found between ancient and modern methods, precedence must be given to the practice of the ancient compilers. For example, he points out that most of the reports that Ṭūsī rejects as unreliable are considered authentic by modern scholars since these reports are accompanied with sound transmission chains. Likewise, he notes, according to the modern criterion of hadith authenticity, most of the reports Ṭūsī uses as basis for action are deemed *ḍa’if* (weak). Furthermore, at times Ṭūsī relies on a report with weak *isnād*, when a “sounder” *isnād* (according to the categorisation of modern scholars) was available. Astarābādī concludes, such cases indicate that considering Ṭūsī’s elevated stature and diligent scholarly standards, he must have known something about these reports’ authenticity that are lost to modern scholars. Astarābādī is aware that his conclusion largely depends on assuming that Ṭūsī was not only a diligent compiler but also a truthful individual. Hence, he asserts, “We know that al-Ṭūsī does not normally lie, and he says that he took his reports from the *uṣūl*. Ibn Bābūya and al-Kulaynī say this also, and we know that they do not lie”.<sup>267</sup>

Astarābādī accompanies his assertion about Kulaynī and Ibn Bābūya’s truthfulness with two anecdotal remarks. He reiterates a claim that Kulaynī was in touch with some of the Twelfth Imam’s deputies during the minor occultation and that he composed *al-Kāfī* due to the blessings of the hidden Imam and compiled the hadiths from the *uṣūl* that the Imams had commanded their companions to compose.<sup>268</sup> *Al-Kāfī* was compiled, he writes, for the guidance of the Imams’ followers during the major occultation, and “it is due to this that Kulaynī asserts at the beginning of *al-Kāfī* that all the hadiths quoted in the book are *ṣaḥīḥ*, meaning that – in ancient scholar’s terminology – their attribution to the Infallibles has been established”. Concerning Ibn Bābūya, Astarābādī points to his birth due to the hidden Imam’s prayer as a mark of his distinction.<sup>269</sup> According to Ibn Bābūya’s own account in *Kamāl*

<sup>264</sup> Astarābādī, *Fawā'id*, 178; Gleave, 71.

<sup>265</sup> Astarābādī, *Fawā'id*, 177; Gleave, 70.

<sup>266</sup> Astarābādī, *Fawā'id*, 178; Gleave, 71.

<sup>267</sup> Astarābādī, *Fawā'id*, 376; Gleave, 79.

<sup>268</sup> There is no evidence, however, that would suggest Kulaynī had contacts with the Imam’s dignitaries, and none of the four dignitaries are mentioned or alluded to in *al-Kāfī*. Nevertheless, a later scholar such as Ibn Ṭāwūs argues that the fact *al-Kāfī* was composed during the presence of the Hidden Imam’s four dignitaries is a proof in favor of the compilation’s veracity and reliability.

<sup>269</sup> Astarābādī, *Dānishnāmih*, 154–5.

*al-dīn*, not having any children, his father asks al-Aswad, a Shi'i close to the Imam's deputies, to relate to the third deputy of the hidden Imam, Abū al-Qāsim Ḥusayn b. Rūḥ, to petition the Imam to implore God to grant him a son. After three days, he is told that the Imam has prayed for him and that he shall soon father a "blessed son" who will be of benefit to him. Ibn Bābūya accompanies the report of his birth with the following remark: "On numerous occasions whenever al-Aswad would see me attending the sessions of our teacher Ibn Walid and show eagerness for books of knowledge [i.e., hadith] and their memorization, he would say, 'Your eagerness for knowledge is not unexpected; you were born through the Imam's prayer'".<sup>270</sup> Ibn Bābūya implicitly, and the later tradition explicitly, make a connection between the reports surrounding his birth and his status as a hadith transmitter.

All these indicants regarding the process of hadith transmission, the truthfulness of the transmitters and the authenticity of the extant compilations, establish for Astarābādī that the Four Books are *authentic*, and during the Imam's absence, the Shi'is must acquire their knowledge only from them. Astarābādī acknowledges that the supporting indicants he presents do not provide "absolute certainty" (*al-yaqīn al-wāqīʿī*) regarding the authenticity of all the reports since such certainty can only be acquired directly from infallible Imams. Rather, he argues, the Four Book's authenticity is certain to such degree that warrants their use as the sole source of knowledge and conduct during the occultation. He calls this type of certainty, "conventional certainty" (*al-yaqīn al-ʿādī*). We could perhaps translate this kind of certainty formulated by Astarābādī as a sort of "common sense" certainty or "certain beyond any reasonable doubt".<sup>271</sup>

For instance, am I *certain* that the sun will rise tomorrow morning just as it did today? Yes and no. If by certainty it is meant *absolute* certainty, the answer is no. There is nothing regarding the sun, the world or me as an observer that would necessitate the sun to rise tomorrow just as it did today. But if by certainty it is meant *near* certainty, then the answer is yes; I am certain the sun will rise tomorrow just as it did today. Astarābādī calls the second sense of certainty *al-yaqīn al-ʿādī* or "conventional certainty". In his view, and perhaps most would agree with him on this, the overwhelming majority of the things we claim to have knowledge about are "conventional certainty" rather than "indubitable certainty" (*al-yaqīn al-wāqīʿī*). He asks readers not to make an exception in their epistemic standards when it comes to the Four Books. In his view, the evidence available for the authenticity of the Four Books is not drastically different than the evidence available for other objects for which we claim to have knowledge. His aim is not to persuade his audience that the Four Books are certainly authentic but rather that one can be certain of their authenticity to the extent that certainty can be reached about anything in this world. Whether or not the evidence Astarābādī presents endangers "customary certainty" in his readers is not a line of enquiry that I will pursue in this study. At this juncture, it suffices to mention that Astarābādī's arguments have failed to persuade the majority of Imāmī scholars in the past four centuries since the *Fawā'id*'s publication. Nevertheless, Astarābādī persuaded enough followers that less than eighty years after his death, his followers significantly changed the landscape of Shi'i thought up to the present day.

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<sup>270</sup> Ibn Bābūya, *Kamāl al-dīn*, h. 32.

<sup>271</sup> Gleave has noted this sense of "conventional certainty" as "common sense" certainty. He writes, "One is reminded here of G.E. Moore's defence of "common sense" certainty in the possibly apocryphal statement he made about Bertrand Russell: Russell may have been a sceptic, but he was, on thousands of occasions, certain that he was sitting down". Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam*, 70 (f. 31).

In contrast to the Uṣūlī scholars who argue that the hadith books on their own are insufficient to provide credible legal rulings for *all* matters, Astarābādī contends that it is *only* the hadith books that are able to provide credible legal rulings on *any* matter. He rejects the *ijtihād/taqlīd* division, the authority of *ẓann*, and the fourfold division of the hadith. Astarābādī believes that there is no need for a *mujtahid* since every Muslim is capable to derive legal ruling by consulting the hadith books; there is no need for the *yaqīn/ẓann* distinction since the words of the infallible Imams provide us with “certain” knowledge, and there is no need for the fourfold division of hadith since in Astarābādī’s views all the hadith contained in the Four Books are “authentic” (*ṣaḥīḥ*).

Despite his focus on the Four Books, Astarābādī is willing to designate the same, or nearly similar status, to other hadith compilations.<sup>272</sup> Concerning *al-Maḥāsin*, for instance, he writes that both Ibn Bābūya and Ṭūsī have attested this compilation to be amongst the credible books (*kutub-i mu’tabira*).<sup>273</sup> Elsewhere he groups *Maḥāsin* and *Kāfī* together and calls them “trusted sources” (*uṣūl al-mu’tamada*).<sup>274</sup> Astarābādī’s ultimate criterion is that the extant compilations are authentic because they are derived from the *uṣūl* (“foundational sources”). Had this not been the case, he writes, “then this would mean our hadith are not sound, and hence any action based on them would be invalid”.<sup>275</sup> Astarābādī – similar to Shahīd Thānī, Ḥārithī, Ḥasan ‘Āmilī and Bahā’ī – traces the genesis of the Four Books to the “four-hundred foundational sources”.<sup>276</sup> He claims that the compilers of the Four Books relied exclusively on these four-hundred sources because they were certain that the transmitters of these sources were truthful in their narrations and directly narrated the reports from the Imams. Furthermore, the compilers compared these *uṣūl* books with those sources whose authenticity had been established with certainty and found them to be consistent and reliable.<sup>277</sup>

Astarābādī is fully aware that his proposed framework drastically departs from the prevailing paradigm of his contemporaries. In the preface to the *Fawā’id*, he remarks that in writing this book he is inspired by God and obliged to express the views He has bestowed to him. He writes that he is determined to make his views known, fears no one’s interrogation, and asks God to “keep him safe from people”.<sup>278</sup> Astarābādī knows well that in attacking Ḥillī he has undertaken a grave task. Ḥillī was enormously respected by friend and foe alike, and his jurisprudence had become firmly established among Shi’i scholars and exercised a pervasive influence in directing the religious life of the community. To undermine Ḥillī was tantamount to undermining a large segment of the scholarly and

<sup>272</sup> From time to time, on some minor occasions, Astarābādī does raise questions regarding the reliability of certain reports quoted in the Four Books. In principle, however, he considers the Four Books entirely authentic.

<sup>273</sup> Astarābādī, *Dānishnāmih*, 154–5. *Al-Maḥāsin*, compiled by Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Barqī (d. c. 280/894), is the earliest extant compendium of Imāmī hadiths, preceding *al-Kāfī* by half a century. On Barqī see Roy Vilozy, *Constructing a Worldview: Al-Barqī’s Role in the Making of Early Shi’i Faith* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016); Andrew J. Newman, *The Formative Period of Twelver Shi’ism-Hadith as Discourse Between Qum and Baghdad* (Richmond, 2000), 50–66.

<sup>274</sup> Astarābādī, *Dānishnāmih*, 182.

<sup>275</sup> Astarābādī, *Fawā’id*, 375; Gleave, 78.

<sup>276</sup> Astarābādī, *Fawā’id*, 131.

<sup>277</sup> Astarābādī, *Fawā’id*, 146; Gleave, 78.

<sup>278</sup> Astarābādī, *Fawā’id*, 31.

clerical establishment. Consequently, Astarābādī was aware of the backlash that his inimical criticisms would generate in his audience. His successors, however, were receptive to him.

Those who accepted Astarābādī's outlook, found the views put forth by Shahīd Thānī and his followers deeply problematic. This was particularly true concerning Ḥasan and Muḥammad 'Āmilī who caused an uproar among the Akhbārīs. These two scholars not only these two scholars advocated the fourfold classification, they also adhered to a stricter requirement for proving a transmitter's truthfulness. By arguing that the probity of a transmitter must be attested to by at least two witnesses of recognized probity, in order for him to be considered reliable, they denied truthfulness to a large number of transmitters and consequently refrained from calling their reports authentic.

Yūsuf Baḥrānī (d. 1186/1772), often described as a moderate Akhbārī,<sup>279</sup> criticizes Muḥammad 'Āmilī's "rejection of the majority of hadiths" that 'Āmilī deems unreliable as well as those that fit 'Āmilī's own understanding of reliable transmitters (*thiqa*).<sup>280</sup> He further accuses Muḥammad 'Āmilī of inconsistencies between his rejection of certain hadiths as unreliable on one hand and his reliance on them as evidence for particular positions on the other. He also claims that 'Āmilī at times cannot make up his mind as to whether certain transmitter's reports are *ṣaḥīḥ* or *ḥasan*. Baḥrānī believes these inconsistencies are due to 'Āmilī's 'rashness' in approaching the issue of hadith authenticity.<sup>281</sup>

According to Baḥrānī, the approach advocated by Ḥasan and Muḥammad 'Āmilī is closer to perversion rather than goodness since where it to be acted upon it would corrupt the Sharī'a and lead to outrageous heresy. He claims that what they term as "*ḍa'if*" and "*muwaththaq*" has no Sharī basis but is rather "falsehood and slander". He maintains that reliance only on *ṣaḥīḥ* and *ḥasan* reports is useful for addressing only limited issues pertaining to legal rulings (*aḥkām*). It is of no use, however, for addressing the majority of *aḥkām al-sharī'a* and especially in regard to the core doctrines of religion (*uṣūl*), virtues of the Imams, their infallibility, and talking about their excellences, graces/miraculous deeds (*karāma*), and other such issues. He notes that examining *Uṣūl al-Kāfi* and other similar works indicates that the majority of their content is of the kind that Ḥasan and Muḥammad 'Āmilī undermine. He concludes that either the two 'Āmilī scholars should accept the reports as the previous "righteous" scholars did, or they should get a religion other than Islam and a different *sharī'a*. This is because, Baḥrānī writes, rejecting the majority of reports renders the *sharī'a* deficient due to its lacking the resources necessary for addressing all the rulings. He concludes, "I do not see them committing to any of these two options even though there is no third one available".<sup>282</sup> Baḥrānī is passing this verdict on *Muntaqā* and *Madārik* nearly hundred and fifty years after their authors' death. His views represent the culmination of a line of criticisms that had started by Muḥammad 'Āmilī's own student, Astarābādī. Most Akhbārīs extend this view to anyone who rejects the authenticity of the Four Books, adheres to the fourfold division, and considers *sanad*-analysis the only means of establishing a report's veracity.<sup>283</sup>

<sup>279</sup> For Robert Gleave's detailed study of Baḥrānī see his *Inevitable Doubt: Two Theories of Shī'ī Jurisprudence* (Leiden, 2000).

<sup>280</sup> Yūsuf Baḥrānī, *Lu'lu'at al-Baḥrayn* (Manama, 1429), 43.

<sup>281</sup> Yūsuf Baḥrānī, *Lu'lu'at al-Baḥrayn*, 44.

<sup>282</sup> Yūsuf Baḥrānī, *Lu'lu'at al-Baḥrayn*, 43–5.

<sup>283</sup> The Akhbārī thinker, Ni'mat Allāh al-Jazā'irī (d. 1112/1700), for instance, does not adhere to the position that all reports quoted in the Four Books are authentic. See Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam*, 257–9.

## §7. Conclusion

Shahīd Thānī is the first Imāmī scholar to make an explicit reference to the Four Books and single them out as the “best” Imāmī hadith compendia. He is also the author of the earliest extant Imāmī text on hadith sciences entitled, *al-Ri‘āya fī ‘ilm al-dirāya*. In this book, he traces the genesis of the Four Books to “*al-Uṣūl al-arba‘umi’a*” or “four-hundred foundational sources”, which according to the Shi‘i tradition, were compiled by a select number of the Imams’ companions who had directly heard the hadiths from them. Shahīd Thānī notes that these sources gradually disappeared. At a later stage, however, they were incorporated into abridged collections out of which the four books of *al-Kāfī*, *al-Faḥḥ*, *al-Tahdhīb*, and *al-Istibṣār* emerged. Following Ibn Muṭahhar Ḥillī and his successors, Shahīd Thānī steadfastly adheres to the principle that the only means of establishing a report’s authenticity is through its transmission chain; no external supporting evidence, such as scholars’ continued reliance on a report, redeems a report’s defective transmission chain. This approach leads him to designate as “weak” a large number of reports narrated by the Imams’ most prominent companions due to the occurrence of interruptions (*irsāl*) in their transmission chains. According to this authentication method, a great number of the reports narrated in the Four Books fall short of authenticity. Hence, despite considering the Four Books as the “best” Imāmī hadith compilations and as “*arkān al-dīn, asās al-yaqīn, sanad al-madhhab, ‘imād al-īmān*, and *asās da‘ā’im al-islām*”, Shahīd Thānī does not maintain that every report narrated in them is authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*); in fact, most of the reports lack authority as reliable sources to be used in determining conduct.

Shahīd Thānī’s framework in *al-Ri‘āya* is further elaborated by his foremost disciple, Ḥārithī. Following his teacher, Ḥārithī composes a text in the sciences of hadith entitled, *Wuṣūl al-akhyār ilā uṣūl al-akhbār*. A major difference between *Wuṣūl* and *al-Ri‘āya*, is Ḥārithī’s position concerning the most authoritative sources of Imāmī hadith. While Shahīd Thānī points to *al-Kāfī*, *al-Faḥḥ*, *al-Tahdhīb*, and *al-Istibṣār* as the “best” compilations, and collectively refers to them as “*al-kutub al-ḥadīth al-arba‘a*”, his disciple, Ḥārithī designates this status to five compilations he refers to as “*al-uṣūl al-khamsa*”. These are the Four Books plus a compendium titled *Madīnat al-‘ilm*. This compilation, attributed to Ibn Bābūya, is no longer extant. Ḥārithī is the only person to present *Madīnat al-‘ilm* amongst the most foundational sources of Imāmī hadith. His contemporaries and successors, similar to Shahīd Thānī, do not present *Madīnat al-‘ilm* as a foundational source and content themselves with the four books.

In addition to Ḥārithī, Shahīd Thānī’s approach to hadith authentication is further cultivated, albeit with some modifications, by his son, Ḥasan ‘Āmilī. Similar to his father, he adheres to the fourfold stratification, and believes a report’s authenticity is determined only on the basis of its transmission chains and regardless of its content. He remarks that the fourfold division is a comparably recent development in Imāmī intellectual history. Earlier scholars, he states, adhered to a two-fold division where authentic was any report whose attribution to the Imams was established; weak reports (*ḍa‘īf*) lacked this quality. According to Ḥasan ‘Āmilī, before Ibn Muṭahhar Ḥillī, only Ibn Ṭāwūs had adhered to the fourfold division and that before him, Imāmī scholars had not used this terminology at all. He argues that the two-fold division, however, is no longer beneficial for determining a report’s authenticity. This is because earlier scholars – due to their proximity to the period during which the reports were transmitted by the Imams’ immediate companions – had access to additional pieces of

evidence for establishing a report's credibility that are no longer available to later scholars. In his view, this time-gap has led to "the closing of the door of trust" for later scholars. As a result, *sanad* analysis is the only means of establishing a report's veracity; a report is authentic when there are no defects in its transmission chains such as *idtirāb*, *irsāl*, or *qaṭʿ* and when all the transmitters are credible (*ʿadl*).

A major difference between Ḥasan ʿĀmilī and his predecessors revolves around the criterion used for establishing a transmitter's credibility. According to Ḥasan ʿĀmilī, a transmitter's credibility is proven through the testimonies of at least two witnesses of recognized credibility. In his view, descriptions regarding a person's credibility must be treated as testimonies; meaning, the same standard must hold for statements made regarding a transmitter's status as a reliable or unreliable narrator as in court cases (where at least two witnesses are required in order for judge to pass a verdict). Shahīd Thānī and Ḥārithī, similar to the majority of Shīʿī scholars, do not equate *taʿdīl* with *shahada*, and hence require only one individual's assertion to be sufficient for establishing a transmitter's reliability.

Ḥasan ʿĀmilī uses this method in composing his own hadith compilation, *Muntaqā al-jumān fi al-aḥādīth al-ṣiḥāḥ wa al-ḥisān*. He remarks that, in compiling the *Muntaqā*, he relies only on the reports narrated in the Four Books. He explains that the reason for limiting himself to these sources is because specifically these four books enjoy excessive attention amongst recent scholars due to how excellent they find them. As a result, these four compilations have been "privileged" over many other well-known and available hadith books. In addition to their widespread use, he provides another reason for limiting *Muntaqā* to the reports found in the Four Books. According to Ḥasan ʿĀmilī, these are the only available hadith books whose attribution to their respective compilers is generally well-attested (*tawātur ijāmālī*) and for which there is *qarāʿin ḥālīyya* (circumstantial evidence) that their content is known to have been correctly transmitted. By the correctness of content, he does not mean that whatever is contained in the Four Books is authentic; rather, he means that nothing has been lost or added to these books that their compilers had not intend.

Whereas his father, Shahīd Thānī, had singled out the Four Books as the "best" Imāmī hadith compilations, Ḥasan ʿĀmilī describes them as the later scholars' "preferred" compilations. For him, these four compilations are set apart from other available hadith works due to the privileged status designated to them by Imāmī scholars as well as their reliable transmission and attribution to their compilers. Ḥasan ʿĀmilī's approach to hadith authenticity was advocated by his relative and intellectual companion, Muḥammad ʿĀmilī who in his *Madārik al-aḥkām* systematically applies it to a large body of hadith literature. These two scholars' assertion that a report's veracity should only be determined based on its chain of transmission, that a transmitter's probity is proved through the testimonies of at least two witnessed of recognized probity, and that only authentic reports must be acted on provoked the dissent of his contemporaries. Not all those who adhered to the fourfold division agreed with them. These disagreements pertained either to the details of the framework or its application. An important representative of this departure is Bahāʾ al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī.

