

THE BROKEN CHAIN

Reflections upon the neglect of a tradition



AFTAB AHMAD MALIK

with a foreword by

MASUD AHMED KHAN

L I M I T E D E D I T I O N



THIS BOOK BRINGS TO LIGHT the classical scholarly views in order to illuminate a number of seemingly intractable controversies evident in MSAs, university campuses and mosques in the West. It aims specifically to understand the breadth and depth of traditional Islamic scholasticism, which has now given way to certain narrow reformist and revisionist interpretations.

This accessible work should be of value to anyone interested in understanding the impact of divergent opinion within the Muslim community today and in taking steps to resolve differences amicably.

'...Malik addresses the key issues of the day...This is an important, accessible and timely work that summarizes the traditional scholarship that has become available to English-speaking Muslims in the last decade or so.'

Q-News Magazine

'...this book goes a long way in clarifying many argumentative hot-topics that are flying around on University campuses today. A must read for anyone who wants to understand the legacy of rich scholarly tradition that the Islamic Civilisation produced!'

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'...courageously addresses the global problem of faulty and literal interpretation of books, otherwise known as the 'I read a book, I'm a scholar on the subject' syndrome, widely seen on campuses and mosques.'

Asma Haidri, MSA Co-President, University of Iowa

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More Reviews of *The Broken Chain* (from the first edition)

“Hard-hitting ... well researched wake-up call for all Muslims in the west”

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—Dr. Laleh Bakhtiar, *Encyclopedia of Muhammad's Women Companions and the Traditions They Related*

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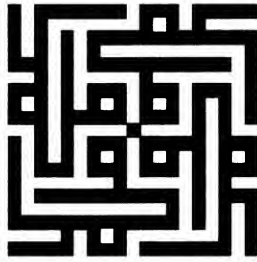
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“University campuses are rife with self-styled mini-ulama, angry young people who have read a few books on Islam...coupled with modern—technology of searchable databases of the sacred texts and the Internet. They are then deluded into thinking that they have properly read and understood the works and are qualified to give opinions on them and other issues...Malik shows concisely and clearly that knowledge must be obtained from a living scholar and thereby reconnecting the "Broken Chain" and becoming part of the "Unbroken Chain" of a living tradition stretching back to the source of this great religion of Islam.”

—Masud.co.uk

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S P E C I A L L I M I T E D 2 0 0 2 E D I T I O N

“This knowledge is religion, so look well to
whom you are taking your religion from”.

—*Imam al-Zuhri (d.124)*

[...] I am conscious of imperfections when I look at the work of scholars past and present. I confess my inability to penetrate so difficult a subject. I wish that men of scholarly competence and wide knowledge would look at the book with a critical, rather than complacent eye, and silently correct and overlook the mistakes they come upon. The capital of knowledge that an individual scholar has to offer is small. Admission (of one's shortcomings) saves from the censure. Kindness from colleagues is hoped for. It is God whom I ask to make our deeds acceptable in His sight. He is a good protector.

— Ibn Khaldun, *al-Muqaddimah*

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F O R E W O R D

ALL PRAISE IS DUE TO ALLAH who has placed in man a divine gift of the expression of love. Peace and blessings be upon our Master the Beloved of Allah, Muhammad al-Mustafa who is the object of praise and love amongst the Ulama, the Salhin and the common folk throughout the ages of our Umma. He (May Allah bless him and give him peace) is loved and praise by the Believers in preference to everything including their own selves. He is adored by the physical and unseen realms, by animate and inanimate objects. He softens even the most hardest of hearts by his immense and unparalleled character with the Light of Allah that he reflects throughout the whole universe.

What can one write in honour and praise of the Best of All Creation that hasn't already been written by those who have gone before us? What can we write that will do justice to the personality and being of he who is praised by Allah (The Most High) Himself. In short it is not possible to even imagine that we can do justice to someone whose *maqam* (status) increases every second of everyday. Each act of worship, each good deed, each Prophetic Sunna performed by the believers is attributed to the Prophet (May Allah bless him and give him peace) through which his status is elevated.

We know that there are certain acts of worship that carry on after we depart from this world. If we have ever taught anyone how to pray, read the Qur'an or make supplications and such like, every time that person carries out that act we have a share in it. If that person then teaches someone else those very same acts of worship then you obtain a share from that person as well and so on. The potential for amassing a great deal of reward in the afterlife is immense. What then of the status of someone who is the fountainhead of all our acts of worship (May Allah bless him and grant him peace)?

The present work has been a real labour of love for the author. He has spent a great deal of time writing and researching it. Relying exclusively upon

authoritative Classical texts, he also has taken it upon himself to ensure that this book would be a valuable resource on the veneration of the prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace). He contextualises the current malaise of Islamic knowledge and the confusion over various issues that have been raised. The present work is not a polemical piece but rather aims at providing missing bits of information that make up the whole picture. The author has gone through university life and draws upon his experience as a student on campus discussing these issues with other Muslims ranging from the apathetic, through to the liberals, to those shouting for the Caliphate and to those whose Islam is an ultra-literal rigid "my way or the highway" system.

Alhamdulillah, moves are now afoot amongst orthodox Muslims to establish learning and acquisition of knowledge in a traditional fashion, whereas before we were content with information by any means. This acquisition of knowledge is facilitated by various Din Intensive and LightStudy courses [<http://www.lightstudy.org>] that have been on going for a number of years and the ever popular summer Rihla course organised by The Ibn Abbas Institute [<http://www.ibnabbas.org>]. These courses concentrate on the transmission of knowledge from a living shaykh who has ijazas or certificates of learning for the material he is teaching. Students not only gain the knowledge but also benefit from the explanation of the subtleties of the text which a casual reader may miss. They also gain the barakah or blessing from receiving the transmission of the text and take their place in a long chain back to the source, the Prophet (May Allah bless him and give him peace). Finally and most importantly the most beneficial thing they learn is the *adab* or the etiquette of receiving knowledge. The importance of adab cannot be understated or under-estimated, since one realises that the more he learns the more he realises he doesn't know and this is a very humbling experience. He then realises that there is room for *ikhtilaf* or difference of opinion and is less hasty to condemn and judge others who may differ. Indeed he realises that this *ikhtilaf* is a mercy and that the Shariah is flexible to a point and not a primitive black and white affair that some would have us believe. There is such a severe lack of adab amongst the debators that one wonders whose sunna they are following, when we are told to use the best speech with non-Muslims what then of those who share the Qibla with us? We get into areas of speculative theology that would make the most eminent of our ulama turn cold and yet we carry on regardless. We touch on subjects which previously were left untouched precisely because they would affect the iman of the lay-people who have no frame of reference to answer

them.

The distinction between "knowledge" and "information" is important, but it is one that many people cannot make. How often have we seen young people arguing about the Caliphate or the attributes of Allah based on information rather than knowledge? They rattle off this ayat and that hadith without actually knowing them and receiving them from a living scholar and not knowing the literal and historical context of what they are narrating. This leads me onto my next point, knowing our scholars. Many of us are ignorant of the heritage of our scholars and the main reason is that we are disconnected from them. We take their knowledge from translated books, in some cases heavily edited [read: censored] with whole sections removed or changed. We have to look carefully into whom we are taking our knowledge from and it is important that we take our Islam from the most widely accepted scholars of our din. It is important that we know them, their rank and what they specialised in.

As stated earlier, this book presents the reader with additional information and context for some of the discussions and arguments heard around university campuses and outside mosques, information that is usually concealed or not known by those who would have you believe that what they say is the absolute truth. They go to lengths to try and prove that what other Muslims do are bida'h, shirk or kufr and this is not based on real knowledge, in essence they condemn what they do not know when it would be safer to admit ignorance and say "Allah knows best".

And Allah-knows best.

Mas'ud Ahmed Khan

www.masud.co.uk

A U T H O R ' S N O T E

SOME MAY QUESTION WHY a limited edition of this book has been published, and this is a fair question to ask. Since demand for the first edition of *The Broken Chain* took me somewhat by surprise, I have been asked by bookstores and individuals to release a re-print. However, realising that there can always be room for improvement, I requested more time to continue and expand the research required for subjects covered in the book for inclusion in any future edition.

As time passed and the e-mails continued, I was finally persuaded to publish a limited run of the current book, with what research I have so far undertaken. Apart from cosmetic changes, I have used one translated version of the Qur'an rather than several—to create more consistency. In using quotes—I have not altered the spellings used by authors, to match my own spelling. However, most important of all, are the extra notes in this edition, which amount to some extra 40 pages from the previous edition. Importantly, when writing these notes, I have not departed from using the 'ulama as my 'checks and balance', and have ensured that there are full references for people to check and verify what is contained within them. Again, I am not conveying to the readers my opinions; rather, I am conveying what our scholars have handed down to us.

A.A.M
August 2002

I N T R O D U C T I O N

THE THEME OF THIS BOOK looks at the distortion of traditional scholarship within Islam that has occurred, due to a break in the transmission or a paralysis of knowledge. Looking specifically at how the Prophet of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, has been venerated in a tradition that began from the time of the first generation of Muslims, the book simply attempts to convey to the reader what has stemmed from over a thousand years of scholarship. Divided into three parts - Part I examines issues such as:

- The demise of the Caliphate and the rise of Islamic movements
- The rise of the phenomena of Modernism as a reaction to Europe
- The impact of the printing press upon the manner knowledge was sought, and
- The reconstruction of the traditional method of acquiring knowledge

and tries to trace back where and how this break in transmission occurred and what its consequences are for Muslims of today.

Being an analysis and examination of the consequences of events, Part I tries to outline how the deconstruction of understanding traditional learning and scholarship took place, while Part II begins to unravel how the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was praised by means of poetry. It also questions why some publishing houses choose to censor many of the early eulogies of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, that deprive us the insight of how the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace was truly recognised from the very earliest of generations. Part III then attempts to reconstruct the traditional esteem in which the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was revered by specifically looking at how he was venerated throughout the history of Islam, starting by his Companions, may Allah be pleased with them.

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This section tries to capture the sense of the inability of Muslims to truly understand who the Messenger of Allah is, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and serves well to demonstrate vividly how we have strayed from the tradition of just praise of the ‘the one who is oft praised.’ This is attempted by referring to what had been said and passed down by the *Salaf al-Salihin*, *Khalaf al-Sidiqin* and the scholars of Sunna and Jama’a.

It is beyond a shadow of a doubt that juristic differences are a mercy for this Umma from Allah, and hence I am acutely aware from indulging in condemning others who follow a different understanding where there is *ikhtilaf* amongst the *fuqaha*. *Imam al-Bayhaqi* records that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: ‘The differences that occur among my Umma are a mercy’¹. Echoing the essence of these prophetic words, ‘*Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz* declared: ‘It would not please me if the Companions of Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had not disagreed, for had they not done so, no mercy would have come down.’ In today’s culture that breeds an ‘it’s my way or the high way’ type mentality, we are grossly unaware of the tolerance that was once manifest throughout the Islamic world of divergent interpretations upon varying issues—so long as they were held by reputable scholars. *Sufyan al-Thawri* once said that: ‘If you see a man doing something over which there is a debate among the scholars, and which you yourself believe to be forbidden, you should not forbid him from doing it.’² *Imam Nawawi* and even *Ibn Taymiya* mentioned something along similar lines: ‘Scholars only protest against that which musters unanimous consensus: as for what does not muster unanimous consensus, then there is no permission to protest.’³ Where such a consensus occurs—I only reiterate it, and not invent one out of convenience.

In this book, I seek to clarify areas where there is often confusion matched only by the lack of knowledge of the rich scholarship that confirms the diversity of a traditional Islamic approach. *Yahya ibn Sa’id* (who was one of the great hadith narrators among the Followers (Tabi’un) said: ‘The people of knowledge are a people of broadness (*ahl taws’a*). They continue to give fatwas which are different from each other, and no scholar reproaches another scholar for his opinion.’

In the modern world, such an emphasis is placed in controlling and possessing information that this often is confused with acquiring knowledge. Of course, the acquisition of the latter is not as simple as it may initially seem and without conditions. Information does not necessarily mean knowledge,

and the line that differentiates the two is examined in light of what the *Salaf* and the succeeding generations of scholars understood it to be—and more precisely—the importance of *adab*. As *Imam Zakariya al-Anbari* once said: ‘Knowledge without *adab* is like fire without wood, and *adab* without knowledge is like a spirit without a body’.⁴

The centrality of *adab* and its relationship with knowledge has always been at the root of the Islamic tradition. Whereas for some, the time in which information can be accessed would depend upon the speed of one’s modem, for the one who is firmly rooted with the tradition of acquiring knowledge, it has always been understood that the latter can only be truly acquired ‘painstakingly at the hands of those who know’.⁵ Unfortunately today, the Qur’anic injunction to ‘ask the people of remembrance if you do not know’⁶ and the associated divine question ‘are they the same those who know and those who do not know?’⁷ seems to have been lost within the quagmire of information overload produced by the hi-tech age of the Internet. The book provides some general insight on the honour and prestige given to the people of learning,⁸ which has sadly been eroded and ignored in a time where Muslims cry such slogans as ‘we’re men and they’re men’, and which has had some disastrous consequences for this Umma.

It appears that many university campuses have now become the home ground to explosive debates and discussions on issues that even the most senior of the *fugaha* refrained from passing opinions. In doing so, often without at times realizing it, people actually mock the learned opinions of the scholars if it is found to be contradicting their own. Armed with a few books and tapes, the student who has perhaps never studied in any formal way, thinks himself capable and able to have an opinion on almost anything. *Ibn Mas’ud*, may Allah be pleased with, once said: ‘You will be prosperous as long as knowledge is in the possession of your seniors, but if it is transferred to the subordinates, then they will mock their seniors’. Muslims take so much care not to fall into the haram, but when it comes to the tongue, the scrupulousness is lost. Muslims seem unrepentant upon pronouncing their own judgments and views of people and the opinionated seem to be unaware of what their own tongues are harvesting. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, told *Mu’adh ibn Jabal*, may Allah be pleased with him: ‘Is there anything which drags people into the Fire on their faces other than the harvest of their tongues?’ And, it is established that he said: ‘Whoever believes in Allah and the last day, let him say [something] good or keep silent’. And, it is narrated that he advised

‘Uqbah ibn ‘Amir, may Allah be pleased with him: ‘Hold your tongue, let your house contain you, and weep over your misdeeds’.

Imam al-Ghazzali in his *Ihya ‘Ulum al-Din*, has a profuse section on the Vices of the Tongue, which is a disease that has gripped this Umma due to our ignorance. We have become an Umma of armchair critics; we find it easier to criticize, pass comments and judgments. The distinguished historian and Hafiz, *Ibn ‘Asakir* of Damascus, also cautioned against letting our tongues loose against the scholars. He said:

Know, brother, that the flesh of scholars is poisonous [i.e. whoever backbites them is liable to poisoning, for the Qur'an likens backbiting to eating the flesh of one's dead brother], and the Way of Allah concerning those who insult them is well-known. So, whoever insults the scholars of this ummah by his tongue, Allah will afflict him in this [very] world by death of the heart.

We make the arguments of scholars our personal concern, which is tantamount of assuming that we have reached their levels of scholarship. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said:

The primacy of the scholar over the worshipper is like my authority over the lowest of you.' Then, the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said, 'Allah, and the angels, and the dwellers of the heavens and the earth, even to the extent of the ant in its hole, and the fish in the sea, send salutations on those who teach people the good.'⁹

The book is structured such that the main text of the book is purposely a very light introduction to the detailed essays that form the bulk of the book—the footnotes. Some people may find it cumbersome to read them, but for others who want to explore the diversity of opinions, historical and scholarly discussions that took place behind many of the issues so frequently and emotionally discussed on university campuses and in the Mosques—they will hopefully find a ‘series of well-referenced mini essays’¹⁰. While I make no claims for the footnotes as being comprehensive—the idea is for the footnotes to allow readers to reflect upon areas they perhaps had not previously given much thought to—or had not known had even existed. Perchance, the footnotes might incentive others to go out and research further, with the references providing good starting points from where to begin the study.

With so many scholars intentionally mentioned in the book, I hope to

convey to the readers their opinions—as opposed to mine. Simply mentioning names often does not help those unacquainted with the stature, position and authority of the scholars mentioned here, and as such, I have included a biography of the most often cited towards the end of the book.

Lastly, but importantly, needless to say, being human, mistakes will make their appearances in this book. Although I have tried my very best to limit them, if any inaccuracies are found I welcome any corrections. As it has been said of Imam al-Shafi'i that when he reviewed his *Risala* over forty times, he continued to find small mistakes in it. He finally gave up and said, 'Only the Book of Allah, is a book which is free from error'. I kind of know how he must have felt!

Wa ma tawfiq illa bi'Llah

Aftab Ahmad Malik

aftab@amalpress.com

Bristol (UK)

August, 2002

- 1 For an elucidation upon this hadith, refer to:
<http://66.34.131.5/ISLAM/misc/ikhtilaf.htm>
- 2 See: al-Dajaw, Imam, *Maqalat wa-Fatawa* (Cairo: Majmu' al-Buhuth al-Islamiya) 1492, II, 583, and 575, for what issues are raised when discussing a difference of opinions
- 3 Al-Nawawi, *Sharh Sahih Muslim*, Chapter entitled: *Al-Amr bi al-Ma' ruf wa al-Nahy 'an al-Munkar*, (hadith of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace). This statement is reiterated verbatim by Ibn Taymiya in *Majm' al-Fatawa al-Kubra* (Dar al-Ma' rifa edition, 2:33)
- 4 Ghudda, Shaykh Abdul Fattah, *Islamic Manners*, Translated by Abu Ghudda, Muhammad Zahid (Awakening Publications: Swansea, Wales) 2001, p 1
- 5 al-Zarnuji, Imam, *Instruction of the Student: The Method of Learning*, Translated by Grunebaum, G.E Von and Abel, Theodora M, (The Starlatch Press: Chicago) 2001, p viii
- 6 Qur'an 16:43 and 21:7
- 7 Qur'an 39:9
- 8 There exists a huge corpus of literature regarding the honour and status given to the people of knowledge, which have been conveyed in the writings of the scholars—who have based their writings on the various hadiths mentioning 'ilm and those dedicated in acquiring and teaching it. For example, a hadith related by Ibn Najjar states: 'The scholars are leaders and the pious are sought for help in times of need and the gatherings of both lead to increase.' A hadith related by Imam Ahmad states: 'Scholars are the inheritors of the Prophets'. In Imam Tirmidhi's collection, he relates that: 'The preference of a scholar over a devout worshipper is like the preference of your Prophet over the least of you'. Finally, Qadi 'Iyad mentions in his *Tartib al-Madarik* that: 'The position of a scholar of Sacred Law in relation to an ignorant person is like the position of a prophet in relation to those to whom he was sent'.
- 9 It was narrated by Tirmidhi, who said it is a fair, authentic hadith. (Tirmidhi's *Sunan*, Book of Knowledge, 5:48-49, #2685. He said it is a rare hadith).
- 10 Q-News Review of the first edition: *Q-News: The Muslim Magazine*, No. 333, July 2001, p 32

PART ONE

Understanding where we are today

مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُوْلُ اللهِ

The two feet of the son of Adam will not move from near his Lord on the Day of Judgment until he is asked about five (matters): about his life - how he spent it; about his youth – how he took care of it; about his wealth - how he earned it and where he spent it; and about that which he acted upon from the knowledge he acquired. (al-Tirmidhi)

CONTEXT. ITS SIGNIFICANCE CANNOT BE OVERSTATED. One can take something out of context thereby radically altering what the original message or meaning was, and it is only by placing it back into its appropriate context that a true understanding materialises. Love for the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is *the* central means to come to know the *Tawhid* of Allah. It was through His noble Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, that thousands upon millions have been brought back to life from their deep slumber of ignorance and come to realise salvation. As a poet once said:

Your brother 'Isa – he called a dead man and he got up for him,
But you, O Muhammad, brought generations to life from non-existence

Loving the Prophet of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, unlocks the keys to life – since by loving him, you come to obey him, and by obeying him, you obey Allah, *The Majestic*. Indeed, Allah has commanded us

to love Him which itself can only be achieved through the means of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, as Allah commands: “*Say: If you love Allah, then follow me; for then Allah will love you, and forgive your sins. Allah is Forgiving, Compassionate*”² Love is the driving force that leads to action and which requires understanding; and understanding itself then necessitates action. The Khurasanian scholar Muhammad al-‘Amiri said that *knowledge is a starting point of action, and action is the perfection of knowledge*, while Imam al-Ghazali remarked that: ‘*Knowledge without action is insanity and action without knowledge is vanity*’.

