

Ibn Qutayba's response to the Mu'tazilite

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Abstract: The aim of this article will be to provide specific details of how the Mu'tazilites differed and what arguments they used against the *Ahl al-Ḥadīth* when they based their legal rulings from the Ḥadīth. Specific reference will be given to the work of Ibn Qutayba's *Ta'wīl Mukhtalif al- Ḥadīth*, whose work comprises of a theological treatise in defence of the Prophetic Ḥadīth, which also attempts to find acceptable interpretations for Ḥadīth that the Mu'tazilites considered problematic. Special focus will be drawn to the legal Ḥadīth, which the Mu'tazilites considered unacceptable and therefore rejected them because they did not conform to their rationale.

Keywords: Ḥadīth, Ahl al-Ḥadīth, Mu'tazilite, Mutawātir, Khabar al-Wāḥid

İbn Kuteybe'nin Mutezile'ye cevabı

Öz: Makale, Mu'tezile'nin Ehli Hadis'ten nasıl farklılaştığını ve hadiste ne tür bir metodoloji takip ettiğini ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Makalede özellikle hadis müdâfaasında önemi haiz olan ve Mutezile'nin problemleri gördüğü hadislerle dair kabul edilebilir yorumlar içeren İbn Kuteybe'nin *Tevīl Muhtelifü'l-hadis* isimli kitabı bağlamında konu ele alınmaktadır. Makalede ayrıca Mutezile'nin akla uygun olmadığı gerekçeyle kabul etmediği ahkâmı ilgili hadislerin analizine özellikle yoğunlaşılmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hadis, Ehli Hadis, Mutezile, Mütevatir, Haber-i Vâhid.

Introduction

The foundation of the Mu'tazilites is the notion that God and everything in the world can be perceived through the intellect, which God creates in Man. This perception means that the knowledge that God exists with his many attributes and qualities can be known through the intellect.¹ Contrary to the view of the *Ahl al-Ḥadīth*, one can know God without the support of Scripture and even without God sending Prophets. In addition, according to the Mu'tazilites reason has an overwhelming power over revelation. Since reason is the governing principle of the world, the contradiction between revelation and reason must be solved according to reason.²

According to the Mu'tazilite, humans may obtain knowledge about God and the Universe through three methods:

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1 Huseyin Hansu, 'Notes on the term Mutawātir and its reception in Hadith Criticism', *Islamic Law and Society* 16, (2009), 385

2 Benyamin, Abrahamov, *Islamic Theology: Tradionalism and Rationalism*, 1998, (Edinburgh University Press) 33

1. Sense perception
2. Transmitted report
3. Reason

With regard the transmitted report i.e. a report about the past; they are, generally speaking, accepted as the most important source of religious knowledge by the Mu'tazilite. If they were not acceptable as a source of knowledge, then it would be necessary to reject knowledge that is both derived from the Prophets and transmitted from them. Ultimately, the senses are the sources of knowledge about the physical world and reports are the source of knowledge of the past. To understand the metaphysical universe, one must have recourse to either rational inference or the report of the Prophet. The Mu'tazilite considered these two sources as important. However, the difference between these sources, in the view of the Mu'tazilite, is that sense perception and reason provide direct knowledge and transmitted reports only indirect knowledge because of an intermediary who stands in between the report and the object. The recipient acquires this knowledge through the intermediary (if the intermediary transmits it to him successfully) and hence the intermediary also has to be a reliable reporter.³ However, the different scholars of theology developed slightly different avenues to validate the Ḥadīth, hence the Mu'tazilite would come to understand Ḥadīth somewhat differently than the Asharites, Maturidites and the *Ahl al-Ḥadīth*.

If this is the foundation of the Mu'tazilite then what is their position on Ḥadīth, especially on Ḥadīth which do not conform to the rational mind. It will suffice to mention here that the Mu'tazilite and their opponents, the *Ahl al-Ḥadīth*, had created their own methodology; the Mu'tazilite glorified reason to determine the proper interpretations of the sources of revelation and the *Ahl al-Ḥadīth* sacralised the *isnād* as the only means to guarantee a pure understanding of Islam and rise above the heresies of the human mind. For the Mu'tazilites, the Qur'ān and human reason were the main tools for content criticism. As the Qur'ān, being the literal word of God, laid down the legal and dogmatic principles, it provided the criteria for determining the contours of the faith and its community. The Mu'tazilites main justification for the use of the Qur'ān as a criterion in their debates with the *Ahl al-Ḥadīth* was a report in which the Prophet states: "When a Ḥadīth comes to you from me, compare it to the Book of God and if it agrees with it then accept it, and if it differs with it, leave it."⁴

For the Mu'tazilites the Qur'ān and human reason were the main criteria to evaluate the Ḥadīth of the Prophet. This is because the Qur'ān has been transmitted through *Mutawātir* reports and the Ḥadīth were not; as they are also transmitted through *Āḥād* reports. As Van Ess asserts that for the Mu'tazilites 'in the field of Ḥadīth the problem of authority arose as a problem of transmission'⁵ and hence this will now take us further to discuss the terms *Mutawātir* and *Khabar al-Wāḥid* and the Mu'tazilites position on Ḥadīth.