Bahāʾī, similar to Shahīd Thānī, Ḥārithī, and Ḥasan ʿĀmilī, designates a privileged status to the Four Books. Similar to Shahīd Thānī, he believes that Kulaynī, Ibn Bābūya, and Ṭūsī compiled the Four Books from the Imams' extant reports found in the Four Hundred Books. While Shahīd Thānī describes the Four Books as the "best" compilations, and Ḥasan ʿĀmilī had calls them the "privileged" sources, Bahāʾī describes the Four Sources as "the central" works in these times. He reiterates Ḥasan ʿĀmilī's

remark concerning the differences between ancient and modern scholars' criteria of hadith authenticity and provides a detailed outline of the supporting indicants utilized by ancient scholars to establish a report's authenticity. Similar to Ḥasan 'Āmilī, he holds that the ancient method is no longer viable since the majority of the supporting indicants have been lost in the passage of time. Faced with this situation, modern scholars devised a method (*qānūn*) in order to distinguish the unreliable from the reliable reports. Bahā'ī considers this a positive development and approves the fourfold method of hadith authentication. At the same time, he disagrees with Shahīd Thānī and Ḥasan 'Āmilī who consider scrutinizing the transmission chains as the only means of verifying the reports' authenticity. In his view, some of the ancient scholars' means of verification can still be used. These include the acceptance of *mursal* reports and those with non-Imāmī transmitters once it is established that ancient scholars widely acted on these reports despite their defective transmission chains. In this way, Bahā'ī designates authority to a large number of reports that fail Shahīd Thānī and his followers' criteria of authenticity. His other disagreement with Ḥasan 'Āmilī pertains to the issue of transmitters' moral probity. He sides with the majority of Imāmī scholars who do not equate assertion of credibility with court testimony and argues that a single assertion is sufficient.

Bahā'ī criticizes Ḥasan and Muḥammad 'Āmilī's requirement of (at a minimum) two witnesses for establishing a transmitter's trustworthiness and argues that those who advocate this principle do not abide by it in practice. He argues that if one were to agree with the requirement of two witnesses, the *rijāl* books would not provide a firm basis for determining the veracity of those appearing in a report's transmission chain even if there is agreement between two or more *rijāl* scholars concerning the probity of a particular transmitter. This is because, there is no guarantee that in composing their books, *rijāl* scholars required the testimony of two truthful individuals before they announced a transmitter as reliable or unreliable. In Bahā'ī's view, the reverse in fact has been the case. Hence, he finds Ḥasan and Muḥammad 'Āmilī's reliance on *rijāl* literature to be in conflict with their demand for two witnesses of recognized probity.

Bahā'ī plays a decisive role in reorienting Shi'ī scholarship from *sanad* analysis to reliance on *shuhra* as means of hadith authentication. In contrast to Shahīd Thānī, he does not limit the means of determining a narrator's credibility to the information provided in the chains of transmission, and hence, under certain conditions, he grants authority to *mursal* reports as well as the narrations of non-Imāmī transmitters. What distinguishes Bahā'ī from other scholars who like him adhere to the fourfold division, is his incorporation of the elements from the ancient framework into the modern criteria of hadith authentication. He fluctuates between the ancient and modern frameworks. Bahā'ī is a transitional figure between the dominance of the Ḥilla School as well as its 'Āmilī adherents, and the emergence and the Akhbārīs. Despite undermining a number of decisive features of the fourfold model, Bahā'ī still belongs to the Uṣūlī camp of 'Allāma Ḥillī and his followers such as Shahīd Thānī, Ḥārithī, and Ḥasan 'Āmilī. He adheres to the *mujtahid* and *muqallid* dichotomy and gives credibility to *ẓann* as basis for action.<sup>284</sup> In his view, it is the permissibility to rely on *ẓann* that justifies the authority of *āḥād* reports as sources of legal knowledge since such reports, on their own, do not engender knowledge in their recipients. In Bahā'ī's view, *ẓann* is prohibited only concerning *uṣūl al-dīn*.<sup>285</sup>

<sup>284</sup> Bahā' al-Dīn 'Āmilī, *Zubdat al-uṣūl* (Qom, 1423), 159 onwards; (on *ẓann*), *Zubdat*, 39–40.

<sup>285</sup> Bahā' al-Dīn 'Āmilī, *Zubdat*, 92. This contrasts with Astarābādī who reject *ẓann*, and hence the *mujtahid*/*muqallid* dichotomy. According to Astarābādī, the Imams' extant report provide knowledge concerning matters of belief and conduct.

Astarābādī, takes his predecessors' discussions on hadith authenticity to a new territory. By the time he enters the scene, a few main themes have emerged from the discussions of his predecessors concerning hadith authenticity. First, division of reports into *mutawātir* and *wāḥid* and division of *āḥād* reports into two or four categories (depending on whether one adheres to the ancient or modern scholars' verification methods). Second, division of transmitters into reliable and unreliable, Imāmī and non-Imāmī; the issue of determining transmitters' moral probity and disagreements as to the minimum number of individuals necessary for establishing a transmitter as truthful. Third, historical narratives concerning the process through which the Imams' reports became codified into textual records known as the "four-hundred foundational sources" (*al-uṣūl al-arbaʿumi'a*) as well as the afterlife of these four-hundred sources into various hadith collections. Fourth, assertions as to which collections are the most reliable representations of the "four-hundred foundational sources" and hence the most authoritative.

Whereas Ḥasan ʿĀmilī and Bahāʾī maintain that modern scholars had adopted the fourfold method due to the changing circumstances and loss of the earlier sources, Astarābādī links the replacement of the twofold with the fourfold division with a misguided imitation of Sunni scholars. In his view, whereas the *āḥād* reports available to Sunni scholars were bereft of supporting indicants that would establish their authenticity, this is not the case with Shiʿi hadith. He avers that ʿAllāma Ḥillī, heedless of this fact, adopted the fourfold division and approached Shiʿi hadith books the same way that Sunnis had approached theirs. According to Astarābādī, Ḥillī undertook this project despite the assertions of his predecessors such as Kulaynī, Ibn Bābūya, Murtaḍā and Ṭūsī who all have proclaimed consensus for the authenticity of the extant hadith compendia. Central to Astarābādī's project of revival a Sunni-free Shiʿism is a categorical rejection of the fourfold division. He writes that Ḥillī's successors such as Shahīd Awwal, Muḥaqqiq Karakī and Shahīd Thānī followed him in this regard until there appeared "the most knowledgeable of modern scholars in the sciences of hadith and *rijāl*, and the most pious of them, the master of all in all matters, Mīrza Muḥammad Astarābādī", who, having realized their deviance, asks Astarābādī to revive the path of ancient Akhbārīs and dispel the dubious points of those who oppose this path. Astarābādī reports that Mīrza wanted to undertake this task himself but God destined that it come through Astarābādī's pen.<sup>286</sup>

None of the figures discussed in this chapter considers every hadith quoted in the Four Books to be authentic. Even Bahāʾī, who among modern scholars has the most affinity with the ancient method, considers some of the reports contained in these four compendia to be unreliable. Astarābādī is the first person to make such a claim. Within Ḥillī and ʿĀmilī scholars' *sanad*-based authentication framework, it is a report's chains of transmission, rather than the compilation within which it is found, that decides its reliability. Compilations attain their credibility from the reports quoted in them rather than vice versa; Astarābādī reverses this logic. In his view, reports acquire their credibility from the compilations that transmit them. For him, *sanad*-analysis isolates the report from its wider context, which includes the compilation, the compiler, the pieces of evidence external to the transmission chains, and the community's collective assessment regarding these issues.

Although Shahīd Thānī argues that the Four Books were gathered from the remnants of the "four-hundred foundational sources" and represent the "best" Shiʿi hadith compilations, he does not arrive at the conclusion reached by Astarābādī and his followers; namely, the fact that the Four Books

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<sup>286</sup> Astarābādī, *Dānishnāmih*, 70–1.

were gathered from the “four-hundred foundational sources” guarantees their authenticity. What started as Shahīd Thānī’s “best collections”, in less than a century, ends as “authentic collections”. Disagreements regarding reference hadith collections begin as soon as the Four Books are presented as somehow unique among other available collections. Ḥasan and Muḥammad ‘Āmilī, while acknowledging the Four Books’ importance, articulate a criterion that restricts the scope of credible hadiths quoted in the Four Books. Bahā’ī, disagreeing with this criterion, expands the method of hadith authentication beyond *sanad*-analysis, which leads to expanding the scope of credible hadiths. Astarābādī finds all these discussions misguided. In his view, there is no need for the two or fourfold categorizations since all the hadiths quoted in the Four Books are authentic. Astarābādī’s position represents a radical departure from his predecessors and as we shall see in the next chapter has implications on a wide range of issue in hadith scholarship, exegesis, law and jurisprudence. In the next century, a group of scholars would enthusiastically take up Astarābādī’s ideas, making waves that rippled widely across the Shi‘ī world.

From the figures studied in this chapter, none left behind a comprehensive hadith compendium. Shahīd Thānī and Ḥārithī did not compose hadith books; Ḥasan al-‘Āmilī and Bahā’ī did try their hands at compilation but the former’s *Muntaqā* and the latter’s *Ḥabl al-matīn* both remained incomplete at their authors’ death. As for Astarābādī, his efforts were chiefly directed at canonizing the Four Books rather than compiling a hadith book of his own. It was Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, a student of Bahā’ī and an admirer of Astarābādī, who compiled the first comprehensive Shi‘ī hadith compendium in over six centuries. In the next chapter, I explore Fayḍ’s ideas and approach to Shi‘ī hadith corpus and situate him within the larger context of the hadith discourse developed during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

## Chapter 3

### *Al-Wāfi*: Hadith Compilation, Commentary, and the Four Books

#### §1. Introduction

Of the figures studied in the previous chapter, none left behind a comprehensive hadith compendium. Shahīd Thānī and Ḥarithī did not produce compilations; Ḥasan ‘Āmilī and Bahā’ī did try their hands at compilation, but the former’s *Muntaqā* and the latter’s *Ḥabl al-matīn* both focused only on precepts of conduct and remained incomplete at their authors’ death. As for Astarābādī, his efforts were chiefly directed at canonizing the Four Books rather than gathering a compendium of his own. It was Fayḍ, a student of Bahā’ī and an admirer of Astarābādī, who produced the first comprehensive Shi‘ī hadith compendium in over six centuries.

Fayḍ completes *al-Wāfi* in 1068/1658, a century after Shahīd Thānī’s death. Discussions regarding the authority of the Four Books along with the defense, modification, and rejection of Shahīd Thānī’s approach to them dominated the activities of Imāmī scholars during this century. Some scholars such as Ḥasan and Muḥammad ‘Āmilī endorsed a more rigorous criterion for hadith authenticity; in contrast to Shahīd Thānī, they stipulated that a report is authentic only when the probity of those appearing in the transmission chains is testified to by at least two individuals of recognized probity. Other scholars, however, attempted to expand Shahīd Thānī’s criterion of authenticity. Bahā’ī, for instance, while adhering to the fourfold division, asserted that in addition to transmission chains, other pieces of evidence such as consensus regarding a transmitter’s veracity or a report’s widespread use provide legitimate means of hadith authentication. Astarābādī, disagreeing with both tendencies, rejected the fourfold division altogether and affirmed the categorical authenticity of the Four Books.

In his early training, Fayḍ crossed paths with Bahā’ī and Astarābādī. In his autobiographical remarks, he writes of having studied with Bahā’ī in Isfahan and met Astarābādī for a brief time in Mecca; he speaks reverentially of both events. Fayḍ’s temperament is more akin to Astarābādī’s while his scholarly orientation is closer to Bahā’ī’s. Similar to Bahā’ī, he was a polymath and engaged with numerous scholastic disciplines. Likewise, he also had an affinity for mysticism in general and Persian Sufi poetry in particular. Whereas Bahā’ī and Astarābādī took contrasting approaches to the Sunni intellectual tradition—one conciliatory and the other confrontational—Fayḍ took a middle path. Through his revised version of *Iḥyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn*, he assimilated Ghazālī into a Shi‘ī setting, and yet, he adhered to the narrative espoused by Astarābādī, criticizing Shi‘ī scholars such as ‘Allāma Ḥillī for constructing their legal hermeneutics and criteria for hadith authenticity on the basis of Sunni ideas. Despite their similarities, however, Fayḍ departs from Bahā’ī in matters of jurisprudence and instead develops a framework in line with Astarābādī. As far as labels are concerned, Fayḍ identifies himself as an “Akḥbārī”. In nearly every controversial issue in jurisprudence, he sides with Astarābādī. He contests Uṣūlī scholars’ reliance on conjecture (*ẓann*), views on consensus, division of believers into experts (*mujtahid*) and masses/imitators (*muqallid*), and adherence to the sola-*sanad* criterion of hadith authenticity.

In Chapter Two, I explored Fayḍ's theological efforts to establish hadith as the supreme source of knowledge available during the Imam's absence. In this chapter I study Fayḍ as a hadith compiler and interpreter. In pursuing this line of inquiry, I examine *al-Wāfi*'s structure and content, sources and influences, and the strategies that direct its compilation processes and exegetical methods. Among the questions addressed are: What need does Fayḍ perceive for a new hadith compendium? In what ways, is his compendium different from its predecessors? What is his assessment of the Four Books? What is Fayḍ's epistemology of hadith authenticity? In what ways does his approach to the question of authenticity differ from his predecessors and contemporaries? What justifications does he provide for them? Where does Fayḍ fit in these developments and what are his contributions to the Safavid hadith discourse? My investigation into these and other pertinent questions will revolve around two interconnected aspects of Fayḍ's engagement with hadith: compilation and hermeneutics.

This chapter provides a close reading of *al-Wāfi*'s preface and three introductory sections. In the preface, Fayḍ outlines his objectives and methods in compiling a new hadith compendium. He accompanies this in the first introduction with a brief discourse on the path to acquiring religious knowledge and the role of hadith in this process followed by a historical narrative regarding the formation of the extant hadith corpus. In the two ensuing introductory sections, Fayḍ delineates his conception of hadith authenticity, which includes issues regarding transmission chains, transmitters, and *isnād* reconstruction.

## §2. *Al-Wāfi*: Objectives and Methods

*Al-Wāfi* represents Fayḍ's attempt at compiling a definitive hadith compendium. A museum of scriptural reports, *al-Wāfi* curates materials from the Four Books along with Fayḍ's commentaries on a variety of subjects, ranging from theology, law, and exegesis to ethics, supplication, eschatology and history.<sup>1</sup> Fayḍ describes *al-Wāfi* as a "book abundant in the branches of religious sciences containing everything that is mentioned about them in the manifest Qur'an and all that is included in the Four Sources (*al-uṣūl al-arba'a*), which are the central sources in our times,"<sup>2</sup> meaning *al-Kāfi*, *al-Faḥrī*, *Tahdhīb*, and *al-Istibṣār*.<sup>3</sup> He explains that his motivation for composing a new compilation stems from "the shortcomings present in each of the Four Books which make each [an] insufficient [source] on its own". He notes that taken together, however, the Four Books present sufficient guidance for the Shi'a. In this way, he writes, *al-Wāfi* shall serve, "as a canon (*qānūn*) for people of knowledge and guidance of the saved Imāmī sect, and as an edict (*dustūr*) for the Shi'a of the prophetic progeny who seek redemption in the Hereafter. With it [*al-Wāfi*] they shall need no other book".<sup>4</sup> It is noteworthy that Fayḍ's description of the Four Books as well as his stated aim in compiling *al-Wāfi* closely resemble Bahā'ī's statements. As mentioned in Chapter Two, in explaining his decision to exclusively focus on the reports quoted in the Four Books, Bahā'ī described them as "the central sources in our times".<sup>5</sup> Fayḍ

<sup>1</sup> The edition used in this study is Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *al-Wāfi*, ed. By M. Muḥsin, 26 vols. (Isfahan, 1412).

<sup>2</sup> "Uṣūlanā l-arba'a allatī 'alayhā l-madār fī hādhihi l-a'ṣār."

<sup>3</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:4.

<sup>4</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:7.

<sup>5</sup> Bahā'ī, "al-Wajīza", in *Ḥabl al-matīn*, 1:29–30.

reproduces, verbatim, Bahā'ī's description and prefers it over other available descriptions of the Four Books as the "best", "privileged", or "authentic" compilations (each provided, respectively and in chronological order, by Shahīd Thānī, Ḥasan 'Amīlī, and Astarābādī).

Bahā'ī's influence can also be seen in Fayḍ's stated aim for *al-Wāfi*. In his preface to *Mashriq al-shamsayn*, Bahā'ī writes that he will rely only on those authentic reports that pertain to legal precepts found in the Four Books. In this way, he states, *Mashriq* stands as "a canon (*qānūn*) for the men of religion of the saved Imāmī sect, and an edict (*dustūr*) upon which legal experts (*mujtahid*) rely for deriving important legal matters. I have devoted my utmost effort so that nothing *shādh* from the *ṣaḥīḥ* legal reports is found in this book".<sup>6</sup> Fayḍ replaces Bahā'ī's "men of religion" with "people of knowledge and guidance", and more significantly, whereas Bahā'ī writes that his *Mashriq* is written as a "*dustūr*" for "legal experts", Fayḍ describes *al-Wāfi* as "a *dustūr* for the Shi'a of the prophetic progeny who seek redemption in the Hereafter". Fayḍ's elimination of "legal experts" is an expression of his Akhbārī commitment. This commitment is also evident in refraining, in contrast to Bahā'ī, from labeling some of the reports found in the Four Books composing as *shādh*. Fayḍ's project, therefore, is, in one sense, an expansion and, in another, an alteration of Bahā'ī's initial aim.

Fayḍ's objective in *al-Wāfi* is to compose a compendium encompassing the Four Books, remedying what he perceives as their defects and providing the reader with comprehensive contextual and interpretive information. He maintains that among these defects are the compilers' inadequate attention to include in their compilations all the important reports necessary for finding guidance. Other defects include the compilations' organizational hurdles that make consulting them difficult and their needlessly long lengths due to the inclusion of repeated hadiths.<sup>7</sup> Having mentioned these general criticisms, Fayḍ proceeds to discuss specific issues concerning each of the Four Books.

He describes *al-Kāfi* as "the most honored, reliable, complete, and comprehensive [of the Four Books], which contains within it matters pertaining to the *uṣūl* [of religion], and a book bereft of additions and errors". Nevertheless, in his estimation, *al-Kāfi* displays a series of defects. Fayḍ first points out that Kulaynī's compilation overlooks many hadiths on legal rulings and entirely fails to include certain chapters on the *aḥkām*, and hence, it is not comprehensive as a legal source. The second defect concerns Kulaynī's process of hadith selection. Fayḍ explains that in addressing contradictory hadiths, Kulaynī often includes only one set of reports and excludes those that contradict it. In this way, coherence is created at the expense of exclusion. In his preface to *al-Kāfi*, Kulaynī cites the issue of conflicting hadiths as a motive for composing his compilation and offers a few solutions of his own in resolving these instances. Fayḍ finds Kulaynī's method, its application and results unsatisfactory, and will later on articulate an alternative method of his own. Fayḍ's third major criticism pertains to Kulaynī's decision to refrain, except in rare instances, from commenting on the ambiguities and difficulties encountered in *al-Kāfi*. This contrasts with Fayḍ's approach in *al-Wāfi* where he provides extensive commentaries whenever he deems necessary. Lastly, Fayḍ finds *al-Kāfi*'s organizational arrangement inefficient. He complains that Kulaynī sometimes puts a hadith under an irrelevant title-

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<sup>6</sup> Bahā'ī, *Mashriq al-shamsayn*, 20–1.

<sup>7</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:4–5.

heading or picks a wrong title for a series of hadiths quoted in that section thus reducing the compilation's efficacy.<sup>8</sup>

As for Ibn Bābūya's *Man lā yaḥḍuruḥu l-faqīh*, Fayḍ writes, it is on the whole similar to *al-Kāfi* except that it does not include reports pertaining to doctrinal topics (the *uṣūl*). He notes that *Faqīh* suffers from similar organizational defects in the arrangements of its chapters and headings. More importantly, he points out, in some cases it is difficult to distinguish between the narrated reports attributed to the Imams and Ibn Bābūya's own commentaries on them. He further criticizes Ibn Bābūya for narrating a great number of *mursal* reports and inattentiveness in citing the transmission chains with precision.<sup>9</sup>

Concerning Ṭūsī's two collections, *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām* and *al-Istibṣār*, Fayḍ acknowledges their comprehensiveness in regard to legal issues. He notes, however, that similar to Ibn Bābūya's *Faqīh*, these collections exclude reports pertaining to doctrinal topics, and hence, on their own do not stand as sufficient sources for guidance. Furthermore, Fayḍ finds two additional shortcomings with *Tahdhīb* and *al-Istibṣār*, one hermeneutic and the other organizational. In his view, Ṭūsī at times provides "farfetched interpretations" (*ta'wīlāt ba'ida*) for some of the reports included in *Tahdhīb*. Ṭūsī's collection exhibits the organizational defects of its predecessors by misplacing hadiths under irrelevant chapters as well as needlessly lengthening the work with redundant repetitions. As for *al-Istibṣār*, Fayḍ considers it as part of *Tahdhīb*, since its aim is to address the contradictory hadiths compiled in the former, and thinks it suffers from the same defects as *Tahdhīb*.<sup>10</sup>

After mentioning what he perceives as the shortcomings of each of the Four Books, Fayḍ reiterates a series of general criticisms concerning the corpus as a whole: none of these compendia on its own brings together all the available reports on the doctrinal and legal issues (*uṣūl* and *aḥkām*), the compendia lack comprehensive exegetic treatments of their quoted reports and in many cases do not explain ambiguities and resolve difficulties, and readers of the Four Books are confronted with numerous organizational challenges stemming from the compilers' poor editorial decisions. Fayḍ's primary criticism of the previous compilers, however, pertains to what he perceives as their failure to provide sufficient explications for their quoted reports in general and the contradictory reports in particular.