This book is written within a context of trying to realise the greatness of the final Messenger of Allah, Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. In turn, the context within which the love of the Messenger of Allah is placed, and always has been, is that of obeying Allah’s commands – to enjoin the good and forbid the evil, upon ourselves and to the rest of society where we can;³ for it will be the quality of the individual that will define the richness of a society. After all, societies are comprised of individuals.⁴ The transformative power of Islam lies in its ability to *change* the human condition. Transforming individuals, Islam thereby transforms societies into something authentic and genuine. Its power lies in its ability to change the way in which people view reality, whereby it issues an invitation to those who are chained to the *dunya*, blinded by its superficial allure. The people around the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, all embraced the Qur’an and adopted the Sunna of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, in all aspects of their lives, thus becoming people of *shifā* (cure). For the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was sent to treat the diseases that stemmed from *shirk* and to bring mankind back to the way of tawhid. In this spirit, the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, carried with them this divine remedy for the diseased hearts and minds and set to cure the affliction by taking the call to Allah out to the people around them.

Who do we have today to prevent wrongs and ills, creeping like a menacing shadow into the hearts and minds of the Muslims? Today, we have only one another and ourselves. This not only has an individual implication, but one that rather encapsulates the surrounding community that we find ourselves part of. After all, how many of us can avoid all social interaction with the outside world? Many (if not all) of us live within a community that is coloured predominantly by a non-Islamic culture. We live within an environment where promiscuity is open and is perpetuated from a young age by the mixing

between the two sexes at schools. It is seen as part of experiencing the life of a 'normal healthy teenager,' and anything other than it is seen as odd behaviour. Advertising has become more explicit in content and has now spread from the limited confines of the television and magazine space onto large Billboards. Being strategically located in areas where they would have the greatest exposure, make it almost impossible not to make eye contact, even if for a split second.

The behavior of growing children is influenced by many factors that also include the surrounding environment. Muslim children, although distinct in their moral framework, are exposed to and affected by what they see and learn. It has been said of them, '*They are like molten cement. Anything that falls on them makes a lasting impression.*' As they grow, their organs of reception start developing and accept new ideas and influences. It is up to us to screen the experiential factors that influence a child's development so that they can learn to accept the correct ideas and behaviors and reject the objectionable influences. Statistics from the United States demonstrate that parents have only 25% influence over a 6-16 year old child. 50% is by peers at school or in the community,⁵ and the remaining 25% is from the teachers and other sources of education outside the home (mainly television and magazines for older youths). The influence of parents is high during early age (0-8 years, up to 80%), but as the child discovers new friends and ideas, he or she grows independent from the influence of parents. Social interaction between youth, both inside and outside school, almost guarantee an adoption of predominant attitudes and ideals, and this does not exclude Muslims. Problems that appear in one part of the community do not in itself generate immunity from it simply because of distance. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said:

Allah does not punish the individuals for the sins of the community until they see the evil spreading among themselves, and while they have the power to stop it, do not do so.⁶

Corruption can occur through so many different means, and it can be so subtle at times like diseases that spread within the human body attacking the immune system without any outward indication of the destruction and inward decay that it is pursuing. This process of corruption can continue for some years until it is detected and diagnosed only to realise that the decay is too

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severe and that there can be no reversal. Like the immune system, Islam too protects us from all harmful pollutants, but this can only occur if we are *aware* of what constitutes harm. We do not even need to step outside our houses to be attacked by the lowest forms of society but more so are attacked in our very homes - yet we allow this to occur without realising it. The endless choice of cable and satellite channels now provides our fingers a greater variety from where our eyes can commit the sin of *zina* (adultery of the eyes). Being exposed for so long to elements which are harmful both to the soul as well as the intellect has created a 'numbing down,' an almost 'de-sensitising' effect amongst the Muslims: we no longer recognise the *munkar* as the *munkar* but rather accept it as aspects and part of the predominant culture that we live within. How then, can a people seek to correct a thing when it is no longer seen as constituting harm?

We should be able to clearly observe that if we do not impact upon our communities and societies, they will impact upon our children and ourselves - and if we do not change what is around us, we will be changed by the society that surrounds us. History is replete with examples of nations that wielded power, conquered neighbours and raised empires but could not survive the decay stemming from the disintegration of the family. Sodom, Gomorrah, Iram, Greece, Rome, Babylon all vanished from the face of the Earth when the family system degenerated. Family is the bedrock of a healthy society, it is that which constitute a community, or in a more accurate sense, the Umma. How can we be so oblivious to the fact that there are elements in this society that nurture the lowest aspects of the human soul from which moral decay is but only one by-product? As Muslims, we have been given the blue print of creation and we should be able to understand creation like no other. We need to take this Message out to the people, not only to prevent themselves from continuing to destroy all that are around them, but to also prevent us from being pulled into the wake of their destructive path, which they themselves are oblivious to.

We live in a society that is very topical – issues that occur are pounced upon with commentaries and views and opinions. Do we have a voice by which we can inform people of what Islam offers in the consequences of the turbulence from modern living? We need to look at contemporary issues and see how best they should be dealt with. What about *dawah*, or the lack thereof? How long have we lived amongst non-Muslims and what have we done to introduce our Din to them? There are some Muslims that view each and every non-Muslim as an enemy of Islam and as individually representing everything that is

anathema to Islam. We need to understand the societies that we are living in so that we might carry out dawah in the best and productive manner. Anger and frustration certainly will grab attention – but is this attention that we want? Most non-Muslims already have a negative understanding of Islam and Muslims, so is it wise to begin an invitation by resorting to stereotypical behaviour? Are we not creating hurdles for ourselves, when there need not be any? The engagement is that which is often rooted in aggression and frustration. When the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was stoned by the slaves, children and women of Ta'if, he told Jibril *'alayhis salam* that he did not want him to destroy the city and its inhabitants, but rather, he was concerned about the future of the children and he supplicated that they become Muslims.

We can learn a lesson from this. Do we view the kuffar as simply kuffar, or do we view each one as a potential Muslim? This will affect the attitude that we have when carrying out the dawah. Do we want to argue and dispute with people and to show how inferior they and their culture are, or do we wish to convey to them the beauty of Islam? There is a clear difference between the two approaches. Allah reminds us in the Qur'an to: "*Call to the path of your Lord with wisdom and kindly exhortion, anmd reason with them in the most corteous manner*"⁷ while concerning the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, Allah says: "*It was by the mercy of Allah that you were lenient with them [O Muhammad]. Had you been stern and hard-hearted, they would surely have dispersed from around you.*"⁸ This is how our Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, conveyed the Message of Islam to the people around him. We are further reminded that:

The Messenger of Allah [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] neither spoke in an insulting manner nor did he ever speak evil intentionally. He, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, used to say, 'The most beloved to me among you is the one who has the best character and manners.'⁹

The methods of dawah are as diverse as the people living in a society. It is a sign of the times when there has been a specific area allocated to worship Allah in a community and the non-Muslims that live around that area neither have heard of Allah; neither know who Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is; neither understand what the beliefs of a Muslim are; neither have been told what Islam bought to humankind nor what it offers, or have even

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received the call of dawah. One could have safely assumed that by living here for so long, we would have by now known the productive methods of conveying dawah as well as being able to understand our environment and the people around us.

Many Muslims have graduated from universities and are working in a sphere of people who most likely have had no personal contact with Muslims, and only have taken their understanding about Islam and Muslims from the media. We have a very special opportunity here in presenting Islam to them, so let us not waste it. There are some Muslims who work alongside non-Muslims, but will not speak about their Din, some treating the fact that they are Muslim as some sort of handicap, while others possibly from apprehension as to what their colleagues may think of them. If this is a concern, other means should be sought to convey some form of dawah - let your actions be your words. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said:

Nothing will be heavier in the balance of a believing servant on the Day of Judgment than good conduct. Allah abhors one who is obscene and inclined to loose talk¹⁰

and Abu Hurayra, may Allah be pleased with him, said that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: “*The thing that will make the majority of people enter Paradise is piety to Allah and good manners.*”¹¹ The stress upon *akhlaq* and *adab* in all situations, can be found reported in many different narrations, but the emphasis always remains the same, namely that: “*The most perfect believer in respect of faith is he who is best of them in manners.*”¹² People should not be in haste to dismiss the importance of courtesy – the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, went at lengths to emphasise its critical role – and he, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, did nothing except for it would bring you closer to Allah and earn you His pleasure. The place of work can serve to be a very fertile ground for dawah, from where individuals can become acquainted with the characteristics of another that stand out from the rest.

It has become more than apparent that the Muslims in this modern age have lost their orientation. The problem can be traced back through many routes and times, such as the period of the *Tanzimat*. Here, the directions taken by the Muslims to abate the Western onslaught (intellectually and as physically) were so severe that ultimately, they would contribute to the collapse of the Caliphate.

This period of reform marked the steady decline in the influence of traditional *ulama* which by the nineteenth century witnessed the arrival of men who believed it necessary to borrow from Europe and who regarded the *ulama* as a hindrance to the project of reviving the Muslims. The common view shared within these reformist circles was that Muslims now had to '*master the sciences that gave Europe a technological advantage,*' and this had no place for religious education.¹³ The process continued to take place throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century, where the Muslim reaction to the challenge of an ongoing presence of Europe in the Muslim heartlands resulted in a re-form of Islam as opposed to a renewal. Seyyed Hossein Nasr illustrates that:

It is with this background in mind that we must turn to the events and reactions, some intellectual and cultural, some social and political, some moderate and some violent, which have taken place within the Islamic world [...] and which have affected the understanding of the Islamic world in the world at large as well as the understanding of the Muslims themselves.¹⁴

Bernard Lewis, in attempting to understand the nature of modernism deduced that it was a means by which the Islamic culture could shed its inhibitions and embrace much of the modern Western civilisation. He observes:

In every era of human history, modernity, or some equivalent term, has meant the ways, norms and standards of the dominant and expanding civilisation. Every dominant civilization has its own modernity in its prime...over a wide area and radiated (its) influence over a much broader one still, far beyond (its) imperial frontiers [...] Today, for the time being [...] the dominant civilisation is Western, and Western standards therefore, define modernity.¹⁵

This observation is also true at the time when the 'sick man of Europe' saw that salvation was in the sciences that made the West so great. The profound implications of the concept of 'modernism' itself can be traced back to the French revolution. Here a process was introduced into Western, European thought, where the higher levels of reality became eliminated. From now on man became the centrepiece of being and there was nothing higher than human reason. The Western renaissance had taught the modern man that there was no room for Revelation, since there was nothing higher in man than his reason, and reason dictated that there was no room for God. This process was

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then conveyed to the Muslims as Europe began expanding her colonial boundaries into the Muslim lands, but it was not taken in its entirety - since the severing of the divine from the life of man would be nothing short of Kufr. Rather, what occurred was the 'Islamization' of modernism of the Western experience, in which the trend in thought of the European renaissance was applied within an Islamic framework. The result was that the striking rationalism of the West was to be found in the minds of the intellectuals who reduced Islam into only one of its dimensions, namely the Shari'ah and the nature of man to the physical (body) and psychological (soul). However, according to the traditional view of man he has not two but three levels of being: the third being the spiritual.¹⁶ Thus, one of the profound effects that modernism had upon Islam was that there was no room for any spiritual development, whereas traditionally, Islam had stressed that the spiritual and the temporal are the two sides of the same coin.¹⁷

The only perceived way forward during that dark period was to abandon the centuries of scholasticism that was deemed outdated and unsuited for the modern world. The effects of the process of reform has also added to the compounded problem facing the present generation of Muslims, without at times even realising its gravity. I am referring to the loss of *adab*. Adab does not simply imply 'manners' but more so to *discipline* - the discipline of body, mind and the soul. Adab in the true sense of the word includes the discipline that assures the *recognition* and *acknowledgement* of one's proper place in relation to ones self, society and community; the *recognition* and *acknowledgement* of one's proper place in relation to one's physical, intellectual and spiritual capacities and potentials; the *recognition* and *acknowledgement* of the fact that knowledge and beings are ordered in degrees, levels and ranks. I am not trying to infer a hierarchy nor want to draw the parallels where oppression, exploitation and domination are legitimised, and certainly not in the English sense of the word.¹⁸ In stark *contradistinction* to this, I point to the ranks and degrees in the order of creation, the cosmic essence and the display of divine wisdom. Allah is *The Just* and He fashions and deploys all of His creation in justice so that we might recognise and acknowledge His just order.¹⁹

It can be clearly seen that Allah Most High in the Qur'an has differentiated between selected Prophets and others; between the earlier believers and the later believers; between times and places; between those whose belief holds complete sway over them and those who admix their faith with sins; between the *Anbiya'*, the *Siddiqin*, the *Shuhada'* and the *Salihin*; between the *Darajat* or levels that

the Believers receive from their Lord, between those who possess *hikma, fiqh, albab, absar, Iman*, as opposed to those who possess merely Islam; between those whose hearts shake at His mention as opposed to the rest. It is all about hierarchy even among the disbelievers, some being closer to belief than others. Hierarchy in Islam is decreed by Allah Most High: When Allah loves someone, He decrees it to Jibril who then announces it to the angels who then announces it in the heavens and the earth, and that person becomes beloved, their prayers answered, as mentioned in the hadith Qudsi:

[...] When I love him I am his hearing with which he hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes, and his foot with which he walks. Were he to ask something of Me, I would surely give it to him, and were he to ask refuge in Me, I would surely grant him it.

It was in reference to this just order that Imam al-Bayhaqi in his *Branches of Belief* recorded that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, warned his Umma not to 'equalise.' In another version, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: 'You will continue to be healthy as a society as long as you have degrees of excellence, but should you all become the same, you will be destroyed'. While it is the case that all people are equal before the Shari'ah—however in people's 'accomplishments and divine success (tawfiq), they differ markedly'.^{19a} Abu Dawud and al-Hakim reported as an authentic hadith that Maymun Ibn Abu Shabib recounted that a beggar stopped the Prophet's wife, A'isha and she gave him a piece of dry bread. At another time, a properly dressed, well groomed man asked her for food, and she let him sit and offered him a meal. When asked about this, she replied that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had said: 'Treat people according to their status'.

While Islam does not have an official ordained hierarchy like is present in Christianity and Judaism, it does nevertheless place the 'onus upon individuals to recognize who their scholars and leaders are through recognition of excellence in their works and deeds'.^{19b} 'Equalising', and assuming all people 'are the same' provokes a warning and infers a consequence as recorded above. Traditionally, it has been understood that not everybody is equally fitted to understand the same things. The modern notion of equality that this generation of Muslims have been exposed to for so long, breeds the inability to recognise peoples' natures. 'Equality' cannot exist anywhere between two beings

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because there cannot be two distinct beings that are at the same time alike in every respect. When the Angels prostrated to Adam, upon whom be peace, were they worshipping him? Indeed, they were obeying Allah, and *recognising and acknowledging* the superior knowledge bestowed upon him. It was Iblis who did not recognise nor acknowledge Adam's superior nature. Allah Himself mentions that He does not burden a soul more than it can bear²⁰ which reveals that even souls themselves are not equal in their capacity. Not everybody is equally fitted to understand the same things. The striking individualism that the western educational model provides for Muslims as a framework has had a devastating effect when it comes to recognition of authority in Islam. Adab refers to the right and proper place of things – a loss of it would result in an inability to recognise and acknowledge that there are degrees and levels of righteousness and knowledge, which in itself would result in an improper self-appointed rank. In respect to the individual, the confusion that exists around adab and knowledge allows the society to breed an overwhelming sort of individualism; he thinks himself equal to others – when in fact they are superior to him. He thinks he knows, when in fact, he knows not his relation to others.

The chief characteristic symptom of the loss of adab, has been the *leveling* within the Umma: everyone is brought down to the same level of the person who is leveling both in mentality and attitude. The loss of adab does not simply imply a loss of knowledge but also a loss in the capacity and ability to recognise and acknowledge true teachers – true 'ulama. If everyone is now leveled and is placed on the same ground as the leveler – how can the true pioneers stand out above the rest? The confusion that exists around knowledge of the Din must first be approached by understanding the adab to knowledge and the impact of a loss of it – for no true knowledge can be instilled without the precondition of adab in the one who seeks it and to whom it is imparted. Take for example the Qur'an – the source of all true Knowledge. Allah Himself commands that it cannot be touched save through the prescribed adab of wudhu' – ritual purity. One needs to be purified before they can advance to attain knowledge. Indeed, *Ibadah* itself in its entirety is but another expression of adab towards Allah Himself. Without understanding that adab exists, in reality, the individual is free to do as he or she wishes, or believes to be true. Knowledge must be approached reverently and in humility, and it cannot be simply possessed. Where knowledge and the acquiring of it is concerned in the Islamic framework, it is done so upon *authority*, and it was this authority that was so vehemently attacked as being the root cause of the malaise of the Umma,

which then resulted in acceptance of any individual to derive their own understandings from the hadith literature. This then resulted in the abandonment of the continuous generations of scholasticism that had accrued over a millennia and the lowering of rank of our Imams into empty slogans: *they're men and we're men.*²¹

Today, the discussion and terminology that we use goes back to this almost neo-rationalist period, whereupon Muslims began to radically re-interpret much of the classical works to adjust and fit the understanding in the modern discourse and age. The effect of that process today, is that in almost all areas where the traditional 'ulama agreed and accepted, is given no credence to or even flatly rejected today because of the uncomfortable position of 'anti-intellectualism' position it holds within the contemporary lifestyle and mindset of some Muslims today. It is as Nazim Baksh observes:

[In popular discourse] to be traditional is to adamantly cling to the past. From this perspective, tradition is not only diametrically opposed to modernity; it represents a distinct historical period from which modernity saved the world by liberating itself from the shackles of tradition.²²

That tradition was attacked as being something which was stagnant as opposed to being dynamic was a far cry from reality, when in fact tradition:

was never static nor monolithic, but was instead varied and constantly evolving over time. The accusation of rigidity was hurled at tradition [...] by the architects of colonization in order to establish the colonizer's hegemony over the colonized. Ultimately, in order for the colonizer to succeed in his colonization, the modern had to be cast as superior to the existing order. And thus the only reason why civilizations of old were destroyed, the argument goes, was because they failed to develop, progress, and to change. In other words, leave the old and dilapidated and get with the new program.²³

It is far more accurate to think of Islamic tradition as a living organism with the Qur'an and the Sunna as its genes. A living organism - a plant or a human being - grows and changes during its lifetime and yet the blueprint of this growth and change, is already in its genes. In the same way the Islamic tradition grows and changes with time but the pattern of its growth and change is once and for all fixed in the Qur'an and the Sunna. For example, the sciences of *Hadith*, *Fiqh* and *Kalam* did not exist in the earliest period of history as we know them today, yet they have been accepted as legitimate and crucial Islamic

developments. This would not have been possible if Islamic tradition were not something living and growing but dead and fixed. The fact that Islamic tradition grows continuously does not mean that revelation did not come to an end with the Prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, or that it was not perfected by his work. For the entire growing Islamic tradition *is* the Prophet's work, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. It is like a planter who plants a tree and the tree that continues to grow even after the planter departs from this world.

