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## Introduction

\* بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ \*

\* اِقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ \* خَلَقَ الْاِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ

\* اِقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْاَكْرَمُ \* الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ \* عَلَّمَ الْاِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ

***In the Name of Allah, the All-compassionate, the All-merciful***

***Read in the name of thy Lord who created;***

***created humankind of congealed blood.***

***Read and thy Lord is the Most Magnanimous, who taught with the pen;***

***taught humans that which they knew not. [1](#)***

**[...and We gave him wisdom \[hikmah\] and resolving speech \[fasl al-khitab\]](#)**

I start with the gift of salutations and peace [salām] from Hasan Hasan-zādeh ḥmolī, a humble gleaner of the brilliance of the great.

I was asked to write up a biography of the glory-suffused life of the great exegete, divine philosopher, godly mystic, holy jurist, pride of Islam, exemplary lecturer, ḥyatullāh al-'Uzmī<sup>2</sup> 'Allamah<sup>3</sup> Ḥajj<sup>4</sup> Mīrzā<sup>5</sup> Sayyid<sup>6</sup> Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i.

Deserving accomplishment of such a serious matter is beyond the ability of my humble person, who neither knows eloquent Farsi nor coherent Arabic. What can a lowly person with a broken pen write of the eloquence of the Glorious?!

This being said, I did not deem it humane to decline, and thus with my poor resources I shall offer a slight notion of what is recorded in the oeuvre of my memories of the many years I spent in the heavenly presence of this holy saint and under the tuition of this godly instructor. Thus, without formal and intricate penmanship I shall leave the stylus to its simple comportment and proceed as the pen wills.

یک دهان خواهم به پهناي فلک تا بگویم وصف آن رشک ملک

ور دهان یابم چنین و صد چنین تنگ آید در بیان آن امین

این قدر هم گر نگویم ای سَد شیشه‌ی دل از ضعیفی بشکند

I need a mouth as great as the firmament,

to illustrate the details of this enviable king.

And, if I find such a mouth or even comportment greater,

it would fall short in illustrating this virtuous one.

O chronicle! If I say not this much,

the glass of my heart will break of fragility.

When speaking of great personages such as this, who exceed time and space and are eternal prodigies, we can delineate several features. The briefest of these is outlining the time, place, and method of their livelihood, whereas talking of such mundane matters is far from the dignity of these empyrean souls.

Thus, in this area we shall suffice with this elocution by sweet-tongued H<sup>af</sup>iz:

فلک به مردم نادان دهد زمام مراد تو اهل دانش و فضلی همین گناهت بس

To ignorant people the cosmos gives reign to desire.

You are a person of learning and grace; this is your only vice.

When I was afflicted with insufferable travails on occasion of my education, an erudite friend, with whom

I had the previous privilege of being roommates, visited me—God bless him—or rather heartened and healed me, and he gave me good tidings that, “O friend! May you savor these tribulations for, to the affidavit of biographies, receptive souls have become illustrious personages and paragons of the age by tolerance of suchlike hours of woe.” Indeed:

نه در غنچه کامل شود پیکر گل نه در بوته ظاهر شود صورت زر

زأحداث چرخ است تهذيب مردم چو از زخم خايسک تيزي خنجر

Neither is the soma of a flower completed in the bud,

nor does the visage of a meddler manifest in a shrub.

Of the travails of fate comes cultivation of souls,

as of the blows of the hammer, sharpness of blade.

## The works of every person are manifestations of his wealth

The best depictees of this master are his mysticism, his scientific works, and his lectures. The notables of the theological schools of Qum who lecture in Shā‘ah Islamic principles were his students. The glorious “Tafsīr al-Mūzīn”, pride of the world of knowledge, is one of his fine works and the masterpiece among his entire oeuvre.

In describing the Qur’an, the great Imām, Amīr al-Mu‘minīn ‘Alī (‘a)<sup>7</sup> declared:

کتاب الله ينطق بعضه ببعض، ويشهد بعضه على بعض.

***“Parts of the Book of Allah explain other parts and some parts substantiate other parts.”<sup>8</sup>***

Also, the Glorious Qur’an describes itself thus:

﴿...وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ تِبْيَانًا لِّكُلِّ شَيْءٍ﴾

***“And We have sent down upon you the Book explaining all things...”<sup>9</sup>***

﴿...اللَّهُ نَزَّلَ أَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيثِ كِتَابًا مُّتَشَابِهًا مَّثَانِيَ﴾

**“Allah has revealed the finest account, a book whose verses are similar to each other and repeated...” [10](#)**

﴿ وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَاكَ سَبْعًا مِّنَ الْمَثَانِي وَالْقُرْآنَ الْعَظِيمَ ﴾

**“And certainly we have given you the seven oft-repeated verses [11](#) and the grand Qur’an.” [12](#)**

The meaning of mathn (which is used in two of the preceding verses) is that which Amr al-Mu’min (‘a) referred to when he stated, “Parts of the Book of Allah explain other parts and some parts substantiate other parts.”

Mathn is plural of mathniyyah, which is the participial adjective object form of thiny which means doubling over; like a river that turns and folds back on itself. Such places are called mathn and due to such folding the part of the river before the turn and the part after the turn become parallel and ‘witness’ each other.