3 Richard C. Martin, Mark R. Woodward and Dwi S. Atmaja, *Defenders of Reason in Islam: Mu'tazilism from Medieval school to Modern Symbol*, 1977, (Oxford:Oneworld) 15

4 Sulaymān b. Aḥmad al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu'jam al-Kabīr*, V12, (Maktaba Ibn Taymiyya) 233, Cf: Jonathan Brown, 'How do we know Hadith Critics did Matn Criticism', in Shah, ed. *The Hadith: Critical Concepts in Islamic Studies*, V.3, (Routledge 2010) 190-191

5 Joseph Van Ess, *L'autorité de la tradition prophétique dans la théologie mu'tazilite*, in Makdisi, Sourdel and Sourdel-Thomine, eds. *La notion d'autorité au Moyen Age Islam, Byzance, Occident*, 1978, (Paris:Presses Universitaires de France) 211

The Ḥadīth of the Prophet Muḥammad regarding its category of transmission falls into two categories:

1. *Mutawātir*
2. *Khabar al-Wāḥid*

The term *Mutawātir*, which is used in different sciences of legal methodology, theology and in Ḥadīth criticism conveys two distinct meanings. In legal methodology and theology it refers to the epistemological value and certainty of a report, but in Ḥadīth criticism it refers to a report that is well known and widespread, but which does not necessarily yield certain knowledge. Although some Ḥadīth scholars, beginning in the 9th/15th Century, applied the term in the first sense, this usage did not become widespread.⁶ The term itself was not fully fledged especially in the time of al-Rāmahurmuzī (d.360AH/970CE) and during the time of al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī (d.405AH/1014CE) as there is no mention of this in their works. It was from the seventh/thirteenth century onwards that the term began to be applied on a wide scale, albeit loosely. As from the time of Ibn Ṣalāḥ al-Shahrazūrī (d.643AH/1245CE), the concept was studied in more detail and the definition as to what precisely the word stood for was refined by a subdivision, in which *tawātur lafẓī*, i.e. the verbatim *Mutawātir* transmission of a text, became distinguished from *tawātur ma'nawī*, i.e. transmission in respect of only the gist or one salient feature of a given text. It was generally, admitted that the number of reports transmitted *ma'nawiyyan* vastly outnumbered those transmitted *lafẓiyyan*.⁷ Amīdī (d.630AH/1233CE) argues that the *tawātur* originated as an epistemological concept in theology during the 2nd/8th century and was applied to jurisprudence already in that and the following century. Furthermore, this concept in Ḥadīth criticism was used in late medieval works, which led to some problems and confusion.⁸ It may be argued here that the early Ḥadīth experts did not use these two terms because most if not all the Ḥadīth that have a proper chain of transmission are *āḥād* reports and for this reason the early Ḥadīth experts did not use these two classifications.

The term *Mutawātir* is a report which yields necessary knowledge. For example, if reports are established as a reliable source of knowledge, the truthfulness of a prophet's message follows by necessity, because the truthfulness of a prophet's mission is established by concomitant miracles. However, the certainty of the knowledge provided by miracles is valid only for those of the Prophet's contemporaries who witnessed them directly. This knowledge was subsequently transmitted through reports that termed either *khabar Mutawātir* or *khabar āḥād*. *Mutawātir* reports provide necessary knowledge and they must be believed.⁹ As an example, according to Muslim theologians, the authenticity of the Qur'ān is established through *Mutawātir* reports and thus no one can deny this fact. Abū al-Husayn al-Baṣrī (d.436AH/1044CE) argues that according to some scholars, knowledge obtained through *Mutawātir* reports is acquired (*muktasab*), because in order to understand whether something is *Mutawātir* or not, one must begin from some premise, and this premise causes such a person not to consider it as immediate knowledge, since the certainty of the *Qur'ān*,

6 Huseyin Hansu, 'Notes on the term *Mutawātir* and its reception in *Hadith Criticism*', *Islamic Law and Society* 16, (2009) 383-384

7 Juynboll, '(Re) Appraisal of some technical terms in *Hadith sciences*', *Islamic Law & Society*, 8:3 (2001), 303-49

8 'Ali b. Abu 'Ali Al-Amīdī, *Al-Iḥkām fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām*, 2005, (Beirut, Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya) 258

9 Ibid.

Sunna and *Ijmā'* are established, hence, these scholars say that knowledge derived from these sources is also acquired knowledge.¹⁰

With regards to the term *khobar*, it is a report that bears the possibility of being either true or false, because the possibility of falsehood exists.¹¹ Theologians treat reports as a primary source of knowledge about revelation and the Prophet because they are the only means by which one can obtain knowledge of situations that are outside one's individual experience. Knowledge or awareness of the past is possible only through reports. Therefore, reports are considered the most important source of knowledge in all religious communities.¹² As mentioned earlier, these reports were transmitted through either *khobar Mutawātir* reports or *khobar āḥād* reports. They are *āḥād* because they do not fulfil the conditions of *Mutawātir*, hence these reports fall short of providing certain knowledge and, having a merely probable character, they cannot be the basis of conviction.¹³