Much argumentation stems from ignorance, and the confusion that stems from it. Today, certain people have created a great deal of friction and animosity amongst Muslims by re-opening old doctrinal matters as a matter of acrimonious debate among a largely uneducated people, a debate which would be deplorable among the learned let alone the uneducated. Everyone has to have their say, even upon issues that they really fully do not grasp.²⁴ It has always been understood within the scholastic circles that in areas where there is disagreement amongst the scholars of *ijtihad*, it is not permissible to object to *actions being done based upon sound ijtihad nor to object to it not being done*. However, armed with a modern education, Muslims can freely object, reject, condemn and criticise any of the scholars and their outcomes of *ijtihad*, simply on the basis that they 'feel' that it is wrong. Shaykh 'Uthman Dan Fodio writes in his *Najm 'l-Ikhwari*:

Realise brothers that argumentation without knowledge causes the loss of much good and leads the ones arguing to invalidate a path from one of the paths of shari'a [...] It says in the prophetic tradition, 'Verily the shari'a came in three hundred and thirteen paths. There is not a single path from among them which a servant takes except that by means of it his Lord will enter him into Paradise.' This has been related by al-Tabarani and others. For if a person knows all these paths and he sees a path that contradicts these paths, then he has the right to argue concerning it. However, if he is ignorant of even a single path, then it is not possible for him to enter into dispute or perhaps he will invalidate by his arguments one of the paths of the shari'a, or perhaps he refuses to act by it and loses much good. As a result, he becomes counted among those who reject the shari'a.²⁵

While 'Izz Ibn 'Abd al-Salam concluded that:

Objection (*inkar*) can only pertain to that about which there is agreement concerning its obligation (*I'jab*) or its prohibition (*tahrim*). Whoever avoids that

which there is a difference of opinion concerning its obligation; or performs an act in which there is a difference of opinion concerning its prohibition (while following the scholars) – then there is no objection against him [...] There is no objection to him because he is not committing something that is clearly forbidden [...]²⁶

Underpinning this all is the assertion of knowledge, and more precisely, the actual manner by which we gain this. There is also the misunderstanding that exists between knowledge and information. Imam Malik has been reported to have said, “*knowledge is a light which Allah places where he wills; it is not a great deal of narration.*” In this way we would distinguish between information and knowledge. Information can be gathered as data is by a computer, but that is different from having knowledge. The Salaf regarded one’s knowledge as something by which one is judged, so that it is either a witness for or against one.²⁷ It was for this reason that unlike today, the Salaf were far from eager to answer the legal questions of the people. ‘Abd al-Rahman Ibn Laila, may Allah be pleased with him said that:

I have seen one hundred and twenty Companions from the Ansar (and) whenever anyone asked them a religious question they would always refer it to the next person, who in turn would refer it to the next and so on until it returned to the first.

‘Ata Ibn al-Sa’ib, may Allah be pleased with him, said that:

I have seen many of the people (of the first and second generations) and if anyone was to ask them a question they would tremble out of fear of Allah.

It has been narrated that whenever Imam Shafi’i was asked a question, he would not answer immediately. Upon being asked why he was not answering, he would reply, “*Not until I know which is better, to keep silent or to answer.*” Of Imam Ahmad, it has been related by al-Athram who said that he always used to hear Ahmad Ibn Hanbal saying “*‘I don’t know,’ and he is well known for this answer.*” Imam Malik was once asked fifty questions, where he did not answer a single one, and then he would say:

One who wishes to answer any questions, must before answering, look at himself (present himself) in front of heaven and hell (contemplating about

them) and ask himself what will save him from the fire; then after this, he may answer.²⁸

When it came to the compilation, audition and the narration of hadiths, there was a science and an adab that was involved. Imam Malik used to perform wadhu, wear his turban and put scent on even before he transmitted a hadith. He followed the tradition of the Salaf who lowered their voices when relating hadiths and remained silent when hearing hadiths – since it was as if the Messenger of Allah himself were speaking. Imam Malik once had a man flogged for standing while relating hadiths, which causes one to think what state are we in when it comes to this affair. The early scholars knew the worth and value of hadiths, which are not simply words, something which some have reduced them to today. We find that people are more interested in winning their argument than actually benefiting and internalising the knowledge that they gain. Imam Shafi'i said:

Knowledge is not (only) that which is committed to memory, (the actual) knowledge is that which is benefited. The benefit of knowledge is calmness (with the fear of Allah), demure, submission and humility for Allah.²⁹

Jabir, may Allah be pleased with him, said that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said:

Do not acquire knowledge in order to compete with the scholars, nor to argue with the ignorant, nor to gain mastery over the gatherings. Since whoever does that, then: The Fire! The Fire!³⁰

Emphasising the importance of the intention of gaining 'ilm, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: "*Whoever acquired knowledge for other than Allah or intended to please other than Allah, should choose his lodging in the fire.*"³¹ The great scholar, *Khatib al-Baghdadi* of whom Imam Dhahabi praised as: *the most peerless Imam, erudite scholar and mufti, meticulous hadith master, scholar of his time in hadith, prolific author, and seal of the hadith masters,*" wrote a book entitled *Al jami' li akhlaq ak Rawi wa Adab al-Sami*, otherwise known as 'The Compendium on the Ethics of the Hadith Narrator and the Adab of the Auditor' which covers the adab of learning and narrating hadiths in two volumes. This displays before us how the early scholars dealt with the issue of hadith memorisation and narration. Some of the chapter

headings include:

Choosing One's *Shuyukh* Once Their Attributes Are Known (9 sections); The adab of Study (4 sections); The adab of Asking Permission to Enter the House of the Hadith Master (7 sections); The adab of Entering the House of the Hadith Master (9 sections); The Veneration and Honoring of the Hadith Master (6 sections) In the section entitled "Kissing the Hand of the Hadith Scholar, His Head, and His Right [Shoulder]"; The adab of Hadith Audition; The adab of Interrogating the Hadith Master (5 sections); His Caring For His Appearance and Looking to His Adornment Before Narrating Hadith (28 sections:) Which includes sections of: *Siwak*; Paring Nails; Clipping the Moustache; Grooming the Hair; Wearing Clean Clothes; Avoiding Foods That Cause Bad Breath; Combing His Beard; Incensing and Perfuming Himself; Looking At Himself In the Mirror.³²

Even from a cursory glance at the above headings, one realises just how far we have departed from this tradition – one that the Salaf kept very much alive. We must never forget the reverence that is associated from reading or relating hadiths, something that sadly has been eroded by the substitution of taking our Din from books, as opposed to living authorities. This general misleading acceptance of the premise that the Din can be simply taken from books, has created an environment whereby:

book-learning has been substituted for 'understanding'; quality is sacrificed entirely to quantity and memory has been substituted for intelligence in the altogether verbal and bookish conception of present day education.³³

It is hoped, *In sha' Allah* that if one does not accept what is contained herein, readers should be at least able to recognise those *fuyaha* who did. Today, it seems that Muslims are all too ready to accuse one another of one sin or another, without first giving them the benefit of the doubt. As Ibn al-Mubarak said: "*The believer tries to find excuses for others, while the hypocrite looks out for mistakes.*"³⁴ Ibn 'Ata Allah said as a warning:

Beware of having enmity of the people of *La ilaha illa Allah*, for they indeed possess general friendship (*al-wilayat al 'amat*) from Allah, for they are the friends of Allah. If they were to make mistakes or if they were to come with errors as near in size to the earth, while they have not associated anything with Allah (*shirk*), then Allah will meet them with its like in forgiveness. Whoever

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has the friendship of Allah established for him, then it is forbidden to make war against him [...] The least of your states when you are ignorant of him, is to be slow at drawing conclusions about his affair.³⁵

The importance of brotherhood has been emphasised by the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, of which the essence is captured in the following two hadiths:

Do not fall out with one another, do not hate one another, do not envy one another, do not break off [from] one another. Serve Allah as brothers. The Muslim is the brother to the Muslim. He does not wrong him or offends him, or forsake him. A man can do no worse than disgrace his Muslim brother.³⁶

Ibn ‘Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said:

Every Muslim is the brother of every other Muslim. He neither oppresses him nor forsakes him (in the hour of distress), and he who tries to fulfill the need of his brother, Allah will fulfill his need. And he who alleviates the suffering of a Muslim, Allah will alleviate some of his sufferings on the Day of Resurrection. And he who overlooks the sin of a Muslim, Allah will overlook his sins on the Day of Resurrection.³⁷

When asked about how one should hate the sinful actions of the Muslim but love them for their Islam, Shaykh ‘Uthman Dan Fodio replied:

I would answer with what al-Ghazali said about that in his *al-Ihya* concerning the one who had a beautiful wife who was corrupt (*fajira*). ‘He loves her from one respect and he hates her from another respect.’³⁸

Differences will occur amongst the scholars, but we must remember that these are people who had immersed their entire life and time in the study of Islam to a great depth, and so we should respect their scholarship. Inevitably, individuals will align themselves to certain scholars and accept their opinions, which will then result in differences amongst the common folk. We are not scholars and thus should not act as if we are. Realising that differences will arise as each qualified scholar looks at an issue from a different perspective should mean that we be mature enough to put *our* differences aside, rather than

dismissing others (through our own ignorance) as people who are astray, and continue to construct barriers when we should be tearing them down. Indeed, we are far away from the strength and vibrancy of scholarship that had existed throughout much of our history. The chain of tradition which links us to it has been greatly strained, but until the chain is broken, a renewal is always possible. It appears that the root cure to our ignorance is to simply say, '*we hear and we obey.*'³⁹

Tawfiq is only from Allah



NOTES

¹ For an excellent review of the veneration of the Messenger of Allah throughout history, refer to Schimmel, Anne-Marie, And Muhammad is His Messenger: *The veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety*, (University of Carolina, 1985)

² Al-Qur'an 3: 31

³ Allah the Most High says: "Let there be among you a community who enjoin good and forbid evil; it is they that shall be successful" [3:104]. Ibn Qudama Maqdisi commentating upon the abridgement of the *Ihya'* of Imam al-Ghazali (by Ibn al-Jawzi) upon this verse wrote that: 'This verse explains that commanding the right and forbidding the wrong are a communal rather than a personal obligation, for He says: 'Let there be a group of you [...]' and not 'All of you command the right..' [Al-Misri, Ahmad ibn Naqib, *Reliance of the Traveller: A Classic Manual of Islamic Law*, Translated by Nuh Ha Mim Keller, (Sunna Books: Evanston USA 1994) p 714].

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said:

Whoever among you sees a *munkar* (an offensive or evil act), then let him change it with his hands; if he is incapable (of doing this), then he must change it with his hand; if he is incapable (of doing this), then with his tongue; if he is incapable (of doing this), then with his tongue; if he is incapable, then with his heart, and that is the weakest of Iman. [Sahih Muslim]

Ibn Mas'ud, may Allah be pleased with him, once heard a man saying, 'He who does not command good or forbid evil is ruined,' and responded by saying: 'He who does not know the good and the evil in his heart is ruined' [Recorded by al-Tabarani in *al-Mu'jam al Kabir* (vol.9, p 112)]. Hafiz ibn Rajab commentated upon this by saying that: 'Ibn Mas'ud indicates that knowing the good and the evil in the heart is an obligation from which no one is exempt; so whoever does not know it is ruined' [*Jami'*

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al-Ulum wal Hikam, vol. 2 p 245].

It has been understood from the scholars that commanding the good and forbidding the wrong will be obligatory until the Day of Judgment, however this is not without restrictions. Ibn Taymiya mentioned in his *Majmu al-fatawa* (vol. 28, p 66):

Indeed, capability is a condition for commanding good and forbidding evil. So its level of obligation on a particular person is proportional to his capability, as Allah mentions: *Have Taqwa of Allah as much as you are capable* [Al-Qur'an 64:16].

Ibn Taymiya further added that:

There are three essential qualities that must be present in the person who commands good and forbids evil – knowledge must precede the command or prohibition, Gentleness must consort it, and Patience must follow it. Surely each of these three would (normally) be present in a person in all such situations as is reported from some of the *Salaf*; 'None is to command good and forbid evil unless he understands what he is commanding and what he is forbidding, is gentle in his commanding and forbidding and is patient in his commanding and forbidding.

[*Majmu' al-fatawa*, vol. 28. pp 136-137, also refer to: *Fundamentals of Commanding Good and Forbidding Evil, according to Shaykh al Islam Ibn Taymiyyah*, compiled and introduced by 'Ali Hasan al Halabi and translated (with commentary) by Abu Khalil and Muhammad al Jibali, al Qur'an was Sunnah Society of North America, 1995].

Shaykh 'Uthman Dan Fodio in his *Ihya as Sunna*, remarked:

You are at liberty to object to everything which is known to be harmful, but if its objection leads to that which is more reprehensible than it, then keep away from it – not because of itself, but because of what it will lead to.

[Dan Fuduye', Shehu 'Uthman, *Ihya'u as Sunna wa Ikhmad al Bid'a*, 'The Revival of the Sunna and the Destruction of Innovation,' Translated by Abu Alfa Umar Muhammad Shareef bin Farid,'(Sankore' Institute: Fairfield California 1996) 1x1]

⁴ Individuals comprise the building block and essentially form the essence of a society. While they can be constructive and beneficial to those around them, they can also be a source of fitna and capable of tearing apart the very fabric that a social structure is found upon, as was the case with the eventual dismantling of the Caliphate. What we can learn from this bleak lesson of history is that the *mere existence* of the Islamic state,

in and of itself, will not solve the modern problems of the Umma. If we advocate that there existed a Caliphate until 1924 the point surfaces itself: many of the problems that we as an Umma face today, existed *in spite* of there being a Caliph to enforce the hukm of the shari'ah. Issues such as foreign occupation and domination, cultural imperialism (in all its modern guises) nationalism, secularism and the neglect of the Muslims of their Din, were all eating away at the Umma throughout much of the nineteenth century. Muslim lands were being occupied and dominated by the French, Russian, British and then later by the Americans, *despite* there being an Islamic state [For details on which European countries were competing against one another for the largest share of the Caliphate, refer to; Miller, William, *The Ottoman Empire and its successors: 1801-1927* (Cambridge, England: University Press, 1936). To read *how* the Allies sought 'to capture Islam,' see also, Fromkin, David, *A Peace To End All Peace: Creating The Modern Middle East, 1914-1922*, (London: Penguin Books, 1991)].

The 'Dawla' could not stop nor prevent these occurrences *in and of itself*. The latter part of the nineteenth century witnessed massacres that took place in the Balkans, and this is of to say nothing about what occurred in Spain – a time at the height of the Caliphate, that witnessed the forced conversions, expulsion and massacre of thousands of Muslims that was prolonged over a vast period of time. When the people themselves change – their condition changes, for the better or for the worse, depending upon their orientation. Whilst having the protection of an Islamic state, Muslims were far from being in an Islamic state of mind. Muslims had adopted alien ideals, concepts and paradigms – much as we have adopted today. The minds and outlook of the Muslim had radically shifted on a profound scale. They changed from something that which was a *fitra* state, to that of a somewhat cosmetic state; their outlook changed from viewing everything through the eyes of the Qur'an and Sunna, to that of understanding their environment only through the material sciences; their aspirations changed from advancing in their studies of the Islamic sciences, to that of the adoption of the secular sciences *en masse*, with the science of shari'ah being seen as something antiquated and of no value in the new age; their understanding shifted from that of Accountability and there being a Day when all deeds will be taken to account, to realising that they could now vote for governments to represent them and their ideals. Changes occurred until their very way of life was turned from that of leading a society based upon *Taqwa* and *Wara*, to that of a society based upon individual unconstraint, and where the individual and their caprice was king.

Muslims need to be re-educated and become re-cultivated into understanding and adopting once again the Islamic way of life *completely*, at a grass root level. Without this state of being, 'the' state, *in and of itself*, cannot do anything as history demonstrates for us, since the vast majority of Muslims were not attuned to follow nor accepted the leadership of the Caliph at the turn of the twentieth century. The dismantling of the Caliphate as an institution came after a long, targeted and concerted effort by Europe of penetrating the minds and hearts of the Muslims, that shifted their aspirations from

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the Akhirah to the dunya, and who after continuous exposure were being, as Taqi al-Din al-Nabahani observed '*drugged with alien ideologies and poisonous notions [...] so much so that they were incapable of appreciating the gravity of this event.*' [Farouki, Suha Taji, *A Fundamental Quest: Hizb al Tahrir and the search for the Islamic Caliphate*, (Grey Seal: London 1996), p 78].

Napoleon Bonaparte's invasion of Egypt in 1798 can be argued to have ushered a new era in which the Middle East was seen to have full contact with the Western World. Old trade routes and political links had existed between Europe and the Middle East during the medieval period, but because of the long distances, the difficulties of communication they were hardly used frequently, and were not all that safe for voyages [Armajani, Yahya and Ricks, Thomas, *The Middle East, Past and Present*, (Prentice-Hall, Inc. :New Jersey 1970), pp 145–151]. Napoleon's short occupation was defeated by the British who had the aid of the Caliph's army. The young Ottoman general sent to help the British was Muhammad 'Ali, and it was due to his fascination with the French's administrative techniques and military power that he believed the key to future success was by embracing European institutions. It was out of curiosity that 'Ali sent students to Europe to study European thought, the result of which not only had serious implications for Egypt, but for the rest of the Islamic world. As new generations of intellectuals became enticed with European ideology, this led to a restructuring of the traditional educational system, that would evolve into institutions of their own, based upon teaching European laws, history and philosophy. The net effect of 'Ali's policies were also actually paving the way of the domination of the domestic markets by European manufacturers, which was accompanied by the influx of European bankers, technicians and industrialists. Ships, arms and munitions were being purchased from Europe, which gradually created a larger European presence in Egypt, with Albert Hourani noting that in reality, "*behind [every] merchant and [...] sailor, there stood the armed power of the European states*" [Hourani, Albert, *History of the Arab people*, (Belknap Press Of Harvard University Press 1991), p 266]. This influx was so large, that 'Ali was later forced to open new courts for European merchants who took up qualms against Egyptian and Ottoman officials. These social and economic changes in Egypt were ways in which Europe was able to continue its process of colonising the Middle East, guised as helping to 'modernise the backward states.'

The changes that were occurring within Egypt acted as catalyst that led to a whole series of reforms occurring throughout the Islamic lands, which the Caliph himself, eventually had to succumb to. Now, it was his ill equipped and ill - prepared armies who were at the mercy of the new, stronger, better equipped European forces, so much so was the discrepancy that soon enough the Caliph's army was taught by European instructors who introduced them to new weaponry and military tactics [Holt, P.M., *Egypt and the fertile crescent: 1516-1922* (Cornell University Press, 1980) pp 176-192; and Rilin, H. A. B., *The Agricultural policy of Muhammad 'Ali in Egypt*]. The Umma had come to realise that the European powers were overwhelming the Islamic lands.

Attempts at modernisation had been previously attempted (during Ahmad II 1690 – 1695 reign and Ahmad III 1720 reign) but these did not last long. It was the Caliph, Mahmud II (1839-1908) who realised that modernising reforms had to include *all* aspects of society and so introduced radical reforms into Ottoman society based upon the European way of living. Western clothing was introduced, beards were cut and the Fez replaced the Turban. The Shari'ah had no longer become a complete way of life. Mahmud had achieved an incredible feat, and the Islamic state had entered into an age that is known as the *Tanzimat* – the Age of Reform. A whole series of secular law codes based upon European counterparts were enacted beginning in 1850, and of which the then Prime Minister, Lord Palmerston called them, “*a grand stroke of policy.*” No later than 1855 the *jizya* had been abolished [Shaw, S., *The nineteenth century Ottoman tax reform and revenue system*, pp 421-459]. It seemed that not only were reforms necessary for the survival of the Ottoman state, but more so that “*Reformers were enacted under pressure from Christian powers, who seemed intent on breaking up the Empire, or completely dominating its economy, or both*” [Mortimer, Edward, *Faith and Power: The Politics of Islam*, (New York: Random House, 1982), p 96]. By now, the Islamic state was almost under European influence, from the base structure comprising of the people, to the power elite, consisting of advisers, viziers, pasha's and even at moments of history, the Caliph's themselves. The means had all been the same: the positioning by Europe of a perceived better way of life, by the introduction and exposure of an ‘enlightened’ ‘modern’ and ‘progressive’ way of thinking.

The eventual dismantling of the Muslim educational model and its replacement of a European model paved the way of Muslims themselves to contribute in a new wave of internal conflict that would shake the very foundations of the seat of the Muslim world. The wave of new ‘enlightened’ thinkers did not just grow overnight, but from a series of consequences and events that took place within the Umma. It were these events, that were to mould the way the new Muslims would think – and which knowingly or unknowingly would assist Europe to achieve her own goals far faster than any of its previous methods. This class, or ‘group’ of Muslims believed that:

Islam had to be modified or modernised in order to accommodate itself to the onslaught of the West with its own worldview, philosophy and ideology.

[Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, *A Young Muslim's Guide To The Modern World* (The Islamic Texts Society: Cambridge, 1999) p 119]

They became known as ‘pioneering re-formers,’ who were found scattered across the Islamic lands – in India, Turkey, Algeria, Egypt amongst others. Although the reformers *did not speak at all times with one voice*, their objectives however, were the same. It was held that modern thinkers believed that the traditional interpretation of Islam did not satisfy many people who had been the recipients of a modern education. They

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argued that it was their right to interpret Islam and understand it in the light of the knowledge that they now had at their disposal. The spread of pan-Islam and reformist movements all seemed to have the noble intention of restoring Islam back to her rightful place, but did so at the cost of tearing away from tradition – which it saw as being grossly inadequate in the modern age. *Taqlid* was blamed by the newly emerging Western educated body of Muslims, for the Umma's inability to respond to the Western world's progression, economically and politically, militarily and intellectually. The reformers known included:

Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan of Alighrah (1817-1898)

He argued that with regards to jurisprudence, the opinions of the fuqaha were exposed to fallibility and therefore were not binding on the Muslims [Hali, Maulana, *Hayat e Jawed*, (Lahore, 1957), p 276].