Qur’anic verses are also such; they bear witness to each other, i.e. they explain and elucidate one another. In the “Muntah al-Arb” dictionary it defines thiny as the bend in a river, valley, or mountain pass.

This is a summary of the fine research of this master in “Tafsir al-Mazin” regarding mathn. Accordingly, he has interpreted the Glorious Qur’an using the Glorious Qur’an itself. At the beginning of his exegesis he indicated this important point; summing-up he stated: it could not be possible that the Qur’an be the light and illuminator of all things but not illuminator of itself.

This exegesis is a utopian city of wisdom in which the best and greatest human and religious discourses, in the areas of intellect, tradition, mysticism, philosophy, divine wisdom, morality, society, economy, etc., are discussed.

Think not that this utterance of mine is in conflict with what this master stated in his prologue:

قد اجتنبنا فيها عن أن نركن إلى حجة نظرية فلسفية، أو إلى فرضية علمية، أو إلى مكاشفة عرفانية

“Verily I refrained from basing the rationales of this book upon philosophical and scientific theories or mystical revelation.”

We both spoke true, just as the luminary himself declared at the close of his prologue. Ponder upon it:

ثم وضعنا إبحاثاً مختلفة، فلسفية وعلمية وتاريخية واجتماعية وأخلاقية الخ

“I shall, however, make use of various philosophical, scientific, historical, social, ethical... discussions.”

## From the blessed tongue of the master himself

On a Tuesday morning, Sha‘bān 25, 1387 AH (November 28, 1967), I came into the presence of Master ‘Allāmah Tabṭabā‘ī. Discussion led to the days of the ‘Allāmah’s education and scientific research. He said, “I was looking forward to spring and summer because in these two seasons the nights are short and I would study and write at night and sleep in the day time.”

Then, about his exegesis he stated, “First, I performed much research and enquiry regarding the hadīths in “Bihār al-Anwār”, so I could have a publication regarding hadīth. Later, I endeavored much to synthesize Qur’anic verses with hadīth until I concluded that I should write an exegesis.

However, I thought because the Qur’an is an unending sea, if I attempted to address the entirety I might not be successful. Therefore, I picked out all the divine names and attributes and Qur’anic verses regarding eschatology and similar issues and wrote seven independent books on seven subjects.

Later I became occupied in interpreting the Qur’an and now fourteen volumes of the exegesis have been completed and published.”

This is what the master said on that day, and later, praise be to Allah, the Exalted, he was successful in completing “Tafsīr al-Māzīn” in twenty volumes in the span of twenty years. At the end of his exegesis, he recorded the completion date in the following utterance:

## Completion date of “Tafsīr al-Māzīn” and recommendation to theology students [tullāb]

تم الكتاب والحمد لله، واتفق الفراغ من تأليفه في ليلة القدر المباركة الثالثة والعشرين من ليالي شهر رمضان، من شهور سنة اثنتين وتسعين وثلاثمائة بعد الألف من الهجرة، والحمد لله على الدوام، والصلوة على سيدنا محمد وآله والسلام.

“The book has been completed and praise be to Allah for I was successful in finishing this composition on the blessed Night of al-Qadr, the twenty-third night of the month of Ramadān, of the year 1392 of the hijrah and continuous praise and peace be upon our liege Muhammad and his family.”

Our dear theology students [tullāb] must follow this example, that ‘Allāmah Tabṭabā‘ī took vigil on the Night of al-Qadr [laylat al-qadr] [13](#) by researching Qur’anic verses and thus his exegesis was concluded on this felicitous night. Indeed, one must work in this way. According to the expressive and eloquent poem of Shams al-Dīn Muhammad ibn Mahmūd ṣmolī, the author of “Naf‘is al-Funūn”:

به هوس راست نیايد به تمّني نشود كاندرين راه بسي خون جگر بايد خورد

It won't be rectified with caprice, nor with desire.

For, on this path much dolor must be endured.

At the end of the book “Diyat”, Shaykh al-Mashayikh, the celebrated author of “Jawahir al-Kalam” wrote:

تمّ كتاب جواهر الكلام في شرح شرائع الاسلام، في مسائل الحلال والحرام، في ليلة الثلاثاء ثلاث وعشرين من شهر رمضان المبارك، ليلة القدر التي كان من تقدير الله تعالى فيها ان يتفضّل علينا باتمام الكتاب المزبور، من سنة ألف ومائتين واربع وخمسين من الهجرة النبوية الخ

“The book of “Jawahir al-Kalam”, a commentary of “Sharayih al-Islam fi Mas'ail al-Halal wa al-Haram” (The Laws of Islam Regarding Lawful and Unlawful Issues) was finished in the 23rd night of the month of blessed Ramadan, the Night of al-Qadr which was ordained by the Almighty Allah. In this night I was blessed with finishing this book, 1254 years after the hijrah of the Prophet.”

In “Mafatih” of Muhaddith Qumm, regarding nightly vigil on the 21st and 23rd of the blessed month of Ramadan which are considered to be the most probable nights of al-Qadr, Saduq ibn Babawayh (may God be pleased with him) was quoted as saying:

قال شيخنا الصدوق فيما أملي على المشايخ في مجلس واحد من مذهب الإمامية: «ومن أحيى هاتين الليلتين بمذاكرة العلم فهو أفضل».