Fayḍ writes that his criticisms do not undermine the merits of the Four Books and their compilers. In his view, Kulaynī, Ibn Bābūya, and Ṭūsī satisfactorily fulfilled the tasks set before them in light of their particular circumstances. It would be "unfair", Fayḍ remarks, to demand from a single author to compose a compendium free from all the above-mentioned shortcomings. But the time has come, he writes, to address these deficiencies in a single compendium containing the best of what each of the Four Books offers and to complement them with what they lack. He notes that in his hadith commentaries he will not limit himself to the Four Books and will also take recourse to reports found in other sources. Lastly, Fayḍ writes, in explaining difficulties he will refrain from providing far-fetched interpretations.<sup>11</sup> He holds that in this way *al-Wāfi* shall serve,

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<sup>8</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:5. Fayḍ's assessment contrasts with Shahīd Thānī who praises *al-Kāfi*'s arrangement. See Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī, *Mawsūʿat al-Shahīd al-Thānī*, 4:423.

<sup>9</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:5.

<sup>10</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:5–6.

<sup>11</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:6–7.

...As a canon for people of knowledge and guidance from the saved Imāmī sect, and as an edict for the Shi'a of the prophetic progeny who seek redemption in the Hereafter. With it [*al-Wāfi*] they shall not need any other book and after it they will not need to take recourse to extensive reasoning in inferring legal precepts. They will be free from corrupted legal interpretation (*ijtihād*) and deserted consensus, from varied jurisprudential principles and different delusional viewpoints. I have named the book *al-Wāfi* for it clings to important things and reveals the ambiguities. I ask God to have the opportunity to see its completion as He has prepared for me the opportunity to commence it.<sup>12</sup>

Through the reports included in *al-Wāfi* and his own commentaries on them, Fayḍ seeks to remove the need for legal interpretation, consensus, and what he describes as farfetched interpretations (*ta'wīl*), which in his view constitute illegitimate means of forming precepts. He discusses his rejection of legal interpretation and consensus along with other related matters pertaining to his compilation and hermeneutical approach in three introductory sections that follow his preface: (1) On the Path to Knowledge of the Religious Sciences; (2) On Knowledge of the Reports' Transmission Chains; (3) On the Terminologies and Rules [of the Hadith Sciences]. In the following pages, I will highlight major issues in each of these three introductory sections.

### §3. Embedding Compilation within Epistemology

Fayḍ uses the first introduction to situate *al-Wāfi* within a larger historical and epistemological context. He begins by making a distinction between two kinds of knowledge: investigative (*taḥqīqī*) and imitative (*taqlīdī*). In his view, the first and most excellent kind of knowledge is investigative.<sup>13</sup> He explains that this knowledge is a “light present in the hearth” expanding it so that one witnesses the Unseen.<sup>14</sup> Investigative knowledge, he remarks, is obtained by liberating the heart through learning, spiritual purification through purging the soul from vices and embellishing it by virtues, adhering to the revealed law, and practicing mindfulness (*taqwā*).<sup>15</sup> According to Fayḍ, imitative knowledge is of a lower rank than investigative knowledge. God imparts this knowledge to people and they take from it what is accessible to their level of understanding.<sup>16</sup>

According to Fayḍ, the only path to imitative knowledge – in both belief and conduct – is through “knowing the reports (*āthār*) of the Imams and learning their hadiths from the transmitted foundational sources (i.e., *uṣūl*) because the Imams are the caliphs of the Prophet, upholders of the revelation, wellsprings of knowledge and firmly rooted in it,<sup>17</sup> the people of remembrance to whom the

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<sup>12</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:7.

<sup>13</sup> Fayḍ mentions that this type of knowledge is also referred to as *al-ʿilm al-ladunnī*.

<sup>14</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:9.

<sup>15</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:10.

<sup>16</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:9.

<sup>17</sup> Q. 3:7.

believers have been commanded to turn,<sup>18</sup> and those entrusted with authority<sup>19</sup> to whom the believers have been ordered to follow”.<sup>20</sup> This view is identical with Kulaynī’s position expressed in the preface to *al-Kāfi*. For Fayḍ, similar to Kulaynī, knowledge revolves around the axis of the Imam; it is through the guidance of the Imam, Kulaynī holds, that man is able to practice religion with knowledge (*‘ilm*), insight (*baṣīra*), and certitude (*yaqīn*).<sup>21</sup> By contrast, any religiosity divorced from the Imam’s guidance will inevitably involve taking recourse to personal opinion, blind adherence to the jurists’ dictates, and erroneous interpretations devoid of knowledge and insight.<sup>22</sup> Certitude (*yaqīn*) is attained only by following the guidance of one’s intellect (*‘aql*), which according to Kulaynī, is “the axis on which everything revolves”;<sup>23</sup> the Imam represents the intellect in its most perfect state.

God explained his religion through the guided Imams from the progeny of our prophet – may God’s peace be upon him and his progeny – and lighted through them the path that leads to him, and through them he unearthed the deep springs of his knowledge (*‘ilm*); he appointed them as the milestones on the path to his cognition (*ma‘rifa*), signposts for his religion, and steers between himself and his creation. He made them the gates which lead to his true knowledge and informed them of the mysteries of his unseen secrets.<sup>24</sup>

This conception of knowledge—and the Imams’ role as the sole possessors of it—directs Kulaynī’s project in *al-Kāfi* and is central to Fayḍ’s hermeneutical approach to the Qur’an and hadith. According to this view, the presence of an Imam is necessary since the true meanings of the Qur’an and the Prophet’s *sunna* are only fully grasped through his guidance. In the absence of a manifest Imam, it is their extant reports that serve as guidance. Fayḍ condemns any other path to acquire knowledge of the principles of religions and precepts pertaining to conduct. He is particularly wary of those he calls *ahl al-jadal* and *ijtihād* who, according to Fayḍ, dispute in religion and attempt to form legal precepts by taking recourse to personal opinion (i.e., *ra’y*) as opposed to the teachings of the Qur’an, the Prophet and the Imams. Having distinguished between the possessors of *taḥqīqī* knowledge (*muḥaqqiq*) and *taqlīdī* knowledge (*muqallid*), Fayḍ introduces a third category of people who are neither *muḥaqqiq* nor contend to be *muqallid*. Instead, he writes, these “misguided” people mix truth with falsehood, and venture to interpret the Qur’an and *sunna* based on their personal opinions. He argues that such individuals first appeared amongst Sunni scholars and eventually even found adherents amongst a segment of Shi‘i scholars, who due to error and ignorance, adopted their ways.<sup>25</sup>

After establishing the epistemological framework within which he approaches the issue of religious knowledge and the Imams’ role in it, Fayḍ turns toward developing a historical narrative concerning Shi‘i hadith corpus. According to this narrative, after the passing of the Prophet, an ordeal

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<sup>18</sup> Q. 16:43 and 21:7.

<sup>19</sup> Q. 4:59 and 4:83.

<sup>20</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:11–12.

<sup>21</sup> Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, 1:14.

<sup>22</sup> Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, 1:9, 16.

<sup>23</sup> Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, 1:21 (“*al-‘aql huwa al-quṭb ‘alayhi al-dār*”).

<sup>24</sup> Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, 1:7–8.

<sup>25</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:12–3.

fell upon Muslims regarding his succession that led to the misguidance of the majority except a small number of people who attached themselves to the Imams and found salvation through adhering to the “two weighty things”, the Qur’an and the Prophet’s progeny. The Imams, designated by the Prophet as the guides of the community, commanded and encouraged their followers to transmit their teachings in order to preserve them for future generations. Hence, Fayḍ argues, a link was established between the Imams, their immediate audience who directly heard their hadiths and transmitted them to others of their generation who in turn transmitted them to their successors. Through these unbroken transmission chains, Fayḍ writes, the hadiths have been transmitted from generation to generation until they have reached him.

Fayḍ maintains that the Imams’ followers carried the hadiths in their hearts and preserved them in their notebooks as they had heard them.<sup>26</sup> He holds that this writing process involved critical engagements with the inherited reports in order to separate the fabricated from the authentic hadiths and preserving them from transmission errors. He holds that Shi‘i scholars, upon encountering prevaricators, would publicly discredit and explicitly mention them as unreliable transmitters in their *rijāl* books in order to guard future generations from attributing fabricated hadiths of these individuals to the Imams.<sup>27</sup> He argues that Imāmī scholars would not rely upon the transmitted reports of a narrator who was exclusively known to be untrustworthy or whose identity and veracity was unknown (*majhūl*) to *rijāl* scholars while supporting evidence testifying to the authenticity of his reports was also absent. He notes that scholars called such reports *al-khabar al-wāḥid* and considered them bereft of necessitating knowledge or action. Fayḍ asserts that scholars would not “believe in anything concerning details of the principles of religion or act on anything pertaining to the rulings of the Sharī‘a except on the scriptural texts (*nuṣūṣ*) heard from their Imams, upon them be peace, either through the trustworthy narrators (*thiqa*) or trustworthy intermediaries (*wasā’iṭ thiqāt*)”.<sup>28</sup> In adopting this method, Fayḍ takes a stand against the *sola-sanad* method of Shahīd Thānī and his followers, and instead sides with Bahā’ī and Astarābādī.

According to Fayḍ, following the Imams’ teachings through this authentication process safeguarded the Shi‘a from

extracting (*takhrīj*) opinions by interpreting the ambiguities (*ta’wīl al-mutushābihāt*), acquiring conjecture (*ẓann*) with the help of crafted principles called legal interpretation, or relying on people’s agreed-upon opinions called consensus as it is done among all Sunnis. But they had been prohibited to do so by the Imams and by God as explicit verses and authentic reports indicate. This prohibition [against relying on legal interpretation and consensus] was well-known amongst them and they were even famous for upholding it among their opponents.<sup>29</sup>

Fayḍ laments that Sunni-influenced scholars introduced these erroneous procedures among the Shi‘a. This narrative is a recurrent motif in Akhbārī writings of the period and, as discussed in the previous chapter, has its genesis in Astarābādī’s *Fawā’id*.

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<sup>26</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:13.

<sup>27</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:14.

<sup>28</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:14.

<sup>29</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:14.

Fayḍ describes the “Sunnification” of Shi‘ism in the following manner: after the period of the Imams’ presence elapsed, and the connection between people and the concealed Imam through his representatives was terminated, the Shi‘a began to intensely feel the weight of the Imam’s absence (*ghayba*). Bereft of a connection with their Imam, they came under Sunni scholarly domination, which had an enduring impact on Shi‘i scholars who began to assimilate within Sunni centers of learning. A consequence of this blending with their adversaries was their familiarity from an early age with Sunni school curriculums. Frequenting Sunni religious schools and reading books on jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), which the Sunnis had constructed as a means of deriving legal rulings, led a segment of Shi‘i scholars to adopt their adversaries’ erroneous ways and composing similar treatises in the manner of the Sunni scholars. This new development occurred, Fayḍ writes, in opposition to the teachings of the Prophet and the Imams. As a result, a new class of Shi‘i scholars began to engage in writing texts on legal theory, utilizing terminologies elaborated by Sunni scholars in which they sanctioned the practice of legal interpretation, issuing rulings based on personal opinion, legal interpretation, and interpreted the ambiguous passages of the Qur’an through conjecture and consensus.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to the advent of the occultation and coming under the influence of Sunni intellectual tradition, Fayḍ lists three factors that contributed to the adoption of independent legal interpretation and legal theory among Imāmī scholars. First, encountering disagreements between the “apparent” sense (*ẓawāhir*) of verses from the Qur’an and the Imams’ reports that can only be resolved through interpretation (*ta’wīl*). For Fayḍ, this is a type of legal interpretation that requires outlining the principles and guidelines for undertaking interpretation (*ta’wīl*). Second, encountering new events for which no scriptural text (*naṣṣ*) is available and extending the need to seek out the rulings that pertain to them. Third, encountering confusing issues and ambiguities concerning some of the rulings that a group of Shi‘i scholars believed can only be resolved through acquiring a conjecture that prefers (*trajīh*) one ruling over other possible rulings. Fayḍ calls this approach legal interpretation.<sup>31</sup>

He explains that the Imāmī scholars justified their reliance on legal interpretation, consensus, conjecture in the following way: they argued that the available verses and reports against the use of legal interpretation only concern legal analogy (*qiyās*), preference (*istiḥsān*) and other such methods that belong to the juristic principles used by Sunnis; they argued prohibitions against interpreting the ambiguities and relying on conjecture is exclusive to the realm of the principles of religion (*uṣūl al-dīn*) and not to the realm of legal rulings; they argued the condemnations of relying on agreed-upon views is exclusive to those agreements that do not include the view of the concealed Imam within them when it was established for them that there is no time that is bereft of an infallible Imam. Fayḍ does not find these explanations convincing. In his view, the adoption of these methods has only increased the disagreements between jurists and led their followers (*muqallidūn*) astray.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:13–15. Neither in *al-Wāfi* nor in his other works does Fayḍ make any secret of the fact that his narrative concerning the “later” scholars’ approach to hadith owes much to Astarābādī’s *Fawā’id*, in which the latter envisioned a repudiation of the Sunni-influenced scholars’ classification of hadiths into a four-fold category as well as their legal hermeneutics (*uṣūl al-fiqh*). For Fayḍ, as for Astarābādī, it is the approach of the ‘ancient’ scholars (*mutaqaddimīn*) that is to be adopted. In his *al-Ḥaq al-mubīn*, written in the same year as *al-Wāfi*’s completion in 1068/1658, Fayḍ mentions his indebtedness to Astarābādī, “It was him who opened this door for us and guided us to the correct (*ṣawāb*) way”. See Fayḍ Kāshānī, *al-Ḥaq al-mubīn*, in *al-Uṣūl al-aṣīla*, ed. by M. Muḥsin (Tehran, 1349 sh.), 12.

<sup>31</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:15.

<sup>32</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:15–16.

Fayḍ considers Imāmī scholars' use of legal interpretation especially misguided. In his view, a widely narrated report – found in both Shi'ī and Sunni sources – has explicitly addressed the appropriate manner for dealing with ambiguities involved in some rulings. According to this report, Fayḍ writes, all rulings fall under one of the following categories: those whose correctness is manifest; those whose incorrectness is manifest; and those whose correctness or incorrectness is difficult to determine and hence their rulings must be referred to God and His Messenger. Fayḍ remarks that despite the report's demand to leave the ambiguities aside, many scholars have not been satisfied to do so and instead attempted to resolve them through legal interpretation. In his view, the appropriate course of action is to suspend judgement regarding the third group of rulings since their ambiguities might indeed contain wisdom and serve the believers' interests (*maṣāliḥ*). Moreover, ambiguities only increase rather than decrease as a result of engaging in legal interpretation. Were this not true, he argues, relying on legal interpretation and conjecture should have divided the rulings into manifestly correct and manifestly incorrect. This, however, is not the case since even after using legal interpretation the third group of rulings mentioned in the above hadith is still in place.<sup>33</sup>

At this juncture, Fayḍ invokes a much-quoted passage from the Qur'an where verses are divided into clear and ambiguous, and a group of people are condemned for pursuing the ambiguous verse: "The perverse at heart eagerly pursue the ambiguities in their attempt to make trouble and to pin down a specific meaning of their own. Only God and those firmly grounded in knowledge know their meaning" (3:7). Referring to the proponents of legal interpretation, Fayḍ rhetorically asks, "Do they not know 'those firmly established in knowledge' refers to no one but the Imams?"<sup>34</sup> He remarks that in cases of conflicting reports, rather than engaging in legal interpretation, the Imams have elaborated the manners for preferring one hadith over another and established the permissibility of choosing (*ikhtiyār*) to act on the basis of this preference. He explains that the preference must be made on the basis of which report has the most trustworthy narrator, which report more closely accords with the Qur'an or is more distanced from the ruling adhered to by Sunni jurists. Having undertaken this investigation, Fayḍ concludes, the Shi'a have been permitted to choose – in a state of utter submission and humility – the report they consider authentic. Hence, there is no need for legal interpretation to resolve disagreements between various reports since the Shi'a have been instructed to choose one report and act on it even though other reports are available that conflict with it.<sup>35</sup>

According to Fayḍ, when an Imam is present in the community, his views become known to others through the teachings directly heard from him. During the occultation, however, the Imam's views become known to their followers through those reports preserved by trustworthy transmitters who either have preserved the Imams' statements in their memory or recorded them in notebooks. At this juncture, Fayḍ addresses the issue of consensus, which he had already rejected as an authoritative means of forming legal rulings. He writes:

It happens that at times the righteous community (i.e., the Shi'a) has an agreement (*ittifāq*) with regard to narrating a given hadith and acting on it due to its prevalence (*shuhra*) among them.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:16–17.

<sup>34</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:17.

<sup>35</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:17.

<sup>36</sup> In the *Safina*, Fayḍ adds that such a report can be acted on if no one in the community (*tā'ifa*) considers it as *shādh*" (20).

Such a hadith is called ‘agreed-upon’ (*mujma‘ ‘alayh*) just as it is mentioned in the statement of Imam al-Ṣādiq in a hadith about making preference between opposing reports: ‘Take what is agreed-upon between your companions because there is no doubt in agreed-upon reports’. This, and nothing else, is the meaning of true consensus including the view of the infallible which was the view of previous Shi‘a.<sup>37</sup>

In Fayḍ’s view, disagreements amongst jurists would not have occurred had they abided by the following principles: (1) to divide rulings into the clearly permitted, the clearly prohibited, and the ambiguous; (2) to leave aside the ambiguous rulings (i.e., to refrain from engaging in legal interpretation) and to remain silent about them just as God Himself has remained silent about them; (3) to practice caution (*iḥtiyāt*) concerning the ambiguous rulings and leaving their knowledge to God and His Messenger; (4) in encountering conflicting reports (*muta‘arid*), to decide which report one believes to be authentic without considering the other reports as inauthentic; (5) in encountering contradictory reports (*mutanāqid*), to expand the meanings of each report so that they become complimentary. He avers that all these principles are outlined in the Imams’ reports and sanctioned by them.<sup>38</sup>

According to Fayḍ, as a result of disregarding the Imams’ instructions, endless disagreements have become prevalent among Shi‘i jurists and there is enmity and bad-blood amongst them. He writes that this situation has degenerated to the point that the masses, rather than emulating the path of their Imams, emulate the jurists’ whims and following their unfounded opinions.<sup>39</sup> It is in this context that Fayḍ presents *al-Wāfi* as a “canon” and an “edict” for the Shi‘a. He holds that *al-Wāfi* terminates the need to depend on any other book, method, and authority since it gathers all the “trustworthy” reports and dispels the need for legal theory. His commentaries, he believes, resolve any ambiguities in the reports and remove the need for providing far-fetched interpretations or as some might say today, hermeneutical acrobatics.<sup>40</sup>

#### §4. Of Transmissions, Transmitters, and Hadith Authenticity

*Al-Wāfi* is a compendium of scriptural reports (*akhbār*). Each report is comprised of a text (*matn*) prefaced with a documentary evidence (*sanad*) that provides information about the report’s narrators and transmission route. Fayḍ delineates his approach to hadith authenticity in the second and third introductions *al-Wāfi*. His treatment of the topic is expressive of the Akhbārī-Uṣūlī disputes regarding the criterion applied for determining a report as authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*). As discussed in Chapter Three, to categorize reports into various levels of authenticity based on the degree of their transmission reliability was a development that chiefly took place among the Ḥillī and ‘Āmilī scholars of the seventh/thirteenth to tenth/sixteenth centuries. According to Fayḍ, it was Ibn Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī who first introduced the four-fold categories of authentic, sound, credible, and weak (*ṣaḥīḥ, ḥasan, muwaththaq, ḍa‘īf*) into Shi‘i

<sup>37</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:17–8.

<sup>38</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:18.

<sup>39</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:18.

<sup>40</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:7.

hadith scholarship.<sup>41</sup> Similar to Astarābādī, he proceeds to argue that the ancient compilers had a different understanding of what constitutes an authentic report than Ḥillī and his followers.