Muhammad 'Abduh (1849-1905)

It was 'Abduh, who was the first to proclaim that it was the duty of every Muslim to go directly to the Qur'an and the teachings of the Messenger of Allah, without the mediation of either the Salaf, or those of the Khalaf ['Abduh, Muhammad, *al Islam wa' Nasraniyya Ma 'al 'ilm wa' l Madaniyyah* (Cairo) 1375, pp 64-65]. He proclaimed that 'the later generations are not less, but more qualified to give their decisions on religious matters' [Cragg, Kenneth and Mas'ud, Ishaq, *Theology of Unity* (Shaykh Muhammad Ashraf Press: Lahore) 1966, pp 149 – 50].

'Amir Ali (1849-1928)

The Indian re-former takes Ahmad Khan's a step further, by agreeing with an English author who said that 'Just as the Hebrews deposed their Pentateuch in favour of the Talmud, so the Muslims have abolished the Koran in favour of the traditions and decisions of (the) learned' ['Ali, Amir, *The Spirit of Islam*, (London, 1899), pp 328-329].

Perhaps it is more accurate to state that the architect of the modern reformers was a man by the name of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839 – 1879) also known as *The Sage of the East*. He believed, as Albert Hourani writes, that 'Islam needed a Luther; this indeed was a favourite theme of al-Afghani, and perhaps he saw himself in that role' [Hourani, Albert, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, Oxford, 1962, p 122]. Afghani called all the Muslims to embark upon renovation and a reform of the religion that would allow the Umma to defend itself against the Western onslaught. His student, 'Abduh often expressed his admiration of the Protestant Reform movement that took place in Christianity stating that, 'their religion was in all but name the religion of Muhammad, it differed only in the shape of worship not in meaning or anything else' [Cragg, Kenneth and Mas'ud Ishaq, op. cit., pp 149-50]. The appeal of a model of

reform based upon that presented by Martin Luther, not only impressed upon the enlightened intellectuals in the Arab speaking lands, but it also found its champions in the subcontinent – amongst the Indian re-formers. Ahmad Khan remarked: 'The fact that India needs not merely a Steele or an Addison, but also, and primarily, a Luther' [Panpati, Muhammad (Ed), op. cit., p 50]. The Luther that they were so desperately seeking, was none other than al-Afghani.

These architects were themselves in some ways similar to the previous attempts of reform that made its appearance in the Nejd in the eighteenth century at the hands of Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahab. However, a difference is discernable between the two approaches of reform: Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahab's (c.1703-1791) movement had a necessary militant streak (discussed below) and has been described as a 'highly conservative reform movement' [Crim, Keith (Ed.). *The Perennial Dictionary of World Religions* (San Francisco: Harper Collins) 1989, Reprint; originally published as *Abingdon Dictionary of Living Religions*, 1981; p. 800]. He advocated a strict literalism in which the text became the sole source of legitimate authority, and displayed an extreme hostility to intellectualism and to any form of mysticism. While sharing many characteristics of the aforementioned movement, the reformist groups that sprung at the beginning of the late nineteenth early twentieth century sought to respond to the demands of modernity, and had a more liberal theological orientation. [See for example the classification forwarded by Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, op. cit p 120 and Levtzion, Nehemiah and O. Voll, John (Ed) *Eighteenth Century Renewal and Reform in Islam* (Syracuse University Press: New York, 1987) Introduction].

Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahab actually asserted that the Islam protected by the Ottoman Caliph was not the true Islam, and that he was not the legitimate leader of the Umma. Professor Sedgwick observes that:

Wahhabism first emerged as something truly revolutionary, taking almost as its motto 'Islam began as a stranger [gharib] and will return a stranger as started,' which it interpreted to place Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahab (as the leader of the return) in some respects almost on a level with the Prophet (as leader of the first beginning.)[...] Wahhabism thus set itself uncompromisingly against the whole of the Muslim world [...]

[Sedgwick, Mark J.R, *Saudi Sufis: Compromise in the Hijaz, 1925-40*. *Die Welt des Islams: International Journal for the Study of Modern Islam*, vol 37 (1997): p 352]

Thus the Caliph's authority was challenged and out rightly rejected, since the followers of Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahab believed that 'they observed religious duties more strictly than Turks' [Commins, David Dean, *Islamic Reform: Politics and social change in late Ottoman Syria*, (New York: Oxford University Press) 1990 p 22].

Analysing the 'Wahhabi' movement

The discussion of 'Wahhabis' provokes many emotions amongst the Muslims—the foremost today is the criticism of breaking unity. This is a strange position to take—given the fact that from its very advent, the Sunni 'ulama discounted them from belonging to the Ahl al-Sunna—which included Muhammad bin 'Abd al-Wahab's own brother and father. In discussions of Wahhabis, one will be able to quickly discern from reading Islamic heresiography from the past 200 years, that they are described in fiery and non-ambiguous terms. [For example, see the works of: Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Nejdi, 'Allama al-Shaykh Sulayman, elder brother of Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab: *al-Sawa'iq al-Ilahiyya fi al-radd 'ala al-Wahhabiyya* ["Divine Lightnings in Answering the Wahhabis"]. Ed. Ibrahim Muhammad al-Batawi. Cairo: Dar al-insan, 1987. Offset reprint by Waqf Ikhlas, Istanbul: Hakikat Kitabevi, 1994. Prefaces by Shaykh Muhammad ibn Sulayman al-Kurdi al-Shafi'i and Shaykh Muhammad Hayyan al-Sindi (Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's shaykh) who said to the effect that Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab is "dall mudill" ("misguided and misleading"); Al-Zamzami al-Shafi'i, Muhammad Salih, Imam of the Maqam Ibrahim in Mekka, wrote a book in 20 chapters against them according to al-Sayyid al-Haddad; Al-Tamimi al-Maliki, 'Allama Isma'il (d. 1248), Shaykh al-Islam in Tunis: wrote a refutation of a treatise of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab; Shaykh al-Islam Dawud ibn Sulayman al-Baghdadi al-Hanafi (1815-1881 CE): *al-Minha al-Wahbiyya fi radd al-Wahhabiyya* ["The Divine Dispensation Concerning the Wahhabi Deviation"]; Ashadd al-Jihad fi Ibral Da'wa al-Ijtihad ["The Most Violent Jihad in Proving False Those Who Falsely Claim Ijtihad"]; Al-Qazwini, Muhammad Hasan, (d. 1825). *Al-Barahin al-jaliyyah fi raf' tashkikat al-Wahhabiyyah* ["The Plain Demonstrations That Dispel the Aspersions of the Wahhabis"]. Ed. Muhammad Munir al-Husayni al-Milani. 1st ed. Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Wafa', 1987; Dahlan, al-Sayyid Ahmad ibn Zayni (d. 1304/1886). Mufti of Mekka and Shaykh al-Islam (highest religious authority in the Ottoman jurisdiction) for the Hijaz region: *al-Durar al-saniyyah fi al-radd ala al-Wahhabiyyah* ["The Pure Pearls in Answering the Wahhabis"] Egypt 1319 & 1347 H; *Fitnat al-Wahhabiyyah* ["The Wahhabi Fitna"]; *Khulasat al-Kalam fi bayan Umara' al-Balad al-Haram* ["The Summation Concerning the Leaders of the Sacrosanct Country"], a history of the Wahhabi fitna in Nejd and the Hijaz; Ibn 'Abidin al-Hanafi, al-Sayyid Muhammad Amin: *Radd al-muhtar 'ala al-durr al-mukhtar*, Vol. 3, *Kitab al-Iman*, Bab al-bughat ["Answer to the Perplexed: A Commentary on "The Chosen Pearl,"" Book of Belief, Chapter on Rebels]. Cairo: Dar al-Tiba'a al-Misriyya, 1272 H; The family of Ibn 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Hanbali in Zubara and Bahrayn possess both manuscript and printed refutations by scholars of the Four Schools from Mekka, Medina, al-Ahsa', al-Basra, Baghdad, Aleppo, Yemen and other Islamic regions; Ibn 'Afaliq al-Hanbali, Muhammad Ibn 'Abdul Rahman: *Tahakkum al-muqallidin bi man idda'a tajdid al-din* [Sarcasm of the muqallids against the false claimants to the Renewal of Religion]; Ibn Dawud al-Hanbali, 'Afif al-Din 'Abd Allah: *as-sawa'iq wa al-ru'ud* ["Lightnings and

thunder"], a very important book in 20 chapters. According to the Mufti of Yemen Shaykh al-'Alawi ibn Ahmad al-Haddad, the mufti of Yemen, "This book has received the approval of the 'ulama of Basra, Baghdad, Aleppo, and Ahsa' [Arabian peninsula]. It was summarized by Muhammad ibn Bashir the qadi of Ra's al-Khayma in Oman,"; Al-Buti, Dr. Muhammad Sa'id Ramadan (University of Damascus): *Al-salafiyyatu marhalatun zamaniyyatun mubarakatun la madhhabun islami* ["The Salafiyya is a blessed historical period not an Islamic school of law"] (Damascus: Dar al-fikr, 1988); Al-lamadhhabiyya akhtarun bid'atin tuhaddidu al-shari'a al-islamiyya ["Non-madhhabism is the most dangerous innovation presently menacing Islamic law"] (Damascus: Maktabat al-Farabi, n.d.); Al-Rifa'i, Yusuf al-Sayyid Hashim, President of the World Union of Islamic Propagation and Information: *Adillat Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jama'at aw al-radd al-muhkam al-mani` 'ala munkarat wa shubuhat Ibn Mani` fi tahajjumihi 'ala al-sayyid Muhammad 'Alawi al-Maliki al-Makki* ["The Proofs of the People of the Way of the Prophet and the Muslim Community: or, the Strong and Decisive Refutation of Ibn Mani`'s Aberrations and Aspersion in his Assault on Muhammad 'Alawi al-Maliki al-Makki"] (Kuwait: Dar al-siyasa, 1984)]

Only recently has it become 'politically incorrect' to speak or refer to 'Wahhabis' as such, which almost wholly can be attributed to 'generous Saudi funding' that ensures a silence to all critics, and the domination of the publication world with their once rejected and refuted tracts [Occhiogrosso, Peter. *The Joy of Sects: A Spirited Guide to the World's Religious Traditions* (New York: Doubleday) 1996 p 436]. It is still astounding to find that even after 200 years, this movement still holds that people have not understood Tawhid correctly (implicitly condemning everyone else as mushriks) which is manifest in most, if not all of their literature. Take for example the English translation of the Qur'an by Muhammad Taqi al-Din al-Hilali and Muhammad Muhsin Khan, printed in 1994, it states in the afterward by the translators that:

'We have noticed that most of the mankind, who embrace Islam, do not understand the reality of the meaning of the first fundamental principle of Islam, La ilaha ill Allah, Muhammad-ur-Rasul-Allah.

[Interpretation of the Meaning of the Noble Qur'an in the English Language (Riyad) 1994, p 1011.]

The fact that in the face of internal political disintegration, facing unusual setbacks and much of the time being on the defensive, the Caliphate still went to pains to expose this movement, should not dissuade us from now arguing that to do the very same thing—would be a disservice to the Umma.

To understand why Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahab believed that a reform was required amongst the Muslims, we must first understand within which context his view was developed. He believed that innovations had crept into the Umma which were so

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deep rooted, they were breeding an ignorance [jahiliya] that was either worse or equal to that of the pre-Islamic Arabia. He viewed innovation as any doctrine or action not based on the Qur'an and the traditions or the authority of the Companions. Goldziher in his book, *Muslim Studies*, states that modern Wahhabism is fanatical regarding innovation. [The title Wahhabi was given to the followers of Muhammad bin 'Abd al-Wahab by Europeans (who were their allies) and by Muslims who opposed them. 'Wahhabi' was asserted to differentiate between those who followed a Madhab (i.e., Hanafis, Maliki's, Shafi'i's and Hanbali's) and those who followed the madhab of Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahab. People to whom the Wahhabi name was applied promptly rejected this label. Instead, they called themselves ahl al-Tawhid (People of Unity or Muwahhidun); those who profess the doctrine of the Unity of Allah. This demonstrated just how far Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahab believed that the Muslims had strayed—to the extent that everyone else were polytheists (i.e., opposed to the Unity of God) and that those who followed his ideals were the true worshippers of God [Renz, George, *The Wahhabis*, in A. J Arberry (Ed), *Religion in the Middle East*, vol. II (Cambridge: UK) 1969 pp 270-285]. It follows the pattern of earlier times in striving to brand as innovation not only anything in contravention to the Qur'an and Sunna, but also anything that cannot be proved to be in it.

The issue of the Nejd

Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahab was born in 'Uyaynah, in the part of Arabia known as Nejd, where Riyadh is today, and where the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, himself notably warned there would be a source of corruption and confusion. The fact that Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahab's preaching and doctrinal enforcement spread from Nejd—a place that had been cursed as producing the 'horn of the devil' by the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, has been long cited as evidence of the deviant nature of Wahhabism. (See Appendix) Some commentators today, in an attempt to diffuse this connection, have attempted to explain away that the hadith cited actually does not refer to the Nejd—but falls short from their mark. In reviewing the arguments for such a claim, one Muslim theologian remarks interestingly that: 'not one of the great muhaddiths, mufassirs, grammarians, historians, or legists of Islam has emerged from the region known as Nejd, despite the extraordinary and blessed profusion of such people in other Muslim lands'.

[See: <http://66.34.131.5/ISLAM/misc/Nejd.htm> for an attempt to cast aspersion on the area known as Nejd, and the response to it]

The scholasticism of Muhammad bin 'Abd al-Wahab

As Hamid Algar points out in his excellent booklet: 'Wahhabism: A Critical Essay,' to ascertain the intellectual output of Muhammad bin 'Abd al-Wahab is a legitimate study, for 'every major figure to inaugurate a significant movement of renewal in Islamic history has been a prolific and influential writer.' [Algar, Hamid, *Wahhabism: A Critical*

Essay (Islamic Publications International: New York) 2002, p 17]

In examining some of his works, Algar comments that while there are some large compilations of his work, they tend to collected hadith works categorized under various sections. On the whole, he comments that his works 'are slight in terms of both content and bulk'. With regards to his *Kitab al-Tauhid*, even this consisted exclusively of uncommented hadith arranged into sixty-seven chapters. In his introduction to his translation of the book, Ismail Raji al-Faruqi described the book as having 'the appearance of a student's notes'. It appears that most of his literature published are preceded with either 'made detailed by' or 'expanded by' In most cases, it becomes difficult to distinguish where the original contribution from Muhammad bin 'Abd-al Wahab is from the contributions of the editors. Those that seem substantial are collected works of Muhammad bin 'Abd al-Wahab, and appear to be no more than a collection of hadiths and notes. Examining a particular bulky work—*Mu' allafat al-Shaykh al-Imam Muhammad bin 'Abd al-Wahab*, Algar notes that volumes one and two carry:

No elucidation or commentary [...] and the identification of the sources of hadith contained in the footnotes is entirely the work of the three editors.' [Ibid. pp 15-16]

When comparing Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahab to two near contemporaries—Shaykh 'Uthaman dan Fodio and Shah WaliAllah Dihlawi, Algar concludes that he cannot be compared to either one of them in scope of intellectual and scholarly output, and contemplates if indeed 'Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahab regarded the authorial act as one more unauthorized innovation'. [Ibid. p 17]

His refusal to accept but a few books besides the Qur'an, demonstrated just how many people (and more precisely, scholars) he believed to have been innovators. W. F Smalley stated that Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahab's library consisted of the Qur'an, the six standard books of tradition, two books of exegesis [tafsir] (Ibn Kathir's twelve volumes, and al-Baghawi's six) and a small book of the specialised teaching which he had written. [W. F. Smalley, *The Wahhabis and Ibn Saud*, *The Muslim World*, vol. 22, (Missionary Review Publishing Co. Inc.: New York) 1932 p 237]. In refusing to read or study those works or to include them in his library, Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahab differed from other Muslim scholars. It was his conviction that many of these innovations that had been introduced, had indeed led Muslims to become polytheists. On this pretence he declared Muslims blood and property licit, [who did not adhere to his views] and called his followers to embark on a true Jihad to establish a Caliphate on the way of the Salaf [Ayman al Yassini, *Saudi Arabia the Kingdom of Islam*, in Carlo Calarola (Ed), *Religion and Societies*, 1982, p 64].

If their practice of takfir; accusing Muslims of disbelief, which justified the killing of Muslims and the plundering of their wealth, was not sufficient to cause revulsion in the

Muslim world, then the massacre that ensued at Ta'if in 1803 (not to mention the bombing that took place later of Mekka in 1916 and then of Medina in 1924) at the hands of the Wahhabis did. Here it was recorded that the inhabitants were abused as 'kuffar' and 'mushrikun.' Once it was clear that a massacre had taken place, an estimated fifteen thousand people fled from Mekka to Jeddah, fearing that a repeat incident would ensue [Sedgwick, Mark J. R, op. cit. pp 356-357]. This incident was simply referred to as a 'clash' with the 'ignorant idiots of Taif' by one prominent biographer of Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab. [See: Bin Baz, Shaykh Abdul Aziz, Imam Muhammad Bin Abdul Wahhab: His Life and Mission (Darussalam: Riyadh) 1997 p 41]

In their tracts to the Sunni 'ulama, the Wahhabis spoke uncompromisingly from a position of being the true torchbearers of Islam. An official governmental response to the Wahhabis, which summoned Muslim leaders to 'reject idolatry, to pray only to God, and perform the duties enjoined by religion,' can be illustrated by a typical response from a Damascene scholar who wrote to them in 1810, but the theme of which was maintained throughout the nineteenth century. The scholar first remarks that such a letter should be addressed to unbelievers and idolaters, not Muslims. He addressed them as 'a tribe ignorant of Islam's principles,' and informed them that they 'should fight the enemies of religion, not Muslims,' and he added that 'nothing is worse than killing Muslims, looting their wealth, burning their homes, and despoiling their honour' [Commins, David Dean, op. cit. p 23].

The authenticity that a legitimate Jihad was being waged by Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahab, and then by his successors essentially had to come from their conviction, and their ability to demonstrate to everyone outside their camp, that this was being done against 'infidels'—since a jihad against Muslims could simply not occur [Levtzion, Nehemia and Voll, John O., (Editors) Eighteenth Century Renewal and Reform in Islam, (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1987) p 12]. In his justification for the 'Jihad' waged by Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, Shaykh Bin Baz describes that guiding people back to Islam by the Ibn Wahhab seemed to have been ineffective until force was used. Shaykh Bin Baz asserts that:

Any intelligent man with a common sense will benefit from clear proof and accept the truth with its evidence. But the oppressor or the wrong-doer who follow his lusts cannot be deterred except without a sword

[Bin Baz, Shaykh Abdul Aziz, op cit., p 38]

Despite the evidence to support the butchery and the abuse Muslims faced by the Wahhabi 'army'—it was and still is deemed to have been necessary for their own good.

Rebelling against the leadership: *Acting according to the way of the Salaf?*

The main problem that underpinned Muhammad Ibn ‘Abd al Wahab’s ideology of a pure Islam as allegedly understood by the Salaf was that in his methodology, he actually departed from the way of the Salaf in two vital areas;

- Rebelling against the leadership, and
- Pronouncing Takfir on Muslims and allowing their blood to be shed.