“Our master Saduq said in the book Amali that if there are two groups in a single gathering of vigil in the two nights of al-Qadr, one of which are having scientific discussions, the other praying. Attending the former has preference.”

In other words, the best of deeds when taking vigil during these al-Qadr nights is acquiring knowledge.

## [A great master of ‘Allamah Tabataba‘i’: Sayyid Husayn](#)

### [Bakbeh’](#)

During a lesson, I asked the ‘Allamah regarding trusteeship [wilayah] and Imamate and talk led to the following holy verse:

﴿وَإِذِ ابْتَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبُّهُ بِكَلِمَاتٍ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّ قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا قَالَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي قَالَ لَا يَنَالُ عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ﴾

***“And (remember) when his Lord tested Abraham with certain words and he fulfilled them. He said, ‘Verily, I shall make you an imam of the people.’ He replied, ‘And of my offspring?’ He said, ‘My covenant shall not include the evildoers.’”<sup>14</sup>***

In the exegesis of this verse<sup>15</sup>, he had referred to a statement from one of his masters and I asked him who it was. He replied, “The late Sayyid Husayn B<sup>ḥ</sup>dk<sup>ḥ</sup>beh<sup>ḥ</sup>’<sup>ḥ</sup>.”

## **Master Tab<sup>ḥ</sup>tab<sup>ḥ</sup>’<sup>ḥ</sup>’s education in mathematics**

After a class session, on the 3rd of November 1977, on the way home talk of mathematics came up. He said, “In Najaf, our master, Sayyid Husayn B<sup>ḥ</sup>dk<sup>ḥ</sup>beh<sup>ḥ</sup>’<sup>ḥ</sup> instructed us to study “Tahr<sup>ḥ</sup>r-e Uql<sup>ḥ</sup>ḍus”.

Therefore, we studied the “Tahr<sup>ḥ</sup>r-e Uql<sup>ḥ</sup>ḍus” and mathematics for over two years under the instruction of Sayyid Ab<sup>ḥ</sup> al-Q<sup>ḥ</sup>sim Khw<sup>ḥ</sup>ns<sup>ḥ</sup>r<sup>ḥ</sup>’<sup>ḥ</sup>.” Then, he said, “The late Sayyid Ab<sup>ḥ</sup> al-Q<sup>ḥ</sup>sim Khw<sup>ḥ</sup>ns<sup>ḥ</sup>r<sup>ḥ</sup>’<sup>ḥ</sup> was very skilled in mathematics. They would send him questions from universities. He was a most skilled person in algebra. Recently, he died in India.”

One day, Master ‘All<sup>ḥ</sup>mah Tab<sup>ḥ</sup>tab<sup>ḥ</sup>’<sup>ḥ</sup> said to me, “At first, when I came to Qum from Tabr<sup>ḥ</sup>z, I taught “Sharh-e Chaghmayn<sup>ḥ</sup>”.”

“Sharh-e Chaghmayn<sup>ḥ</sup>” (Commentaries on the Book of Chaghmayn<sup>ḥ</sup>) is a book on astronomy authored by Mahm<sup>ḥ</sup>d ibn Muhammad ibn ‘Umar Chaghmayn<sup>ḥ</sup> who also wrote “Q<sup>ḥ</sup>n<sup>ḥ</sup>n<sup>ḥ</sup>cheh” which is a book on medicine. The commentary on the book was written by Q<sup>ḥ</sup>d<sup>ḥ</sup>-z<sup>ḥ</sup>deh R<sup>ḥ</sup>m<sup>ḥ</sup>. The commentator was an astrologer in the Samarqand Observatory and also had a great part in compiling “z<sup>ḥ</sup>” (Astronomy) by Ulugh Bayk<sup>ḥ</sup>.

When I first went to Qum, students of the Qum Hujjatiyyah School told me that ‘All<sup>ḥ</sup>mah Tab<sup>ḥ</sup>tab<sup>ḥ</sup>’<sup>ḥ</sup> had installed a type of sundial for determining the direction of the Qiblah and the exact time of noon in Qum for each day. Unfortunately, however, it was not maintained properly and this great scientific work was ruined.

## **A Turk from Tabr<sup>ḥ</sup>z, living in Qum, istikh<sup>ḥ</sup>rah with the Qur’an**

After his preliminary and conventional [sut<sup>ḥ</sup>h] theological education in Tabr<sup>ḥ</sup>z, Master ‘All<sup>ḥ</sup>mah Tab<sup>ḥ</sup>tab<sup>ḥ</sup>’<sup>ḥ</sup> relocated to Holy Najaf and studied under great masters such as H<sup>ḥ</sup>j Sayyid ‘Al<sup>ḥ</sup> Q<sup>ḥ</sup>d<sup>ḥ</sup> Tab<sup>ḥ</sup>tab<sup>ḥ</sup>’<sup>ḥ</sup>, Sayyid Husayn B<sup>ḥ</sup>dk<sup>ḥ</sup>beh<sup>ḥ</sup>’<sup>ḥ</sup>, Sayyid Ab<sup>ḥ</sup> al-Hasan Isfah<sup>ḥ</sup>n<sup>ḥ</sup>, Muhammad Husayn Komp<sup>ḥ</sup>n<sup>ḥ</sup>, M<sup>ḥ</sup>rz<sup>ḥ</sup> Husayn N<sup>ḥ</sup>’<sup>ḥ</sup>n<sup>ḥ</sup>, and Sayyid Ab<sup>ḥ</sup> al-Q<sup>ḥ</sup>sim Khw<sup>ḥ</sup>ns<sup>ḥ</sup>r<sup>ḥ</sup>’<sup>ḥ</sup>.