Fayḍ argues that ancient scholars (*qudamā'*) considered any report as authentic when it is corroborated by whatever necessarily implies reliability and is accompanied with pieces of evidence that establish its trustworthiness.<sup>42</sup> For example, he writes, ancient scholars would consider a report to be authentic if it is found in many of the widely-circulated Four-Hundred Foundational Sources (*al-uṣūl al-arba'umi'a*) that they transmitted from their own hadith masters in continuous transmission routes tracing back to the Imams. He adds that ancient scholars would also consider a report as authentic if it appears in one, two or more Sources transmitted through different routes and by numerous reliable transmission chains. According to Fayḍ, a report would still be considered authentic even if it were found only in a single Source as long as this Source is widely attributed to one of those transmitters concerning whose truthfulness scholars have reached an consensus;<sup>43</sup> the reports in this Source are transmitted by figures concerning whom there is consensus that their "authentic" (*ṣaḥīḥ*) reports are indeed authentic and correctly transmitted;<sup>44</sup> or if the reports existing in this Source are attributed to those transmitters about whom there is consensus that they acted on their transmissions.<sup>45</sup>

Fayḍ argues that in addition to the above factors, ancient scholars would consider a report as authentic if it appeared in books that bear the stamp of the Imams' approval. In this case, the assumption is that a hadith compiler presented his book to an Imam and received the Imams' approval of its accuracy. As examples, Fayḍ notes 'Ubayd Allāh al-Ḥalabī who reportedly presented his book to Imam al-Ṣādiq and Yūnus ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān and Faḍl ibn Shadhān who presented their books to Imam 'Alī al-'Askari. If a report is found in any of such sources, even if they do not meet the authenticity criteria, they must still be considered authentic since, the argument goes, the Imams' approval has precedence over any other criterion.<sup>46</sup>

Fayḍ next addresses an issue that had become a point of contention among Imāmī scholars. A major disagreement between the Uṣūlī and Akhbārī scholars is whether reports attributed to the Imams and transmitted by non-Imāmīs can be designated the authentic status. The Ḥillī and 'Āmilī scholars are explicit on this issue: even if the transmitters are deemed reliable (*thiqa*) their sectarian affiliations place their reports at best in the *muwaththaq* category.<sup>47</sup> Hence, the presence of Zaydī or Faṭḥī narrators in a report's transmission chains – even if these transmitters are known as truthful and the report's chain is continuously retraced back to the Prophet or the Imams – deprives it of the authentic status. This stance undermined the authenticity of a great number of reports quoted in the Four Books that were narrated by non-Imāmī transmitters. Fayḍ disagrees with this position and maintains that ancient scholars would not necessarily hold a transmitter's sectarian affiliation against him. He claims that they would consider a report authentic if it were found in one of the widely circulated books among their

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<sup>41</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:22.

<sup>42</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:22.

<sup>43</sup> Fayḍ cites Zurāra, Muḥammad ibn Muslim, and al-Fuḍayl ibn Yasār as examples of such figures.

<sup>44</sup> He gives Ṣafwān ibn Yahyā, Yūnus ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān, and Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Naṣr as examples of such transmitters.

<sup>45</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:22. He provides 'Ammār al-Sābāṭī as an example.

<sup>46</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:22–3.

<sup>47</sup> As discussed in Chapter Three, the majority of Imāmī scholars from 'Allāma Ḥillī to Ḥasan al-'Āmilī, did not designate authority to *muwaththaq* reports.

predecessors whom they trusted and relied upon regardless of whether the authors of these books were Imāmī or non-Imāmī.<sup>48</sup>

Fayḍ writes that this is evident in the Four Books where Kulaynī, Ibn Bābūya, and Ṭūsī attest that the reports quoted in their compilations are authentic. He notes that had these three compilers subscribed to the Ḥilla scholars' criteria of authenticity, many of their hadiths would not have been considered as such.<sup>49</sup> An important departure of the Ḥilla scholars from the early compilers consists in their insistence that a report is authentic only if its transmission chain is demonstrated to be fully reliable. A reliable transmission chain, in addition to being continuous in every link, is narrated on the authority of Imāmī transmitters. For the compilers of the Four Books, however, non-Imāmī transmitters did not undermine the authentic status of the reports. Fayḍ cites Ṭūsī who also advocated this position by arguing that ancient scholars readily accepted hadiths from non-Imāmī transmitters (e.g., 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. Rabbāh) since they believed trustworthy individuals can transmit what they have heard from the Imams correctly although they uphold corrupted doctrinal views.<sup>50</sup> If an individual's peers deem him as trustworthy then his corrupted beliefs ('*aqida*) is of no import.<sup>51</sup> Similarly, he writes, not everything stated by Imāmīs is deemed reliable merely because the transmitters uphold correct doctrinal views; the criterion of trustworthiness transcends sectarian affiliations. Furthermore, ancient scholars would consider a report authentic even if its transmitters were unidentified (*majhūl*) and weak or its transmission chains were discontinuous (*mursal*) as long as the reports in question were supported by accompanying pieces of evidence that establish their reliable attribution to the Imams.<sup>52</sup>

After arguing for the reliability of non-Imāmī transmitters, Fayḍ raises another challenge to the post-Ḥillī strand. He reiterates an earlier point that the compilers of the Four Books personally bore witness to the authenticity of their transmitted reports. For Fayḍ, as for Astarābādī before him, since the Four Books include reports narrated by non-Imāmī transmitters, it indicates that the compilers did not believe that authenticity is exclusive to Imāmī transmitters. Post-Ḥillī scholars such as Shahīd Thānī, however, do not take such attestations at face value and maintain that hadith authenticity must be determined through a rigorous examination of the reports' transmission chains. Fayḍ, however, asks that if the compilers' attestations cannot be trusted, how can one rely, for instance, on Ṭūsī's *rijāl* compilation regarding the reliability or unreliability of transmitters?<sup>53</sup> For scholars such as Ḥillī or Shahīd Thānī, it is the reliability of the transmitters that determine the trustworthiness of the reports. But determining a transmitter's reliability depends on the information passed on about him by those who personally knew him and could ascertain his truthfulness. Fayḍ is arguing that Ḥillī and his followers would have difficulty determining whether or not a particular transmitter is reliable since the transmitter as well as those who ascertained their reliability have long passed away. The only means available for determining his reliability is the information provided in the *rijāl* works such as those

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<sup>48</sup> *Al-Wāfi*, 1:22–3. For widely circulated Imāmī books Fayḍ cites the *Kitāb ṣalāt* by Ḥarīz Ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Sajastānī and the books of Banī Sa'īd and 'Alī ibn Mahzīyār; for non-Imāmī works he cites the books of Ḥafṣ Ibn Ghiyāth al-Qādī, Ḥusayn ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Sa'dī, and *Kitāb al-qibla* of 'Alī ibn Ḥasan al-Ṭāṭirī.

<sup>49</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:23.

<sup>50</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:23–24. See, Ṭūsī, *al-Udda fi uṣūl al-fiqh*, 1:154.

<sup>51</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:24.

<sup>52</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:24.

<sup>53</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:24.

compiled by Ṭūsī. Fayḍ's argument is that to distrust Ṭūsī concerning the reliability of his hadith transmission amounts to distrusting him in his *rijāl* views as well.<sup>54</sup>

Fayḍ further points out that for a number of prominent transmitters, there is no information, positive or negative, in the books of *rijāl*. If one were to adopt modern scholars' criterion for hadith authenticity, the reports transmitted by these figures must be considered "weak" (*ḍaʿīf*), and hence unreliable. These transmitters include the teachers of Kulaynī, Ibn Bābūya, and Ṭūsī.<sup>55</sup> Fayḍ concludes that even modern scholars are not prepared to take this step. He then argues that as those familiar with *ʿilm rijāl* discussions are aware, "disputes, contradictions, and errors" regarding the reliability or unreliability of certain transmitters have long been argued by different sides, and no conclusive result has yet been reached that satisfies all scholars.<sup>56</sup> Hence, Fayḍ concludes, credence must be given to the ancient scholars' attestations regarding the reliability of their compilations. In his view, it is only through disregarding the standards of post-Ḥillī scholars that challenges directed at the authenticity of the Four Books can be overcome.<sup>57</sup>

Fayḍ remarks that acknowledging the categorical authenticity of the Four Books neither means certain reports quoted in them are not preferred over others nor that the transmission chains are altogether useless. Ancient scholars, he notes, maintained that when two reliable reports are in conflict, one must first enquire into the transmitters' status through the *jarḥ* and *taʿdīl* information provided about them in biographical dictionaries; then a judgment must be formed on the basis of the Imams' statement, "decide [about the transmitters' reliability] according to what those who are the most just, virtuous, and righteous in hadith judge".<sup>58</sup> Indeed, Fayḍ writes, it is in light of this method that *al-Wāfi* provides the transmission chains in full details. Fayḍ next examines who are "the most just, virtuous, and righteous" individuals in hadith? Fayḍ answers this question by referring to a group of transmitters who are known in the Shiʿi hadith tradition as *aṣḥāb ijmāʿ* or the "Companions of Consensus".

#### 4.1 The Companions of Consensus (*aṣḥāb ijmāʿ*)

*Aṣḥāb ijmāʿ* refers to a group of the companions of the fifth to the eighth Imams who are considered, through a claim for consensus, to be the most reliable of all hadith transmitters.<sup>59</sup> The earliest extant reference to these transmitters is found in the *Rijāl* of Abū ʿAmr al-Kashshī (d. c. 340/951) where he writes that Imāmīs have formed consensus regarding the utmost reliability of these companions. He places the companions into three groups: companions of the fifth and the sixth Imams; only of the sixth Imam; and of the seventh and eighth Imams.<sup>60</sup> As for the companions listed under the first group, Kashshī writes that Imāmīs have consensus regarding the truthfulness of these individuals and deem them the

<sup>54</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:24–5. Al-Baḥrānī makes a similar comment in the preface to his *al-Ḥadāʾiq* and highlights the disagreements between the *rijāl* scholars as a reason for focusing on the reliability of a source rather than the transmission chains.

<sup>55</sup> Fayḍ's examples of such prominent transmitters include Ibrāhīm ibn Hāshim al-Qummī, Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Yahyā al-ʿAṭṭār, and Ibn Walid. See *al-Wāfi*, 1:25.

<sup>56</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:25.

<sup>57</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:25.

<sup>58</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:25.

<sup>59</sup> See Hassan Ansari, "Imamiyya and *aṣḥāb ijmāʿ*" and "*Aṣḥāb ijmāʿ*", in DMBI; for information on Kashshī see, Najāshī, *Rijāl* (#1018) and Ṭūsī, *Fihrist* (#606).

<sup>60</sup> For a complete list of these companions see Ṭūsī, *Ikhtiyār al-Rijāl*, #430, 705, and 1050.

most expert jurists (*faqīh*). His description of the second and third group of companions is slightly different. He writes that Imāmīs have a consensus concerning the authentic status of the reports that have been transmitted by these companions through a “*ṣaḥīḥ ṭarīq*”; he adds that this consensus also affirms these companions as *faqīh* and ‘*ālim*. Although he cites six individuals under each of these three groups of companions, he notes that some scholars have listed different individuals in each group so that the total number of figures related to the *aṣḥāb ijmāʿ* numbers twenty-two. Among these twenty-two, various scholars dispute the reliability of six figures; hence, there is no disagreement concerning sixteen of them. These include such highly revered figures as Zurāra and Yūnus ‘Abd al-Raḥmān.<sup>61</sup>

The doctrine of *aṣḥāb ijmāʿ* has no precedent in the surviving works of scholars preceding and contemporary with al-Kashshī.<sup>62</sup> It must be pointed out that the term “*aṣḥāb ijmāʿ*” is not itself coined by Kashshī and is a later invention; Kashshī only provides lists of the most prominent companions of the fifth to the eighth Imams and claims that the Imāmīs have consensus regarding their veracity as transmitters and as expert jurists and men of knowledge. Even after Kashshī no explicit reference to the doctrine is made until Ibn Shahrāshūb (d. 588/1192).<sup>63</sup> The two intervening centuries between Kashshī to Ibn Shahrāshūb are amongst the most consequential periods in Shiʿi hadith scholarship. It is noteworthy that in the law and jurisprudence works of Mufīd, Murtaḍā, and Ṭūsī where the issue of hadith reliability is extensively discussed, nothing is mentioned for or against *aṣḥāb ijmāʿ* as a means of hadith authentication. Neither is *aṣḥāb ijmāʿ* invoked in the hadith writings of Kashshī’s contemporaries, Kulaynī and Ibn Bābūya. It is after Ibn Shahrāshūb’s explicit reference in *Manāqib Āl Abī Ṭālib* that discussions concerning *aṣḥāb ijmāʿ* begin to gain much traction in the centuries to come.<sup>64</sup>

Kashshī’s statements regarding the three groups of the Imams’ companions have been subject to different interpretations. One position argues that the consensus affirms the truthfulness of the companions as transmitters. A question, however, is whether this supposed consensus asserts that these transmitters are trustworthy, or that all the reports transmitted by them must be considered authentic —meaning that any report transmitted by these companions is known to be reliably traced back to the Imams. It could be the case that for instance Yūnus ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān (a transmitter included in the *aṣḥāb ijmāʿ*), is trustworthy in transmitting what he has heard from others who are transmitting from the Imam but the fact of Yūnus’s trustworthiness does not guarantee that the other narrators in the chain are also trustworthy. In other words, if one of the companions directly transmits from the Imam the veracity of his report is established; in cases, however, when he is narrating from the Imams via intermediary transmitters, the report’s veracity remains an open question even though the trustworthiness of the companion is not.

Some scholars have argued that the consensus indicates that not only Yūnus is a trustworthy transmitter but also that he would not transmit a report to others unless he was certain about its

<sup>61</sup> For Zurāra see Ṭūsī, *Ikhtiyār al-Rijāl*, #216, 213; For Yūnus see Najāshī #1208; Ṭūsī, *Ikhtiyār al-Rijāl*, #910, 935, 938. It is noteworthy that a number of major Imāmī transmitters are not mentioned amongst the Companions of Consensus. These include, Abū Ḥamza Thumālī, ‘Alī ibn Yaḳṭīn, Zakariya ibn Adam, ‘Alī ibn Mahziyār, and Ḥusayn ibn Saʿīd Ahwāzī.

<sup>62</sup> Khūʾī, *Muʿjam rijāl al-ḥadīth*, 1:59.

<sup>63</sup> It must be pointed out that Ibn Shahrāshūb provides the first two lists and does not mention the third list provided by Kashshī. Even the first two lists are not identical with Kashshī. See Ansari, “Imamiyya and *aṣḥāb ijmāʿ*”; On Ibn Shahrāshūb see Ahmad Pakatchi, “Ibn Shahrāshūb”, in *Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif-i buzurg-i islāmī*, ed. Kazim Musawi Bujnardi (Tehran, 1368–), 4:90–92.

<sup>64</sup> Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib Āl Abī Ṭālib*, 4:211 and 280.

veracity. According to this view, if a report is correctly retraced to any of the Companions of Consensus, even if the rest of the transmission chains reaching to the Imam includes unreliable (*da'if*) or unidentified (*majhūl*) transmitters or its chain of transmission is discontinuous, this report must nevertheless be considered authentic because the *aṣḥāb ijmā'* would not narrate unreliable reports.<sup>65</sup> Thus, a great number of reports that due to various defects concerning their transmission chains or the status of their transmitters would otherwise not be considered as authentic, can now bypass these challenges and be categorized as such.

Some Imāmī scholars have further argued that the consensus, in addition to the veracity of the companions also establishes the veracity of those from whom these companions have transmitted. In that case, many transmitters who under normal circumstances would not be considered trustworthy, through their connection to *aṣḥāb ijmā'* become recognized as such. An examination of the biographies of the twenty-two companions and their reports' chains of transmission illustrates that they have transmitted numerous reports via other intermediaries including their own hadith teachers. Those scholars who disagree with this view point out that in describing the second and third groups of the companions, Kashshī explicitly writes that Imāmīs have a consensus concerning the authentic status of the reports transmitted by these companions through a "*ṣaḥīḥ ṭarīq*". Hence, it is argued, Kashshī's statement emphasizes that the consensus regarding the authenticity of the reports transmitted by these companions is conditioned upon their transmission via trustworthy transmission routes. Otherwise, the reports should not be considered authentic if this condition has not been fulfilled; a report transmitted by these companions is authentic when either the companions narrate the report directly from the Imams or if they narrate the report through other intermediaries the trustworthiness of the other transmitters in the chain is established.

Whereas the six transmitters included in the first group (i.e., the companions of al-Bāqir and al-Ṣādiq) often directly narrate from these two Imams, this is not the case with the remaining sixteen transmitters placed in groups two and three who narrate from al-Bāqir and al-Ṣādiq via intermediary of other transmitters. Moreover, the six companions under the first group have also at times narrated reports through the intermediary of other transmitters and then attributed them to the Imams preceding al-Bāqir and al-Ṣādiq. If the veracity of the reports' attribution to the Imams needs to be established in cases where *aṣḥāb ijmā'* are narrating through intermediaries – considering that the majority of their reports are narrated through intermediaries – the benefit of this claimed consensus regarding their reliability is that it removes the need for verifying one link in the transmission chains where these twenty-two companions appear. This issue is consequential since judging by the information provided in the *rijāl* literature, *aṣḥāb ijmā'* have narrated numerous reports via transmitters whose veracity is either rejected or remains open to further enquiry.<sup>66</sup>

A question to consider at this juncture is what does Kashshī mean when he applies the term "*ṣaḥīḥ*" to the reports transmitted by these twenty-two companions? As I discussed in Chapter Three, the notion of 'authenticity' undergoes various developments in different historical periods. Despite their differences, Ḥilli and his followers share in common the view that a report is authentic once its

<sup>65</sup> Ibn Shahrāshūb (*Manāqib*), 'Allāma Ḥilli (*Rijāl*), Shahīd Awwal (*Ghāyat al-murād*), Shahīd Thānī (*Ra'āya*) Mīr Dāmād (*al-Rawāshiḥ al-samāwīyya*), Shaykh Bahā'ī (*Mashriq al-shamsayn*), Muḥammad Amīn Astarābādī (*Fawā'id*, 181–3), and Ḥurr 'Āmilī (*Wasā'il*, 30:224 and 245).

<sup>66</sup> Khū'ī, *Mu'jam* 1:66.

transmission chains pass certain requirements such as that the transmitters be Imāmī in every link within the chains all the way back to the Imam. Hence, the appearance of a non-Imāmī narrator in the transmission chains prevents the report from being categorized as authentic even if the transmitter in question is acknowledged as trustworthy. This approach contrasts with the position, advocated by another group of Imāmī scholars, that considers a report authentic if certain indicators establish its trustworthiness. Within this framework, a report is deemed authentic once the veracity of its narrators is established; sectarian identity is not a factor for or against the transmitters' veracity. Those who adhere to this view further argue that scholars of the formative period such as Kashshī used the term 'authentic' in this sense and not in the sense elaborated by Ibn Ṭāwūs, Ḥillī and their successors. Whereas the latter group divides the reports into four categories, for the other group a report is either authentic or not. As discussed in Chapter Three, Ḥasan 'Āmilī and Bahā'ī maintain that this shift of conceptualisation in what constitutes "authenticity" came about when there had remained no means for scholars to establish the transmitters' veracity on the basis of pieces of evidence external to the transmission chains. Hence, scholars began to adopt the four-fold division and turned to *isnād* analysis as a means of ensuring hadith authenticity.<sup>67</sup>

It is at this juncture that the doctrine of *aṣḥāb ijma'* could serve a significant role. Although later generations might have no means of assessing the transmitters' veracity, these companions had a variety of ways for ensuring the veracity of those from whom they are transmitting. Mīr Dāmād, a contemporary of Astarābādī, adheres to this position: "Our colleagues have a consensus authenticating any report correctly retraced to the Companions of Consensus; they all attest to the Companions' [superior] understanding (*fiqh*), excellence, diligence, and trustworthiness. The Companions' narration is considered authentic even if it is *mursal*, *marfū'*, transmitted by those who although are named their status as transmitters is unknown to us, or transmitted by those of corrupt belief (*'aqīda*) and deviant creed (*madhhab*)."<sup>68</sup> Hence, for Mīr Dāmād, the consensus regarding the companions' truthfulness establishes the reliability of all their transmitted reports even if some of these reports have defective transmission chains or are transmitted via those whose *rijāl* status is either unknown or known to be non-Imāmī or non-Shi'i.

Akhbārī scholars did not have a monopoly in upholding the doctrine of *aṣḥāb ijma'*. It was indeed 'Allāma Ḥillī, Astarābādī's chief antagonist, who is the first major figure to discuss this doctrine in some details. In his *Mukhtalaf al-shī'a* and *Khulāṣat al-rijāl*, Ḥillī argues that Kashshī's statement means that the consensus concerning these companions indicates that 'Abd Allāh ibn Bukayr and Abān ibn 'Uthmān are also trustworthy (*thiqa*) even though they uphold corrupt beliefs and belong to the Fathiyya and Nāwūsiyya.<sup>69</sup> Aḥmad Ardabīlī and his two students Ḥasan 'Āmilī and Mūsawī 'Āmilī, all three belonging to the Uṣūlī School, continue to advocate Ḥillī's position.<sup>70</sup> Shahīd Awwāl, another prominent Uṣūlī and a predecessor to Ardabīlī, Ḥasan and Muḥammad 'Āmilī, puts forward a different perspective. In *Ghāyat al-murād*, he argues that the consensus, in addition to the veracity of the

<sup>67</sup> Ḥasan al-'Āmilī, *Muntaqā*, 1:13.

<sup>68</sup> Mīr Dāmād, *al-Rawāshih*, 78.

<sup>69</sup> Ibn Muṭahhar Ḥillī, *Mukhtalaf al-shī'a*, 2:379, 3:420, 269; 4:63; idem, *Khulāṣat al-aqwāl fī ma'rifat al-rijāl*, 106 ("al-fā'ida al-thāmina").

<sup>70</sup> Aḥmad Ardabīlī, *Majma' al-fā'ida*, 1:156; 2:335; Ḥasan al-'Āmilī, *Ma'ālim al-uṣūl*, 200; Muḥammad al-Mūsawī al-'Āmilī, *Nihāyat al-marām*, 1:384.

companions, also establishes the authority of their *mursal* narrations as well as the trustworthy status of those from whom these companions have transmitted their reports.<sup>71</sup> This view had remained in the margins for nearly two centuries until Bahā'ī revives it in his writings. In *Wajīza*, he quotes Kashshī's view on *aṣḥāb ijmā'* and accepts it as a legitimate means of hadith authentication.<sup>72</sup> Concurring with Shahīd Awwal, he argues that even if a transmitter is judged as "weak" (*ḍa'īf*) in the *rijāl* literature, if one of the *aṣḥāb ijmā'* is narrating reports from him, it indicates that the report should be trusted since had it not been authentic the companions would not have transmitted it. It is noteworthy that Shahīd Thānī, departing from Ḥillī and Shahīd Awwal, does not designate any privilege status to the Companions of Consensus; he considers a report as authentic when the transmission chains are continuous, and all the transmitters are Imāmī and trustworthy.