The Mu'tazilite's position regarding *Mutawātir* and *Āḥād*

Āmidī (d.630AH/1233CE) states that the majority of the jurists and theologians agree that the knowledge acquired from a *Mutawātir* report is of incontrovertible certainty. With regards to *Āḥād* then there is a dispute amongst the theologians. Āmidī states that a group of theologians agree that knowledge is acquired from this report. However, the dispute is whether this knowledge is of certainty or speculation. The *Ahl al-Ḥadīth*, the *Zāhirite* and *Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal* (d.241AH/855CE), according to one of his narrations, maintain that *Āḥād* reports do prove the knowledge of certainty.¹⁴ With regards to *Mutawātir*, *Abū al-Husayn al-Baṣrī* (d.436AH/1044CE) argues that it is speculative. However, the position of *'Abd al-Jabbār* (d.415AH/1025CE) in general regarding the *Sunna* as a whole is that the *Sunna* is the Prophet's order, which must be carried out perpetually, or it is his act, which must be followed continuously. The definition relates to the statement or acts of the Prophet, which is proved or established from him. Now, a tradition which is based on the authority of a single transmitter (*Khobar al-Wāḥid*) or single transmitters (*Āḥād*) and which fulfils all the criteria and conditions of trustworthiness is called *Sunna* according to ordinary usage.¹⁵ *'Abd al-Jabbār* opposes the consideration of these traditions as the true *Sunna* because 'we are not safe from being liars concerning this'. He argues that such traditions do not convey certainty, therefore it is forbidden from the point of view of reason to say definitely: 'The Prophet has said it'.¹⁶ Ultimately, for *'Abd al-Jabbār* the majority of traditions are of uncertain source, due to rational considerations. In evidence, to support his position and attitude towards traditions, he cites mainly statements of *Shu'ba b. al-Ḥajjāj* (d.160AH/776CE), whom he names 'Commander of the faithful concerning the tradition' which espouse the danger of

10 Abu al-Husayn al-Basri, *Al-Mu'tamad fi Uṣūl al-fiqh*, 2010, V.2, (Beirut, Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya) 80

11 Huseyin Hansu, 'Notes on the term *Mutawātir* and its reception in *Hadith Criticism*', *Islamic Law and Society* 16, (2009) 387

12 Ibid: 384

13 Ibid. Cf: Usman Ghani, *The concept of Sunna in Mu'tazilite thought*, in Duderija, ed. *The Sunna and its Status in Islamic Law: The search for a sound Ḥadīth*, 2015, (Palgrave Macmillan) 59-74

14 'Ali b. Abu 'Ali al-Amidi, *Al-Iḥkām fi Uṣūl al-Aḥkām*, 2005, (Beirut, Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya) 258

15 Benyamin Abrahamov, *Islamic Theology: Traditionalism and Rationalism*, 1998, (Edinburgh University Press) 45

16 Ibid:45

dealing with traditions and the notion that a great many are not genuine. He further, argues that if there were no proof of the obligation to carry out such acts according to this type of traditions, there would be no benefit in transmitting them. For according to the Prophet, the criterion for judging the authenticity of traditions is their agreement with the contents of the *Qur'ān* and the *Sunna*, which are known. This criterion is relevant to deal with traditions which deal with practice, but there is no obligation to accept *Khabar al-Wāḥid*, which deals with theological issues. He goes further onto censuring the *Ahl al-Ḥadīth* not because of the essence of the tradition, but rather because of their wrong method and their limited understanding. To summarise, 'Abd al-Jabbār does not oppose *Khabar al-Wāḥid* by virtue of itself, but because many traditions of this kind are spurious because their transmitters cannot be relied upon due to their negligence and lack of understanding, therefore, they also have an impact on matters and issues related to Islamic Law.¹⁷

Ibn Qutayba's *Ta'wīl Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīth*

This is a treatise written in response to a letter directed to Ibn Qutayba according to whom the Mu'tazilite particularly accused the *Ahl al-Ḥadīth* of lying and expressing contradictory statements so that divisions arose and the Muslim community each claimed the truth on the basis of Ḥadīth. He describes how the Mu'tazilites mock the *Ahl al-Ḥadīth* for heaping accolades on one another for their knowledge of different narrations of Ḥadīth without understanding the basic meaning or even the grammar. His work comprises a theological treatise in defence of the Ḥadīth alongside attempting to find acceptable interpretations for Ḥadīth that the Mu'tazilites consider problematic.¹⁸ In his *Ta'wīl*, Ibn Qutayba find himself rebutting four general criticisms of Ḥadīth by the Mu'tazilites:

1. A Ḥadīth contradicts the Qur'ān
2. It contradicts other established Ḥadīth
3. It is contradicted by rational investigation (*al-naẓar*), which usually involves the Ḥadīth having some unacceptable legal or dogmatic implications
4. It is contradicted by rational proof (*ḥujjat al-'aql*), which generally means it clashes with some notion of what is acceptable or possible according to the precepts of reason or the basic tenets of the Muslim rationalist worldview.¹⁹

As an example, there are traditions which oppose speculation and rational arguments, such as the Prophet's statement that he is more entitled to be sceptical than Ibrāhīm concerning God's actions. The assumption which lies at the basis of the argument is Muḥammad's perfection, which could not be impaired by doubts. Furthermore, some traditions do not coincide with human being's experience. According to a tradition, the Prophet said that no human being would remain on earth in the year 100AH. Now the Mu'tazilite argue and maintain that we are in 300AH and the world is more populated than before.²⁰

¹⁷ Ibid: 45

¹⁸ Jonathan Brown, 'How do we know Hadith Critics did Matn Criticism', in Shah, ed. *The Hadith: Critical Concepts in Islamic Studies*, V.3 (Routledge 2010) 190-191

¹⁹ Gerard Lecomte, *Le Traite des divergences du Hadit d'Ibn Qutayba*, 1962 (Institute Francais De Demas) 25-26

²⁰ 'Abd Allah b. Muslim b. Qutayba, *Ta'wīl Mukhtalif al-Hadīth*, 2006, (Beirut, Al-Maktaba al-Islami) 211

In similar vein, a Ḥadīth put forward by the Muʿtazilite which they argue as “whose beginning,” according to them, “is spoiled by its end” (*yufsidu awwalahu akhiruhu*), in other words, the Ḥadīth is allegedly incoherent and has severe legal implications. The Ḥadīth in question states that the Prophet said:

“If one of you awakes from sleep, then he should not plunge his hand into the water-container until he washes it three times (*ḥattā yaghsilahā thalāthan*)-after all, he doesn’t know where his hand has spent the night.”²¹

The Muʿtazilite claim that the last phrase (he doesn’t know where his hand has spent the night) is:

- a) Patently absurd, since everyone knows where their hand has been during the night
- b) Legally inapposite, since even if one touches one’s genitalia while awake, that does not vitiate one’s previous ablutions
- c) Inconsistent with a general precept of the law that involuntary acts (e.g., those committed while sleeping) have no adverse legal consequences for the person who commits them.

However, in response, Ibn Qutayba disputes point **b** and in the course of that discussion, he says the following: ‘So if the ablutions for touching the genitalia are that one wash the hands, then it is clear that God’s Messenger commanded the person waking up from sleep to wash his hand before he puts it into the water- container, because that person does not know where his hand has spent during the night. Perhaps, he says, during his sleep he touched his genitalia or his anus with it, and it cannot be certain that a drop of urine or the remnants of semen did not get on his hand if he had sexual intercourse before falling asleep. So if he put it into the water-container before washing it, he would defile the water and spoil it. He singled out the sleeping person for this because the sleeping person’s hand might fall on these places without him being aware of it.’²²

Another example is the Ḥadīth in which the Prophet Muḥammad insists that his wives conceal themselves completely from a blind male visitor. When his wives complain that the man is blind, Muḥammad replies that the issue is that his wives should not look at the man. The Muʿtazilite allege that the Qur’ān and consensus (*ijmā’*) invalidate the Ḥadīth. Consensus, they argue, allows that women may lawfully look at men so long as the women are appropriately covered. What is more, the Qur’ān chapter 24:31 provides that women need not cover those of their charms (*zinā*) which in the ordinary course are open to view (*zāhara*). Ibn Qutayba responds that Muḥammad’s wives were implicitly ordered to conceal themselves from all male visitors in the Qur’ān chapter 33:53 which mentions this point. The rule in the Ḥadīth applies, then, to Muḥammad’s wives in particular: This verse is specific for the wives of God’s Messenger in particular, just as they were singled out in regard to it being unlawful for any Muslim to marry them. Ibn Qutayba goes on to say, however, that the rule applies mostly in their dwellings, not when they must perform public religious obligations such as the pilgrimage, or have other pressing reasons to go out in public.²³

21 Ibid:262

22 Ibid:262

23 Ibid

Another example where the Ḥadīth contradict each other is the example where the Ḥadīth states that water cannot be defiled by anything and the other that water in an amount greater than or equal to two pitchers full (*idhā balagha...qullatayn*) cannot be defiled. The Mu'tazilites say that the negative implication of the second Ḥadīth (small amounts of water can be defiled) contradicts the general import of the first (no matter how small the amount, water cannot be defiled by anything). Ibn Qutayba replies to his opponents that the first Ḥadīth refers to water in the sense of large amounts of water, which usage, in turn, is the more usual. He further argues that the second Ḥadīth does not contradict the first one. Rather, God's Messenger merely said that water cannot be defiled by anything in the most usual case and for the most part, since what is most usual for wells and pools is that they have a large amount of water. Accordingly, he uttered the phrase in a way that was of restricted import (*fa akhrajā al-kalām makhraj al-khuṣūṣ*). This is just like when one says, "Nothing can repel the flood-stream" and, in the same vein, "A wall couldn't hold the flood-stream back." One intends thereby, a large amount of it, not a little. It is also like saying, "Nothing can withstand fire." One does not intend thereby the flame in a lantern, which can be extinguished by blowing, and not sparks either. Rather, one intends the fire in a conflagration. Then, after saying that in the first Ḥadīth, in the second Ḥadīth he used the term "two pitchers full" to distinguish the amount of water that is subject to defilement from a large amount of water that cannot be defiled by anything.²⁴