Under the tutelage of these great masters he rose to exceptional heights of theoretical and practical knowledge. After ten years in Najaf, he returned to Tabr<sup>ḥ</sup>z in 1935. There, he occupied himself with lecturing, writing, and research. In 1946 he left Tabr<sup>ḥ</sup>z and took up residence in Qum where he instituted exegesis of the Holy Qur’an and education of theoretical sciences and divine principles. Until today,

June 28, 1981, his blessed assemblies have been the seat of intellectuals and the school of theology.

Even though many of the people of the theological seminaries of Qum enjoyed his luminous presence, not many were blessed by meeting him. Some of these were allotted with learning mere terminology, some rose to lofty scientific levels, fewer still inclined toward practical mysticism, and hardly any attained the arts of both knowledge and action.

It is in fact as the divine sage M<sup>ʿ</sup>r<sup>z</sup> Ab<sup>ʿ</sup> al-Hasan Jelveh (hallowed be his grave) wrote in his memoirs, “Currently, most theology students from various cities that desire knowledge have gathered around me. Each for a reason: some just to learn the terminology, others to learn to beautify gatherings, a meager few for their honesty, simplicity, and belief in the spiritual realm. These last few have been described thus:

﴿ تُلَّةٌ مِنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ \* وَقَلِيلٌ مِنَ الْآخِرِينَ ﴾

***“A great many of the first (peoples), and few from the last (peoples).”<sup>16</sup>***

Anyway,

هر کسی از ظن خود شد یار من وز درون من نجست اسرار من

Each person became my friend for their own presumption.

And he did not seek out the secrets I have within me.”

One day, Master ‘All<sup>ʿ</sup>mah Tab<sup>ʿ</sup>tab<sup>ʿ</sup> remarked, “When I decided to resettle in Qum, I performed istikh<sup>ʿ</sup>rah with the Glorious Qur’an. This holy verse came up:

﴿ هُنَا لَكَ الْوَلَايَةُ لِلَّهِ الْحَقِّ هُوَ خَيْرٌ نُوَابِا وَخَيْرٌ عَقَبًا ﴾

***“There, support and protection belong solely to Allah, the True; He is the best to reward and the best to accord favorable outcome.”<sup>17</sup>***

**‘All<sup>ʿ</sup>mah’s great master: H<sup>ʿ</sup>j M<sup>ʿ</sup>r<sup>z</sup> Sayyid ‘Al<sup>ʿ</sup> Q<sup>ʿ</sup>d<sup>ʿ</sup> Tab<sup>ʿ</sup>tab<sup>ʿ</sup>’**

One of the great masters of ‘All<sup>ʿ</sup>mah Tab<sup>ʿ</sup>tab<sup>ʿ</sup> in Najaf was the elevated mystic, lofty jurist, possessor of virtues and gnosis, the late lamented ʿyatull<sup>ʿ</sup>h al-‘Uzm<sup>ʿ</sup> H<sup>ʿ</sup>j Sayyid M<sup>ʿ</sup>r<sup>z</sup> ‘Al<sup>ʿ</sup> Q<sup>ʿ</sup>d<sup>ʿ</sup> Tab<sup>ʿ</sup>tab<sup>ʿ</sup>. This man was a timeless prodigy.

‘All<sup>ʿ</sup>mah Shaykh ʿq<sup>ʿ</sup> Bozorg Tih<sup>ʿ</sup>n wrote about him thus, “He is Sayyid ‘Al<sup>ʿ</sup>, son of M<sup>ʿ</sup>r<sup>z</sup> Husayn,

son of Mṣrḥ Ahmad, son of Mṣrḥ Rahḥm Tabḥtabḥ'ḥ Tabrḥzḥ Qḥdḥ, a God-conscious scholar and self-disciplined erudite moralist. For tens of years there was friendship and association between us. During this time I found him to be unfaltering upon his path, stalwart and humane in character, great in essence... He wrote an exegesis of the Qur'an from the beginning up to this verse:

﴿ قُلِ اللَّهُ ثُمَّ ذَرْهُمْ فِي خَوْضِهِمْ يَلْعَبُونَ ... ﴾

***“...Say, ‘Allah (has sent it down).’ Then leave them to amuse themselves in their wrongful devotion.”***<sup>18</sup>

His father also wrote an exegesis of the Qur'an. From long ago, their house was a place of knowledge, virtue, and piety.<sup>19</sup>

One of his pleasant utterances was that if a person devotes half their life to achieving perfection the time would not be wasted. What 'Allḥmah Shaykh ḥqḥ Bozorg Tihrḥnḥ said about him, “... I found him to be unfaltering upon his path...” is a valuable attribute because the most important thing in advancement toward Allah is perseverance, the shower of divine blessings and favors are due to perseverance.