A look at two contemporary publications should be adequate to demonstrate this:

- *The Consensus of the Salaf from among the Companions of Allaah’s Messenger on the Prohibition of Reviling the Rulers—Be They Righteous or Sinful: A Refutation of the khawarij.* [Taken from, *Foundations of the Sunnah*; Imaam Ahmed ibn Hanbal, Salafi Publications, 1997 Birmingham, UK]
- *The Creed of The Imaam of Hadith*, Abu ‘Abdullah Muhammad bin Ishmaa’eel al Bukhari [d. 256 rahimahullaah] & of the Great Scholars from whom he narrated, [Salafi Publications: Birmingham, 1997, UK]

If we begin by examining Chapter five (pp. 139 – 151) of the former book, it informs us that (emphasis added):

Attacking the honour of the rulers [Umaraa] and occupying oneself with reviling them and mentioning their shortcomings is a very big mistake and a repugnant sin. The purified revelation has forbidden it and has censured the one who does so. *It is also the starting point of rebellion ...* and taking arms against the rulers and this rebellion, *is the basis of the corruption of both the religion and the world.*

Its footnote explains that Ibn al-Qayyim said:

[..] The prophet [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] legislated for his ummah, the obligation of rejecting the evil so that by its rejection, the goodness that Allah and his messenger love is obtained. And when rejecting the evil leads to what is more evil and more hated by Allah and his messenger then it is not allowed to reject it—even if Allah hates it and detests those who perform it [the evil]. And this is like the rejection [inkaar] against the kings, and the ones in authority by coming out against them [with arms etc., to fight them], for verily, that is the basis and foundation of every evil and every tribulation till the end of time. And the companions asked permission from the Messenger of Allaah [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] for killing the leaders [Umaraa] who delay the prayer from its proper time, saying, “Shall we not kill them?” So he said, “No, so long as they establish the prayer,” and he also said, “Whoever sees something from his leader [ameer] something that he dislikes then let him not

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raise his hand [away] from the leader's obedience." [Ibid. pp 139 –140]

The topic continues, with a report from Anas ibn Malik who said:

The senior amongst the companions of Allah's messenger [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] forbade us [saying], "Do not revile your Rulers [Umaraa'], nor act dishonestly with them, nor hate them and have taqwaa of Allaah and be patient—for verily the matter is close [at hand]

The author continues: 'Its chain of narration is jayyid [good] and all of its narrators are thiqaat [precise, reliable and trustworthy]'. [Ibid. p 143]

After three other such quotations, the translator concludes that:

[it] is the unanimous agreement of the most senior of the Companions of Allaah's Messenger [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] upon the prohibition of attacking the honour of the Rulers by reviling and abusing them.

A further footnote, to reinforce the above, if the point has not been emphasized enough, reads that al-Barbahari [d.329] said:

When you see a man making a supplication against the Ruler [Sultaan] then know he is a person of desire [...] we have been commanded that we supplicate for them, for their rectification and we have not been commanded to make supplications against them, even if they oppress and commit injustice [...] [Ibid.144]

This chapter makes an excellent read for those who want to understand how Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahab's actions would have been judged under the scrutiny of those very people he aimed to emulate. Note how Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahab went overtly against the very actions and principles that the Salaf condemned, and yet is projected to be a Mujadadid (Renewer). Providing these very quotes, how then can Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahab be defended on the viewpoint that his mission was in strict accordance with the Salaf? Even the title of the chapter, "The Consensus of The Salaf," tells us that his actions opposed the way he sought to emulate.

Turning to the second book: The Creed of The Imaam of Hadith, Abu 'Abdullah Muhammad bin Ishmaa'eel al-Bukhari [d. 256 rahimahullaah] & of the Great Scholars from whom he narrated, [Salafi Publications, Birmingham, 1997, UK, (for our purposes: pp 35 – 38)], under the heading of "Dealing With the Rulers," the reader is immediately informed of the Qur'anic injunction (in bold text):

“O you who believe! Obey Allaah and obey the Messenger, and those of you [Muslims] who are in authority.” [an Nisaa’ (4):59]

and then a barrage of footnotes further inform the reader of the evil consequences of going against Rulership, of which I have selected a few:

Imaam al Barbahaaree [d. 329] said, “Whoever rebels against a Muslim leader is one of the *Khawaarij*, has caused dissent within the Muslims, has contradicted the narrations and has died the death of the days of ignorance. [Ibid. p 36]

And Shaykh Abdul Azeez ibn Baz [r] was asked, “Is it from the *manhaj* (methodology) of the Salaf to criticise the Rulers from the *minbar* [the pulpit]? And what is the *manhaj* of the Salaf with respect to advising the rulers?” He responded, “It is not from the *manhaj* of the Salaf to publicise the faults of the Rulers and to mention such things from the pulpit because that leads to confusion/disorder and the absence of hearing and obeying the ruler is what is good.....The followed path with the Salaf, however is to give *naseehah* [advice]...

Today, we are reminded that it is on the *manhaj* of the Salaf that we must be patient with our rulers. The spilling of blood and the outright violation of the Salafi way, by the very person who claimed to be on the way of that Salafi path, is concealed.

Pronouncing Takfir upon the Muslims

Another reprehensible action (as understood by the Salaf) is the action of declaring Muslims as *Kaffirs*, or non-believers. With all that has been said above, it was highly unlikely that Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahab did not know that to revile the Caliph and the lay Muslims was to oppose the *manhaj* of the Salaf. Rather, it was by declaring Takfir upon all those who opposed his interpretation of Islam, that allowed him to go against the Caliph’s rulership that justified his actions. It was the only feasible path to take, since declaring the Muslims (and the Caliphate) as disbelievers, would allow him to declare his homeland an area of warfare (*bilad harb*), and the seizing of their property.

However, Takfir is no simple matter, and has never been taken lightly. It was because of this hallmark (to declare other Muslims as non-Muslims) of the Wahhabis that from its inception they were branded as *Khawarij*. The *Khawarij* lived in the time of the Successors of the Companions, and comprised of a large group of several of thousands of Muslims—most were Qur’an memorisers and totally devoted to worship. However, despite such noteworthy characteristics, the *Khawarij* openly declared the other Companions as disbelievers, made the land a land of war and only applied the verses in the Qur’an that were for the idolaters, to the Muslims. [See for example how Imam al-

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Tabari documents the actions, of and the revulsion to the Khawarij in his *Tarikh: History*, Vol. XVIII, translated by M. Morony (New York) 1987 pp 21-31, also see Kafafi, M, 'The Rise of Kharjism'. *Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts of the University of Egypt*, XIV (1952), pp 29-48] The famous erudite scholar al-Hafiz Muhammad Ibn 'Abidin relates in his *Radd al-muhar 'ala-darr al-mukhtar* (volume III p 309 under the 'chapter of Rebels;) that:

The name Khawarij is applied to those who part ways with Muslims and declare them disbelievers, as took place in our time with the followers of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahab [and] who came out of the Nejd and attacked the Two Noble Sanctuaries [Mekka and Medina]. They [the Wahhabis] claimed to follow the Hanbali school, but their belief was such that, in their view, they alone are Muslims and everyone else is a mushrik [polytheist]. Under this guise, they said that killing the Ahl al-Sunna and their scholars was permissible.

Yet, despite their disbelief, neither the Companions nor the Tabi'un declared the Khawarij as Kaffirs. As Ibn Taymiya himself relates:

But despite fighting them, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, Sa'd ibn Waqqa and other Companions regarded them as Muslims and did not brand them as infidels.

[Ibn Taymiya, Abd al-Halim, *The Principle of Ahl al-Sunnah wa 'l-Jamma'ah of Showing Mercy to the People of Innovation and Disobedience, and Participating with them in Congregational Prayer*, Translated by Samir Sixel and Usama Hasan (Al-Qur'an Society: London) n.p.d, p 12]

Ibn Taymiya, who is the chief architect, and the undisputed authority for those who wish to pursue a 'Salafi' Islam, further writes that 'It is not permitted to brand a Muslims as Kafir' [Ibd. p 11]. He goes on to explain that:

A fundamental principle in Islam is that the blood, wealth and honour of the Muslims are sacred for one another, and they do not become lawful except by the permission of Allah and His Messenger. The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said in his Khutbah during the Farewell Pilgrimage,: 'Verily your blood, your properties and your honour are sacred to one another, like the sanctity of this [sacred] day of yours [the Day of 'Arafah], in this [sacred] town of yours [Makkah], in this [sacred] month of yours [Dhu'l-Hijjah] [Ibid. p 12]

He continues to explain that there might be in that group (that is being accused), less unwarranted innovations than in the party carrying out the declaration of disbelief

[Ibid]. Even if one supposes a group to have made reprehensible innovations, it is unwarranted for the group which is on the path of the Sunna to declare them disbelievers, since, perhaps, its innovation is an outgrowth of an error, and Allah said, "Our Lord, do not blame us if we forget or make a mistake." [2:286] and: "The mistake you make will not be held against you but what your hearts on purpose intend." [33:5]; and the Messenger of Allah's saying, may Allah bless him and grant him peace: 'Surely, has Allah forgiven my community error and forgetfulness and what they were forced to do'.

We must recognize that the way of those who are on the path of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and on the way of the Salaf, are those who shrink away from anyone declaring Muslims to be Kaffirs. One principle of Islam is that we cannot condemn any one who accepts Islam because of what we see as a defect in their practice. The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: '*Whoever said, 'la ilaha ill-Allah' we cannot make him an unbeliever due to any sin he committed and we can-not put him out of Islam by any act he did.* And he, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: '*Whoever says to his brother 'O unbeliever!' then one of them will have that applied to him'*. The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, also said, '[...] *cursing a believer is like murdering him; and whoever accuses a believer of disbelief, then it is as if he had killed him'*. In another hadith, we learn that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: '*Religion is advice,*' so the best way, when a Muslim sees a wrong, is to advise, not to accuse nor slander, as that accusation might revert to the accuser.

Not only did the Wahhabis contradict what was in the Qur'an and Sunna, but they also went against the consensus (*ijma*) of the statements of all those who lived in the period of the Salaf, and as well as those very Imams that Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahab claimed to have followed. It was no wonder then, that Sunni 'ulama writing at the time, such as the Hanafi scholar Ibn 'Abidin and the Maliki al-Sawi, branded the Wahhabis the modern day Khawarij of Islam, and condemned their fanaticism and intolerance. [See above for books written along these lines, as well as: Ahmad al-Sawi, *Hashbiyat al-Sawi 'ala Tafsir al-Jalalayn* (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-Arabi, n.d.), 3 :307-308. See also Ahmad Dallal, "The Origins and Objectives of Islamic Revivalist Thought, 1750-1850," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 113/3 (1993), who demonstrates that Wahhabism in the nineteenth century was considered a fringe fanatic group]

Wahhabis: the use of violence

Extensive discussions are currently taking place in the media on the role of Wahhabism and the use of violence; a relationship that has been synonymous of the movement since its inception. On various Wahhabi Internet websites, there was an endorsement of the tragedy of the innocent victims of September 11th, and one wonders what Islam they are following.

Traditional Muslim jurists considered terrorist attacks against unsuspecting and

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defenceless victims as heinous and immoral crimes, and considered the perpetrators as the worst type of criminals. It is a well-established Qur'anic precept that the injustice of others does not excuse one's own injustice. ["Terrorism Is at Odds With Islamic Tradition" *The Los Angeles Times*, August 22, 2001; Khaled Abou El-Fadl]

Those who read headlines about Islamic terrorism will realize that advocates of this way represent a certain distinct understanding of Islam—politicized, rejectionist, reactionary and militant—one that calls for the overthrow of governments. In doing so, they justify the means by the end. Theirs is the way of Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahab, who required the sword to spread and enforce his message on Muslims who were seen to need redemption. The role of 'jihad' was a vital component in Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahab's ability to prove moral and religious grounds as to their war with their Turkish brethren. To the Wahhabis, 'jihad' was not limited to the narrower concept of war, but applied even to domestic measures taken to cleanse or purify or render the community closer to God. Consequently, under Wahhabism, conquest is morally justifiable; a fact which would be very shrewdly cultivated and exploited by the al Sa'ud clan three times, and which accounts for the fact that Wahhabism represented the first modern manifestation of militant Islam. [R. Bayly Winder, *Saudi Arabia in the Nineteenth Century* (London and New York: Macmillan and St. Martin's Press) 1965 p. 11 and G. H. Jansen, *Militant Islam* (London: Pan Books, Ltd.) 1979 p. 87] The Ikhwan, were ferocious Bedouins and were ruthless in battle. They introduced a new concept of butchering all males in captured camps. A survivor of one battle with the Ikhwan, the battle of Turabah described the battle:

I saw the blood running at Turabah like a river between the palms [...] I saw the dead piled up in the citadel before I jumped out the window. But the strangest thing I saw was the sight of the Ikhwan during the battle stopping long enough to enter the mosque and pray, then returning to the fray.

[Robert Lacey, *The Kingdom* (London: Fontana-Collins) 1981 p 150]

Children were also slaughtered on occasion, as were women. [J. S. Habib, *Ibn Sa'ud's Warriors of Islam* (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill) 1978 p 66]. This practice, probably more than any other, struck fear into the hearts of all who found themselves opposed to the Ikhwan. The practice of martyrdom and massacre—currently being articulated upon the world's media stage—back then created and expanded the Ikhwan's reputation for ruthlessness; a reputation which was undeniably a major factor in their extraordinary military success. It has been reported that the second wave of Wahhabi dominance (1806) was built upon the deaths of some 40,000 people. Massacres were carried out by the Ikhwan in cities such as Ta'if, Burayda and al-Huda. Governors appointed by Ibn Sa'ud are said to 'carried out 40,000 public executions and 350, 000 amputations in the course of subduing the peninsula'. [Algar, Hamid, op cit., p 42]

The Ikhwan, however, cannot be depicted as mere puppets of Ibn Sa'ud. While been fed constantly and weaned upon the literal doctrines of Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahab, by 1925, they were destroying such modern installations as telephone lines. Unsanctioned by the Qu'ran, Western technological innovations such as the telephone were thought by the Ikhwan to be the work of the devil. Such actions and beliefs not only greatly hindered Ibn Sa'ud in his attempts to bring technological advances to Arabia, but caused diplomatic problems with his new British friends. [Mohammed Almana, *Arabia Unified: A Portrait of Ibn Sa'ud* (London: Hutchinson and Benham) 1980 p 83] Although relatively minor, these actions demonstrated a growing defiance of Ibn Sa'ud. In 1926, the Ikhwan, through their religious "policing" caused a diplomatic rift with Egypt. Egyptian craftsmen traditionally made the cloth which covers the Ka'aba in Mekka—the 'Kiswah.' The Ikhwan found the gold-laden cloth idolatrous, and the musical procession which marched alongside offensive. An Ikhwan-induced riot followed, in which many pilgrims were killed. The event typified the spontaneous, defiant violence the Ikhwan were capable of, and had indulged in increasingly.

Ibn Sa'ud soon faced a dilemma. He could not continue to aggravate his worsening relations with the British, nor could he simply and effectively stop the Ikhwan. 'Having incited them to suspect and hate every non-Wahhabi as an agent of the devil, he could not now plead the merits of compromise with the infidel British—and since he had elevated the murderous innocents to the principal element in his armed forces, he could not now pursue his disagreements with them only at the risk of his own destruction.' [Lacey, *op cit*, p 207]

It was then predictable that Ibn Sa'ud and the Ikhwan would soon have to part their ways—and this came in the Battle of Sabillah of March 1929. However, the conflict was reignited, and the rebellion was taken up again. The second uprising, like the first, was put down quickly.

The internal and continual conflict between the Ottoman's and the tribe of Ibn Saud, was seen by the European powers as a means of further weakening the consolidation of power held by the Turkish Caliph, and as soon as speculation amounted that the world would be soon engulfed in a war, the Allies were looking to gain as many friends as possible. It was their friend, the Shaykh Mubarak al-Sabah of Kuwait (he had in 1899 entered into a bilateral agreement with Britain giving her the responsibility of taking responsibility for Kuwait's foreign and defence affairs. By 1913, Britain had secured the signature of the Caliph [Draft Convention on the Persian Gulf Area] which effectively recognised the 'special relationship' that existed between al Mubarak and Britain) who appeared with an offer Britain could not ignore. He had promised Britain that he would secure the allegiance of Ibn Sa'ud. He wrote to Ibn Sa'ud stating:

According to what I hear, this war is entirely the fault of the Germans, and they are inciting the Turks. May God abuse them both [...] and God has shown

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favour to the Arabia and Islam generally by bringing the Glorious English government into existence [...] By following the wishes of the Glorious Government, we shall find our happiness [...]

[Karsh Efraim and Karsh Inari, *Empires of the sand; The Struggle For Mastery In The Middle East 1789 – 1923* (Harvard University Press: USA) 1999 pp 177 – 178]

The contempt that had been brewing within Ibn Sa'ud for the 'Turks' needed in reality little encouragement to translate into action. He had at last, an opportunity to reclaim his rightful desert kingdom, that of his fathers and of his forefathers. It was only right – after all, he was an Arab of pure stock. He wrote back with words that were encouraging for Britain. He stated:

We hope that God will grant the victory to him whom there will be profit therein to you and me [Ibid].

Such hatred for non-Wahhabis that the Wahhabi doctrine promulgated that it is no surprise to learn that 'Abd al-'Aziz bin Sa'ud once told John Philby (his mediator with the British Foreign Office) that he preferred Christians to non-Wahhabi Muslims. Christians, he explained 'act according to their religion, whereas the Muslims who do not follow the Wahhabi understanding of tawhid are guilty of shirk'. [Algar, op cit., p 22].

In return for Ibn Sa'ud's support, Britain guaranteed him protection against any Ottoman retaliation, but more importantly, recognition of Ibn Sa'ud as the independent ruler of Nejd and Hasa, and recognition of his sons and descendents by inheritance. He was also given a monthly subsidy of five thousand pounds [Ibid. pp 178 – 179]

Predicting the collapse of the Caliphate, local actors within Arabia were all trying to either maintain or spread their 'kingdoms' by whatever means necessary. This was also true of Sharif Hussein of Mekka. In 1916, after receiving the support of both Britain and France, the Sharif headed the 'Arab Revolt'. He stood for everything that was Arab—as opposed to everything that was Turkish. It was widely suspected amongst the intellectual elite, that the Sharif was chosen initially by the British who sought a means of 'getting the Holy Places within her influence' [Ibid. p 188]. This can seem to be justified by reviewing a letter sent to the Sharif in 1914 by Kitchener (who then was the secretary of state for war) who amongst outlining the benefits of joining and siding with Britain in the war. He wrote:

It maybe that an Arab of true race will assume the Caliphate at Mecca or Madina and some good may come by the help of God out of all the evil which is now occurring [Ibid. p 205]

A report by the political agent in Kuwait, Colonel Hamillton noted that Ibn Sa'ud was 'consumed with jealousy' at the Sharif, who had assumed the title (besides King of the Hijaz) the title King of Arabia—a title which Ibn Sa'ud only saw as himself owning. [Ibid. p 188] Another reason for his contempt at the Sharif, was the latter's enormous subsidy given by the British—a massive two hundred thousand pounds a month by 1916 [Ibid. p 192].

Whether it be the Sharif at Mekka or Ibn Sa'ud in the Nejd, Britain would see to it for once and for all that the 'sick man of Europe' would not recover from its terminal illness. Britain was indifferent to both camps of Arabs from where help was to come from, at the beginning. However, understanding that once the Ottoman Caliphate would disappear, this would create a vacuum for power hungry camps seeking to succeed the Turks. The threat of an emergence of a new Arab Caliphate after the demise of the Turks based upon 'purely religious terms' was a very real concern for Britain. It was decided in Cairo, that a 'federation of semi-independent Arab states' would be better than a unified state. Kitchner therefore began his task of arranging the chess pieces in the Middle East to unite the Arab speaking people without creating a unified Empire that would occur 'under British tutelage' [Ibid. p 207].

While the Sharif initially was pointed for a lead role, it was noticed that while 'friendly Chieftains' like Ibn Sa'ud' were anti Sharif (for obvious reasons), pro Sharif Chiefs were also pro Turkish. Soon enough, Britain began to tire at the Sharif's bold claims, no action and frankly, incredible requests. [Ibid. p 229] His request for being granted an empire that would be solely headed by him, his family and successors was not what concerned Britain—since 'if the new Empire was to fall under British tutelage' this would be to Britain's advantage. However, their concern was more that they felt that the Sharif could not muster enough support by fellow Muslims to become the acknowledged ruler of the Arabs. It was then that Britain decided to offer her full support to Ibn Sa'ud for his quest for an independent kingdom, and the true ruler of Arabia [Ibid. p 350].

Essentially, both efforts at reform argued for a return to the Qur'an, since 'Islam through the centuries has accumulated much which is not only not essential to it, but is positively hostile to it' [Dr. Abdul Hakim, Khalifah, Islamic Ideology, (Lahore) 1961 p 322]. They argued that the Qur'an and a few authentic traditions were sufficient as guidance for the Muslims and that the modern Muslim equipped with new modern education could and should exercise his own independent judgment in light of the Qur'an and Sunna. Rather than just to receive guidance from the medieval theologians, commentators and jurists, who, after all, were just as fallible as any human being was, the re-formers wanted a radical reformation of Muslim society and for this to occur, Taqlid was targeted as one of the major reasons why the Muslims were 'backward'. Its advocates argued for its followers to think rationally and act as rational human beings – since they believed that it was Taqlid that led to the 'anti-intellectualism' that has engulfed the Muslim world. The 'modernist' reformers, who had been enlightened by

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their modern education, set out to offer new understandings and meanings that were aimed at abrogating the medieval theologians explanations.