Another example where the Ḥadīth are in conflict with the Qur'ān is regarding Adultery. The Mu'tazilite claim that a Ḥadīth in which Muḥammad announces his intention to impose the punishments of stoning and exile 'on the basis of God's Book' contradicts the Qur'ān, which contains no mention of stoning or exile. Ibn Qutayba offers an ad hoc argument to the effect that 'God's Book in this instance refers not to the Qur'ān, but rather to God's ruling (*ḥukm*) or imposition of an obligation (*farḍ*). As evidence, he cites some further verses of the Qur'ān that allegedly use cognates from the root *kataba* in this way, and a verse of poetry, as proof of his claim. The Ḥadīth in question is well known and was the subject of much discussion in early legal texts. Shāfi'ī offers a very complex analysis of this same problem in the *al-Risāla*, mostly under the rubric of abrogation.²⁵ Subsequently, the Mu'tazilite also allegedly argue that the Ḥadīth in which Muḥammad stoned an adulterer conflicts with the verse in chapter 4 verse 25, which provides that the punishment for adultery is flogging. The dispute centres around, at least in part, on what the word *muḥṣanāt* means in the verse in question. The opponents claim that it must mean female slaves (*Imā*). Ibn Qutayba argues that it means 'free virgin women' and cites the beginning of the same verse, in which as he argues, uses *muḥṣanāt* in that sense. Ibn Qutayba also expressly labels his interpretation a *Ta'wīl*.²⁶

There are further traditions from the Prophet reported by Abū Hurayra, which contradict other reports from other companions. I will put them in each category and discuss the implications.

24 Ibid

25 Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī, *Al-Risāla*, 2003 (Beirut, Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya) 123

26 'Abd Allah b. Muslim b. Qutayba, *Ta'wīl Mukhtalif al-Hadīth*, 2006 (Beirut, Al-Maktaba al-Islami) 262

An example of a Ḥadīth which contradicts other established Ḥadīth:

Abū Hurayra reports that the Prophet said: *‘When the shoe lace of any one of you is broken, he should not walk in the second one until he has got it repaired.’*²⁷

The Ḥadīth which contradicts this report is narrated from ‘Āisha that sometimes the Prophet’s shoelace would break and he would walk with one shoe until he would fix the other.²⁸

The Mu‘tazilite maintain that latter report contradicts the former. Ibn Qutayba argues that there is no contradiction in the reports because when a person’s shoelace breaks or snaps then he can either hold on to it and walk in one shoe until he finds another lace or he can take one step at a time until he rectifies his other shoe.²⁹ However, this is an explanation from Ibn Qutayba and his attempt here is not to reject either report but he has tried to harmonise and reconcile the two reports.

Another example where Ḥadīth was contradicted by rational investigation (*al-nazar*), which usually involves the Ḥadīth having some unacceptable legal or dogmatic implications, is the Prophet’s statement that he is more entitled to be sceptical than Ibrāhīm concerning God’s actions. The assumption which lies at the basis of the argument is Muḥammad’s perfection, which could not be impaired by doubts. The opponents also contended that this is also disparagement of Ibrahīm’s personality as a prophet. Ibn Qutayba argues that this was the humility and humbleness of the Prophet Muḥammad and there is no sign of him undermining the personality of Ibrāhīm.³⁰

More specifically, Ibrāhīm al-Nazzām (d.221AH/836CE) has criticised Abū Hurayra for narrating and accuses him of fabricating Ḥadīth. The first Ḥadīth narrated by Abū Hurayra in Bukhārī that the Prophet Muḥammad said:

*‘None of you should walk, wearing one shoe only; he should either put on both shoes or put on no shoes whatsoever.’*³¹

Nazzām’s argument is that when ‘Āisha heard this report she said: ‘I will definitely oppose Abū Hurayra.’ Ibn Qutayba does not provide a strong argument here in defence of Abū Hurayra besides arguing that he stayed with the Prophet for more than three years and narrated more from him than other companions. He also concedes however, that ‘Umar and ‘Āisha did criticize him for his narrations.³²

The second Ḥadīth which is criticized by ‘Āisha in which Abū Hurayra reports from the Prophet Muḥammad who said:

*‘A woman, an ass and a dog disrupt the prayer, but something like the back of a saddle guards against that.’*³³