﴿ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَامُوا تَتَنَزَّلُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَلَّا تَخَافُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا وَأَبْشِرُوا بِالْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي كُنتُمْ تُوعَدُونَ \* نَحْنُ أَوْلِيَائُكُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا مَا تَشْتَهِي أَنْفُسُكُمْ وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا مَا تَدْعُونَ \* نَزَّلْنَا مِنْ غُفُورٍ رَحِيمٍ ﴾

***“Verily those who say, ‘Our Lord is Allah’ and then are steadfast, the angels descend upon them (saying) that ‘Fear not nor sorrow rather receive good tidings of the Paradise you are promised. We are your supporters and friends in the worldly life and the hereafter; therein you shall have all that your souls desire and all for which you ask as a hospitable gift from the Forgiving, the Compassionate’.”***<sup>20</sup>

## **Mṣrḥ–ye Shḥrḥzḥ and Mṣrḥ Husayn Qḥdḥ—hallowed be their graves**

On a Thursday night, October 25, 1967, a few worthy friends and I were in the blessed presence of Master 'Allḥmah Tabḥtabḥ'ḥ. Amid his lecture he spoke of his master, the late Qḥdḥ, and his teachers and students. He said his deceased mentor had many teachers and named a few. Then he stated, “His father, the late Hḥj Mṣrḥ Husayn Qḥdḥ wrote an exegesis of Sḥrat al–Fḥtiḥah and Sḥrat al–An'ḥm. I read them but I do not know who currently has them in their possession...

Hḥj Mṣrḥ Husayn Qḥdḥ was a pupil of the late Mṣrḥ–ye Shḥrḥzḥ and when he went to say farewell to the Mṣrḥ and go to Tabrḥz, the late Mṣrḥ said to him, ‘Now that you are going, put aside one hour

every 24 hours to meditate.’ After some time, the late Mṣrṣ asked about Hṣj Mṣrṣ Husayn Qṣdṣ. He was told, ‘He has increased that one hour to twenty–four in which he is constantly in meditation, self–consciousness, and seclusion.’ However, seclusion of the following kind:

هرگز میان حاضر و غایب شنیده‌ای من در میان جمع و دلم جای دیگر است

Have you heard of being at once among others and absent?

I am among the crowd but my heart is elsewhere.

On a Thursday morning, November 23, 1967, I had the honor of visiting the late ʿyatullḥ Hṣj Sayyid Husayn Qṣdṣ Tabṣtabṣ, the cousin of ʿyatullḥ Hṣj Sayyid ‘Alṣ Qṣdṣ (hallowed be his grave).

I kept notes of what he said, among which was the matter of the constant meditation and self–awareness of Hṣj Sayyid Husayn Qṣdṣ and his talk with Mṣrṣ–ye ShṣrṣZṣ just as I quoted from Master ‘Allṣmah Tabṣtabṣ.

On Wednesday night, 27th of Dhṣ al–Hijjah 1968 CE, I had the honor of visiting with Master ʿyatullḥ ‘Allṣmah Tabṣtabṣ. Amid his discussions he said, ‘All that I have of such real (i.e. mystic) matters I have of the late Mr. Qṣdṣ—both that which I learned from him when he was alive and was in his presence and that which I received from the late Qṣdṣ by my own means.’ Contemplate upon this.”

## Telling of a dream and the resulting statement of the late

### ʿyatullḥ ṣmolṣ regarding ‘Allṣmah Tabṣtabṣ’

The next day I left Qum for Tehran and had the honor of visiting ʿyatullḥ Hṣj Shaykh Muhammad Taqṣ ṣmolṣ (may God be pleased with him) and I related a dream I saw of him, wherein he had said to me, “Tawhṣd is to forget all but Allah”. When he heard this monotheistic utterance from me in explanation he recited for me the following verse from “Golshṣn–e RṣZ” by ‘ṣrif Shabestarṣ:

نشانی داده‌اندت از خرابات که التوحید اسقاط الاضافات

They gave you instructions in a drinkery,<sup>21</sup>

that tawhṣd is relinquishing the extras.

Then, I talked of the late Mr. Qṣdṣ and Master ‘Allṣmah Tabṣtabṣ and his honorable brother, ʿyatullḥ Sayyid Muhammad Hasan Ilṣhṣ. The late Mr. ṣmolṣ said to me, “Sir! If a person must become something under perfect authority and education, I do not know anyone better for you than Mr. Tabṣtabṣ, the author of “Al–MṣZṣn”.

Associate with him more for he and Sayyid Ahmad Karbalā'ī Kishmīrī were the best students among all the students of the late Mr. Qadī. Mr. Tabatabā'ī had many mystical revelations during that time.”

## Master ‘Allāmah Tabatabā'ī's “Risālah Muhkimāt”

On Friday morning, the first of Dhī al-Qa'dah 1392 AH, I was honored by visiting Master ‘Allāmah Tabatabā'ī. Talk led to his Risālah Tadhyyāt in which he appraised the correspondences between the lofty mystic, Sayyid Ahmad Karbalā'ī and the prestigious sage, Mr. Kompānī (hallowed be their graves). These missives relate to a verse from the exalted mystic Shaykh ‘Attār (hallowed be his grave):

او بسر ناید زخود آنجا که اوست کی رسد عقل وجود آنجا که اوست

The mystic cannot, of himself, apprehend that which is Him.