In the eleventh/seventeenth century, with the flourishing of the Akhbārī movement, the doctrine of *aṣḥāb ijmā'* takes on a new life.<sup>73</sup> Not only these companions are deemed as trustworthy transmitters but also their hadith masters, everyone from whom they transmit, and their *mursal* reports are also designated authority.<sup>74</sup> This concept becomes one of the focal points of Akhbārī scholars in their effort to justify the categorical reliability of the Four Books. Considering that a great number of the reported quoted in these four compilations were transmitted through these twenty-two individuals, much is at stake. Al-Nūrī al-Ṭabrisī (d. 1320/1902), aware of the significant of this concept, writes, "discussion regarding *aṣḥāb ijmā'* is among the most important discussions in this science [i.e., *rijāl*]. This is because in many instances thousands of hadiths that would not otherwise be considered authentic [according to the standards set for authenticity], enter the authentic category [by the virtue of being narrated by *aṣḥāb ijmā'*] or the status of authenticity is applied to them".<sup>75</sup> Hence, four main positions emerge regarding the Companions of Consensus. First, these companions are trustworthy; second, the reports narrated by these companions are authentic even if the transmission chains be defective since they would only narrate reports to others after ensuring their reliability; third, not only the companions are trustworthy and their reports authentic, but those from whom these companions narrate are also trustworthy even if they be considered unreliable in the *rijāl* literature; forth, there is nothing inherently superior about these companions and their transmitted reports.

Considering this context, Fayḍ's position on this issue is nuanced. Although he refers to the privileged status of the Companions of Consensus, in determining a report's authenticity, he emphasizes that consensus concerns their trustworthiness as transmitters; this acknowledgement, however, does not necessarily imply the authentic status of *all* their transmitted reports where they appear in the transmission chains.<sup>76</sup> Hence, Fayḍ contends, although these figures faithfully transmitted the reports narrated to them, it does not imply that those who narrated the reports to the companions

<sup>71</sup> Al-Shahīd al-Awwal, *Ghāyat al-murād*, 2:41.

<sup>72</sup> Bahā'ī, "Wajīza", in *Ḥabl al-matīn*, 1:31.

<sup>73</sup> See, for instance, Muḥammad Amīn Astarābādī (*Fawā'id*, 181–3), and al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī (*Wasā'il*, 30:224 and 245).

<sup>74</sup> It is to be noted that this approach was not entirely new. Ṭūsī, for instance, without invoking the phrase *aṣḥāb ijmā'*, had argued that the *mursal* reports of three hadith masters – Ibn Abī 'Umayr, Aḥmad ibn Abī Naṣr Bazanṭī, and Ṣafwān – are credible despite their defective transmission chains. In his view, this exception is justified since it is "known" that these three transmitters neither narrate nor pass on *mursal* transmissions except from trustworthy narrators. See, Ṭūsī, *Uddat al-uṣūl*, 1:386.

<sup>75</sup> Al-Nūrī al-Ṭabrisī, *Mustadrak al-wasā'il*, 3:757.

<sup>76</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:27.

by attributing them to the Imams must be considered reliable as well. There is no certainty that the reports narrated by the Companions of Consensus were indeed issued by the Imams themselves unless they are narrating from the Imams without any intermediary.

In holding this position, Fayḍ departs from a segment of the Shi'i tradition that designates authenticity to all reports transmitted by the Companions of Consensus. Ascribing this position to the "modern scholars", he argues that they consider such reports authentic and attribute them to the Imams without assessing the transmitters' probity even if some of them are famous for upholding corrupt doctrines and committing hadith forgery, or the reports attributed to the Imams on their account is narrated through discontinuous transmission chains (i.e., *mursal*).<sup>77</sup> "You are aware," Fayḍ writes, "that Kashshī's statement is not explicit in this regard and should not be taken at first value". In his view, Kashshī's remark pertains to the truthfulness of these companions as transmitters and not to the authenticity of their transmissions.<sup>78</sup> Therefore, although consensus supports the veracity of these particular companions, other transmitters appearing in the transmission chains must be subjected to scrutiny since in contrast to the Companions of Consensus, there is no consensus that establishes their probity.<sup>79</sup> Hence, *isnād* analysis remains a primary concern for Fayḍ throughout *al-Wāfi*.

#### 4.2 *Isnād* Reconstruction and Manuscript Criticism

Fayḍ addresses various issues surrounding transmission chains in the third introductory section. He remarks that in citing the transmission chains he aims to be as detailed as possible. Furthermore, he remarks that part of his endeavor in *al-Wāfi* is to compensate for the deficiencies found in *Faḥih* (where Ibn Bābūya excludes most transmission chains) and Ṭūsī's *Tahdhīb* and *al-Istibṣār* (where some of the transmission chains are either not mentioned or are incomplete). He carries this task through reconstructing the defective transmission chains found in the Four Books so that the reports' authenticity is not undermined. Hence, if the transmission chains of a report quoted in *al-Kāfi* is discontinuous while the exact same report exists in any of the other Four Books, Fayḍ reconstructs the transmission chains of *al-Kāfi*'s report by adding the missing or ambiguous links from the full transmission chains available in another source. Sometimes he reconstructs a report's defective transmission chains by using sources other than the Four Books (e.g., Ibn Bābūya's *al-Tawḥīd*).<sup>80</sup>

Fayḍ's *isnād* reconstruction, in addition to transmission links, also pertains to the transmitters appearing in them. In some cases, the recorded names of transmitters are identical, which makes it difficult to distinguish them from each other. A well-known example is the name Ibn Sinān that is common between Muḥammad ibn Sinān and 'Abd Allāh ibn Sinān. This issue is particularly consequential when *rijāl* scholars have provided conflicting information concerning their reliability status as transmitters. While all scholars consider 'Abd Allāh to be *thiqa* there are disagreements regarding Muḥammad's status. Many scholars including Shahīd Thānī, Ḥasan and Muḥammad 'Āmilī

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<sup>77</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:27.

<sup>78</sup> Ḥurr 'Āmilī disagrees with Fayḍ's view and considers any reports retraced to the *aṣḥāb ijma'* as authentic. This includes the companions' *mursal* reports as well. See his *Wasā'il*, 20:81.

<sup>79</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:27.

<sup>80</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:31–2.

consider Muḥammad ibn Sinān to be unreliable. In citing the transmission chains, Fayḍ attempts to provide the transmitters' full names in order to facilitate enquiring into their *rijāl* status.<sup>81</sup>

Another aspect of Fayḍ's attempt at remedying defects found in transmission chains pertains to the Imams' given titles and the means of making sure to precisely which Imam a title refers. He also addresses the issue of *iḍmār*, which refers to the deletion of elements in an utterance by assuming that the hearers would understand the utterance without explicitly mentioning the deleted elements. A report is *muḍmar* when the person who is directly narrating the report from the Imam, in transmitting it to others, he refers to the Imam by the pronoun, "he/him". As a result, the Imam's identity remains unknown in the transmission chains. While some scholars such as Shahīd Thānī question the reliability of *muḍmar* reports, Fayḍ considers them authoritative since, he writes, the reliability of such reports can be corroborated through various supporting pieces of evidence. In his view, sometimes *iḍmār* occurs as a result of the transmitter's *taqiyya* and sometimes it stems from the transmitters' fragmentation of a report into parts and passing it on as separate reports; had the report been transmitted in full, the name of the Imam would have been mentioned at the beginning of the transmission chain, and hence, *iḍmār* would have been prevented.<sup>82</sup>

Another aspect of Fayḍ's project in *al-Wāfi* is his attempt at providing a critical edition of the Four Books. In order to achieve this aim, he engages in manuscript criticism through consulting various manuscript copies of each of these hadith compilations aiming to resolve their discrepancies. On occasion, the discrepancies could have interpretive consequences. Fayḍ takes these varying manuscripts copies into consideration and determines the version that seems to him most authentic. Throughout *al-Wāfi*, Fayḍ mentions whenever he finds differences in recording in the manuscripts available to him. For instance, in a report quoted in *al-Kāfi* it is stated, "Indeed the Qur'an that was sent to Muḥammad by Gabriel contains 17000 verses". A group of Shi'i scholars have used this report as evidence for distortion (*tahrīf*) of the official codex of the Qur'an since this codex contains about 6666 verses. Kulaynī's report, however, is worded differently in *al-Wāfi*: "Indeed the Qur'an that was sent to Muḥammad by Gabriel contains 7000 verses".<sup>83</sup> Hence, in Fayḍ's manuscript criticism of this report the Arabic wording is changed from Kulaynī's "*saba'a 'ashara alfa āyatin*" to "*saba'a ālāf āyatin*". This wording somewhat resolves the charge of distortion by making the verse number of Qur'an's official edition to 7000, which is close to the usual verse counting of 6666.<sup>84</sup> His other method of manuscript criticism is to look at the wording of the same report in other sources. If the transmission chains or wording of two similar reports is approximately the same, Fayḍ prefers the report that provides less interpretive challenges. Lastly, in cases where all the manuscript copies have recorded the same wording of a report which troubles Fayḍ in terms of meaning, he writes that although the compilers and scribes recorded the report truthfully, it must have been the transmitter who narrated falsely the reports attributed to the Imams.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>81</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:33–9.

<sup>82</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:27 and *al-Ṣāfi*, 1:113. For concrete examples from *al-Wāfi* concerning the above-mentioned *isnād* reconstructions see Mir Jalili, 132–146.

<sup>83</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 9:1780, h. 9089.

<sup>84</sup> Later scholars such as al-Nūrī al-Ṭabrisī (d. 1320/1902) who advocate the *tahrīf* of the Qur'an have criticized Fayḍ's view.

<sup>85</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 9:1316–17; Ibn Bābūya's quoted-hadith is found in his *Faḥṣḥ*, 1:432, h. 1264.

### 4.3 Organizing *al-Wāfi*

As previously mentioned, Fayḍ cites the organizational inadequacies of *al-Wāfi*'s predecessors amongst the factors that prompted him to compile a new compendium. He arranges 25703 reports into fourteen books each subdivided into various chapters (*bāb*). Each book is on specific topic or common theme. For instance, Book One is on the intellect, knowledge, and God's unity; Book Five on obligatory prayers, supplications, and the Qur'an; and Book Twelve on marriage, divorce, and children. Fayḍ notes that in arranging each book and its subdivisions, he chiefly adheres to *al-Kāfi*'s arrangements although at times he makes certain changes to make the arrangement more consistent.<sup>86</sup> He laments that despite his efforts, he has not been able to carry this task as well as he had wished.<sup>87</sup>

Besides these fourteen books and the introduction, *al-Wāfi* contains a postscript where Fayḍ lists the hadith masters of Ibn Bābūya and Ṭūsī, which trace them back to the Imams.<sup>88</sup> *Al-Wāfi*'s introduction also includes Fayḍ's own transmission genealogy to the Four Books; through citing detailed genealogies the compiler seeks to establish his authority as a transmitter. Fayḍ begins with his teacher Sayyid Mājīd ibn Hāshim al-Ṣādiqī al-Baḥrānī who Fayḍ notes transmitted hadith from Bahā'ī; Fayḍ adds that sometimes he directly transmits from Bahā'ī without Baḥrānī's intermediary. Bahā'ī transmitted from his teacher and father Ḥārithī who himself transmitted from Shahīd Thānī. Fayḍ remarks that in addition to Baḥrānī and Bahā'ī, he transmits the Four Books as well as other books (hadith and otherwise) from Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan ibn Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī who in turn transmitted them from his father Ḥasan ʿĀmilī, and him from his father Shahīd Thānī. From this point on Fayḍ proceeds to draw a genealogy that traces the chain of transmitters with fifteen links to Kulaynī.<sup>89</sup>

## §5. Conclusion

To recapitulate, *al-Wāfi* is a compendium comprised of the reports quoted in the Four Books, which according to Fayḍ, collectively constitute the “central” hadith sources of his time. Completed three decades after Astarābādī's death, Fayḍ's approach in *al-Wāfi* to hadith authenticity bears the main characteristics of the Akhbārī movement. Fayḍ, in agreement with Astarābādī, rejects the fourfold division and adheres to the ancient scholars' two-fold criterion. According to this view, any report accompanied with supporting pieces of evidence can be considered authentic even if its transmission chains be defective. At the same time, Fayḍ does not devalue *isnād* analysis as a means of authentication. This contrasts with the views advocated by some Akhbārīs such as al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī who designate merely a “decorative” value to transmission chains.<sup>90</sup> Hence, a major aspect of Fayḍ's project in *al-Wāfi* is not only to preface each report with its transmission chains, but also to engage in reconstructing defective transmission chains, when necessary and possible.

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<sup>86</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:40. For examples see, Mīr Jalīlī, 149–155.

<sup>87</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:40.

<sup>88</sup> Fayḍ arranges the names alphabetically and for brevity's sake, at times he shortens the transmitters' names.

<sup>89</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:28–9.

<sup>90</sup> Al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasā'il*, 30:258.

Fayḍ's attentiveness to *isnād* analysis, does not lead him, in contrast to Shahīd Thānī and his followers, to undermine the authenticity of the reports quoted in the Four Books. In his view, a report's chain of transmission, while significant, is not the only legitimate method for determining its authenticity. In the preface to *al-Wāfi*, he explains that a report is 'authentic' either because it has been narrated through reliable transmitters or through reliable means. It follows from this distinction that a report can be designated as 'authentic' even if its transmission chain is defective as long as it has been transmitted via reliable means corroborating that its transmission, from the Imam to the last transmitter, has been secure from distortion. Fayḍ takes recourse to two authentication means in particular: scholars' widespread reliance on a given report (*shuhra*) in forming their rulings and their consensus regarding the veracity of particular transmitters. Despite Akhbārī thinkers' wary attitude towards consensus, a foundational piece of evidence they rely on as a means of hadith authentication is based on a reported consensus regarding the veracity of a group of transmitters referred to as the Companions of Consensus (*aṣḥāb ijma'*). Fayḍ, while agreeing with the special status of these companions, disagrees with Akhbārīs and some Uṣūlīs (e.g., Shahīd Awwal) over the extent of their authority. He maintains that consensus only establishes the truthfulness of the transmitters and not necessarily the authenticity of their reports. As for the Four Books, Fayḍ mentions Kulaynī, Ibn Bābūya, and Ṭūsī's attestations to the veracity of their quoted reports as a major factor that establishes their authenticity.

Fayḍ's decision to compile *al-Wāfi* has practical as well as theoretical components. To bring together the Four Books into one single compendium has the practical benefit of easy accessibility to the readers; rather than carrying four books and glossing over numerous repeated reports, Fayḍ's compendium provides one book with no repetitions. Furthermore, he makes many cosmetic changes to the previous four compilations. These include organizational improvements, omitting redundancies, clarifying obscure references, reconstructing defective transmission chains, correcting scribal errors. He accompanies these editorial changes with theoretical interventions the most significant of which is his hadith commentaries. Another reason – and perhaps more decisive in Fayḍ's decision to compose a new compendium – is his inclusion of reports that did not initially make it into the Four Books. Rather than inserting these excluded reports into the main body of *al-Wāfi*, Fayḍ quotes them in the body of his commentaries on the collected reports from the Four Books. By adopting this approach, he not only brings the Four Books together but also situates them within a larger spectrum of Shi'i hadith literature. At one stroke, he validates the epistemic authority of the excluded materials from the Four Books by including them in his compendium at the same time that he interprets the Four Books through them.<sup>91</sup>

Besides *al-Wāfi*, Fayḍ composed two other hadith compendia, *al-Shāfi* and *al-Nawādir al-akhbār*. In *al-Shāfi*, he provides an abridged version of *al-Wāfi* and excludes the contradictory reports from it. As for *al-Nawādir*, it is solely dedicated to reports on doctrinal topics not quoted in the Four Books. In both works the transmission chains are excluded. In addition to his hadith compilations and further refinements of Akhbārī jurisprudence, Fayḍ's greatest contribution to the Safavid hadith discourse is hermeneutical. Throughout his long career, hadith hermeneutics remained amongst his central concerns. Fayḍ is not the first person to undertake hadith commentary; his predecessors had long acknowledged that the reports are not self-explanatory. Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī, for instance, had

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<sup>91</sup> It is to be noted that in the *Fawā'id*, Astarābādī had given credence to the non-Four Books reports.

written two large-scale commentaries on Ibn Bābūya's *Faqīh*, one in Persian and the other in Arabic. Although prior to Fayḍ's undertaking other scholars had composed commentaries on the Four Books, *al-Wāfi* is the first book of its kind that provides commentarial remarks on all of these four compendia and gathers them into a single work. Furthermore, what sets Fayḍ apart from most Akhbārī thinkers is that he brings the issue of interpretation to the forefront; in addition to providing commentaries, he reflects on the interpretive process and engages with interpretation as a phenomenon.

Similar to the compilers of the Four Books, resolving contradictory reports preoccupies Fayḍ throughout *al-Wāfi* and his other writings. The pattern that had emerged from Kulaynī to Ṭūsī reaches a peak in Fayḍ and other Safavid compilers: each proceeding compiler is dissatisfied with his predecessors' approach to resolving the issue of contradictory reports. In the next chapter, I will present and examine Fayḍ's hermeneutical thought in general and his solutions to the issue of contradictory reports in particular.

## Chapter 4

### Hadith Authenticity, Interpretation, and the Holy Spirit

#### §1. Introduction

In 1075/1664, six years after *al-Wāfi*, Fayḍ completes his other major work, a commentary on the Qur'an entitled *al-Ṣāfi fī tafsīr kalām allāh al-wāfi*. Intended as *al-Wāfi*'s companion, *al-Ṣāfi* provides commentaries on the Qur'an relying only on the extant reports attributed to the Imams. Fayḍ's decision to compose a sola-hadith commentary stems from his view that the letter of the Qur'an can only be correctly understood through the Imams' explanations. He maintains that during the absence of the Imams, the task of a Shi'i exegete is to examine the authenticity of their surviving reports, understand their meanings, and use them to explain the Qur'an. Whereas *al-Wāfi* represents Fayḍ's attempt to provide a compendium of the Imams' 'authentic' reports, *al-Ṣāfi* is a record of his efforts to interpret the Qur'an through these reports. As the preface to *al-Ṣāfi* indicates, Fayḍ is aware that his chosen project is not unprecedented.<sup>1</sup> Scholars before him composed commentary works on the Qur'an entirely based on reports attributed to the Imams.<sup>2</sup> Yet, he writes, such efforts suffer from a series of shortcomings.

According to Fayḍ, although Shi'i exegetes explicitly express their belief in the indispensable function of the Imams as the supreme interpreters of the Qur'an, many of them have followed their Sunni counterparts in attempting to interpret the Qur'an either through linguistic analysis or rationalistic methods.<sup>3</sup> He points out that in contrast to this dominant current, a small number of Shi'i exegetes have attempted to explain the Qur'an by a sole reliance on the surviving reports of the Imams. In his view, however, even these exegetic works suffer from a series of shortcomings such as focusing only on select verses with explicit doctrinal consequences rather than providing an exegesis of the entire Qur'an. Another defect, he remarks, pertains to the commentators' reliance on reports whose authenticity has not been established either because the transmitters are unreliable, unidentified, or doctrinally corrupt.<sup>4</sup> Fayḍ points out that in composing his commentary, he will rely on the credible (*mu'tabar*) hadiths found in the credible books (*al-kutub al-mu'tabira*) that have been transmitted by Imāmi narrators.<sup>5</sup>

Fayḍ cites interpretive incompetence as another defect of previous Shi'i sola-hadith Qur'an commentaries. He writes that some commentaries quote the Imams' reported statements in ways that seem to be in conflict or contradiction with each other. He considers this shortcoming particularly fatal; these commentators' inability to fully grasp the reports' contents can lead some to assume that the

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<sup>1</sup> Fayḍ cites the exegetical works of 'Alī ibn Ibrāhīm al-Qummī and al-'Ayyāshī among the sources he will incorporate in *al-Ṣāfi*. His critical comments regarding his predecessors' works will be discussed below.

<sup>2</sup> For a study of early Imāmi hadith-based Qur'an commentaries see Meir M. Bar-Asher, *Scripture and Exegesis in Early Imāmi Shiism* (Leiden, 1999).

<sup>3</sup> *al-Ṣāfi*, 1:47.

<sup>4</sup> *al-Ṣāfi*, 1:47.

<sup>5</sup> *al-Ṣāfi*, 1:111.