27 Muslim b. Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1998 (1st Edition, Darussalam, Riyadh) 938

28 Muḥammad b. ‘Isā al-Tirmidhī, *Jāmi‘*, 1999 (1st Edition, Darussalam, Riyadh) 421

29 ‘Abd Allah b. Muslim b. Qutayba, *Ta’wil Mukhtalif al-Hadith*, 2006, (Beirut, Al-Maktaba al-Islami) 192-194

30 Ibid:207

31 Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1999, (2nd Edition, Darussalam, Riyadh) 1031

32 ‘Abd Allah b. Muslim b. Qutayba, *Ta’wil Mukhtalif al-Hadith*, 2006, (Beirut, Al-Maktaba al-Islami) 114

33 Muslim b. Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1998, (1st Edition, Darussalam, Riyadh) 209

Nazzām's argument is that 'Āisha reported: *'The Prophet used to pray at night while I lay between him and the Qibla.'*³⁴

Ibn Qutayba's argument is very succinct as mentioned before and he does not attempt to rebut this further argument of the opponents. However, from the opponent's perspective there are another five reports from 'Āisha which contradict Abū Hurayra's report. They are as 'Āisha reports:

The Messenger of Allah said his whole prayer (*Tahajjud* prayer) during the night while I lay between him and the Qibla. When he intended to say *Witr* (prayer) he awakened me and I too said *witr* (prayer).³⁵ 'Urwa b. Zubayr reported: 'Āisha asked: What disrupts the prayer? We said: The woman and the ass. Upon this she remarked: Is the woman an ugly animal? I lay in front of the Messenger of Allah like the bier of a corpse and he performed prayer.³⁶

1. Masrūq reported that it was mentioned before 'Āisha that prayer is invalidated (in case of passing) of a dog, an ass and a woman (before the worshipper, when he is not screened). Upon this 'Āisha said: You likened us to the asses and the dogs. By Allah I saw the Messenger of Allah saying prayer while I lay on the bedstead between him and the Qibla. When I felt the need, I did not like to move to the front (of the Prophet) and perturb the Messenger of Allah and quietly moved out from under its legs.³⁷
2. Aswad reported that 'Āisha said: You have made us equal to the dogs and the asses, whereas I lay on the bedstead and the Messenger of Allah came there and stood in the middle of the bedstead and said prayer. I did not like to take off the quilt from me (in that state), so I moved away quietly from the front legs of the bedstead and thus came out of the quilt.³⁸
3. 'Āisha reported: I was sleeping in front of the Messenger of Allah with my legs between him and the Qibla. When he prostrated he nipped me and I drew up my legs, and when he stood up, I stretched them out. She said: At that time there were no lamps in the houses.³⁹

The legal and ritual implications of these contradictory reports are found in Tirmidhī's (d.279AH/892CE) *Jāmi'*, where he has reported both traditions; one which does not nullify the prayer and the other which does nullify it. Tirmidhī states that the majority of the Companions and the Successors held the view that nothing nullifies the prayer and that a minority held the view that an ass, woman and a black dog nullify the prayer. He further mentions the stance of Aḥmad (d.241AH/855CE) regarding this issue as saying, 'I do not doubt that the black dog nullifies the prayer but with regards the ass and the woman I am doubtful.' To reinforce Aḥmad's view, Tirmidhī states Iṣḥāq b. Rāhwayh's (d.238AH/853CE) stance which is that nothing nullifies the prayer except the black dog.⁴⁰

34 Ibid:938

35 Ibid

36 Ibid:209

37 Ibid

38 Ibid

39 Ibid

40 Muḥammad b. 'Isā al-Tirmidhī, *Jāmi'*, 1999, (1st Edition, Darussalam , Riyadh) 92

The next argument of Nazzām against Abū Hurayra is when ‘Alī was informed that Abū Hurayra initiates from the right hand when he dresses or performs ablution, ‘Alī asked for water and started to wash with the left hand and said: ‘I will definitely oppose Abū Hurayra.’⁴¹

Again Ibn Qutayba does not respond and challenge this argument but Hilālī in his footnote commentary of this statement argues that this is falsely attributed to ‘Alī because this is a matter which is agreed upon by the Companions and successors to start from the right.⁴²

The final argument of Nazzām is the Ḥadīth which states, ‘whoever wakes up in the morning in the state of major ritual impurity, then there is no fasting for him.’⁴³

The whole incident is recorded from Abū Bakr b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān who said, ‘I heard Abū Hurayra mentioning one of his statements ‘whoever wakes up in the morning in the state of major defilement, then there is no fasting for him.’ I mentioned this to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Ḥārith, who then mentioned this to his father, who then denied this report. So ‘Abd al-Raḥmān and I went to ‘Āisha and Umm Salama, and asked ‘Āisha about this statement and she replied, ‘The Prophet would wake up in the morning in the state of major defilement and he would still be in the state of fasting’. After hearing this from ‘Āisha, we went to Marwān b. al-Ḥakam and mentioned the whole incident. Marwān then advised us to approach Abū Hurayra and see how he responded. So we approached Abū Hurayra and stated that which ‘Āisha and Umm Salama had said. Abū Hurayra responded by saying, ‘did both of them say that (‘Āisha and Umm Salama)? ‘Yes’, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān replied. Abū Hurayra then said, ‘They are most knowledgeable’. Then Abū Hurayra attributed his statement to another companion, Faḍl b. ‘Abbās. He said, ‘I heard this statement from Faḍl and not directly from the Prophet.’⁴⁴