From the beginning of the Wahhabi dispensation, in the late 18th century, this movement was associated with the mass murder of all who opposed it. For example, the Wahhabis fell upon the city of Karbala in 1801 and killed 2,000 ordinary citizens in the streets. In addition, the broader ideology name Wahhabism—which is built on the concept of political enforcement of religious beliefs—represented a serious challenge to the theology and practice of mainstream Sunni Islam. Where there is no political entity to force their will, the advocates of this ideology simply took, and take matters in their own hands—nothing short of vigilantism.

Reforms (in whatever form they took) were being implemented as being the only way to strengthen the Muslims against the West, did the reverse. It opened and eased the way for the West to make inroads to the heart and soul of the Muslims. The modeling of Muslim education upon European education, created enlightened European thinking Muslims. The paradigm of Islamic renaissance had been set and molded within a Western Framework. While the growing secular Muslims viewed Europe as actually a blessing rather than previously held belief of an oppressor, the reformers looked at the West with one eye of contempt. However, due to the path that the re-formers were ensuing, Europe actually benefited from them in that the reformers clashed with the traditional 'ulama on many issues, and who were seen by Europe as less than 'welcoming' to many of their ideas. In fact, Lord Cromer said of the reformists, "They are the natural allies of the European reformer" [Al-Murabit, Shaykh 'Abd al-Qadir, *The Return of the Khalifate* (Madina Press: South Africa) 1996, p 2]. Following a disaster in trying to see a reform enacted in the Shari'ah courts that would see the 'legitimate levying of interest', Lord Cromer saw to it that all those who opposed it were removed from office. Whilst with the few powers that the Khalifah still held onto, he still replaced the Mufti of al Azhar himself, but it was Lord Cromer who appointed his successor – none other than one of the 'initiators of an Islamic renaissance' - Muhammad 'Abduh. Cromer remarked about 'Abduh, that he is 'animated with liberal sentiments and is hoped that he will aid (us) in the course of reform' [Kedourie, Elie, *Afghani and 'Abduh; An essay on religious unbelief and political activism in Modern Islam*, (Frank Cass: London) 1997 p38]. 'Abduh's ascension to the Mufti of Egypt in 1889, was no more simple for Cromer to do, than it was to remove people from office. He remarked that as Mufti of al-Azhar, 'Abduh was someone who was more open to wholesome European influences' [Ibid. p 2].

The educational syllabus had now made the educated elite amongst the Muslims the intellectuals' carriers of Western thought, be that secular minded or reformist inclined, and through the lack of Islamic education, the Umma as a default had inherited the Western concept of life. The effects that the injection of European ideas into the educational system at first and then later across all areas of the Muslims life was such that:

[...] it created a new element in Muslim society – a class of young officers and officials acquainted with a Western language, usually French, professionally interested in the study of some aspects of Western civilization, and trained to look up to Western Christian experts as their teachers and guides for better ways.

[Lewis, Bernard, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe*, (W.W Norton & Company: New York) 1982 p 86]

Taking their new guides and sages, the 'ulama had almost become redundant, now having no worth, not knowing about the 'useful' subjects and sciences such as the French Revolution, Engineering, Mozart, American history and the like. In the sciences, Muslims were taught to look at the universe from the viewpoint of a person who does not know God. In the teaching of history, events were seen to be random and without a moral calculus driving them. They were not taught to see Allah's laws that govern the rise and fall of nations. The Europeans and their Muslim students challenged the 'ulama as to whether Islam had the solutions to the problems of modernity, and they questioned how could a ruling system allow one man to take all responsibility and authority of ruling. They argued that man, being man is subject to despotism and dictatorship, and as such, looked upon the Caliph as a dictator [a-Fajr, Issue 9, April 1987, pp 8-9]. The Muslims soon learned that bad governments did not have to be tolerated and that people could belong to political communities, based upon race, language or culture, and shared historical experiences—in short, nations. Nationalism was the means by which secular Muslims saw as the only way of unshackling themselves from a bankrupt, inefficient and defunct system of governance and upon these ties allowed for a series of revolts against the Caliph. Nationalism was and is a powerful, emotional tool that was 'invented in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century,' and noted for its remarkable effects. It was visible that within a few years, 'the ideas of nationalism had arrived to every subject within the Middle East' [Yale, William, *The Near East: A Modern History*, (Arbor, Ann: University of Michigan) 1968 p 41]. Harnessing the emotions of the people, the Europeans were readily accepting that their chief

Business (was) to reach individuals, but individuals can only be reached by establishing a point of contact with them, and amongst the strongest personalities to be reached are those who live and move within the circles of Nationalism.

[The International Review of Missions, vol. 13. No. 50, April 1924, p 169]

It was at the hands of the nationalistic movement of the Young Turks, that the institution of the Caliphate was finally abolished. The people had made their decision. The achievement was remarkable in the fact that it had been accomplished by a people

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who were dismissed by the early 'ulama as "(lacking) keenness of understanding and clarity of intelligence."

What then is the root problem of our state today? Is it fundamentally because we lack an Islamic state? Ali', may Allah be pleased with him, once responded to complaints by the people that were questioning why they were facing so many problems under his rule that were not apparent at the time of Abu Bakr and 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with them both, by saying, 'When they ruled they had people like me to rule over, while I have people like you.' In a word, people. As mentioned at the beginning, the orientation of the people has changed, as highlighted by 'Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, and which is re-emphasised by the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, who said: 'The nations will call to one another to attack you as people invite each other to share a dish of food'. One of the sahaba asked: 'is it due to our few numbers, O Messenger of Allah?' The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, replied; 'no – you will be numerous but like the scum which is washed up by the raging water of the flood – and Allah will take the fear of you away from your enemies and will put al wahn in your hearts'. The sahaba asked; 'what is al wahan?' He, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: 'love of the world and a hatred of death'.

Although today, we find ourselves without a Caliph, this is not the cause of our troubles; rather we as an Umma have become neglectful of our Din and have become preoccupied with this life, as opposed to the next. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, did not inform his Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, that we would be leaderless, but rather, we would have become lovers of this life and its allure. We need to once again reorient ourselves away from the dunya in our first step to the process of changing our condition. The real irony of this time that the very movement that is so adapt in calling to attention of all the innovations that people are so guilty of committing, actually helped the European forces and actively participated in the biggest bid'a that the Umma has ever seen—the destruction of the Caliphate, and its replacement with a Kingdom.

⁵ According to a study conducted by an American Police Department in California, the leading school discipline problem in 1940 was talking, chewing gum, making noise, running in the hallways, getting out of place in line, wearing improper clothing and not putting paper in the wastebasket, etc. By 1980 the major problems were: drug abuse, alcohol abuse, pregnancy, suicide, rape, robbery, assault, burglary, arson, and bombing. The Indianapolis public schools conducted a behavior discipline survey. It reported the following activities in the hall: Grabbing 69%, pushing 84%, hitting 82%, kicking 48%, slapping 57%, pinching 66%, fighting 78% and tripping 62%. There is also a high percentage of physical violence by teacher against student (22%) and by student against teacher (42%). We leave our children at school in such an environment for 30-40 hours per week and then expect them to behave as upright Muslims – think again.

⁶ Ahmad

⁷ Al-Qur'an 16:125

Since the horrific and tragic events of September 11th, nothing has been greater discussed and scrutinised in the public arena than Islam; it is as if Islam has been introduced to the Western world, or 'discovered' once again. Could it have been the case—had we been more proactive and less reactive—that this 'discovery' would have taken place under more positive circumstances? It seems that it takes the Muslims a tragedy to occur for us to realise that we have an immense responsibility while living in the West.

Contrary to the President of America and the Prime Minister of England's official praise of Islam, some of the media have bluntly suggested that the action taken after September's event is a war and Islam is at its heart. Despite there being a conscious effort to truly understand Islam and Muslims, there seems to be those who are determined to paint terrorism and Islam with the same brush. Simplified and undifferentiated descriptions of Islam help create an image by which Islam is seen as hostile to Western culture, and a religion of backwardness and oppression. 'A selective presentation and analysis of Islam and events by both scholars and political commentators too often inform articles and editorials on the Muslim world' says John Esposito, Director of the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, at Georgetown University in Washington. 'This selective analysis fails to tell the whole story [...] While it sheds some light, it is a partial light that obscures and distorts the full picture.' [J. L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat – Myth or Reality?* (Oxford University Press: New York and Oxford) 1992, p 173]

There seems to be a noticeable discrepancy between knowledge of Islam on the one hand and the certainty of judgments on the other. While the terrorist crime of September 11th may have been the work of some misled individuals, it was certainly not the product of Islam.

However, it would not suffice to leave the condemnation of such a heinous crime there, but it would also be for the world community to seek out the root from which such hate pours fourth from people; what are the causes of grievances, turmoil, anger, bitterness, frustrations, hopelessness and how can we eliminate them? [See: Malik, Aftab Ahmad (Ed), *Shattered Illusions: Analyzing the War on Terrorism* (AmalPress: UK) 2002 for a thorough discussion on the topic of what could cause people to hate the US so much, to drive them to inflict the maximum amount of destruction] We will soon realise that these causes are not the doing of God or religion, but merely results of regimes that oppress and policies that kill and subvert. Now more than ever is the need to investigate the link between terrorism and support that continues for dictatorial regimes particularly in the Muslim World.

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It is not the case that the Muslim world hates the 'West' or indeed America. There are many Muslims living in the West and it would be hypocritical to denounce in rhetoric of hate the very host country that has welcomed them. Muslims view that there are many parallels extant in the West to Islamic precepts, such as freedom, tolerance, the right to education, and civil liberties. Graham E. Fuller, the former vice-chairman of the National Intelligence Council at the CIA, recently wrote in the *LA Times* that: 'If you travel around the Muslim world, it quickly becomes evident that there is immense respect for a great variety of American values.' Rather, the frustration is vented at what is seen as double standards in policies. People can enjoy such values in the West, but it appears that there has been a concerted effort to keep such values restricted—seen to be only fit 'for home consumption but are not for export.' ["Muslims Abhor The Double Standard" *Los Angeles Times*, 5 October 2001; Graham E. Fuller]

Perhaps we can pray for a new beginning. The tragic events of September have certainly allowed anything good that occurred in 2001 seem like a far, distant memory. The momentous and landmark issue of the Eid stamp last year—seems irrelevant and the struggle and the hard work of a symbol of Muslim integration into the mainstream being reduced to nothing but a blip on a screen. Marred by bloodshed and hate, the latter part of 2001 was seen to be a time of confusion, apprehension and fear of Islam and Muslims. While there has been a certain degree of backlash, people also are trying to understand what Islam really stands for. Book-sellers in Europe and the Middle East reported an upsurge in interest in the Qur'an, which confirms what one British newspaper editor had to say: 'Islam [...] has never been of greater interest to the people of Britain than it is today.' [Lawrence H Sear, Managing editor of *The Daily Mail* writing in a column in *The News International*, November 21, 2001, p 10]

Part of this confusion about Islam, stems from the feeling and understanding that Islam is viewed as something far, alien and distant from the people living in the West, when in fact, this is not true. Of Britain—history tells us otherwise. Of all the countries in the West, Britain has always enjoyed a 'special relationship' with the Muslim world. Contacts with the Islamic world extend back further in time than is generally imagined.

The people of South-west England have had contact with Islamic communities for many centuries. The first gold coin minted in Britain by the Anglo-Saxon King Offa of Mercia (757-796) remarkably bears the Islamic inscription of the declaration of faith along with the Kings own name: OFFA REX. Historians speculate as to the coin's purpose; theories include trade, diplomacy, a protest to the Pope and even acceptance of Islam. Whatever its design, it serves to show just how early contact with Islam had been made. Like Offa's Islamic coin, the Irish Ballycotton cross (ninth century) also bears an Arabic inscription. At the centre of the cross is written the Islamic phrase 'In the name of Allah', and provides further evidence of Islam's early interaction with Britain.

From the sixteenth century onward voyagers from the West Country reached Islamic

countries and brought back travelers' tales that sometimes reached printed form to feed the appetites of people eager for information on distant lands. A number of these accounts are represented in Exeter libraries, having circulated among people in Devon for centuries.

When it came to trade, of all the countries of Europe, Britain enjoyed the most extensive trade with the lands of Islam by the seventeenth century. It exported dyed cloth, tin and led, and imported currants, cotton, wool, yarn, spices, oils, chemicals, silk etc. Some of these imports, such as silk, stimulated new industries in Wiltshire and Gloucester.

Cultural, economic and diplomatic exchanges also initiated great interest in the language of Islam—Arabic. Indeed, by the seventeenth century, Arabic became an adjunct to a complete university education, and was seen to be 'the hallmark of the enlightened Englishman – particularly the man of science.' At both Oxford and Cambridge, students by 1630, had to study the Arabic branches of Islamic learning, since it was the language in which the books of physics, astrology and rhetoric were written in. The Cambridge professor in mathematics, Isaac Barrow, concurred that mastery of Arabic was necessary for the advancement of learning. Edward Pococke (professor Oxford University) composed poems in Arabic to mark major national occasions – such as was done on the restoration of Charles II in 1660.

The influence of Islamic scholarship, trade and diplomacy upon Western culture, particularly in the fields of science and medicine is borne out by words in the English language which we use every day. Words such as Algebra, Alcohol, Alkali, Divan, and Sugar, are derived from their Arabic names al-Jabbr; al-Kuhl; al-qali; divan and sukkar respectively.

The relationship between Islam and Britain is a complicated but rich one. It was one of cultural dialogue and exchange and one from where trade allowed a transportation of culture and ideas. The intellectual and religious impact of the encounter challenged men whose writings and influence have been instrumental in defining early modern European culture; from Pope Pius II to Martin Luther, John Lock to John Clavin, from George Fox to William Shakespeare. These people all reflected to varying degrees in their writings on the interaction between the two civilisations. [For such literature discussing the interaction between Islam and the West, see: Matar, Nabil, *Islam In Britain 1558-1685*, (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge UK) 1999 and Matar, Nabil, *Turks, Moors and Englishmen In the Age of Discovery*, (Columbia University Press: New York) 1999].

The brief discussion about Islamic civilization and its interaction with the West would not be complete without mentioning recent works that shed light upon the contact which existed between Islam and America prior to Christopher Columbus's 'discovery' of America. Dr. Barry Fell (Harvard University) introduced in his book *Saga America*, such evidence supporting this claim. Dr. Fell discovered the existence of Muslim schools at Valley of Fire, Allan Springs, Logomarsino, Keyhole Canyon,

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Washoe and Hickison Summit Pass (Nevada), Mesa Verde (Colorado), Mimbres Valley (New Mexico) and Tipper Canoe (Indiana) dating back to 700-800 CE. Engraved on rocks in the old western US, he found texts, diagrams and charts representing the last surviving fragments of what was once a system of schools—at both an elementary and higher levels. The language of instruction was North African Arabic written with old Kufic Arabic script. The subjects of instruction included writing, reading, arithmetic, religion, history, geography, mathematics, astronomy and sea navigation.

There are 565 names of places (villages, towns, cities, mountains, lakes, rivers, etc.) in USA (484) and Canada (81) which are derived from Islamic and Arabic roots. These places were originally named by the natives in pre-Columbian period. Some of these names carried holy meanings such as: Mecca (Indiana) - 720 inhabitants, Makkah Indian tribe (Washington), Medina (Idaho) - 2100, Medina (NY) - 8500, Medina and Hazen (North Dakota) - 1100 and 5000, respectively, Medina (Ohio) - 12,000, Medina (Tennessee) - 1100, Medina (Texas) - 26,000, Medina (Ontario) -1200, Mahomet (Illinois) - 3200, Mona (Utah) - 1100, Arva (Ontario) - 700, and many others. [Fell, Dr Barry, *Saga America*, (Times Books: New York, NY) 1980; a book that is next to impossible to find. However, those less fortunate, may want to begin their search by visiting: <http://www.equinox-project.com/islamic.htm> which contains some extracts of the book.]

A renowned American historian and linguist Leo Weiner of Harvard University, in his book *Africa and The Discovery of America* wrote that Columbus was well aware of the Mandinka presence in the New World and that the West African Muslims had spread throughout the Caribbean, Central, South and North American territories, including Canada, where they were trading and intermarrying with the Iroquois and Algonquin Indians. [Weiner, Leo, *Africa and The Discovery of America*, 3 Vols. (Innes & Sons: Philadelphia) 1920] We have mentioned just how powerful the Arabic language had been—that it was the scientific language of most of humankind from the 8th to the 12th century, which could explain why Columbus, in his own words, considered Arabic to be ‘the mother of all languages,’ and why on his first voyage to the New World, he took with him Luis de Torres, an Arabic-speaking Spaniard, as his interpreter.

While we are reminded of the vast advances that the Western civilization has made for mankind—unfairly, Western historians of arts and sciences, especially those engaged in the history of medicine, have largely ignored the Muslim contribution to these sciences. At best, they maintain that the Muslims kept the Greek traditions of learning alive, and then passed them onto the European world. However, the Muslims did not merely indulge in the task of translating Greek texts—the Muslim scholars critically analyzed, collated, corrected and even supplemented substantially the Greek sciences and philosophy. Whereas the Greeks systematized, generalized and theorized, the Muslims established new methods of investigation, of experimentation, observation, measurement and development that resulted in the transmission of the roots of modern

day science as we have today, from the Islamic Civilization to the European Civilization.

Muslim scholars have made vital contributions in the sphere of the sciences, arts and scholasticism, which have formed the foundation of modern civilization. Despite such contributions, most of the Western world is unaware of such luminaries as: Ibn Sina (Avicenna) b 980AD, who wrote *al-Qanun* (The Canon), which was one of the most influential medical textbooks in medieval Europe until the 17th century. Ibn al-Nafis (d. 1289) who explained blood flow, over three hundred years before William Harvey, who wrote about it in 1628. Jabir Ibn Haiyan (Geber), known as the father of chemistry. The very name Chemistry is derived from the Arabic *al-Kimya*. Several technical terms introduced by Jabir, such as Alkali, Cinnabar and alembic are still used in modern scientific vocabulary. Muhammad Bin Musa al- Khawarizimi (Algorizam) introduced the mathematical concept of algorithm, which is named after his last name. He is the recognized founder of algebra, which is the name derived from his famous book—*al-Jabbr Wa-al Muqabilah*. This book was the principal mathematical textbook in European universities until the 16th century. [See: Beckingham, C.F., *Misconceptions of Islam: Medieval and Modern*, Journal of Royal Society of Arts, September 1976; Draper, John William, *The Intellectual Development of Europe* (London) Vol. I, 1875; Makdisi, George, *The Rise Of Humanism In Classical Islam & The Christian West* (Edinburgh) 1991; W. Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Surveys; The Influence of Islam on Medieval Europe* (Edinburgh) 1972]

Unfortunately—such knowledge is normally known within in the confines of academia and regrettably lacking amongst the masses.

⁸ Al-Qur'an 3:159

⁹ Narrated by al-Bukhari

¹⁰ Al-Tirmidhi

¹¹ Al-Tirmidhi

¹² Narrated by Abu-Dawud

¹³ Commins, David Dean, *Islamic Reform: Politics and social change in late Ottoman Syria*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990) p 14

¹⁴ Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, op cit., p 124

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¹⁵ Lewis, Bernard, “*The West and the Middle East*” published in Foreign Affairs (1997)

¹⁶ Islam consists of three dimensions:

Islam – One who follows Islam, is a Muslim. This is at the most basic level – and which the vast majority of the Umma are at.

Iman – A person who has Iman is said to be a *Mu'min*. Iman answers our questions as to *why are we doing things*. Interestingly, the root word of Iman is Alif Mim Noon: A MA NA – which means to make oneself safe and secure. So we become safe by having Iman – a lack of Iman will result us being the opposite of secure and safe – and we see this around us with the Kuffar

Ihsan – The person who practices this is said to be a *Muhsin* – and these number a few people. ‘Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, said (as related by Ibn al-Jawzi in the chapter devoted to him in *Sifat al-safwa*) concerning the people of Ihsan that they:

are the fewest in number, but the greatest in rank before Allah. Through them Allah preserves His proofs until they bequeath it to those like them (before passing on) and plant it firmly in their hearts. By them knowledge has taken by assault the reality of things, so that they found easy what those given to comfort found hard, and found intimacy in what the ignorant found desolate. They accompanied the world with bodies whose spirits were attached to the highest regard (*al-mahall al-a`la*). Ah, ah! How one yearns to see them!