Imams' reports contain contradictory teachings, and hence, cannot be trusted as authoritative sources of knowledge. Fayḍ's remark echoes Ṭūsī's statement in the preface to *al-Tahdhīb* where he writes,

One of my good friends talked to me about our companions' hadiths and the disagreements, disparities, conflicts, and contradictions found in them. Indeed, for each credible hadith, there is another that contradicts it, and for every sound hadith there is one that is in conflict with it. These discrepancies have led our opponents to use this issue as a means of offending us and as an instrument for undermining the truth of our beliefs...their opposition has generated error and doubt amongst those lacking knowledge and insight, and even some, without realizing the truth of the matter, have forsaken their faith [in Shi'ism]...now this being the case, to attempt to compose a book that could interpret (*ta'wīl*) and bring together the different and conflicting hadiths is one of the most important contributions in religion, and among the loftiest means of seeking nearness to God, the Exalted.<sup>6</sup>

Fayḍ, similar to Ṭūsī, considers resolving discrepancies as a major factor that necessitates hadith interpretation. He avers that whereas Sunni exegetes rely on unreliable reports attributed to the Prophet, and hence err in their interpretations of the Qur'an, Shi'i scholars, while having access to authentic scriptural sources, often lack the necessary skills to properly use them to understand the Qur'an.<sup>7</sup> Hence, *al-Şāfi* is composed with the purpose of overcoming such shortcomings by providing a commentary of the entire Qur'an, rather than on selected verses, while relying exclusively on the extant reports of the Imams. In relying on these reports, Fayḍ claims to only quote those he considers to be "authentic". This authenticity is ensured through examining the reports' content (*matn*) as well as their transmission chains (*isnād*). Furthermore, not satisfied with what he calls Ṭūsī's "farfetched interpretations", Fayḍ aims to address the issue of contradictory reports in a comprehensive manner.

## §2. *Taqiyya* and Hadith Discrepancies

Fayḍ frames his discussion concerning hadith discrepancies around the doctrine of *taqiyya*.<sup>8</sup> He writes that due to the ruling authorities' violent opposition and systematic persecution, the Imams at times had to conceal some of their views by refraining from expressing their beliefs in public. The necessity of dissimulation impelled the Imams to modify their statements in ways that would not endanger the survival of their followers. Sometimes this concealment required the Imams to express the opposite of

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<sup>6</sup> Ṭūsī, *al-Tahdhīb* (Beirut, 1412), 1:45.

<sup>7</sup> *al-Şāfi*, 1:47–50.

<sup>8</sup> For a brief overview of the doctrine of *taqiyya* see, 'Alī Ma'mūrī and Wilfred Madelung, "Taqiyya" in DMBI, 16:77–9. For more detailed studies see, Etan Kohlberg, "Some Imāmī Shi'i Views on *Taqiyya*," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 95 (1975), 305–402; idem, "Taqiyya in Shi'i Theology and Religion," in Hans G. Kippenberg and Guy G. Stroumsa (eds.), *Secrecy and Concealment: Studies in the History of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Religions* (Leiden, 1995), 345–80; Ignaz Goldziher, "Das Princip der takijja im Islam," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 9 (1906), 213–26; Daniel De Smet, "La pratique de *taqiyya* et *kitmān* en islam chiite: compromis ou hypocrisie?" in M. Nachi (ed.), *Actualité du compromis. La construction politique de la différence* (Paris, 2011), 148–161; Maria Dakake, "Hiding in Plain Sight: the Practical and Doctrinal Significance of Secrecy in Shi'ite Islam," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 24.2 (2006), 324–355.

their actual views. This was done in order to indicate an apparent agreement between Shi'ī and Sunni views where dissenting views would set the Shi'īs apart from the rest of Muslims, and hence, invite opposition and conflict between them. *Taqiyya*, in a sense, has created a parallel body of hadiths. Hence, in reading the Imams' extant reports, one is not able to know for certain whether the statements are representative of the Imams' genuine views or were uttered under *taqiyya*. He further points out that due to *taqiyya* numerous sayings have been omitted or their true meaning remains veiled. It is also highly probable that many of the Imams' sayings have not survived since some of the transmitters feared their life and decided not to pass on some of the sayings that had the potential of arising violent responses from the enemies of the Shi'īs.<sup>9</sup>

An example of such hadith discrepancies concerns the number of the Imams succeeding the Prophet. In *al-Maḥāsin*, the earliest extant Imāmī hadith compilation, the number of the Imams varies between three to ten without any mention of the number twelve. But in *Baṣā'ir*, another early compilation, in a few reports the number of the Imams is mentioned to be twelve. According to some scholars, this numerical variance as well as the ambiguities regarding the precise identity of the last Imam are due to Shi'ī community's fear of violent persecution from their opponents.<sup>10</sup> The numbers vary since the Imams knew that by announcing the name and number of the last Imam their enemies would pursue to annihilate him. Hence, precautionary and prudential concerns required the Imams to state varied names and numbers for the succeeding Imams. After the last Imam, al-Mahdī, went into occultation and his life was no longer in danger, compilers such as Kulaynī, Ibn Bābūya, and Ṭūsī had no reservation to mention the Imams' precise numbers and names.<sup>11</sup> In this way, the doctrine of *taqiyya* explains the existence of contradictory statements regarding the number of Imams succeeding the Prophet beginning with 'Alī and ending with the twelfth Imam, al-Mahdī.

Does *taqiyya*, however, help resolve the conflicting reports pertaining to topics besides the Imams' names and numbers? On this question, Fayḍ writes, the real task of scholars begins when the process of scrutinizing the historical authenticity of the reports has ended. Some Imāmī scholars had sought to resolve contradictory reports attributed to the Imams by determining one groups of the reports to be inauthentic, and hence, only hold on to those reports that are in agreement with each other. As pointed out in the previous section, Fayḍ criticizes Kulaynī for his regular exclusion of conflicting reports. In this way elimination leads to concordance at the expense of contradictory materials that might indeed be historically reliable. In Fayḍ's view, two contradictory reports can both be considered authentic in so far as their reliable transmission is concerned. For as was explained, the doctrine of *taqiyya* makes it clear that at times the Imams uttered their statements out of prudential concerns. It is conceivable to assume that the Imams' listeners recorded their sayings truthfully and with accuracy. At the same time, although such recorded statements are 'authentic' in the sense of being accurate representations of the Imams' statements, they might be 'inauthentic' in another sense. While historically reliable, they are not necessarily 'intellectually' authentic since had the Imams been free of prudential constraints they would have perhaps provided different views. This position is further

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<sup>9</sup> *al-Ṣāfi*, 1:45–6.

<sup>10</sup> Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation*, 100, n. 251; Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide*, 216, n. 566; Kohlberg, "From Imāmiyya to Ithnā Ash'ariyya," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 39 (1976), 521–34.

<sup>11</sup> Amir-Moezzi, *The Silent Qur'an and the Speaking Qur'an: Scriptural Sources of Islam between History and Fervor* (New York, 2016), 110–5.

supported since in circumstances where the Imams were able to freely express themselves they provided their trusted recipients with contrasting statements compared with those uttered under constraints. From these observations, Fayḍ concludes that there is yet another way of reflecting on the conflicting reports without taking the route of creating concord amongst reports by eliminating some as inauthentic.

## 2.1 *Taqiyya Amongst the Adherents*

According to Fayḍ, the Imams' prudential concerns must be taken into account not only in relation to their opponents but also to their followers. At times, the Imams employed *taqiyya* in order to conceal some of their teachings from those of their devotees who were unequipped to understand them. He writes that the Imams would use this form of *taqiyya* because they deemed it necessary to address their audience in light of each person or group's level of understanding. Imams' use of *taqiyya* indicates their recognition that different individuals have different capacities for understanding. This is the case not only in relation between the select circle of the followers of the Prophet and the Imams and their ordinary followers but also among the select circle itself. Fayḍ remarks that the Prophet is reported to have disclosed to Salmān (d. c. 33/657), one of his most distinguished companions, "If what you know had been presented to Miqdād, he would have become an unbeliever". In another statement, the fourth Imam is reported to have told his companion, "Had Abū Dharr known that which is in Salmān's heart he would have considered him an unbeliever".<sup>12</sup> These two statements are particularly significant since both Miqdād b. Aswad (d. c. 33/653) and Abū Dharr (d. 32/652) are amongst the most illustrious companions of the Prophet and the first Imam, 'Alī. Yet, these two reports indicate that Salmān was bequeathed with a knowledge, which Miqdād and Abū Dharr did not have the capacity to bear.

In another report, quoted in *Biḥār al-anwār*, "When Ja'far al-Ṣādiq was asked who used to speak to Salmān (*yuḥaddithuhu*) he reportedly answered, "The Apostle of God and the Commander of the Faithful [sc. 'Alī]. Of all the persons to whom they talked, only Salmān became a *muḥaddath*, since they divulged to him secret and concealed knowledge about God which to anyone else would be unbearable".<sup>13</sup> Had others become aware of Salmān's inner thoughts they would have misunderstood him, and would perhaps consider him a heretic deserving of execution.<sup>14</sup> The Prophet and the Imam, in addressing Salmān, Miqdād, and Abū Dharr, gave due consideration to each individual's particularity and engaged with them in the light of their varied levels of preparedness for comprehending divine knowledge.

The Imams' close companions were themselves aware of the importance of concealing certain teachings that the Imams had forbidden them to share with the public. One example is the following report quoted in *al-Kāfi*:

Al-Bāqir is said to have revealed to his disciple Jābir b. Yazīd al-Ju'fī 70,000 (variant: 90,000) hadiths which, on the Imam's command, Jābir divulged to no one. After al-Bāqir's death, Jābir told al-Ṣādiq that this burden lay heavy on him (variant: until he sometimes felt he was going

<sup>12</sup> Fayḍ, *al-Kalimāt ṭarīfa*, 68; idem, *al-Ḥaqā'iq*, 18.

<sup>13</sup> Kohlberg, "Muḥaddath," 42–3.

<sup>14</sup> Kohlberg, "Taqiyya in Shī'ī Theology and Religion," 250.

mad). The Imam advised him to go to the desert (variant: to the mountains), dig a hole in the earth, place his head in it, shout the contents of the hadiths and fill up the hole; the earth would then keep his secret. Jābir followed this advice and immediately experienced relief.<sup>15</sup>

In another report, quoted in *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt*, the Imam states, “Not everything which is known may be revealed; not everything which may be revealed may be revealed at the present time; and not everything which may be revealed at the present time has an audience to which it may appropriately be revealed”.<sup>16</sup> This theme is also present in Fayḍ’s treatise titled *al-Ḥaqā’iq fī maḥāsin al-akhlāq*; he quotes a report from *Nahj al-balāgha* where Imam ‘Alī is reported to have stated, “I have access to hidden treasures of knowledge. If I disclose it, you will start trembling like ropes in deep wells”.<sup>17</sup> These reports suggest that the Imams’ prudential concerns are not restrained to protecting themselves and the community from dangers posed by their adversaries, but that they apply to their most esteemed followers as well.

Other reports are found in hadith literature that also point to this form of *taqiyya*. In *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt*, it is reported that when a companion of the Imam asked him a specific question the Imam answered in a certain way and when two other companions, in the presence of the first questioner, asked the same question the Imam provided two different answers than the answer provided to the first questioner. The companion thinks to himself that this must be due to *taqiyya*, but the Imam, reading the companion’s mind, disagrees that the varying answers were due to *taqiyya*, and states that there are many different dimensions to their knowledge and they are free to answer in any way they wish and according to the state of the person who asks the question.<sup>18</sup>

Approaching *taqiyya* in various contexts leads Fayḍ to maintain that the inconsistencies found amongst reports – aside from concerns about their historical authenticity as well as the Imams’ prudential concerns in relation to their opponents – stem from the fact that the Imams spoke according to the measure of the audiences’ understanding. Hence, conflicting reports could be considered ‘authentic’ when they are examined within each report’s particular context.<sup>19</sup> In Fayḍ’s view, the best course of action for creating cohesion between conflicting reports is to expand the scope of interpretation.<sup>20</sup> Rather than narrowing the reports’ meaning to their “apparent” (*ẓāhir*) sense, the “hidden” (*bāṭin*) meanings of the Imams’ words must be reserved for the those sufficiently prepared to understand them. Fayḍ writes that in cases where the level of understanding of a person reaches only the reports’ “surface” meanings, it is best for that person to content himself with that meaning and avoid seeking any further instruction in the “inner” aspects of the Imams’ teachings since due to his lack of preparedness he might be led astray. Fayḍ adds that for such a person, it is more suitable to delegate the “inner” knowledge to God and those “firmly grounded in knowledge” (*al-rāsikhūn fī ‘l-‘ilm*), a

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<sup>15</sup> Kohlberg, “Taqiyya in Shi‘i Theology and Religion,” 242.

<sup>16</sup> Kohlberg, “Taqiyya in Shi‘i Theology and Religion,” 249.

<sup>17</sup> Fayḍ, *al-Maḥāsin al-akhlāq*, 17.

<sup>18</sup> *Baṣā'ir*, #1371 and 1382.

<sup>19</sup> *al-Ṣāfi*, 1:69;

<sup>20</sup> *al-Ṣāfi*, 1:49.

reference to verse 3:7, and await the “breezing of the divine spirits from God” so that through his eagerness and trust God might open up his being to deeper understandings of the Qur’an and hadiths.<sup>21</sup>

Since the Imams addressed people in light of their level of understanding, and since each person understands the Imams’ statements within his own particular context, it becomes paramount to comprehensively examine the various contexts in which the Imams spoke to their addressees. The reports’ transmission chains cite names of the individuals who attest to have personally heard the recorded statements from the Imams. But in most cases, neither the transmission chains nor the reports’ content provide the context in which the statements were uttered. Hence, verbal subtleties such as the tone, facial expression and body language as well as the characteristics of the person or group the Imams addressed are lost in the transformation of the oral context to the written record. What the Imam says to a particular person and regarding a particular situation might not be what he would say to another person and in another situation. As noted above, in both cases the recipients can be assumed to have accurately recorded the Imams’ responses. The fact that the Imam responded differently to two different individuals concerning the same topic does not necessarily mean that one of the individuals in question must be considered an unreliable transmitter. These considerations are consequential in engaging with the hadith corpus. Fayḍ is attentive to these concerns and holds that the Imams addressed each individual according to his level of understanding.<sup>22</sup> Thus, readers of hadith must be cautious lest they universalize the purport of one report and hold its instruction applicable to every person and situation. It is the task of the exegete, so this line of reasoning goes, to evaluate these contextual and contingent factors in using the statements of the Imams as means of interpreting the Qur’an.

Another matter that highlights the importance of having access to proper contextual knowledge is hadith abrogation (*nāsikh* and *mansūkh*). Abrogation is often talked about in the context of the Qur’an’s gradual revelation to the Prophet. Some verses in the Qur’an are said to have abrogated earlier verses.<sup>23</sup> The issue of abrogation has preoccupied Qur’an commentators since the earliest days of *tafsīr*. Abrogation, however, is also prevalent in the hadith literature. In a report quoted in Ibn Bābūya’s *al-ʿItiqādāt*, Imam ‘Alī is reported to have stated that contradiction in his statements stem from four factors including abrogation. According to the Imam, reports are transmitted via four sources: a hypocrite who fabricates a report, a person who transmits a report inaccurately, a person who passes on a report accurately but without also narrating a later report abrogating the first, and a person who passes on a report accurately and is also aware whether or not it has been abrogated.<sup>24</sup> Hence, a reason for the existence of contradictory hadith is due to the fact that the Imams at times deemed it necessary to abrogate some of their previous sayings, and replaced them with new statements. Fayḍ writes that in addition to the issue of *taqiyya*, reports must be studied with a full consideration of the issue of abrogation. Since scholars’ historical knowledge is incomplete as to which statements came later and for certain abrogated the previous ones, reliance on scriptural reports requires constant and continuous revision.

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<sup>21</sup> *al-Ṣāfi*, 1:69–70.

<sup>22</sup> *al-Ṣāfi*, 1:45.

<sup>23</sup> For brief overviews see Andrew Rippin, “Abrogation” in EI<sup>3</sup> and John Burton, “Abrogation” in *Encyclopaedia of the Qur’ān*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe.

<sup>24</sup> Ibn Bābūya, “al-ʿItiqādāt fī madhhab al-Imāmiyya” in *Muṣannafāt al-Shaykh al-Ṣadiq* (Beirut, 1430), 121–2.

In view of the foregoing discussions, the issues of *taqiyya* and abrogation present a challenge to readers of the hadith collections. Lack of access to an Imam who could clarify which statements were uttered under *taqiyya* and which statements abrogate the previous ones, makes the issue of interpretation as decisive as the issue of hadith authenticity. Fayḍ writes that rather than taking the reports at face-value, a broader contextual knowledge is required. The overriding goal of *isnād* criticism is historical: to determine what the Prophet and the Imams stated. Fayḍ finds this approach necessary yet insufficient. For him, the most vital issue is not to determine what was *actually* said but what was actually said *means* to the recipients.

For Fayḍ's hermeneutics, this point is vital: the earlier commentators who sought to explain the Qur'an through the Imams' reports considered their role to consist in first ascertaining the reports' authenticity, and then citing the authenticated reports as explanations for relevant passages of the Qur'an, without interpreting the reports themselves. Fayḍ, however, insists that the function of the exegete is not merely to ascertain the reports' authenticity; the exegete's more vital function is to reflect on the reports' content and to discover their meanings. He writes, considering that the Imams' teachings are difficult for most people, it is the duty of the 'scholar from Muhammad's family', to elucidate the meaning of the Imams' teachings in ways that are comprehensible and bearable to people.<sup>25</sup> This is why in *al-Ṣāfi* and *al-Wāfi*, Fayḍ deems it necessary to accompany the reports with his own commentaries.

### §3. Hadith Hermeneutics

Fayḍ emphasizes the significance of contextual knowledge in his commentary on verse 3:7. He quotes a report attributed to Imam al-Riḍā, and quoted in Ibn Bābūya's *ʿUyūn al-akhbār*, where the Imam remarks that similar to the Qur'an, the statements of the Imams contain clear (*muḥkam*) and ambiguous (*mutashābih*) passages.

Whoever refers the ambiguous [verses] of the Qur'an to its clear [verses] has been guided to the straight path. He then added: So are in our statements, ambiguities similar to the ambiguities of the Qur'an. Hence, refer the ambiguities of our statements to their clear [statements]; do not follow their ambiguities without their clear ones or you will go astray.<sup>26</sup>

Hence, the Imams' reports, similar to the Qur'an, are in need of interpretation. Even if one would grant that the Qur'an is best understood through the Imam's extant reports, these reports are not self-explanatory. The hadith corpus, leaving aside various issues pertaining to its authenticity, contains clear and ambiguous, general and specific (*khāṣṣ* and *ʿāmm*), and abrogating and abrogated (*nāsikh* and *mansūkh*) passages as well as interpretive factors resulting from the Imams' recourse to *taqiyya*. These are the same issues that many Akhbārīs claim the Imams are supposed to solve in regard to the interpretation of the Qur'an.

<sup>25</sup> *al-Ṣāfi*, 1:49.

<sup>26</sup> *al-Ṣāfi*, 2:491 (v. 3:7).

Fayḍ had argued that interpreting the Qur'an according to personal opinion can only be avoided through relying on the Imams. How does one, however, avoid interpreting the Imams' reports according to personal opinion at a time when no manifest Imam is present? Fayḍ believes this difficulty is overcome by insight (*baṣīra*) attained through God's favor. One is immune from understanding the reports according to personal opinion to the degree to which one is endowed with insight. Those "firmly grounded in knowledge" (*al-rāsikhūn fī 'l-ilm*) are distinguished from the rest by their ability to understand the Qur'an according to insight and investigation (*taḥqīq*) rather than opinion (*ra'y*) and imitation (*taqlīd*).<sup>27</sup>

### 3.1 Was Salmān "Firmly Grounded in Knowledge"?

In the fifth introductory section to *al-Ṣāfi*, Fayḍ remarks that through the Imams one can enter the circle of those "firmly rooted in knowledge". He cites the example of Salmān al-Fārsī whom the Prophet is reported to have characterized as one who, "belongs to my family (*ahl al-bayt*)".<sup>28</sup> The Prophet's statement carries significant weight for Fayḍ. Throughout this study it has been mentioned that the distinguishing factor between the Imams and other believers lies in the Imams' infallibility and access to divine sources of knowledge. The Imams are guarded against faulty understandings of the Qur'an, and hence are able to perceive the revelation's true meaning. Does the Prophet's description of Salmān as belonging to the *ahl al-bayt* mean that similar to the Imams Salmān is also infallible or does it imply that infallibility is not a requirement for becoming a member of the *ahl al-bayt*? Both these views can find support in the hadith literature.

Imam al-Ṣādiq, in a report attributed to him in *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt*, tells his disciple Faḍl b. 'Īsā that "Salmān is better than Luqmān".<sup>29</sup> This statement is particularly significant since the Shi'is consider all the prophets infallible. Putting aside the question, in what sense is Salmān "better" than Luqmān, one could deduce from this statement that since Luqmān was a prophet, Salmān, by the virtue of being described as "better" than Luqmān, can also be regarded infallible. Kohlberg notes that in the hadith literature there are statements in which Salmān is described as infallible (*ma'ṣūm*). He also points out that Salmān's distinguished place as belonging to the *ahl al-bayt* is explained in various reports to mean that Salmān was of the same kind (*jins*) and substance (*ṭina*) as the *ahl al-bayt*. These qualities placed him in the same category as the other members of the *ahl al-bayt*, and as a result, he was considered a man of knowledge (*ʿālim*), inerrant (*ma'ṣūm*), and recipient of inspiration (*muḥaddath*).<sup>30</sup> This view of Salmān presents a major challenge to the mainstream views regarding the Imams' privileged status. As Kohlberg observes, Shi'i scholars have long noticed this tension between Salmān's elevated status and

<sup>27</sup> For a brief study of the concepts of *baṣīra*, *taḥqīq*, and *taqlīd* in Fayḍ's thought see Etan Kohlberg, "Aspects of Akhbari Thought," 133–160.

