

Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Abī Bakr ibn Farḥ, Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī al-Khazrajī al-Andalusī al-Qurṭubī al-Mālikī (d. 671) the erudite wise Imām who “probed the meanings of ḥadīth deeply” (Ibn ‘Imād) and great commentator of the Qur’ān. He lived and died in Mīnyat or Munyat Banī Khusayb in Egypt, “one of the righteous, knowing, scrupulously Godwary, ascetic servants of Allāh busy with the concerns of his hereafter through meditation, worship, and authorship” (‘Abd al-Karīm ibn Khaldūn). He “disdained airs, and used to walk about in a simple *thawb* with a plain cap (*tāqīyya*) on his head” (Ibn Farḥūn). Al-Dhahabī, Ibn Farḥūn, Ibn ‘Imād, al-Maqarrī, al-Adnahwī, and Makhḷūf give his obitus as 671 while Ḥajjī Khalīfa cites 668. Whoever cited 656 apparently confused him with his teacher the *muḥaddīth* and author of the commentary on *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* titled *Al-Muḥḥim fī Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar Muslim* attributed to “al-Qurṭubī” and printed under that name although it is by Imām Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad ibn ‘Umar ibn Ibrāhīm al-Anṣārī al-Qurṭubī al-Mālikī al-Iskandarī (d. 656).¹ Also among his teachers were Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī al-Yaḥsubī, the ḥadīth Master Abū ‘Alī al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Bakrī, Rashīd al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Waḥḥāb ibn Rawwāj al-Azdī al-Mālikī, the Imām of Egypt Bahā’ al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Hibat Allāh ibn Salāma al-Lakhmī al-Miṣrī al-Shāfi‘ī known as Ibn al-Jummayzī, Abū al-‘Abbās ibn al-Muzayyin, and others. From him narrated his son Shihāb al-Dīn Abū al-‘Abbās and Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Wālī. He authored the following works:

- *Al-Asnā fī Sharḥ Asmā’ Allāh al-Husnā* (“The Most Decorous Commentary on the Beautiful Names of Allāh”) in two volumes. This work of Ash‘arī doctrine has received two complete editions, one in Ṭanṭa, Egypt at the “Salafī” press Dār al-Ṣaḥābati lil-Turāth and another in Libya at Jam‘iyyat al-Da‘wa al-Islāmiyya. Excerpts:

On the ḥadīth of descent: “The One Whose kindness and tenderness descend, as in his saying [ﷺ], ‘Our Lord descends,’ as ascent and descent are impossible for Allāh Most High.”²

On the ḥadīth, “His veil is light, and if He removed it, the glorifications (*subuhāt*) of His face would burn everything His eyesight fell upon”.³ “If he had removed from them the veil, His majesty (*jalāl*), awe (*hayba*), and subjugation (*qahr*) would have caused everything His sight fell upon to disappear – from the Throne to the undersoil, for there is no end to His sight, and Allāh knows best.”⁴

On the saying reported from the Prophet ﷺ, “The Black Stone is the right hand of Allāh”.⁵ “It means that the Black Stone has the standing (*manzila*) of the Right Hand of Allāh... metaphorically speaking.”⁶

- *Al-I‘lām bimā fī Dīn al-Naṣārā wa-Iḥzār Maḥāsīn Dīn al-Islām.*
- *Al-Intihāz fī Qurrā’ Ahl al-Kūfa wal-Baṣra wal-Shām wa-Ahl al-Hijāz.*
- *Al-Jāmi‘ li-Aḥkām al-Qur’ān wal-Mubīn limā Taḍammanahu min al-Sunnati wa-Āy al-Furqān* (“The Collection of the Rulings of the Qur’ān and the Exposition of the Sunna and Verses It Contains”), a monumental commentary on the Qur’ān “in the fullest sense of that term,” “filled with every kind of unique benefit” (al-Dhahabī) in twenty volumes “from which he omitted the stories and histories customary in other commentaries, and recorded instead the legal rulings and how the Scholars have inferred them, together with the canonical readings (*qirā’āt*), Arabic

¹Cf. al-Dhahabī, *Ibar* (3:278).

²Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Asnā* (1:435), chapter on the Divine Name “al-Hawī.”