How can the collective consciousness attain that which is Him?

In this treatise he imparts mystical subtleties and grand philosophical views.

## ‘Alī wa al-Falsafah al-Ilāhiyyah, a work by ‘Allāmah Tabatabā'ī

One of the works of Master ‘Allāmah Tabatabā'ī is the extremely dear compendious book, “‘Alī wa al-Falsafah al-Ilāhiyyah” (‘Alī and Divine Philosophy). In a paper that the Master sent to the Nahj al-Balāghah Millennium Symposium in Tehran, he expressed his wish to finish this book.

He expressed a sublime point regarding the fact that among all the Companions [sahābah] of the Prophet of Allah (S)<sup>22</sup>, other than Amīr al-Mu'mīnīn ‘Alī (‘a), no one has transmitted or revealed such great divine truths as exemplified in “Nahj al-Balāghah”.

At the beginning of this compendious book, Master ‘Allāmah Tabatabā'ī presents a solid important principle regarding religion and philosophy: in truth, it is surely a great injustice to differentiate between divine religion and divine philosophy.

This utterance issues from the heart of divine research and whoever has heard it exclaims: the speaker of this is a great gem of God. Indeed, considering divine religion and divine philosophy to be separate is surely a great injustice.

At the end of his great book, “Tahsīl al-Sa‘ādah” (Acquiring the Bliss), Abī Nasr Fārābī, celebrated as the Second Teacher [mu‘allim-e thānī] (after Aristotle), expresses a noble philosophical report which leads to this valuable statement, “A perfect philosopher is an imām.” In Asfār, Mullā Sadrā wrote, “Death to a philosophy whose laws do not coincide with the Book and Tradition.”<sup>23</sup>

## The chain of exponents of the practical mysticism of ‘Allāmah

### Tabataba‘ī

In 1966 CE, I benefited from the presence of ‘Ayatullāh Sayyid Muhammad Hasan Ilāhī Qadī Tabataba‘ī—the noble brother of Master ‘Allāmah Tabataba‘ī (may Allah, the Exalted, greatly raise them both in rank)—who had taken residence in Qum to receive and impart blessings.

On a Thursday, March 16, 1967, we talked of the exponents of his and his brother’s practical mysticism. He stated, “Our master was the late Qadī—that is, ‘Ayatullāh Hāj Sayyid ‘Alī Qadī Tabataba‘ī (may Allah be pleased with him)—in turn, his master was Hāj Sayyid Ahmad Karbalā‘ī, and his master was ‘akhund Mawlā Husayn Qulī Hamadānī, and his master was Hāj Sayyid ‘Alī Shāshhtarī, and his master was Mullā Qulī Jawlī.

We do not know who Mullā Qulī Jawlī’s master was and we do not even know who Mullā Qulī Jawlī truly was. Even Hāj Sayyid ‘Alī Shāshhtarī did not know who he was.

### The meeting of Hāj Sayyid ‘Alī Shāshhtarī with Mullā Qulī Jawlī

Hāj Sayyid ‘Alī Shāshhtarī lived at the time of Shāshhtarī. A dispute arose regarding a mortmain [waqf] section of land. Some held that the land was not mortmain and they had secretly buried the mortmain deed [waqf-nāmāh] in a chest. Others claimed that the land was mortmain though they did not have any evidence.

Anyway, for a few days Shāshhtarī was baffled at judging upon the matter. The litigants were insistent and came every day and demanded a judgment from Shāshhtarī. During all this, a man came and knocked on his door. Someone went to the door and asked, “Who are you?” The man replied, “Tell the man of the house that one called Mullā Qulī Jawlī wants to see you.”

When he entered the house and came to Shāshhtarī, he said, “Sir, I have come to tell you that you must leave here and travel to Najaf and take up residence there. Also, know that the mortmain deed of the land is buried in such-and-such place and the land is mortmain.”

Though Shāshhtarī did not know Mullā Qulī Jawlī, he instructed that they dig the indicated place and there they found the mortmain deed. After this he withdrew from judicature and left Shāshhtarī and took up residence in Najaf.

There he attended Shaykh Murtadā Ansārī’s (may Allah be pleased with him) lectures on jurisprudence and in turn the Shaykh attended Shāshhtarī’s lectures on ethics. At that time, ‘akhund Mullā Husayn Qulī Hamadānī embarked upon a quest for truth and went in search of a mystic guide.

He left Hamadān and stayed with a savant for some time but he did not find what he sought with him.

He departed for Najaf and came into the presence of Shāshṭar and Anṣar. There he learned much.

After Shaykh Anṣar's death, Ṣḥḥnd Hamadḥnd endeavored to write a composition of Anṣar's doctrines and jurisprudence. Shāshṭar forbid him to do so and said, "This is not your duty; there are others to do this. You must find the gifted."