<sup>28</sup> *al-Ṣāfi*, 1:72. For more information concerning Salmān see "Muḥammad's Persian Companion, Salmān al-Fārsī" in Sarah Savant, *The New Muslims of Post-Conquest Iran: Tradition, Memory, and Conversion* (Cambridge, 2013), 61–89; G. Levi Della Vida, "Salmān al-Fārsī" in EI<sup>2</sup>. On Salmān's significance in Shi'i piety in Iran see, Louis Massignon, *Salmān Pāk et les pr'émices spirituelles de l'Islam iranien* (Tours, 1934).

<sup>29</sup> *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt* (Tehran, 1392), 106.

<sup>30</sup> As Kohlberg points out, this characterization of Salmān is found in Mufid's *al-Ikhtisāṣ*. See Kohlberg, "The Term *Muḥaddath*," 42.

its consequences for the doctrine of imamate. In their attempts to ease the tension, some scholars have sought to redefine the terms such as *‘ālim*, *ma‘šūm*, and *muḥaddath* when they are applied to Salmān.<sup>31</sup> By modifying these terms, Salmān’s noble status is preserved without undermining the unreachable status of the Imams.

Some scholars, not willing to designate the same status to Salmān, argue that the Prophet’s characterization of Salmān as belonging to the Household is an exaggerated figure of speech, and should not be taken literally. There is also the view expressed by Ṭūsī and Ṭabrisī that interprets the Prophet’s saying to mean that Salmān – who was a Persian convert from Zoroastrian and Christian religions – is a follower of Muḥammad’s religion, and Arabs should not treat him as an outsider.<sup>32</sup> Others do not fully agree with either of these views, and instead highlight Salmān’s admired piety and superior knowledge. In their view, Salmān was more than just a follower of the Prophet’s religion. If the aim of the Prophet was simply to protect Salmān from the prejudices of the Arabs, he could also say that Salmān is one of *us*. The Prophet, however, specifically describes Salmān as belonging to his Household; not many – if any at all – of the Prophet’s followers were described by him in these words. Those such as Fayḍ who ascribe to this alternative view believe that Salmān’s privileged status is due to his capacity for receiving divine knowledge and point to the reported statements attributed to the Prophet and the Imams in which Salmān is depicted in similar veins as Khidr.

In a number of reports, Salmān is said to have been endowed with divine insight, and it was through his insight and knowledge that he was elevated in the Prophet’s eyes.<sup>33</sup> Fayḍ, agreeing with this view, holds that through God’s grace anyone can enter the Household. In his view, the circle of “the firmly grounded in knowledge” is not exclusive to the Prophet and the twelve Imams; the circle is open to anyone who dedicates himself to the Qur’an and the insights of the Prophet and the Imams, and hence enters the Household through God’s grace. He writes,

Whoever sincerely submits to God, His Messenger and the Imams, and takes his knowledge from them and reads (*tatabbu’*) their extant reports (*āthār*),<sup>34</sup> and comes to know some of their secrets so that he gains firmness (*rusūkh*) in knowledge and reassurance in gnosis (*ma‘rifa*), and the eyes of his heart open, and knowledge forces him (*hajama bihi*) onto the reality of things, and comes into direct contact with the Spirit of Certainty, and considers easy (*istalāna*) what the worldly (*mutrafūn*) have considered difficult (*istaw‘ara*), and becomes intimate with what the ignorant dread and engages with the world in body while his spirit is clinging to the Highest place—such a person is able to acquire from some of the Qur’an’s rare teachings (*gharā’ib*) and understand a fraction of its wonders, and such a thing is not rare for God’s generosity nor wondrous for his beneficence. Felicity is not the exclusive property of one group to the exclusion of others. Indeed, the Imams counted a group of their companions who possessed these characteristics as from among themselves, such as when they said: “Salmān is one of us, the *ahl al-bayt*”. So, it is not remote for whoever has such characteristics to become one of those

<sup>31</sup> Kohlberg, “*Muḥaddath*,” 42–4.

<sup>32</sup> See al-Ṭūsī’s comments on verse 11:46 in his *al-Tabayān*.

<sup>33</sup> *Baṣā’ir*, 106.

<sup>34</sup> This might be a pun/double entendre. It could also mean “follow in their footsteps”.

who are firmly grounded (*rāsikhūn*) in knowledge and know the *ta'wīl* [of the Qur'an]—nay! Even [one who can say along with the Imāms], “We are the firmly grounded in knowledge”.<sup>35</sup>

As this passage indicates, Fayḍ's inclusion of Salmān among the *ahl al-bayt* differs from the view that limits the “firmly grounded in knowledge” to refer only to the Prophet and the Imams. Those who ascribe to the latter view often point to a statement attributed to Imam 'Alī in which it is stated, “We [i.e., the Imams] are the firmly grounded in knowledge; we are the ones who know the Qur'an's interpretation (*ta'wīl*)”. The Imams are firmly grounded in knowledge since they receive their knowledge from God rather than basing their knowledge on the shaky foundations of one's personal opinions. Fayḍ includes this statement in the second introduction to *al-Ṣāfi*.<sup>36</sup> Yet, he expands the circumference of the circle of the “firmly grounded” to include the Imams as well as their devoted followers whose hearts have been opened through God's grace. Although the Imams are on a different ontological level than their followers, through the Imams their followers can also become firmly grounded in knowledge and hence interpret the reports and understand the Qur'an without falling prey to personal opinion. For Fayḍ, the Imams serve as the channels through which God's grace streams to His worshippers. The inclusion of Salmān among the “firmly grounded in knowledge” has far reaching implications. By allowing the Imams' devotees to enter the Prophet's Household, Fayḍ is opening the reader to new hermeneutic horizons.

While trying to reconcile the view that considers the Prophet and the Imams as the ultimate interpreters of the Qur'an, and at the same time expanding the circle of “firmly grounded in knowledge” to include the Imams as well as those who profess sincere adherence to them, Fayḍ also attempts to reconcile the prophetic prohibition of interpreting the Qur'an based on one's own opinions (*ra'y*), and the numerous verses and reports that encourage the believers to reflect on the Qur'an and venture to understand its meaning. He cites a few verses in which reflection on the Qur'an is encouraged (e.g., 47:24), and then asks how is one to reflect on the Qur'an without falling prey to interpreting the Qur'an according to *ra'y*? Hence, in *al-Ṣāfi* a distinction is developed between the legitimate and illegitimate manners of interpreting the Qur'an. The distinction centers on the intention of the interpreter as well as the sources and methods he relies on.

According to Fayḍ, a reader is adapting an illegitimate manner of interpretation if he intends to use the Qur'an and its authority as a mere means for validating his own opinions.<sup>37</sup> In this way, certain verses are selectively chosen out of their contexts and without discussing their connection to other relevant verses. Fayḍ contends that if such an interpreter did not already make up his mind regarding the correctness of his opinions, he perhaps would not derive those same views from the verses that he uses the Qur'an to legitimize. Such an interpreter, knowingly or through ignorance, is only interested in imposing his own opinions on the Qur'an rather than attempting to understand the Qur'an by reflecting on the text itself along with the sayings of the Prophet and the Imams regardless of any previously held convictions about what a verse or passage *must* mean. Fayḍ's focus, however, is placed primarily on the interpreter's intention rather than his ability or the necessity of foregoing his personal opinions. The vital factor is for the interpreter to ask God in sincerity to guide him to the right

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<sup>35</sup> *Al-Ṣāfi*, 1:72.

<sup>36</sup> *al-Ṣāfi*, 1:36/57.

<sup>37</sup> *al-Ṣāfi*, 1:72–3.

understanding of His Book. The attainment of this right understanding is facilitated through the statements of the Prophet and the Imams.

Fayḍ also alludes to another illegitimate manner of interpretation, which consists in interpreting the language of the Qur'an without having the required contextual knowledge (i.e., *nāsikh/mansūkh*, *khāṣṣ/ʿāmm*, *muḥkam/mutashābih*, *asbāb nuzūl*). In his view, any interpretation that attempts to understand the Qur'an by analyzing its language without taking into consideration the contextual factors within which the language was placed, will only reach a mistaken understanding of the Qur'an. He affirms that the contextual knowledge of the Qur'an, which is deemed vital by Sunni and Shi'i exegetes alike, is only accessible through the surviving statements of the Prophet and the Imams. Hence, in Fayḍ's view, the Prophet's statement, "Whoever interprets the Qur'an based on his personal opinions has secured a place for himself in Hell", applies to those who seek to impose their views on the Qur'an as well as to those who disregard the absolute necessity of the contextual knowledge by solely focusing on the language of the Qur'an as the means for discovering its meaning. Fayḍ believes that both these interpretive approaches must be avoided.

Having pointed to mistaken exegetical approaches, Fayḍ proceeds to provide what he considers as the correct method for interpreting the Qur'an. He elaborates this method in the twelfth introduction to *al-Ṣāfi* titled "Our Method in Interpreting the Qur'an".<sup>38</sup> In the following I will highlight some of his remarks that reveal a few major aspects of Fayḍ's approach to hadith authentication and interpretation. He begins by mentioning that *al-Ṣāfi* provides an explanation of each verse where an explanation is required. According to Fayḍ, an explanation is required when there is more to a verse than its wording (*lafẓ*) suggests. This is when a knowledge of a verse's abrogation, addressee, or revelatory context (*asbāb nuzūl*) is consequential for understanding its meaning. Another instance is an ambiguous verse that leaves the reader puzzled about its meaning and hence is in need of interpretation (*ta'wīl*). "In summary," he writes, "anything that is considered additional to the clarification of phrases (*lafẓ*) and is in need of listening to the Infallibles".<sup>39</sup> Fayḍ provides a few remedies for resolving these and similar challenges.

First, Fayḍ states that some ambiguous passages of the Qur'an are best explained and clarified through the Qur'an's unambiguous passages. Secondly, he explains, when a "credible" hadith from the Imams is available in "credible hadith books" (*al-kutub mu'tabar*) narrated by Imāmi transmitters, it must be used for interpreting the verse under examination. Thirdly, when no such "credible" report is available, he will rely on reports narrated by Sunni transmitters as long as these reports are attributed to the Imams and do not oppose their other teachings. Noting that the Imams have sanctioned this method, he quotes a report attributed to Imam al-Ṣādiq where he states that when you face an issue for which you do not find a ruling in our reports, enquire to see whether Sunnis have a pertinent ruling attributed to 'Alī and act on that. In cases where no hadith is available in credible Shi'i and Sunni sources, Fayḍ incorporates commentaries provided by Sunni scholars; he adds that he will do this only when these commentaries do not go against the Qur'an and hadith. He quotes two reports, one attributed to the Prophet and the other to Imam al-Ṣādiq, in which the criterion for accepting or rejecting something is its relation to the Qur'an. According to al-Ṣādiq, "Whatever is found in a report

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<sup>38</sup> *al-Ṣāfi*, 1:111–4.

<sup>39</sup> *al-Ṣāfi*, 1:111.

– whether it is narrated by a vitreous or a vicious person – receive it if it agrees with the Qur’an and do not receive it if it disagrees with the Qur’an”. Fayḍ follows this report with another, attributed to Imam al-Kāẓim, where it is stated that upon encountering conflicting reports, one must assess them in the light of the Qur’an and the Imams’ hadiths; reports that resemble what is found in these two sources are true and the ones that do not resemble them are false.<sup>40</sup> This report leads him to address the topic of contradictory reports. He writes that when faced with such reports, he will choose the most “authentic” (*aṣaḥḥ*), “reliable” (*aḥsan*) and “useful/commonly in use” (*a‘ammahā fā’ida*) of them and will provide the reader with reasons for his choice.<sup>41</sup> At this juncture, one might ask what is Fayḍ’s criteria for distinguish the most authentic, reliable, and useful reports from the wide range of the available reports? His answer is provided in two terse passages in *al-Şāfi*, the last paragraph of the twelfth introduction and the last page of the preface.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Fayḍ in *al-Wāfi* criticizes Kulaynī, Ibn Bābūya and Ṭūsī for what he considers as their inadequate attention in citing the reports’ transmission chains. He sets accurate citations of the transmission chains and remedying their defects as one of his aims in composing a new compendium. In *al-Şāfi*, however, he presents a different view. He ends the last introduction by pointing out that for the sake of brevity, he will refrain from citing his quoted reports’ transmission chains. Fayḍ explains that considering the long time-gap between him and the transmitters, little is gained in knowledge by the transmission chains since differences and errors occur in citing them. He further writes that excluding the transmission chains does not pose a problem for him since except on rare occasions, he authenticates the reports through means other than their transmission chains.<sup>42</sup> In *al-Wāfi*, Fayḍ expresses his disagreement with those scholars who decide a report’s status only on the basis of its transmission chains. In his view, a report’s authenticity can also be established through other supporting pieces of evidence. In *al-Şāfi*, he adds consideration of a report’s content (*matn*) as another means of hadith verification.

#### §4. The Superiority of Content over Documentary Evidence

In the preface to *al-Şāfi*, Fayḍ writes of his aim to compose a Qur’an commentary free from the opinions of Sunnis and only based on the Imams’ hadiths. He considers this a daunting task reserved only for an “insightful inquirer” who, according to Fayḍ,

Perceives with the light of God and is aided – with God’s permission – by the Holy Spirit so that through the illumination of His light he observes the hadith’s veracity (*ṣidq*) and authenticity (*ṣiḥḥat*) and knows its falsehood (*kidhb*) and weakness (*ḍa‘f*) by [the text] from how it sounds [*lahn al-qawl*] and so he authenticates the reports by their contents (*mutūn*) and not their chains of transmission (*asānīd*) and takes [his] knowledge from God rather than professors (*asātīdh*) such that it becomes possible for him to distinguish the pure from the sullied and to extract the healing from the harmful. He then unearths the Imams’ exegetical reports until they

<sup>40</sup> *al-Şāfi*, 1:111.

<sup>41</sup> *al-Şāfi*, 1:112.

<sup>42</sup> *al-Şāfi*, 1:113.

are purified of what is fancied as dirt obscuring the clarity (*bayān*) and tears them open until what is appropriate to the understanding of the people of his time emerges from them.<sup>43</sup>

As this passage illustrates, while upholding his belief that the true meanings of the Qur'an are to be found in the Imams' extant reports, Fayḍ is aware of the myriad issues that surround hadith compilations including his own. The insistence on the necessity of relying on hadith for understanding the Qur'an is not meant to make the process of interpretation any less arduous than, for example, the approaches of those who center their exegesis predominantly on rational analysis. For this reason, Fayḍ remarks that it takes a person with a series of extraordinary qualities to properly assess the reports' authenticity, interpret their meanings, and apply them to the Qur'an.<sup>44</sup> His ideal exegete is a person of "insight" who perceives with the "light of God". Such an exegete is aided by the Holy Spirit (*al-rūḥ al-qudus*) who enables him to discern the reports' authenticity and discover their meanings. He is able to discern any falsehood in the reports and distinguish between the authentic and fabricated reports not only by analyzing their transmission chains but also by their content. Since this scholar receives knowledge from God, and not "from professors", he is able to weave through the reports and "wash away any impurity attached to them". Furthermore, Fayḍ writes, such an exegete explicates the reports for others in accordance with the understanding of his era. Fayḍ's ideal exegete, he remarks, must also be able to bring together all scattered reports available concerning a particular passage or topic, so that the Qur'an is not understood based on isolated reports. This scholar must also be able to resolve contradictions and conflicts between various reports and elucidate each report in its particular context.<sup>45</sup>

Thus, according to Fayḍ, to interpret the Qur'an in light of the Imams' surviving reports, involves more than simply restating their reports from the available hadith compilations; one must be able to understand the reports' meanings. The first step toward a meaningful engagement with hadith consists in distinguishing the authentic from the inauthentic reports. Throughout his writings, Fayḍ is simultaneously concerned with hadith compilation and interpretation. He writes that hadith compendia include statements that have not been proven to come from the Imams since the transmitters were either weak, unidentified, or adhered to corrupt beliefs.<sup>46</sup> Considering this situation, he proposes three means for verifying the reports' authenticity: examining their chains of transmission, relying on supporting pieces of evidence such as a report's prevalent use amongst jurists, and content analysis. His statements in *al-Ṣāfi* and elsewhere indicate that Fayḍ considers reflecting on a report's content as the best means of assessing its authenticity. His criterion for distinguishing between authentic and inauthentic reports is a matter of the "heart". As a support for this position he quotes a statement attributed to Imam al-Bāqir and cited in *al-Kāfi*:

Our talk is difficult; no one bears it except an intimate angel, a prophet, or a servant whose heart God has tested. So, if a statement is offered to you from the Family of Muḥammad that softens your heart and you recognize it, take it, and any statement that disgusts your heart, and you

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<sup>43</sup> *al-Ṣāfi*, 1:48.

<sup>44</sup> *al-Ṣāfi*, 1:48.

<sup>45</sup> *al-Ṣāfi*, 1:48–9.

<sup>46</sup> *al-Ṣāfi*, 1:47.

recognize it as unpleasant, turn to God and His prophet or to a scholar from Muḥammad's Family. One is doomed when upon hearing a statement that he is unable to understand declares, "by God it is not true" and rejects it; rejection is the same as unbelief.<sup>47</sup>

Al-Bāqir points to the dictates of one's heart as the criterion for ascertaining the validity of the Imams' statements. At the same time, he warns against considering a hadith inauthentic only because one's heart does not assent to it. In such cases, the heart rather than the hadith might be at fault. Aware of this issue, Fayḍ emphasizes the indispensability of God's assistance in the process of acquiring knowledge.

As previously discussed, Fayḍ is intensely aware of the numerous obstacles that an interpreter of the Imams' statements faces. It is for this reason that he envisions his ideal exegete as one who reads the reports with the "light" of God. To take out a volume of *al-Kāfi* from the bookshelf and quote a report as a commentary upon a verse is not an approach endorsed by Fayḍ. It is to the extent that readers become "firmly rooted in knowledge" that they acquire a share in understanding the Imams' teachings.

According to Fayḍ, "knowledge is not obtained through great learning; it is rather a light that God bequests to the heart of those He wishes to guide". He explains that this light is for anyone who has become prepared for guidance through refining his character, cultivating his inner self to receive illumination, liberating his heart, and concentrating his intellect. Quoting verse 2:282, he concludes that the foundation of all these preparations is mindfulness (*taqwā*): "Be mindful of God and He will teach you".<sup>48</sup> He cautions that in order to acquire this knowledge, one must uphold the precepts of Sharī'a, maintain the traditions, remain steadfast in the midst of calamities and tribulations, persevere in continuous remembrance and contemplation, be on guard against lusts and evil thoughts, purify one's intentions, and enact what one already knows until knowledge appears and one advances from *'ilm al-yaqīn* to *'ayn al-yaqīn* and finally to *ḥaqq al-yaqīn*.<sup>49</sup> Fayḍ then remarks that once these first steps are correctly taken, reaching higher goals becomes attainable. To know the goal, he notes, makes the journey easier and whoever desires a precious thing must be prepared to put himself in danger. He tells the reader that despite the dangers, whoever knocks at God's door will be saved, whoever strives in God's path will find deliverance, whoever trades in God's market will profit. "And my brother", Fayḍ concludes, "this is a matter that can only be achieved through God's grace, 'God gives His grace to whomever He wants'" (2:105).<sup>50</sup> He writes that although this path is open to everyone, few undertake it.

This is the way, where is the wayfarer? These are things sought, where is the seeker? This is Joseph's shirt, where is a Jacob? This is Mount Sinai, where is a Moses? This is the double-edged sword, where is an Abū al-Ḥasan al-Karrār?<sup>51</sup> Not everyone who wills seeks, and not everyone who seeks reaches, and not everyone who reaches finds a station. These are nothing but eternal blessings and divine gifts that just as they have been flowing from the beginning they will also

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<sup>47</sup> *al-Ṣāfi*, 1:49; see *al-Kāfi*, 2:331.

<sup>48</sup> *al-Kalimāt ṭarīfa*, 63–4. Fayḍ provides a similar account in *al-Ḥaqā'iq*, 16.

<sup>49</sup> *al-Kalimāt ṭarīfa*, 64.

<sup>50</sup> *al-Kalimāt ṭarīfa*, 65.