³Narrated from Abū Mūsā by Muslim, Ibn Mājah, Aḥmad, Abū ‘Awāna, Abū Dāwūd al-Tayālīsī, Ibn Abī ‘Āsim, al-Ājurrī, and al-Bayhaqī in *al-Asmā’ wal-Ṣiḡāt* (Kawtharī ed. p. 180-181; Ḥāshidī ed. 1:465-466 #392-394).

⁴*Al-Asnā* (2:92).

⁵Narrated from Ibn ‘Abbās, Jābir, Anas, and others by Ibn Abī ‘Umar al-Ma’danī in his *Musnad*, al-Tabarānī, al-Suyūtī in his *Jāmi‘ al-Saghīr* (1:516 §3804-3805), Ibn ‘Asākir in *Tārīkh Dimashq* (15:90-92), al-Khaṭīb in *Tārīkh Baghdād* (6:328), and others. It is considered forged by Ibn al-Jawzī and Ibn ‘Adī (*al-Kāmil* 1:342). Cf. al-Ahdab, *Zawā’id Tārīkh Baghdād* (5:321-323 §949). However, al-‘Ajlūnī stated that it is *ṣaḥīḥ* as a halted report from Ibn ‘Abbās as narrated by al-Qudā’ī with the wording: “The Corner [of the Black Stone] (*al-rukn*) is the Right Hand of Allāh on earth...” and declared it *hasan* as a ḥadīth of the Prophet ﷺ. Ibn Qutayba in *Ta’wīl Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīth* (1972 ed. p. 215=1995 ed. p. 198, 262) said that it was a saying of Ibn ‘Abbās and relates a saying of ‘Ā’isha that the Black Stone is the depository of the covenant of human souls with Allāh on the Day of Promise (*alastu bi rabbikum*). Its mention in the *Reliance of the Traveller* (p. 853b) as “narrated by al-Hākim, who declared it *ṣaḥīḥ*, from ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Amr,” is incorrect. Note: An authentic narration states that the Black Stone shall appear with two eyes and a tongue on the Day of Resurrection. Narrated by al-Tirmidhī, Ibn Mājah, Aḥmad, al-Dārimī, Ibn Hibbān (§3711-3712), and others.

⁶*Al-Asnā* (2:90-91).

grammar, which verses abrogate others and which are abrogated (*al-nāsikh wal-mansūkh*)” (Ibn Farḥūn), “all the legal Schools of the *Salaḥ*” (Ibn ‘Imād), many of the wisdoms of “the Ulema of the Sufis” (the term reoccurs about two dozen times), and the Ash‘arī tenets of faith (*‘aqīda*). Al-Qurṭubī cites his countryman Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr about five hundred times in this work. Ibn al-Mulaqqin abridged it. Al-Qurṭubī said in the *Jāmi‘*:

On the verse **﴿Those are a people who have passed away. Theirs is that which they have earned, and yours is that which you earn. And you will not be asked of what they used to do﴾** (2:134): “Together with a human being’s action was created his ‘capacity to act’ (*qudra*), through which one comprehends the difference between a deliberate movement and mere reflex (*ḥarakat al-ra‘sha*), for instance. The *Jabriyya* hold that a human being does not earn anything [by his acts] and that he is like vegetation of which the wind disposes. The *Qadariyya* and *Mu‘tazila* hold the opposite of these two positions and say that a human being creates his own acts.”

On the verse **﴿Wait they for naught else than that Allāh should come unto them in the shadows of the clouds with the angels?﴾** (2:210): “It is based on the lexical meaning of *ityān*, which is to proceed to do something (*al-qaṣd ilā al-shay‘*). The meaning of the verse is thus: Wait they for naught else than that Allāh should cause to pass a certain act with some of His creatures whereby He shall proceed to requite them and judge them, just as He brought to be a certain act which He called ‘descent’ and another which He called ‘establishment.’” This is the same explanation as Imām al-Ash‘arī: “Allāh Almighty on the Day of Judgment shall bring about a certain act (*fi‘l*) which He named ‘coming’ and ‘arrival.’”⁷