Nazzām states after mentioning this report that Abū Hurayra used a deceased man as evidence and people had thought that he had heard the Ḥadīth from the Prophet but he had not.⁴⁵

The ritual and legal implications of this report is that it conflicts with the report of ‘Āisha and Umm Salama, which is the base of Nazzām’s argument. Their report states that the Prophet would be in a state of major impurity at the time of Fajr prayer but then he would have a bath and continue fasting. Tirmidhī states that this Ḥadīth is an authentic sound report and majority of the people of knowledge from the Companions and others act upon this. However, he further mentions that some successors had the opinion that if anyone is in state of major impurity then he will have to make up for the fast on another day. He then states that the first statement is the most correct.⁴⁶ Nawawī (d.676AH/1278CE) however, claims that there is consensus amongst the scholars on this issue and that the fast will not be nullified. With regards to the position of Abū Hurayra, it is mentioned that he retracted from his old opinion and accepted the new verdict as is evident in the report in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*.⁴⁷ In addition, also it can also be established that the reports of Abū Hurayra

41 ‘Abd Allah b. Muslim b. Qutayba, *Ta’wīl Mukhtalif al-Hadith*, 2006, (Beirut, Al-Maktaba al-Islami) 95

42 Ibid

43 Muslim b. Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1998, (1st Edition, Darussalam, Riyadh) 452

44 Ibid

45 ‘Abd Allah b. Muslim b. Qutayba, *Ta’wīl Mukhtalif al-Hadith*, 2006, (Beirut, Al-Maktaba al-Islami) 95

46 Muḥammad b. ‘Isā al-Tirmidhī, *Jāmi’*, 1999, (1st Edition, Darussalam, Riyadh) 196

47 Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Mubārakfūrī, *Tuḥfat al-Aḥwadhī sharḥ Jāmi’ al-Tirmidhī*, 2001, (Beirut, Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya) 412

do have implications in Islamic law because if these reports are used to establish anything theological and jurisprudential issues then Nazzām's argument here is that Abū Hurayra's reports are unreliable because of their conflicting nature.

Having gone through the aforementioned examples through the work of Ibn Qutayba, the Ḥadīth, which are considered by the *Ahl al-Ḥadīth* to be an important source of knowledge that equals the Qur'ān, and on which the *Ahl al-Ḥadīth* rely, is according to the Mu'tazilites, a device which cannot be relied on, because reason and man's experience contradict its teachings, its nature is self-contradictory, and it is refuted by both the Qur'ān and consensus. Ibn Qutayba provides a defence in his *Ta'wīl* on these traditions that conflict with the principles of the Mu'tazilites.

Mu'tazilite and legal matters

Consequently, the Mu'tazilite position against the *Ahl al-Ḥadīth* was weakened at the end of the Baghdad Inquisition in 234AH/848CE. It was only during the classical period of Mu'tazilism spanning from the late third/ninth century to the early fifth/eleventh century that the school had to increasingly compromise with its opponents.⁴⁸ It was during this period the Mu'tazilites began a serious study of Ḥadīth comparable to those of their transmission-based adversaries. As an example, Muḥammad b. 'Imrān al-Marzubānī (d.384AH/994CE) was a Mu'tazilite and Ḥadīth scholars considered him reliable as a transmitter; hence, he composed a book on the Ḥadīth of the Mu'tazila.⁴⁹ Al-Dhahabī (d.748AH/1348CE) in his *Tadhkirat al-Huffāz* has also mentioned Abū Sa'īd Ismā'īl b. 'Alī al-Sammān (d.434AH/1042CE) of Rayy as al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī's teacher in Ḥadīth who was theologically a Mu'tazilite and jurisprudentially a follower of the Ḥanafī school of law.⁵⁰

With regards to legal matters, the Basran and Baghdad schools of the Mu'tazilites dropped their requirements for authenticating legal Ḥadīth to two narrators at each link in the chain of narration (*isnād*). Abū 'Alī al-Jubbāi (d.303AH/915AH) explicitly demanded doubling transmission for *Āḥād* Ḥadīth to be admitted in legal matters.⁵¹ Abū al-Qāsim al-Balkhī (d.319AH/913CE) compromised similarly. In his *Qubūl al-Akhbār*, he still demanded massively transmitted Ḥadīth (*Mutawātir*) for theological doctrine and general legal indications. For deriving laws, he believed that one need only provide a report transmitted by two or three people or two or three upright people at each level of the chain of narration. He equates this with the requirements for testimony in court.⁵²