If we examine how Shaykh ‘Uthman Dan Fodio categorises these in his book – *Kitab al-Ulum al-Mu’amala*, he writes:

Islam - The sciences that deal with *fiqh*, concerning the outward aspects of the Din

Iman - The science of *tawhid*, concerning the beliefs comprising the foundations of the Din, and

Ihsan - The science of *tasawuff*, concerning the inward aspects of the Din.

Tasawuff: *What exactly is it?*

Like most of the Islamic sciences, Tasawuff was not known by name during the time of the Messenger of Allah may Allah bless him and grant him peace. This does not make it less legitimate, as many sciences took name and shape many years after the passing of the Prophet of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, such as: The Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence, Hadith Methodology, the Science of Grammar, the Science of Clarification, the Science of Exegesis of the Qur'an, the Science of Linguistic analysis etc etc. As the famous philosopher and historian Ibn Khaldun (d. 808 AH) mentions in his *Muqaddimah*.

This science belongs to the sciences of the religious law that originated in Islam. Sufism is based on (the assumption) that the method of those people (who later on came to be called Sufis) had always been considered by the important early Muslims [Salaf], the men around Muhammad [may Allah bless him and grant him peace], and the men of the second generations [Tabi'in], as well as those who came after them, as the path of truth and right guidance.

[Khaldun, Ibn, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History* (3 Vols) Translated by Franz Rosenthal (Routledge and Kegan Paul: London) 1958, Volume 3 p 76]

Defining Tasawuff can be difficult due to the sheer number of definitions that are available, but it is best to examine what the people of this science themselves said about it—as opposed to what people think about it. Ahmad Zuruq (d. 899AH) wrote that there were over two thousand definitions of Tasawuff, but they all go back to the sincerity of one's self application to Allah. [Zuruq, Ahmad, *The principles of Sufism; An Annotated Translation with an Introduction* by Zaineb S. Istrabadi, unpublished doctorate of Philosophy, Indiana University, 1988, p 2] The objective of Tasawuff is to perfect ones' being with relation to his or her Creator. It is the perfection of adab in all dimensions, since this is what the Shari'ah is for all creation—how to act and behave between others and with their Creator. Ikhlas, or sincerity is at the root of the Din. The fundamental goal of Tasawuff is nothing more and nothing less than to create change and to inoculate the individual with good character. As someone once said, "Tasawuff is character; whosoever is ahead of you in character is ahead of you in Tasawuff." When asked about Tasawuff, Muhammad ibn 'Ali al-Qassab the teacher of Imam al-Junayd, ("The Imam of the World and the Imam of the two sanctuaries," d. 297 AH) answered:

Tasawuff consists of noble behaviour (akhlaq karima) that is made manifest at a noble time on the part of a noble person in the presence of a noble people.

[R. Nicholson (Ed.) *The Kitab al-Luma'* (The Book of Flashes) pp 34-35]

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The emphasis on character that is so central to our understanding of adab was emphasised by the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, who said in a hadith, "I have been sent to perfect manners."

It cannot be ignored that the discipline of Tasawuff has long been an integral part of the traditional Islamic curriculum and that explains in part as to why so many fuqaha have been clear advocates of this science. Imam Dhahabi, the hadith master and brilliant student of hafiz Ibn Taymiya, himself listed over three hundred of his teachers as Sufis, and these were hadith teachers. He compiles a list himself in his *Mu'jam Shuyukh al-Dhahabi* (Compendium of Dhahabi's Shaykhs) as well as in his *Tadhkirat al-huffaz*. In his Compendium he acknowledges his teachers as:

The brilliant savant and usul specialist Safi al-Din Muhammed ibn 'Abd al-Rahim al-Hindi al-Shafi'i—'Qadi al-qudat, the Paragon of Islam, the standard bearer of the Sunna, my Shaykh, Jamal al-Din Abu al-Ma'ali Muhammed ibn 'Ali al-Ansari al-Zamalkini al-Dimashqi al-Shafi'i—The righteous man of Allah, the Imam, the knower, the Muhaddith Abu Abd Allah Badr al-Din Muhammed ibn Mas'ud Ibn al-Tuwwazi al-Halabi al Shafi'i—'Muwaffaq al-din Abu 'Abd Allah Muhhamed Ibn Abi al 'ala al-Rabbani al- Nasibu al-Shafi'i al-Sufi—the Shaykh of the Sufis and fuqara in Ba' albak—The Imam, the reliable Muhaddith, the knower, the linguist, the Ascetic, Safi al-Din Abu al-Thana' Mahmud Ibn Abi Bakr al-Tannukhi al-Armuwi a-l Shami al-Shafi'i al-Sufi,'—My companion, 'Izz al-Din al-Hassan Ibn Ahmed al-Irbili, the physician, he was one of the Sufis of Duwayrat Hamd, 'Zayn al -'Arab bint 'Abdul al-Rahman al-Dimashqiyya Sulamiyya, she was the Shaykha of the ribat in al Kharimiyya

So it should be evident, for those who argue that the Sufis were ignorant of the laws of the Shari'ah, that this hadith master certainly did not believe that to be true. There are also those Muslims who simply want to eradicate any trace or significance of 'Sufism'; to belittle its significance and its existence in orthodox history. Should they attempt that, they would find that barely anything would remain, since:

[The] major corpus of knowledge that has come down to us from prior generations of scholars [...] were mainly Sufis or taught by Sufis.

[Bewley, Aisha, *Islam—The Empowering of Women*, (Ta Ha Publishers: London) 1999, p 48]

In fact, Islam refuses to allow the two sciences of Fiqh and Tasawuff—the one of the outer and the other of the inner to create an uneasy dichotomy— rather it ensures that the one is a necessary requirement of the other, as Shaykh Hamza once mentioned:

The fundamental and underlying message in the tradition of Islam [...] is that it does not and refuses to create this dialectic in which a person's inward and their outward become split. [In which] people are either forced to become esoterists or they are forced to become extoterists. In fact, what Islam is trying to do and what most other spiritual religions and in fact from the Muslim perspective all of them have failed to do is to join these two elements in a harmonious and balanced way.

This can be seen to be even more so evident from a saying of Imam Malik recorded by Ahmed Zarquq in his *Qawa'id*, who was recorded to have said:

He who practices Tasawuff without learning Sacred Law corrupts his faith, while he who learns Sacred Law without practicing Tasawuff corrupts himself. Only he who combines the two proves true.

Ahmed Zaruq himself explains that:

There is no Tasawuff except through understanding fiqh, since the outward judgements of Allah are only known through it. There is no fiqh without Tasawuff, since actions are only according to sincerity. [Zuruq, Ahmed, op cit., p 2]

This is why Tasawuff was taught at virtually every Islamic university and madrassahs throughout the Islamic lands, being incorporated as part of the curriculum, producing scholars that would go onto become the teachers of scholars for over a thousand years right up to the end of the Caliphate. Imam Dhababi attested that—many scholars were the students of Sufis, whilst being erudite scholars themselves were also taking up the path of Tasawuff. Such scholars noted for their Tasawuff include:

Imam Muhammad Amin Ibn Abidin, Sheikh al-Islam Zakaria al-Ansari, Imam Ibn Daqiq al-Eid, Imam al-Izz Ibn Abd al-Salam, Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulsi, Sheikh Ahmad al-Sirhindi, Sheikh Ibrahim al-Bajuri, Imam al-Ghazali, Shah Wali Allah al-Dahlawi, Imam al-Nawawi, the hadith master (hafiz, someone with 100,000 hadiths by memory) Abd al-Adhim al-Mundhiri, the hadith master Murtada al-Zabidi, the hadith master Abd al-Rauf al-Manawi, the hadith master Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti, the hadith master Taqi al-Din al-Subki, Imam al-Rafii, Imam Ibn Hajar al-Haytami, Zayn al-Din al-Mallibari, Ahmad ibn Naqib al-Misri, and many many others.

[<http://ds.dial.pipex.com/masud/ISLAM/nuh/sufitdk.htm>]

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Imam Nawawi's inclusion of a small, but comprehensive chapter on Tasawuff in his basic manual on Islam, *al-Maqasid* includes the section on how one may 'reach Allah.' It seems that at least for this scholar he viewed that not only was this important enough to be placed in a basic primer on Islam, but more notably, that he did not comprehend the exoteric to exclude the esoteric – but rather, the very means of comprehending it. He writes that the Tasawuff is based on five principles:

1. Seeking Sacred Knowledge in order to perform Allah's command;
2. Keeping the company of sheikhs and fellow disciples in order to see with insight;
3. Forgoing both dispensations from religious obligations and figurative interpretations of scripture, for the sake of cautiousness;
4. Organizing one's time with spiritual works to maintain presence of heart; and
5. Suspecting the self in all matters, in order to free oneself from caprice and be safe from destruction.

The *suluk*—or journey to Allah begins fundamentally with the understanding of the laws of the Shari'ah, since it is only after mastering the outward sciences that one may discover the inward aspects—or as Imam Ghazali asserted:

The beginning of guidance is outward piety and the end of guidance is inward piety.

[al-Ghazali, *Bidayat al Hidayah*, Transl. By W. M Watt in *The Faith and Practice of al Ghazali*, (Allen and Unwin: London) 1953, pp 87 – 90]

It is only by living by the Shari'ah—the Law that Allah has given us which is the divine adab of how Allah wishes for us to act as His representatives on this earthly plain, that the Sufis have maintained that the esoteric that contradicts the exoteric is a fraud.

The Sufi is the one who lives by the Shari'ah—so how is it possible for one to break the very adab that is required by his Lord to approach Him and then claim to be a person of Allah? To be otherwise, would not enable you to be called a Sufi. When asked by someone what a Sufi was, Abu Yazid al-Bistami (d. 261 AH) remarked:

He is the one that takes the Book of Allah in his right hand and the sunna in his left hand, looks with one of his eyes at the Garden and the other at the Fire, binds himself with the wrapper of this world and cloaks himself with the cloak of the next world, and between them says to his Master, 'At Your service, O Allah, At Your service. [Bewley, op. cit, p 65]

[Seyyed Abul Ala Mawdudi, echoed something similar when he explained how fiqh

and Tasawuff complement one another [see: Abul Ala Mawdudi, *Understanding Islam*, Translated by Khurshid Ahmed (Islamic Foundation: United Kingdom) 1980, pp 95-97] and also by Professor Muhammad Abul Qasim in his translation of *'Salvation of the Soul and Islamic Devotions* [Kegan Paul International: London, 1983, p 29] along with many other scholars confirming such]

Adab as understood by the Sufis is multi dimensional. The first was that of inward morality and decency, the second was that of outward moral practice and the third was the acquisition of knowledge. To further look into these areas, we see that moral behaviour is a result of moral training; moral practice outwardly was the adherence to the Prophetic Sunna and the final adab. The acquisition of knowledge was in fact the starting point of adab—since it was from here that entire fields of knowledge were opened and which would ultimately allow the Sufi to master all adab for all areas of being

Criticisms of Tasawuff

Although criticism existed and exist about Tasawuff, this is not to say that criticism of other Islamic sciences never also existed. The science of hadith for example, not only required a science to decipher between the sheer number of hadith forgeries and fabrications, but it also produced deviant sects that manipulated hadith narrations for their own means. Does this mean that we conclude that anything to do with hadith literature and study could be corruptive? No we do not; this would be silliness on our part, yet many people apply this false logic to Tasawuff. What really occurs is that the criticisms were and are levelled more at the people's practice rather than at what Tasawuff actually demanded. As the hadith master and mujtahid Imam, Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti mentions that when he had looked:

At the matters concerning which the Imams of Shari'ah have criticised the Sufis [...] I did not see a single true Sufi holding such positions. Rather, they are held by the people of innovation and extremists who have claimed for themselves the title of Sufi—while in reality they are not. [Bewley, op cit, p 50]

Contrary to popular belief, the harshest of critics of this science came from those who advocated it. One such scholar was the Sufi and scholar, Sidi Ahmad Zarruq, who wrote a great book called the *Principles of Tasawuff*; in which he clarified traditional and orthodox Sufism as opposed to cultural customs and local superstitions. One section of his book investigates why people censure Sufis. He writes that there are five reasons:

The first of these is with reference to the perfection of their path, for if the Sufis latch on to a special dispensation, or if they misbehave, or if a fault manifests itself in them, people hasten to repudiate them. This is because the slightest

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flaw is manifest in something clean. No servant is free from fault unless he is granted infallibility or protection by God.

The second reason is the sensitivity of the observer, and as a result, criticism of the Sufis' knowledge in their states occurs, insomuch as the ego [naffs] hastens to deny knowledge that it does not possess.

The third reason is the existence of many who fall short of their claims and of these who seek gain through the guise of the religiosity. This is the reason for denying any claim that they might make even though there is proof of it, because it is found doubtful.

The fourth reason is fear of the generality that they might be lead astray by following esoteric doctrines without upholding the letter of the law, as happens to many ignorant people.

The fifth reason is the covetousness some people have for the ranks of Sufism, since the appearance of Truth invalidates a lesser truth. Thus, people are quick to become inflamed with the Sufis, more so with any other group, and persons in official positions exert pressure on them more than anyone else. He who falls in any one of these categories, except for the last, is either rewarded or excused. But God Knows best!

[Zurruq, Ahmed, op cit, pp 208 –209]

Hanbalis and Sufism

There is also the view that the orientalisists have maintained in that there existed a hostility between jurisprudence and Tasawuff—and it was only after Imam al-Ghazali managed to fuse the two together that Tasawuff and orthodoxy were reconciled. However, this does not take into account figures such as al-Qushayri and al-Junayd. Also, the very misleading assertion that Hanbalism was the 'great enemy of Sufism'—advocates, namely mentioning Ibn al-Qayyim, Ibn al-Jawzi's *Tablis al-Iblis* made prominent by a very partial translation now available, and the polemics of Ibn Taymiya. What people forget—since most is left out in detail, was that these scholars did not set out to condemn the science of Tasawuff in its entirety—nor to set out to demonstrate it as something alien to Islam. Rather, like Imam al-Ghazali and many others besides, they only set out to expose what they believed to be the 'heterodox doctrines and practices' of certain groups. The notion that the Hanbalis were staunch enemies against Tasawuff, is a clear misrepresentation of the truth. There has been a clear and systematic approach to remain silent or to completely ignore those great early Hanbali scholars that were either Sufis themselves—or who admired them and spoke in praise

of them.

Abu Mansur Ma'mar b. Muhammed b. Ziyad al Isfahani (d. 418)

Ibn Taymiya called him 'the Shaykh of the Sufis (of his time)'. [In his *al-aqida al-hamawiyya al kubra*, where he actually uses some verses from Ma'mars texts, but does not mention this explicitly (in *Majmu'* at *al rasa'il al kubra*, Vol 1, p 441).] He wrote many books on the sciences of Sufism. One book, the *Nahj al-Khass*, contained forty chapters including; Bab al-Tawba, Bab al-Irada, Zuhd, Adab, Haqiqa, Sabr, Tasawuff, Himma, Yaqin, and Muraqaba. Each chapter looked at each topic into three sections or three stations, and each station having one possible evil attached to it. For example, he examines adab. He enumerates that there are three possible stations—the correct behavior to the Shari'ah, the correct behavior to Allah, and the correct behavior to people. The evil that was associated to each one of these was:

The evil to learn knowledge without applying it

The evil of being distracted from Allah and having attachments in the world that did this, and

The evil of being pleased with ones passions and giving into the carnal soul.

[Meier Fritz, *An Important Manuscript find for Sufism*, in *Essays on Islamic Piety and Mysticism*, Translated by O'Kane John, Leiden, 1999, p148-149]

Ma'mar makes a point that he was perusing Tasawuff that was adopted from the Imams of the 'external science' and his Imam was Abu 'Abd Allah Ahmed b. Hanbal. [Ibid, p 146] He wrote with ferocity and constantly reiterated that Sufism was in conformity to both the Qur'an and Sunna. In one treatise he explains that like any other science, one must be careful whom to take it from, by quoting Imam al-Junayd, he remarks:

Take this science only from people who write down hadith and have mastered the principles (of usul), because our sciences are intertwined with the hadith of the Messenger of Allah. [Ibid. p 156]

Even from such an early date, Ma'mar in one of his introductions to his book, makes a very strong point of scolding the scholars, the jurists, the Qur'an exegetes and the Qur'an readers by criticising them for not acting in accordance to what they know. On the contrary he argues, it were the Sufis who 'lived in conformity with the Divine commands'.

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'Abd Allah Ansari of Herat (d.481)

The Abbasid Caliph, al-Qa'im (462 AH) called him *Shaykh al-Islam* [The Senior of Islam], *Shaykh al-Shuyukh* [Senior of the seniors], *Zayn al-'ulama* [Ornament of the scholars], and is also accredited as the *Nasir al-Sunna* [the Supporter of the Prophetic tradition]. To others he was known as 'Abd Allah Abu Isma'il, or simply, 'Abd Allah Ansari of Herat [where he was born in 396 AH]. He adhered to the madhab of Ahmed Ibn Hanbal – who he considered to be the clear model for success—writing an array of couplets [or qasidas] of his praises, he declared:

I am a Hanbali, while living and dying.
This is my testament, O brothers, to you!

[Farhadi, 'Abd al Ghafur, *Abdullah Ansari of Herat*; An early Sufi Master, Curzon Press, Surrey, p 11, 1996]

He gained great prominence as a great figure within the Hanbali madhab. There are few figures who lived in the distant past that we have clear information about, and he is one. In particular, two rich sources being the *Dayl 'ala Tabaqat al Hanabila* [The Appendices to the generations of the Hanbalis] of Ibn Rajab of Baghdad, and the *Siyar al 'A' lam al-Nubala* [The Characters of Great and Prominent People] by Imam al-Dhahabi. As well as being a diligent student of hadith, he also rose to become a prominent hadith teacher. While being meticulous with his students while studying the traditions of the Messenger of Allah, he was also mindful to his fellow Hanbalis about the 'great Sufi masters who were Hanbalis.' Considered as a great writer, 'Abd Allah wrote several books and Treatises on Tasawuff, which he taught to his students. Amongst his books were:

Tabaqat al Sufiyya—The Generations of the Sufis; *Sad Maydan*—The Hundred grounds; *Manazil al Sayirin*—The Book of the Stations of the Wayfarer; *Ilal al Maqamat*—The Flaws in the states

The *Tabaqat al Suffiyya* was a book that was originally written by 'Abu 'Abdur Rahman al-Sulami (d. 1021 CE) but was later presented as authored by Ansari's students, who added their teachers' sayings and notes. It was taught so that his students could learn 'about the past Sufi masters'. [Ibid. p 43] Included in the book were sections that covered in details the lives of past prominent Sufis, their teachers and their students; debates that took place between Sufis and their sayings; poems and their teachings. Asked once as to what benefit was achieved by reading such a book, Ansari replied:

The least benefit from learning about the Shaykhs is to notice that one's own

deeds, states and sayings is not like theirs. (The novice/student) will then abandon selfishness from his behaviour and will view his own flaws, to which he will compare the deeds of the Shaykhs [...] [Ibid. pp 44 – 46]

The Sad Maydan was also written for the benefit of his students so that they may recognise the various stages/stations that awaited them in their journey of Tasawuff. It included chapters on:

Tawba (repentance) of which he said: Knowledge is life, wisdom is a mirror, contentment is a fortress, hope is intercession, recollection (dhikr) is medicine (for all ills) and repentance is an antidote;

Compassion, Exile, Tawhid, Bedazzlement, contemplation of which he explained:

Contemplation is the removal of obstacles between the devotee and Allah. The way (Tariq) is threefold: realisation of the degree of wisdom by means of the degrees of knowledge; attainment of the degrees of purity by means of the degree of patience; (and) realisation of the degree of reality (haqiqat) through the degree of knowing (ma'rifat). Man attains the degree of wisdom by means of the degree of knowledge in three ways: putting one's knowledge to good use; venerating (Allah's) Commandments and adhering faithfully to the tradition (sunna of the Messenger of Allah)

—Direct observation and a chapter on fana, of which he dictated:

All things perish except His Face.