On the ḥadīth of descent within his commentary on the verse **﴿Those who say: Our Lord! Lo! we believe. So forgive us our sins and guard us from the punishment of Fire; The steadfast, and the truthful, and the obedient, those who spend (and hoard not), those who pray for pardon in the watches of the night﴾** (3:16-17): “The best thing that was said concerning its interpretation is what was related in al-Nasā’ī’s *Sunan al-Kubrā* [and *‘Amal al-Yawm wal-Layla*] from Abū Hurayra and Abū Sa‘īd رضي الله عنهما that the Prophet ﷺ said: ‘Allāh Most High waits until the first part of the night is over, then He orders a herald (*munādiyan*) to say: Is there anyone supplicating so that he may be answered, anyone begging for forgiveness so that he may be forgiven, any petitioner so that he may be granted his request?’”⁸

On the verse **﴿He is the Omnipotent (al-Qāhir) over His slaves﴾** (6:18, 6:61): “Omnipotence (*al-qahr*) means victory (*al-ghalaba*) and the Omnipotent means the victorious... The meaning of **﴿over (fawq) His slaves﴾** is the aboveness of domination (*isti‘lā‘*) through omnipotence and victory over them. That is, they are under His subjugation (*taskhīrih*). **It does not mean aboveness of place (lā fawqiyata makān)**! It is just as you say, ‘The sultan is above his subjects – that is, in his rank and elevation (*ay bil-manzilati wal-rif‘a*).’”

On the verse **﴿Then He established Himself over the throne﴾** (7:54) in Sūrat al-A‘rāf: “The exaltation (*‘uluw*) of Allāh Most High and His elevation (*irtifā‘*) are an expression of the ‘uluw of His Majesty, Attributes, and Dominion. Meaning: There is nothing above Him whatsoever in the sense of Majesty and its qualities, nor with Him as a partner. Rather, He is the Most High in absolute and unconditional terms – exalted is He!”

On the verse **﴿It may be that your Lord will raise you to a praised estate﴾** (17:79): “It is not impossible, according to all those who profess Islam, that Allah ﷻ shall seat the Prophet ﷺ on His Throne.” He also quoted from Ibn ‘Aṭiyya in his *Tafsīr* of the Verse of the Throne that the meaning was that the *kursī* was placed in front of the *‘arsh* “just like” the footstool is placed in front of a high chair, indicating that it did not necessitate reference to an actual footstool but referred, for example, to a seat or station. Al-Bayhaqī states the same.⁹

On the verse **﴿Unto Him the good word ascends and the good deed raises it﴾** (35:10): “Ascent is upward movement which is inconceivable of words for they are accidents [or signs] (*a‘rād*). Ascent here stands for acceptance.” The same is found in al-Baghawī, Abū Ḥayyān, al-Bayhaqī, and Ibn Ḥajar.¹¹

On the verse **﴿Do you feel safe that He who is in the sky will not make the earth swallow you while it quakes﴾** (67:16): “The more exacting scholars hold that it [﴿in the sky﴾] means,

⁷In al-Bayhaqī, *al-Asmā‘ wal-Sifāt* (Kawtharī ed. p. 448; Hāshidī ed. 2:371).

⁸Narrated from Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī and Abū Hurayra by al-Nasā’ī in *al-Sunan al-Kubrā* (6:124 §10316) and *‘Amal al-Yawm wal-Layla* (ed. Fārūq Hammāda p. 340 §482). Al-Qārī declared it sound in *Mirqāt al-Mafāṭih* (1994 ed. 3:299).

⁹In *al-Asmā‘ wal-Sifāt* (2:197, 2:297).

¹⁰Or: ﴿and the good deed He raises up.﴾

¹¹*Tafsīr al-Bahr al-Muhīt* (7:303) and *Fath al-Bārī* (1959 ed. 13:416).

“Do you feel secure from Him who is over the sky” – just as Allāh says, ﴿Journey in the earth﴾ (9:2), meaning journey over it – not over the sky by way of physical contact or spatialization, but by way of omnipotent power and control. Another position is that it means “Do you feel secure from Him who is over (*‘alā*) the sky,” just as it is said, “So-and-so is over Iraq and the Hijāz”, meaning that he is the governor and commander of them.¹²

On the ḥadīths of the Divine Attributes: “The ḥadīths on this subject are numerous, sound, and widely known, and indicate the exaltedness of Allāh, being undeniable by anyone except an atheist or obstinate ignoramus. Their meaning is to dignify Allāh and exalt Him above all that is base and low, to characterize Him by exaltedness and greatness, not by being in places, particular directions, or within limits, for these are the qualities of physical bodies.”¹³ “*Istiwā*’ is one of the Attributes of acts (*min ṣifāt al-af‘āl*) according to the majority of the explanations.”¹⁴