'Abd al-Jabbār (d.415AH/1025CE) career represents a major shift in the Mu'tazilite School with regards to the position of *āḥād* Ḥadīth in Mu'tazilite thought and their concept of Sunna. While previously Mu'tazilites had generally associated warily with the Ḥadīth Ḥanafī School of law, 'Abd al-Jabbār retained his loyalty to the School of al-Shāfi'ī after embracing Mu'tazilite doctrine. As an adherent to the school of al-Shāfi'ī he was obliged to

48 Josep Van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 2006, (Harvard University Press) 169-171

49 Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, *Tarikh Baghdad*, 2011 (Beirut, Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya) 353

50 Muhammad b. Ahmad Al-Dhahabi, *Tadhkirat al-Huffaz*, 1998, (Beirut, Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya) 213

51 Abu al-Husayn al-Basri, *Al-Mu'tamad fi Uṣūl al-fiqh*, 2010, V.2, (Beirut, Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya) 80

52 Abu al-Qasim al-Ka'bi al-Balkhi, *Qubūl al-Akhbār wa ma'rifat al-Rijāl*, No Publishing date, V.1, (Beirut, Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya) 11

accept rulings from *āḥād* Ḥadīth in matters of law even if they lacked the multiple narrations that earlier Mu'tazilites such as al-Balkhī and al-Jubbāī had required. In the theology of the Mu'tazilites, in his *Uṣūl al-Khamsa*, 'Abd al-Jabbār thus states that while discussing issues of dogma and theology requires massively transmitted reports, deriving law demands only one or two narrations.⁵³

By the second half of the fourth century AH/tenth century CE, the Mu'tazilites standard for authenticating Ḥadīth admissible in discussions of law thus generally demanded doubling transmission. Al-Ḥāzīmī (d.594AH/1179CE) in his *shurūṭ al-a'imma al-Khamsa* states that the Mu'tazila, were, in fact, the only group to require a certain number of transmitters for the acceptance of *āḥād* Ḥadīth. As mentioned earlier, Al-Balkhī had stated, they based this on the requirements for court testimony.⁵⁴

One of the later Mu'tazilite Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d.436AH/1044CE) like his teacher predecessor and teacher 'Abd al-Jabbār espoused Mu'tazilite theology while belonging to the Shāfi'ī School of law. His work on legal theory, *Kitāb al-Mu'tamad fī uṣūl al-Fiqh*, would become one of the most influential works in that genre and provide a framework for many later Shāfi'ī uṣūl books.⁵⁵ Abū al-Ḥusayn's position on the epistemological yield of *āḥād* Ḥadīth reflected the Shāfi'ī position, which was embraced as the orthodox position among almost all Sunnis i.e. that such Ḥadīth yield only probable knowledge (*ẓann*), but are nonetheless legally compelling (*mūjib al-amal*).⁵⁶ He further argues that the consensus of the umma, however, alters this completely. He explains that, 'as for the *āḥād* Ḥadīth, when the umma has come to consensus as to what it entails and deemed it authentic, then its authenticity is epistemologically certain.⁵⁷

Conclusion

To conclude, the Ḥadīth, which is considered by the *Ahl al-Ḥadīth* to be an important source of knowledge that equals the Qur'ān, and on which the *Ahl al-Ḥadīth* rely, is according to the Mu'tazilite, a device which cannot be relied on, because reason and man's experience contradict its teachings, its nature is self-contradictory, and it is refuted by both the Qur'ān and consensus. Ibn Qutayba provides a defence in his *Ta'wīl* on these traditions which conflict with the principles of the Mu'tazilites. As these Ḥadīth did not meet their criteria of acceptance and were also considered irrational, which is the main principle of the Mu'tazilite, they rejected them. Moreover, we have seen the reports of Abū Hurayra which have a similar nature of contradicting other reports hence, this is why his reports were targeted especially by Naẓẓām and hence this idea of rationalism and traditionalism promoted different groups within the Islamic community, which have a different outlook on the Ḥadīth tradition. It is difficult to argue that the Mu'tazilites as a school of thought

53 Richard C. Martin, Mark R. Woodward and Dwi S. Atmaja, *Defenders of Reason in Islam: Mu'tazilism from Medieval school to Modern Symbol*, 1977, (Oxford: Oneworld)108

54 Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Mūsā al-Ḥāzīmī, *Shurūṭ al-a'immat al-khamsa*, 1984, (Beirut, Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya) 61

55 Jonathan Brown, *The Canonization of Al-Bukhari & Muslim: The Formation and Function of the Sunni Hadith Canon*, 2007(Brill)178

56 Abu al-Husayn al-Basri, *Al-Mu'tamad fī Uṣūl al-fiqh*, 2010, V.2, (Beirut, Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya) 570

57 Ibid:550

were in complete agreement on the principles regarding the Sunna and especially the terms *Mutawātir* and *Āḥād*. Furthermore, some specific Ḥadīth may have been re-interpreted if found not in par with rationalism as this was the main criteria for the Mu'tazilites. Nevertheless, in legal issues the Ḥadīth seems to have been understood in par with the majority of scholars, especially since most of the Mu'tazilites followed Sunni schools of jurisprudence.

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