Thereupon, Ṣḥḥnd Mullḥ Husayn Qulḥ (may Allah raise his rank) strove to guide the gifted such that he instructed some from morn to dusk, some from dawn to forenoon, and some from eventide to midnight. Thus, he was successful in edifying three hundred individuals such that they each became great saints [awliyḥ] of God, among them Shaykh Muhammad Bahḥr, Sayyid Ahmad Karbalḥ, Mḥrzḥ Jawḥd Malikḥ Tabrḥzḥ, Shaykh 'Alḥ Zḥhid Qummḥ, and Sayyid 'Abd al-Gḥaffḥr Mḥzandarḥnd.

And this is just a part of the information Master Ilḥḥ Tabḥtabḥ'ḥ conveyed on that day in Qum regarding the chain of exponents of their mysticism.

## Humans before this world, in this world, and after this world

Among the works of Master 'Allḥmah Tabḥtabḥ'ḥ are the three valuable books: "Al-Insḥn Qabl al-Dunyḥ" (Humans before the World), "Al-Insḥn fḥ al-Dunyḥ" (Humans in the World), and "Al-Insḥn ba'd al-Dunyḥ" (Humans after the World). As I mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the Allḥmah's masterpiece is the great "Tafsḥr al-Mḥzḥn" which comprises many of the important issues of his other works; for example the treatise "Wilḥyat" which is contained under the exegesis of the following verse:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ مَنْ ضَلَّ إِذَا اهْتَدَيْتُمْ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

***"O you who believe! Be mindful of your selves (souls): A person who has gone astray cannot harm you, provided you are rightly guided. Unto Allah is your return, every one. Then He will inform you of what you did."***[24](#)

Also, the treatise "Al-Insḥn ba'd al-Dunyḥ" is contained under the exegesis of verse 2:213. These individual works are also important for the significant effort that was put in authoring them; thus, such works must also be given weight and heed.

Here it is apt for us to mention the notable French astronomer Camille Flammarion. Flammarion has valuable works on various subjects including a three volume work named, "La Mort et Son Mystere" (Death and its Secret).

The volumes are named respectively "Avant la Mort" (Before Death), "Autour de la Mort" (About Death), and "Après la Mort" (After Death). An Egyptian scholar, Muhammad Farḥd Wajadḥ, translated this book into Arabic and has named it "'Alḥ ḥtlḥ al-Madḥhab al-Mḥddḥ" (On Refuting the Materialist Doctrine)

which is also, like its original, a valuable book. It seems that the ‘Allāmah has named his treatises in accordance with Flammarion’s books; however, we would have to ask him to be sure.

## The aim of divine ambassadors is educating and edifying humanity

I have found the education and edification of Master ‘Allāmah Tabatabā‘ī such as the Second Teacher, Abū Nasr Farābī, wrote in “Tahsīl al-Sa‘dah”<sup>25</sup>, “Educating is formation of theoretical excellence in societies whereas edifying is the method of forming moral virtues and scientific activity among the people.

Education comes about through pure verbal expression. However, edification is realized through accustoming societies and individuals to act according to scientific norms such that their will drives them towards performing these actions and the scientific norms and their ensuing actions dominate their beings and people become eager to perform thus—like lovers. ”

Each and every one of the publications of Master ‘Allāmah Tabatabā‘ī is noteworthy in these two principles and contains deep and exact critiques. That this master educated and edified gifted souls in the university of divine truths, i.e. the Qum Theological Seminary, at a time when attachment to worldly affairs and material pleasures has bewitched the majority is a blessing from Allah, the Exalted. A blessing with a notification to all that:

﴿ ذَلِكَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَن يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴾

***“That is the bounty of Allah. He gives it to whom He wills and Allah possesses great bounty.”***<sup>26</sup>

This master has a long legacy of knowledge and piety and many of his ancestors were great and notable personages in their own time (may Allah be pleased with them all).

## The most noteworthy oeuvre of ‘Allāmah Tabatabā‘ī, both prose and poetry

All the works of this master are knowledge and thought, truth and understanding, discussion and research, love and reason, Qur’an and hadīth, and so forth.

هر کس سخن با سخنی ضم کند قطره‌ای از خون جگر کم کند

Whosoever joins words with words,

lessens a part of their anguish.

The great exegetic masterpiece “Tafsīr al-Mīzān” in twenty volumes

Usūl-e Falsafah wa Rawish-e Riʿāliism (Principles of Philosophy and Realism)

Hāshiyah bar Asfār-e Sadr al-Mutaʿallihīn (Commentaries on Asfār of Sadr al-Mutaʿallihīn)

Mus̄hibat b̄ Ustād Kurbin (Interviews with Professor Corbin)

Risālah dar Hukūmat-e Islāmī (Treatise on Islamic Government)

Hāshiyah Kifāyah (Commentaries on Kifāyah)

Risālah dar Quwwah wa Fiʿl (Treatise on Potential and Actuality)

Risālah dar Ithbāt-e Dhāt (Treatise on Substantiation of the Essence (of God))

Risālah dar Sifat (Treatise on Attributes (of God))

Risālah dar Afʿāl (Treatise on Actions (of God))

Risālah dar Wasāʾit (Treatise on Intermediaries)

Risālah al-Insān Qabl al-Dunyāʾ (Treatise on Humans before the World)

Risālah al-Insān fī al-Dunyāʾ (Treatise on Humans in the World)