- *Poem on the Names of the Prophet* ﷺ.
- *Qam’ al-Ḥarṣ bil-Zuhd wal-Qanā‘a wa-Radd Dhull al-Su‘āl bil-Kaffī wal-Shafā‘a* (“The Subduing of Worldly Appetite Through Simple Living and Contentment with Little and the Repelling of the Humiliation of Begging with the Hand or Through Intermediaries”). Ibn Farhūn said, “I never saw a better book in its genre.” It was published at Dār al-Ṣahābatī lil-Turāth.
- *Sharḥ al-Taqaṣṣī*, a long commentary on Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr’s book *al-Taqaṣṣī limā fīl-Muwatta’ min Ḥadīthi Rasūlillāh* ﷺ.
- *Al-Tadhkira bi-Aḥwāl al-Mawt wal-Ākhira* (“The Memorial of the States of Death and the Hereafter”) in three volumes meticulously published by Yūsuf ‘Alī Badyawī at Dār Ibn Kathīr. Ibn al-Qayyim cites it heavily in his book *al-Rūḥ*. In the *Tadhkira* al-Qurṭubī says:

“The *mujassim* – one who attributes a body to Allāh – is an idol-worshipper.”

The martyrs are among those Allāh ﷻ exempts according to His saying: ﴿save him whom Allāh wills﴾ in the verse ﴿And the Day when the Trumpet will be blown, and all who are in the heavens and the earth will start in fear, save him whom Allāh wills﴾ (27:87).¹⁵

“As for reciting over the grave, then our companions (*i.e.* Mālikīs) are categorical that it is lawful, and others say the same.”¹⁶
- *Al-Taqrīb li-Kitāb al-Tamhīd* on Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr’s masterpiece of comparative *Fiqh* in two large manuscript tomes.
- *Al-Tidhkār fī Afḍal al-Adhkār* (“The Reminder Concerning the Best Remembrance”), in print, similar to al-Nawawī’s *Tibyān*.

Contrary to the notice in the *Reliance of the Traveller* al-Qurṭubī did not “wr[i]te works in the sciences of ḥadīth and tenets of faith” other than *al-Asnā* on the Divine Names, and Allāh knows best.

Sources: Al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām* (Year 671), *Siyar* (17:101-102 §2054); Ibn Farhūn, *Dībāj* (p. 406-407 §549); Ibn ‘Imād, *Shadharāt al-Dhahab* (5:335); al-Maḥarrī, *Nafḥ al-Ṭīb* (2:685-686); al-Adnawī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Mufasssīrīn* (p. 246-247 §295); Makhluḥ, *Shajarat al-Nūr al-Dhakiyya* (1:197 §666).

¹² *Al-Jāmi’ li-Ahkām al-Qur’ān* (18:216).

¹³ *Al-Jāmi’ li-Ahkām al-Qur’ān* (18:216).

¹⁴ In his *Tafsīr* (18:281).

¹⁵ Narrated from Abū Hurayra and Ibn ‘Abbās by Sa‘īd ibn Mansūr, al-Tabarī in his *Tafsīr* (17:110, 20:19-20, 24:20), ‘Abd ibn Humayd, ‘Alī ibn Sa‘īd in *al-Tā’a wal-‘Iṣyān*, Abū Ya‘lā in his *Musnad*, Ibn al-Mundhir, al-Qattān in his *Mutawwalāt*, al-Tabarānī in his, Abū Mūsā al-Madīnī in his, Ibn Abī Hātim, Abū al-Shaykh in *al-‘Azama*, and al-Bayhaqī in *al-Ba‘th wal-Nushūr* as compiled by al-Suyūṭī in *al-Durr al-Manthūr* (6:384, 7:256). Also narrated from Ibn ‘Abbās by Ibn Kathīr (2:147, 3:205, 3:378), al-Qurṭubī (13:241, also in *al-Tadhkira*), al-Tha‘ālibī (3:70), Ibn al-Jawzī (6:195), al-Shawkānī (4:155), and al-Nahḥās (5:149).

¹⁶ In the *Tadhkira*. Al-Suyūṭī mentioned it in *Sharḥ al-Ṣudūr* (p. 311=p.403).