<sup>51</sup> The title of "*al-karrār*" was given to Imam 'Alī due to his relentless bravery in battles.

flow to the end... “Everyone should strive to attain this” (37:61) “and let those who strive, strive for this” (83:26).<sup>52</sup>

In Fayḍ’s view, God grants the correct understanding of the Qur’an and its hidden meanings to anyone He considers as worthy. He wonders at those who aim to acquire this knowledge merely through reading and writing while the prophets and Imams were poisoned, murdered, and martyred on this path. “The first step in this path”, he writes, “is to sacrifice one’s blood and then journey the path by blood”.<sup>53</sup> He remarks that this knowledge is a jewel hidden in the hearts of mystics (‘*ārifīn*) who were they to reveal them to their closet and most trusted companions, they would think they are heretics and unbelievers.<sup>54</sup> Even when they do divulge this knowledge to a select few, they speak in parables, maxims, and esoteric language.<sup>55</sup> In *al-Wāfi*, he notes that in his own hadith commentaries he refrains from providing the more profound meanings since the Imams have commanded their followers to keep such matters concealed from the uninitiated. Heeding this call, he writes that he shall chiefly use the terminologies of *ahl al-ẓāhir* since they are easily understood by most people.<sup>56</sup> In his own assessment, Fayḍ has only attained a tenth of the qualities he requires of the “insightful inquirer” (*al-nāqid al-baṣīr*) and writes that even this degree has come about through God’s grace alone.<sup>57</sup>

According to Fayḍ, the “insightful inquirer” – whom he also describes as *faqīh*, *khāṣṣ*, and *mujtahid* – are endowed with understanding, acuity, and a holy faculty (*quwwa qudsiyya*); they are wary in the world and pious in religion. Hence, in reflecting on religion, they follow the clear passages of the Qur’an and Sunna as well as those clear statements of the Imams they consider as authentic. In this way, they understand what is obligatory to believe and act upon. In reaching this knowledge, they seek help from the testaments of their upright intellect (*‘aql al-qawīm*) and direct understanding (*fahm al-mustaqīm*). Fayḍ remarks that these individuals affirm the findings of their intelligence with the imports of their minds that have been purified through righteous deeds and the illuminations present in their hearts as a result of their refined morals. Fayḍ states the intellect’s nobility is evident to all and were it not for the intellect the *shar‘* itself would not become known. He writes, “intelligence is the inner *shar‘* just as *shar‘* is the outer intelligence; the two are one another’s companions so much so as though they are one”.<sup>58</sup> Those few who conduct their affairs in this manner, act on the rulings for which they have no doubt and reservation. As for those matters they lack certainty, they took recourse to caution (*iḥtiyāt*) and refrain from categorically accepting or rejecting other views. Fayḍ refers to the issue of *khavar al-wāḥid* as an example; a perceptive person would not categorically accept or reject the authority of *āḥād* reports without at the same time acknowledging and addressing the disagreements amongst scholars regarding this issue. Rather, they take into account any report that has become a source of reference and deeply and thoroughly reflect on it, until they become confident of its validity.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> *al-Kalimāt ṭarīfa*, 66.

<sup>53</sup> *al-Kalimāt ṭarīfa*, 67.

<sup>54</sup> *al-Kalimāt ṭarīfa*, 68.

<sup>55</sup> *al-Ḥaqā’iq*, 16.

<sup>56</sup> *al-Wāfi*, 1:43.

<sup>57</sup> *al-Ṣāfi*, 1:50.

<sup>58</sup> *al-Ḥaqā’iq*, 22.

<sup>59</sup> *al-Ḥaqā’iq*, 23.

Fayḍ recommends to those who have not reached the level of insight (*baṣīra*) to strive to find insightful scholars able to guide them in conducting their affairs. If they are unable to find such scholars, they must present their questions to scholars whom they consider to be of insight. When such a scholar provides a response to their question, they must ask him whether his answer is found in the Qur'an, the Prophet's Tradition, or the Imams' reports. If the scholar confirms that his ruling is found in these sources, then it should be acted on. But if the scholar says that his ruling is not specifically mentioned in the Qur'an and hadith and he has acquired it through his own understanding or that it is based on a consensus for which no report is available, then the person must seek out the views of other scholars until one of them provides him with a ruling found in the Qur'an and hadith or informs him that these two sources have asked the believers to practice caution (*iḥtiyāt*) or choice (*ikhtiyār*) regarding this particular question.<sup>60</sup>

While asserting the indispensability of hadith, Fayḍ does not maintain that acting on the reports must be preceded with certainty regarding their authenticity. His criterion for hadith validity is *sukūn* (peace of mind) rather than *yaqīn* (certitude). According to Fayḍ, while knowledge of Imams' divine designation (*naṣṣ*) is firmly established, the same is not true regarding the veracity of all the reports attributed to them. This is because, he writes, whereas the imamate of each Imam is established via *mutawātir* reports that provide incontrovertible proof regarding their authenticity, a great number of reports attributed to the Imams are not *mutawātir* and hence only provide their recipients with conjecture (*ẓann*) regarding their veracity. In Fayḍ's view, to not distinguish between the reports concerning the imamate of each Imam and the non-*mutawātir* reports attributed to them is tantamount to disbelieving in imamate per se. He avers that the majority of the available reports pertaining to the rules of conduct are in no way equal, both in terms of their content (*matn*) and documentary evidence (*sanad*), to the reports pertaining to the imamate. This being the case, he concludes, since acting on a ruling requires a minimum degree of certainty on the actor's part, as long as one is at peace (*sukūn al-naḥs*) concerning a report's veracity, he is permitted to act on it.<sup>61</sup>

## §5. Conclusion

Fayḍ's projects in his hadith compilation (*al-Wāfi*) and Qur'an commentary (*al-Ṣāfi*) are guided by the belief that the Qur'an and the instructions of the Prophet and the Imams are not self-explanatory. In his view, during the absence of a divinely designated guide, the Imams' surviving reports constitute the most supreme inherited source of knowledge. In order to acquire knowledge from these reports, two issues must be addressed: the reports' authenticity and their correct interpretation. As explained in the preceding sections, according to Fayḍ, a report's authenticity is established either through the reliability of its transmission chains, other supporting pieces of evidence, or its content. Contradictory reports found in the existing compilations bring to surface both of Fayḍ's concerns regarding hadith verification and interpretation. In his view, conflicting reports, in the majority of cases, stem from the Imams' recourse to *taqiyya* in their interactions with their adversaries and adherents.

<sup>60</sup> *al-Ḥaqā'iq*, 23–4.

<sup>61</sup> *al-Ḥaqā'iq fī maḥāsīn*, 24.

Fayḍ explains that due to prudential concerns, the Imams would at times refrain from providing answers that could undermine their followers' survival. Similarly, the Imams, considering that people have different levels of understanding, addressed them in light of their particular context. Hence, in reading the Imams' extant reports, one is not able to know for certain whether the statements are representative of the Imams' genuine views, since they could have been uttered under *taqiyya*, or whether they were genuine views that were uttered in light of the particularities of their audience. In Fayḍ's view, linguistic and rational investigations, on their own, are unable to resolve these challenges; only those who are "firmly grounded in knowledge" are able to transcend their own limitations and verify the reports' authenticity and gain understanding of their meanings. Fayḍ, through his discussion regarding Salmān's status as a person "firmly grounded in knowledge" argues that this phrase is not limited to the Imams, and through God's grace, can be applied to others as well. This position is intertwined with Fayḍ's view that true knowledge, rather than being acquired through study, is a gift that God bestowed to whoever He wishes to guide. Those who are endowed with this gift, are able to distinguish the authentic from inauthentic reports through their holy faculty (*quwwa qudsiyya*) and grasp the reports' meanings by examining them with the light of God. Quoting a report attributed to Imam al-Bāqir, Fayḍ holds that if a statement softens one's heart it has passed the test of authenticity, and if it hardens one's heart the statement must be left aside without being rejected as inauthentic. One is guided through one's innate sense of what comes from God and what does not.

This emphasis on divine assistance and non-discursive knowledge does not undermine the role of reason altogether. According to Fayḍ, the intellect and revelation are the two sides of the same coin; the affirmations of the heart must be accepted in light of the intellect the same way that the heart must assent to intellect's assertions. Nonetheless, in Fayḍ's view, the complexities pertaining to hadith authenticity and interpretations are so encompassing that no 'intellectual' method is able to satisfactorily resolve them. Hence, rather than delineating a method, he seeks to cultivate an orientation in his readers where reason and revelation are complementary, and both acquire their authority and meaning through the assents of the heart.

For Fayḍ, the Imams' teachings are the keys that unlock the doors to the Qur'an's meanings. But since the keys are numerous and the doors many, not all presented with the Imams' teachings are capable of understanding them. One must be taught which key is for which door. In Fayḍ's view, this can only be achieved through God's grace who allows those He deems as worthy to see things with His light and be aided by the Holy Spirit. Otherwise, one will be entrapped in a labyrinth of one's own making. Fayḍ's attempt is to provide his audience with a lantern that will assist them in their labyrinths: to understand the Qur'an by the Imams, the Imams by their reports, and both by the aid of the Holy Spirit. He relocates the question of hadith authenticity and interpretation in the realm of the inquirer's existential experience. In Fayḍ's view, it is only in this way that a person who reflects on the Imams' teachings comes to perceive their truth.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> *al-Ṣāfi*, 1:48.

## Conclusion

Over the past two decades, there has been an increasing interest in the examination of “canons” in Islamic studies. These studies often seek to trace the developments that have led to the canonical status of certain texts such as the Qur’an and hadith compendia.<sup>1</sup> Central to these projects, especially in the case of hadith, is an attempt to historicise textual sources within their particular contexts, highlight the contingent factors involved in their canonization, and, in Jonathan Brown’s words, examine “how the books went from controversial to indispensable as they became the common language for discussing the Prophet’s legacy among the various Sunni schools of law”.<sup>2</sup> A comprehensive study of this kind requires an extensive knowledge of the canonical and non-canonical texts, their historical contexts and commentary traditions, their reception histories prior to canonization, and the theological justifications elaborated for their authenticity and authority. Other aspects that need to be addressed include examination of the processes that culminated in a consensus concerning the authority of the canonized texts, socio-political factors contributing to the formation of this consensus, and the roles played by the individual compilers as well as the scholarly institutions in this process. Such studies can elucidate the processes by which certain texts are designated a canonical status, and in doing so problematize the theological claims – often presented as historical “facts” – to their inviolability.

Due to the increasing emergence of such studies over the past two decades in Islamic studies, and past two centuries in biblical studies, the appearance of the word “canon” or “canonization” in any given title, subtitle or book description, often leaves the informed reader with a few safe predictions regarding the book’s content: that certain texts currently have a canonical status and are considered indispensable to that religious tradition; that the majority of believers assume these texts have always had this status; and that certain intellectual, social, and political factors have been involved in establishing these works’ canonicity. As a result, despite my appreciation for historical approaches to the study of canonization projects, increasingly I find myself equally keen to explore the theoretical consequences of these studies.

The study of canons can be pursued from complimentary historical and theoretical perspectives. A historical approach would investigate the processes and reasons for the canonization of certain texts. Theoretical approaches could take various forms: historiographical enquiries might examine the methods employed by the historian and whether alternate methodologies would render different results; a hermeneutical approach might seek to probe whether the canonicity of a text should make readers interpret that text differently from any other text. A theologian, having been presented with the historical data, might be interested in the doctrinal justifications provided for the authority of canons as well as the consequences of revising the canons, or repudiating their authority, upon his overall theological paradigm. A phenomenological study would investigate the concrete impacts of canons on their audiences and the ways in which their daily lives are affected by continuous encounter with them. Other critical approaches might inquire into the sociopolitical factors such as ethnicity,

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<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Brown’s *The Canonization of Bukhārī and Muslim* (Leiden, 2007), Ahmed El Shamsy’s *The Canonization of Islamic Law* (Cambridge, 2013), and Shady Nasser’s *The Second Canonization of the Qur’an (324/936): Ibn Mujāhid and the Founding of the Seven Readings* (Leiden, 2020) represent three prominent examples.

<sup>2</sup> Brown, *The Canonization of Bukhārī and Muslim*, 7.

gender, and social class that have contributed to the continual maintenance of the canonical status of certain textual sources. Theoretical approaches to the conceptions and configurations of canons pose the question of “so what?” to historians. Historicizing projects are more fruitful when they are tied to theoretical considerations; theoretical studies are more persuasively carried when they are historically informed; the historical becomes more engaging once its theoretical underpinning and consequences are made explicit.

In this dissertation, I have sought to strike a middle path between the historical and the theoretical approaches to hadith canonicity. Chapter 1 began with an examination of the authority designated to hadith in Fayḍ’s theological thought. It was argued that this authority results from Fayḍ’s conceptualisation of God’s relationship to humanity, the role of the prophets and the imams in mediating this relationship, and the dynamics of this relationship during the absence (*ghayba*) of an imam. Fayḍ elaborates the necessity for an imam in the context of humans’ inability to grasp the meanings of the Qur’an on their own. As with many other Shi’i scholars, he emphasizes the distinction drawn in a number of hadiths between the “speaking” and the “silent” Qur’an and upholds the imams as the “speaking” voice of the Qur’an. In his view, considering that the Shi’a currently do not have access to a manifest imam, the extant reports attributed to the Prophet and the Imams stand as the ultimate source of knowledge for understanding the Qur’an and implementing its precepts.

Fayḍ’s emphasis on the Imams’ extant reports is accompanied with a warning that not all the reports attributed to them are authentic. *Al-Wāfi* represents his attempt at compiling a definitive hadith compendium. As he makes clear in the preface, *al-Wāfi* is a collection of the reports quoted in the Four Books, which he describes as the “central” hadith sources of his time. Fayḍ’s compendium reflects the theological and hermeneutical discussions that had pervaded Shi’i intellectual scene throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. At the center of these discussions was the question of hadith authenticity.

Chapter 2 examined the various developments that preceded and informed Fayḍ’s views on hadith. My investigation focused on five figures whose ideas proved particularly influential in shaping the Safavid hadith discourse—al-Shahīd al-Thānī, al-Ḥārithī, Ḥasan al-‘Āmilī, al-Bahā’ī, and al-Astarābādī. A central issue discussed in this chapter pertained to the emergence of the Four Books as the most authoritative Imāmī hadith compilations and the contrasting justifications provided for establishing their privileged status. A particularly divisive issue at the time was whether or not the reports’ authenticity must be established only on the basis of their chains of transmission. While those referred to as the “modern” scholars advocated this position, others argued that “ancient” scholars would take pieces of evidence besides the transmission chains into consideration as a means of determining a report’s authenticity. Astarābādī and his followers, self-described as Akhbārīs, sought to revive the ancient verification method. They rejected the fourfold model and instead divided all reports into authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) and weak (*ḍa‘īf*).

No figure prior to Astarābādī designated authenticity to all the reports quoted in the Four Books. Even Bahā’ī, who among modern scholars is more sympathetic toward the ancient method, considers some of the reports contained in these four compendia to be unreliable. Within Ḥillī and ‘Āmilī scholars’ *sanad*-based authentication framework, it is a report’s chains of transmission, rather than the compilation within which it is found, that decides its reliability. Compilations attain their credibility from the reports quoted in them rather than vice versa; Astarābādī reverses this logic. In his

view, reports acquire their credibility from the compilations that transmit them. For him, *sanad*-analysis isolates the report from its wider context, which includes the compilation, the compiler, the pieces of evidence external to the transmission chain, and the community's collective assessment regarding these issues.

Chapters 3 and 4 investigated Fayḍ's compilation and hermeneutical projects in *al-Wāfi*. Completed a generation after Astarābādī's death, Fayḍ's approach to hadith authenticity bears the characteristics of the Akhbārī movement. Similar to Astarābādī, he rejects the fourfold division and upholds ancient scholars' twofold criterion. *Al-Wāfi* aims to be a cohesive hadith compilation. Although a great majority of Fayḍ's compendium is gathered from the Four Books, *al-Wāfi* also contains statements from other sources such as *al-Maḥāsin*, *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt*, *Uyūn akhbār al-Riḍā*, and *Nahj al-balāgha* as well as the sola-hadith Qur'an commentaries of al-Qummī, al-Kūfī, and al-ʿAyyāshī. Fayḍ incorporates these non-Four Books sources in his hadith commentary. In the preface to *al-Wāfi*, he writes that his purpose for using works other than the Four Book stems from the need to interpret (*ta'wīl*) some of the reports by the means of other relevant reports. This is done in order to create concord between the contradictory statements attributed to the Imams. In his commentary, in addition to linguistic explanations, Fayḍ also refers to the works of prominent theologians, philosophers, and mystics including Ghazālī, Suhrawardī, and Ibn ʿArabī. At times, he also cites relevant poems or parables to elucidate a report. His efforts are directed by the conviction that the Imams' extant reports are the foundation for any proper understanding of the Qur'an. Hence, in his view, the chief duty of Shi'i exegetes is to properly understand the Imams' reports since these reports, similar to the Qur'an, are not self-explanatory.

In compiling *al-Wāfi*, Fayḍ is not simply gathering a more polished version of the Four Books. His attempt is to compile a single and unified work. His editorial interventions – such as omitting repetitive reports quoted in the Four Books, *isnād* reconstruction, orthographic revisions of words, and new structural arrangements – are meant not merely as cosmetic improvements on the Four Books but rather as a way of reducing the Four Books into One Book in both style and content. Fayḍ contextualizes the reports within his own commentary, which also includes reports not found in the Four Books. This in turn places the Four Books within the larger spectrum of Shi'i hadith corpus. In his endeavor to compose a cohesive and unified compendium, Fayḍ eliminates the three authorial voices of the Four Books by removing the four prefaces that contextualize each compiler's book. In this way, *al-Wāfi* is read as speaking with a single voice, and the compendium becomes more self-consistent. In removing the prefaces and adding his own commentary, the Four Books are transformed into One Book composed by one compiler. In addition to removing the prefaces and providing commentary, Fayḍ rearranges the hadiths contained in the Four Books according to a new design, which further removes them from their original context in each of the Four Books.

More than any other hadith scholar of his period, Fayḍ was acutely aware that scriptural authentication is intertwined with scriptural interpretation. This issue comes to the fore in his treatment of contradictory reports and his assertion that besides the chains of transmission, examination of the reports' content also provides a valid means of determining their authenticity. This position is accompanied with Fayḍ's view that in the face of reason's inability to discover the reports' intended meanings, the only sure means of attaining correct understanding is through God's assistance. He argues that a report's authenticity and meaning are attained through reflecting on it with the "light

of God". In his view, only those endowed with a holy faculty (*quwwa qudsiyya*) and assisted with the Holy Spirit gain insight (*baṣīra*) of the reports' meanings and hence are able to distinguish the authentic from the inauthentic reports. Hence, for Fayḍ, hadith authentication is intertwined with hadith interpretation. It is due to this view that his elevation of the Four Books as the "central" hadith sources does not lead him to depreciate the extant reports quoted in sources besides the Four Books. In contrast, however, to other Akhbārī scholars such as al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, this is not because Fayḍ considers the non-Four-Books materials to be reliable merely because of any "historical" evidence (e.g., chains of transmission, prevalent use, consensus). Rather, for Fayḍ, it is insight into the reports' meanings that might render such materials authentic. In light of this position, does Fayḍ consider *al-Wāfī* to be a "canon" of Shiʿi hadith?

A scriptural "source" becomes a "canon" once it begins to receive or command a prevalent acknowledgment of its indispensable status in the religiosity of its audience. The process by which this transformation from source to canon occurs is multi-layered and involves socio-political as well as intellectual factors. Canons are formed within a multifaceted process. But once formed, they are difficult to alter. Difficult, however, does not mean impossible. The Safavid hadith discourse and Fayḍ's contributions to it are illustrations of the canons' boundaries and fluidities. In the context of Shiʿi intellectual history, the closest Shiʿi scholars have come to consider certain sources as canonical, is the authority they have designated to the Four Books. Since their completion, these four compendia have continued to pervade Shiʿi scholarship. This is evident in the references to and quotations from the Four Books found in the doctrinal and legal writings from the fourth/eleventh century onward. But more significant than references to each of these four compilations is the collective reference to them as the Four Books. As discussed in Chapter 2, it is only in the sixteenth century that the Four Books, as a collective corpus, emerge as the most authoritative hadith sources.

The pivot to hadith canonisation took a sharp turn in Astarābādī who began to uphold the Four Books not just as important or central but rather as authentic and indispensable sources. Fayḍ, agreeing with Astarābādī, designates a supreme authority to hadith over the other sources of knowledge such as reason and consensus. But he departs from Astarābādī in emphasizing the reports' meanings as a means of verifying their authenticity. Furthermore, his approach to interpreting the reports' meanings transcends philological considerations and rational analysis. This view contrasts with Astarābādī who considered the reports' meanings to be evident to anyone with sufficient knowledge of Arabic.

For Fayḍ, in contrast to Astarābādī and many of his followers, the Four Books are "central" rather than "canonical". While the Imams' extant reports are necessary for finding guidance, they are not sufficient; guidance is found through the reports and not in them. By the time Fayḍ begins *al-Wāfī*, there had emerged two competing theories of hadith authenticity: those who maintain a report's authenticity must only be established through its chains of transmission and those who rejecting this view upheld other supporting pieces of evidence such as a report's widespread use as a valid means of authentication. While Fayḍ adhered to the latter position, his emphasis on the reports' meanings added an extra layer of complexity. In Fayḍ's scriptural hermeneutics, the "silent" Qur'an "speaks" through the Imams; during the Imams' absence, their silent reports speak to those who reflect on them with the light of God and discover their meanings by the aid of the Holy Spirit. Within this paradigm, the Imams' reports receive their authority through their meanings rather than from supporting historical evidence.

Considering that in Fayḍ's view the reports do not have fixed meanings, there is no fixed canon of hadith.

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