Risālah al-Insān baʿd al-Dunyāʾ (Treatise on Humans after the World)

Risālah dar Nubuwwah (Treatise on Prophethood)

Risālah dar Wilāyah (Treatise on Trusteeship)

Risālah dar Mushtaqāt (Treatise on Derivatives)

Risālah dar Burhān (Treatise on Logical Reason)

Risālah dar Mughalīyah (Treatise on Sophistry)

Risālah dar Tahlīl (Treatise on Analysis)

Risālah dar Tarkīb (Treatise on Synthesis)

Risālah dar Iʿtibārāt (Treatise on Credibilities)

Risālah dar Nubuwwah wa Maqāmāt (Treatise on Prophethood and Ranks)

Manzūmah dar Rasm-e Khatt-e Nasta‘īlīq (Poem on Writing Nasta‘īlīq Calligraphy)

‘Alī wa al-Falsafah al-Ilāhiyyah (‘Alī and Divine Philosophy)

Qur’ān dar Islām (the Qur’an in Islam)

Shāh dar Islām (the Shāh in Islam)

Muhakimāt bayn-e dow Muktibāt (Appraisal of Two Missives)

Bid‘yah al-Hikmah

Nih‘yah al-Hikmah

Many scientific papers published in scientific articles

The final two books (“Bid‘yah al-Hikmah” and “Nih‘yah al-Hikmah”) are very important philosophical texts; they are the greatest evolvement of divine philosophy available—written by the same prudent hand that wrote “Tafsīr al-Mūzīn”. Currently, these two books are part of the Islamic seminary curriculum.

آن کس که زکوی آشنایی است داند که متاع ما کجایی است

The One from the friendship land,

knows where my goods come from.

I hastily wrote these few paragraphs as well as my knowledge could avail regarding ‘Allāmah Tabataba‘ī and handed them over. I confess that I did not do justice to the Master.

However, I have hopes that I may fulfill my duty of gratitude regarding His Holiness and his brother (hallowed be their graves) and present it upon the people. They were both my masters and I am much indebted to them for their education and edification.

Amīr al-Mu‘minīn (‘a) has declared:

«لقد علمني رسول الله (ص) ألف باب يفتح كل باب ألف باب»

“Verily, the Prophet of Allah (S) taught me one thousand doors (subjects), every door of which opens one thousand other doors.”<sup>27</sup>

Zurrah and Abū Basīr cited regarding Imām al-Bāqir (‘a) and Imām al-Sādiq (‘a) that:

«قالا علينا أن نلقي إليكم الأصول وعليكم أن تفرعوا»

“They told us, ‘We taught you the principles and it is for you to elaborate on them’.”<sup>28</sup>

‘Allāmah Hasan-zāhid molā

1. Sūrat al-‘Alaq 96: 1–5.
2. A title reserved for exceptional religious savants. [trans.]
3. A designation accorded to a person with great and extensive knowledge. [trans.]
4. A title used for those who have made the pilgrimage to Mecca. [trans.]
5. An appellation used for a person whose mother is a direct patrilineal descendant of Alī ibn Abī Tālib (‘a).
6. A denomination used for direct paternal descendants of Alī ibn Abī Tālib (‘a).
7. The abbreviation, “a” stands for the Arabic invocative phrase, ‘alayhi’s-salām, ‘alayhim’us-salām, or ‘alayhī’s-salām [may peace be upon him/them/her], which is mentioned after the names of the prophets, angels, Imāms from the Prophet’s progeny, and saints (‘a). [Trans.]
8. Nahj al-Balāghah, sermon [khutbah] 131.
9. Sūrat al-Nahl 16:89.
10. Sūrat al-Zumar 39:23.
11. According to exegeses this refers to Sūrat al-Fatihah which is recited in prayer at least seventeen times a day. [trans.]
12. Sūrat al-Hijr 15:87.
13. This is the night in which the Holy Qur’an was first revealed unto the Prophet (S).
14. Sūrat al-Baqarah 2:124.
15. Al-Ma‘zūn, vol. 1, p. 277.
16. Sūrat al-Wāqī‘ah 56: 13–14.
17. Sūrat al-Kahf 18:44.
18. Sūrat al-An‘ām 6:91.
19. Tabaqāt A‘lām al-Sha‘ah by ‘Allāmah Shaykh Buzorg Tihri, p. 1565, fourth section of the first chapter on the notables of the fourteenth century anno hegirae.
20. Sūrat Fussilat 41:30–32.
21. This is a literary allusion to the place where dervishes live and worship because that is where they realize mystical ecstasy. [trans.]
22. The abbreviation, “s”, stands for the Arabic invocative phrase, sallāllāhu ‘alayhi wa ‘alihī wa sallam [may God’s blessings and peace be upon him and his progeny], which is mentioned after the name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S). [Trans.]
23. Asfar, vol. 4, p. 75.
24. Sūrat al-Mā‘idah 5: 105.
25. Tahsil al-Sa‘dah, p. 29, Haydarābād Publications.
26. Sūrat al-Jumu‘ah 62:4.
27. Bihār al-Anwār, vol. 7, p. 281.
28. Majma‘ al-Bahrayn, maddah f r ‘ [ف ر ع].

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