His is the judgement and to Him you will return (28:88)

Annihilation (fana) is:

Annihilation of the seeking in the found,

Annihilation of the knowing in the known,

Annihilation of the seeing in the seen. [Ibid. pp 63 71]

His *Kitab al-Manazil al Sayirin* is referred to as a 'classic Sufi treatise' and as 'a treatise (that) has no equivalent in earlier or later Sufi literature.' Indeed, it was this very book that Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziya was to later write his bulky commentary on, calling it the *Madarij as Saliqin*—The Grades of the Wayfarers. As with his Sad Maydan, Ansari wrote this for his students. The book detailed a hundred stations that all aimed at achieving Tawhid. Amongst the chapters included were those that dealt with:

Awakening, finding, casting aside, Actions, Principles, Reflections, Realities, Severance, Concentration and Tawhid, which was his final chapter. [Ibid. pp 81

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– 87]

The book was read throughout the Islamic world, during and after Ansari's life. It received much notoriety as well as for the sheer number of commentaries it received—one being done in a large volume by Ibn al-Jawziya, as previously mentioned.

The *'Ilal al Maqamat* was a short, but concise treatise that was dictated to one of his students before he passed away. The treatise was written to warn students of the path, of the dangers that were waiting for them—since this was a path that had many dangers lurking—presumably it hinted at the warning of treading the path with a unqualified teacher, or attempting to do so alone—Wa Allah Hu 'Alim.

'Abd al Qadir al-Jilani (d. 561)

Of him, the 'sultan of the scholars,' Shaykh al 'Izz 'Abd as Salam wrote that:

The Charismatic talents [karimat] of Shaykh 'Abd al-Qadir have been established as authentic by a consensus of numerous reports [...] He is widely renowned for his knowledge and practice, and for his meticulous attention to inner guidance in everything he said. He is so famous indeed, that there is no need for further commentating on the subject.

[Shaykh al-Tadifi, Muhammed ibn Yahya, *Necklace of Gems*, translated by Muhtar Holland, al Baz publishing inc., Florida, 1998, p 545]

The Shaykh al Islam, Ibn Hajr al Asqalani said of him;

As for Shaykh 'Abd al-Qadir, from all authentic reports that have reached us about him, it is clear that he was an expert jurist, a pious abstainer and a devout worshipper [...] Countless people repented at his hands. He was endowed with charismatic talents [karimat] in great abundance, far more than have been reported to us than anyone else. [Ibid, p 546]

The 'reviver of the Din,' Imam Nawawi wrote:

In all that has reached us, from trustworthy reporters concerning the talents of the friends of Allah [Karimat al 'awliya'] we learn of none more numerous than the charismatic talents of [...] the Shaykh of Baghdad, Muhyi' al-Din 'Abd al-Jili May Allah be well pleased with him. He was the Shaykh of the principles of Shafi'i and Hanbali authorities in Baghdad. Leadership in the sphere of knowledge devolved upon him in his day and age [...] The Shaykhs and scholars (May Allah be pleased with all of them) were unanimous in declaring his authority, in referring to his statements and in having recourse to his judgement. [Ibid, p 555]

Although Imam Dhahabi, praises him in his *Siyar a'lam al-nubala'* as:

The Shaykh, the Imam, the scholar, the Zahid, the knower, the exemplar, Shaykh al Islam, the distinguished one among the awliya' [...] the Hanbali, the Shaykh of Baghdad [...]

he remains more sceptical than the previous authorities who accepted the miracles of the Shaykh as some being 'impossible', but he nonetheless recognises the status that he held as the Shaykh al-Islam and the 'the distinguished one among the awliya'.

(‘Abd al-Rahman) Ibn al-Jawzi (d. 597)

His *Tablis Iblis* [Devils Deception] not only criticised Sufi practices—but also condemned the deviated practices by scholars, hadith specialists and Judges that were not seen to have been derived from the Qur'an or Sunna. Rather than simply writing books against Sufism, his five volume *Sifat as Safwah* is a book that contains the biographies and praises of Sufis. In fact he even mentions during this book that he had wished to fill in the gaps that were present in the *Hilayat al Awliya'*—a mammoth ten-volume work that was written by Abu Nu'aym.

Ibn Taymiya (d. 728)

Ibn Taymiya included Sufism in his polemics against all sciences. He argued that Sufism was not known during the Salafi period, but emerged as a result of a study of the Sunna; the studies of Shari'ah and hadith and the actions and thoughts of the inner man led to the birth of Sufism. However, unlike the books published today that accredit a one sided view that Ibn Taymiya held of Sufism, his general attitude can be seen from the text in *Majm at al-Fatawa al-Kubra*. In it, he points out that some people accept every aspect of Sufism—what is right as well as what is wrong; others reject it totally. According to him, the criteria for testing Sufism are the Qur'an and the sunna. It can be deduced quite plainly from his texts that Ibn Taymiya did not reject Sufism totally. This was also the approach taken by Ibn Rajab al-hanbali in his *Dhail 'ala Tabaqat al-Hanabila*, where he identifies in it over one third of all Hanbali scholars as Sufis. When one refers to his biographical work, one finds al Ansari al-Harawi (d.481H) and 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani referred to as "as Sufi," and "az Zahid." Ibn Taymiya himself divided Sufism into three categories. [M. A. H Ansar, *Sufism and Shari'ah*, The Islamic Foundation, Leicester, United Kingdom, 1986, pp130-131]

The first group was what he called *masha' ikh al Islam, masha' ikh al kitab wa al Sunna, and a'emma al huda*. Ansari states that Ibn Taymiya mentioned that the Sufi in the first category were:

Fudayl bin 'Iyad (d. 187H), Ibrahim bin Adham (d. 160H), Shaiq al Balkhi

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(d.194H), Maʿruf ʿl Kharhi (d.200H), Bishar ʿl Hafi (d.227H), Sari ʿl Saqati (d.277H), al Junayd (d.297H), Sahl bin ʿAbd Allah ʿl Tustari (d.283H), and ʿAmr bin ʿUthman ʿl Makki (d.291H) [Ibid, p 131]

The second group consisted of those Sufis who experienced fana' (anhiliation) and sukr (intoxication). In this category, Ibn Taymiya mentioned the names of:

Abu Yazid al-Bistami (d.261H), Abu al-Husayn al-Nuri (d.295H), and Abu Bakr al-Shibili (d.334H). [Ibid, p131]

In the third group, he placed the Sufis who he believed to have contradicted the Shari'ah. His criticism was directed to the third group, and it is clear that his stand on Sufism did not go as far as to say that Sufism had no place in Islam. In fact, there may even be evidence to support the thesis that Ibn Taymmia was affiliated with the Tariqa of Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani. [See Makidisi, George, *Ibn Taymiya: A Sufi of the Qadiriya Order*, American Journal of Arabic Studies, Vol. I., pp 118-129] Ibn Taymiya's view regarding the Sufis can be summarised by his own words taken from his *Majmu*:

The use of the word Tasawuff has been thoroughly discussed. Among those who spoke about Tasawuff are not just the Imams and Shaykhs, but also they include Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Abu Sulayman ad Darani, as Saqati, al Junayd al Baghdadi, al Hasan al Basri, Maʿruf al Kharki, ʿAbdu'l Qadir al-Jilani, al Bistami and many others. This term was given to those who were dealing with that kind of science.

Some people criticised Sufiyya and Tasawuff and have said that they are innovators, outside of the Sunna, but the truth is they are striving in Allah's obedience [mujtahidin fi ta'at illahi], just as others of Allah's people have striven in Allah's obedience. So from among them you will find the foremost in nearness by virtue of his striving [as sabiq ul muqarrah bi hasab ijhtihadihi].

And some of them are from the People of the Right hand [Ahl al Yameen (mentioned in Sura Waqi'ah)], but slower in their progress. As regards both kinds, they might exercise ijhtihad and in that case they might be correct and they might be wrong. And from both groups, some of them might make a sin and repent. And this is the origin of Tasawuff. (And from that Origin, it has been spread. [Bewley, op cit, p 48]

Ibn Taymiya also accepted the concept of fana' and union in so far as it did not become the main objective of the Sufi. He also welcomed the periodic withdrawal [khalwa] if one performed Salat in congregation, attended the Friday prayer and discharged the

fundamental duties. [Ansari, op cit, p133] Further, he did not discount the possibility of Kashf—the concept that man can attain a certain knowledge or Divine guidance outside the normal revelatory media. He cited the Qur’anic passage which indicated that Allah disclosed His message to man in various ways, one of which through a secret communication (iha’).

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751)

He was the student of Ibn Taymiya, and probably the most famous for continuing on his teachers works. However, there was something that was distinctly different from the student and the teacher which was the:

Pervasive but still cautious and reserved concern with formal mysticism in his (Ibn al-Qayyim’s) Later works.

[Bell, Joseph Norman, *Love Theory in Later Hanbalite Islam*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1979, p 92]

Ibn Rajab believed that Ibn al-Qayyim’s understanding of Sufism was reflected by his writings, and that eventually, it was the ‘outgrowth of meditations while in prison and in isolation whilst his teacher was held in a separate cell in.’ [Ibid. pp 92-96] It is even possible to go back and look at the influence that Ibn al-Qayyim’s ‘instructor’ in mysticism—Abu’l Abbas Ahmed b. Ibrahim al-Wasiti (d. 711/1311) held over him. We are informed that even Ibn Taymiya held him in great esteem and of which he often referred to him as the ‘Junayd of his time’. [Ibid. p 93] Whatever the reason, Ibn al-Qayyim could not ignore this field of science even though he himself could in no way be called a Sufi.

Ibn al Qayyim’s writings on the mystical aspects of Islam did not just end here. He also wrote the *Tariq al hijratayn wa bab al sa ‘adatayn*, which in turn was another commentary of the *Mahasin al Majalis*—written by the ‘mystic’ Abu’l Abbas b. Muhammed of Almeria (d. 536/1141). If we go beyond this, we then discover that in turn, this book was an elucidation upon the ‘Iilal of none other than the Hanbali Sufi—‘Abd Allah Ansari. Ibn al-Qayyim also wrote a large volume dealing with Love—something that at first would appear odd coming from the pen of a scholar that was famed for his ‘exoteric’ writings. The book was called *al mawrid al safi wa-l- zill al dafi fi ‘l- mahaba wa aqasmiha wa ahkamih wa bayan ta’ alluqiha bi-l-ilah al haqq duna ma siwahu*—a book that no longer exists, but that dealt with love, its kinds and conditions and its devotion to god alone—a theme that is central to the practices of the Sufis. He then compiled another book (again, no longer extant) entitled *Qurrat ‘uyun al mutibbin wa rawdat qulub al ‘arifin*. Ibn Rajab identifies that this book ‘included eighty arguments on Khulla or intimate, exclusive love’. [Ibid. pp 96-97]

Conclusion

The blanket rejection of Tasawuff by some people today not only highlights the need to fill this void about what our Din comprises of, but also to understand who conveyed the transmission of knowledge from one generation to another. The rejection of traditional sciences and curriculum also implicitly indicates that no one has really understood nor practiced Islam as it should have been from the time of the Prophet and the community of the [true] salaf – and themselves.

The fact that Ibn al-Qayyim deemed the *Manazil al Salikin* ('a classical Sufi treatise') worthy of a large commentary, and the one hundred page commentary by Ibn Taymiya on the *Futuh al Ghayb* (The Revelations of the Unseen) of 'Abd Qadir al-Jilani—should offer us pause for thought. It appears that Ibn Taymiya's works that have been translated into English have been unfairly represented, and his critique of innovations have been selectively published. Who would have imagined that he held such views, walking into the shops that so tirelessly promote his books? In no way do I assert that either were Sufis, but the fact that both scholars wrote and commented (both in a negative and a positive fashion) upon Tasawuff should make one realise that they saw benefits in the science—despite being revered as the champions of 'everything anti-Sufi'.

Despite this, even where some scholar's sole aim was to write against Sufism what can then be said of the consensus that has been built throughout our history from the very scholars who are the transmitters of this Din—and of just some that I have mentioned earlier? What do we say to those scholars that are shown today to be arch-enemies of Tasawuff—only to realise that even they did not go as far as some people have gone today—and never condemned Tasawuff whole-heartedly? Do we simply sweep them away and say that the many thousands of recognised, brilliant scholars were all wrong, implying that at every point throughout history, all our scholars repeatedly made the same mistakes when it came to tackle this issue and instead, take the opinions of the few who are scantily scattered across the pages of our history?

¹⁷ Nasr, Seyyed Hosein, *Traditional Islam In The Modern World* (Islamic Texts Society: Cambridge 199?) pp 109 - 110

¹⁸ As a dictionary will reveal, the word descends from the:

Middle English 'ierarchie', which is derived from Old French; from Medieval Latin hierarchia; from Greek hierarkhia, meaning the *rule of a high priest*; from hierarkhs, *high priest*; One who occupies a position of authority in a religious *hierarchy*.

This definition and understanding of the word was derived from its application in

the Medieval church – and it was *this* hierarchy that allowed the church fathers and priests to create a monopoly in reaching god. For it was only through the church that salvation could be sought and that was to be found at the hands of the priests. In the eleventh century, the church, directed by strong popes, became the most powerful institution in the West, with the ability to exert influence over kings and princes without challenge. The Church was able to define exactly what was and was not heresy. In doing so,

[...] the Church consistently chose tenets and ideologies that best supported its control over the individual and society.

As it took over leadership in Europe and the Roman Empire collapsed, the Church all but wiped out education, technology, science, medicine, history, art and commerce. The Church amassed enormous wealth as the rest of society languished in what were literally *the dark ages*. Christianity greatly influenced the geography of medieval Europe, due to colonisation and missionary efforts. It reorganised Europe from pagan bands and villages into the centrally organised holds of feudal Europe. This reorganisation was patterned after the ecclesiastical hierarchy envisioned by the Church. It provided sanction and divine recognition for governments of the day in the form of “*Divine Right*,” and was responsible for the ordination of kings and often arbitrated disputes over territory. It attempted to control, contain and confine spirituality, the relationship between an individual and God. As a result, Christianity, as some have argued, has helped to create a society in which people are alienated not only from each other but also from the divine.

[Helen Ellerbe, *The Dark side of Christian History* – Introduction, Morningstar Books, 1995., and Bede, (Leo Sherley-Price, translator), *A History of the English Church and People*. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1968]

¹⁹ In the Qur’an we are reminded in many places of the various ranks and degrees of people that exist due to their actions, piety and knowledge. For example, in Sura al-An’am (6:132) we are told that:

For all [of them] there will be ranks from what they did.
Your Lord is not unaware of what they do

And also in 58:11,

O Believers! Make room in your assemblies when bidden to do so; Allah will raise to high ranks those that believe and those who have knowledge among you. Allah is aware of what you do.

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These ayats indicate that people can be raised higher than others, and this is more explicit in the following ayats:

He it is who has placed you as vicegerents of the earth and has exalted some of you in rank above others, that He may try you by that which He has given you [...] (6:165)

See how We have bestowed more on some than on others; but verily the Hereafter is more in rank and gradation and more in excellence (17:21)

Allah also informs us that circumstances can actually qualify your rank::

And why should you not spend in the cause of Allah, when He alone will inherit the heavens and the earth? Those of you that gave of their wealth before the victory and took part in the fighting are not equal [to those who gave and fought thereafter]. Their degree is greater [..](57:10)

Concerning ranks in knowledge:

[...] Whomsoever We will, We raise in degrees. Over every man of knowledge is one who is more knowing (12:76)

“Say: ‘Are those who know and those who do not know equal’” (39:9)

There are other ayats that enumerate upon this theme, such as 9:20, 12:33, 20:64, 20:75, 25:25, 25:50, 27:17, 27:19, 27:83, 37:1, 37:164, 39:65, 40:15, 41:19, 43: 32, 52:20, 57:10, 78:38, 81: 20 and many more

Other areas in which we can see that creation has been ordered in ranks include:

The Angelic Realm

Amongst the Angelic realm, we find the degrees and levels evident as well. There are so many angels in creation that they are countless, that ‘*None knows the warriors of your Lord but Him*’ [74: 31]. There are angels that act as guardians [6:61], angels that record details [43: 80], and angels that roam the earth seeking people of dhikr (Bukhari and Muslim). Some angels have two, three or four wings [35:1] and in one hadith, it was mentioned that Jibril (Gabriel) had six hundred wings and the distance between each wing was the same as the distance between the East and the West! [Sheikh Kishk, ‘Abdu’l Hamid, op cit p 6]. There are those angels who are closest and nearest to Allah and then there are those who are not: There is none of us but has an assigned place (37:

154) and, They seek the means of access to their Lord, whoever of them will be nearest (17: 57) are such indications found in the Qur'an. Out of all the angels that exist, Jibril, Mikail and Israfil are considered as the leaders [Ibid. p 15]. Jibril is entrusted with Revelation, Mika'il is entrusted with the plants and the rain, and Israfil is entrusted with the Trumpet that he will blow three times – the first being the blast of terror, the second of swooning, and the third being the blast of The Rising for the Lord of the Heaven and earth [Ibid. pp 14 – 15].

Heaven

In Heaven, there exists levels that correspond to the ranks of the inhabitants that they earned whilst living on earth; '*See how We preferred some above others: the Hereafter will be even greater in degrees and greater in preferment*' [17:21]. In a hadith mentioned in Sahih al-Bukhari, we are informed that Paradise has 100 grades [Dr al-Shimemeri, 'Abdullah 'Abdurraheem, *Descriptions of Paradise*, (Abul Qasim publishing house: Saudi Arabia, 1994) p 45] while in Sahih al Muslim it is mentioned that 'the people of Paradise will look to the upper apartments of Paradise in the same way as you see planets in the sky' [Ibid. p 46]. Concerning the lowest rank of Paradise, the Messenger of Allah is reported to have said:

I know the person who will be the last to come out of the Hellfire and the last to enter Paradise. He will be a man who will come out of Hell crawling and Allah will say 'Go and enter Paradise.' He will go to it, but will imagine that it has been filled and he will return and say, 'Oh Lord, I have found it full.' Allah will say, 'Go and enter Paradise, and you will have what equals the world and ten times as much (or, you will have as much as ten times the like of the world).' On that, the man will say, 'Do you mock at me (or laugh at me) though you are The King?' I saw Allah's Apostle (while saying that) smiling [so] that his premolar teeth were visible. It is said that that will be the lowest in degree among the people of Paradise. [Ibid. p 47]

Hell

As like Paradise with its degrees, Hell too has its levels for its denizens; '*Surely, the hypocrites will be in the lowest depths of the Fire, and you will find no helper for them*' [4: 145]. '*For all [of them] there will be ranks from what they did*' [6: 132]. 'Abd ar Rahman Ibn Zaid (a tabi' tabi'in) stated that, '*The levels of Paradise ascend, and the levels of Hell descend*' [al-Shaybani, Muhammed Ibrahim, Hellfire described in the Qur'an and Sunna, translated by Idris Ibn Stanley Palmer (Jam'iat Ihyaa' Minhaaj al Sunnah: Ipswich, 1993) p 18].

In a hadith recorded in Sahih al-Muslim, Abu Hurayra narrates that:

We were in the company of Allah's Messenger when we heard a terrible sound. He said: Do you know what (sound) is this? We said; Allah and His Messenger knows best. Thereupon he said; That is a stone which was thrown 70, 000 years before in Hell, and it (has) been constantly slipping down and now it has reached its base and you heard its sound. [Ibid. p 19]

Times, places and people

Even times and places themselves are not equal: We have times of a day that are better to offer your du'as than other times, we have places that are better to go and offer your prayers than others; we have days that are better than other days; and then we have people that are higher than other people – the 'Awliya, the Shuhada and the Mu'minin. Surat *al-Kahf* clearly enumerates for us of the degrees and ranks that exist:

The Anbiya -The leader of the community of Prophets being our Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.

The Sidiqin, - The highest Sidiq after the Prophet being Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, and the highest Sidiqa being Maryam, may Allah be pleased with her.

The Shuhada -The highest according to some scholars being the shahid to deny the *Dajjal* [some say that this is Khidr, may Allah be pleased with him], and then

The Mu'minin - There is a report in the Musnad of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (1:112) that explicitly singles out a group of Muslims as being above those of the ordinary, but neither being martyrs, Messengers nor Prophets:

[...]The people of Syria were mentioned in front of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib while he was in Iraq, and they said: "Curse them, O Commander of the Believers." He replied: "No, I heard the Messenger of Allah say: 'The Substitutes (*al-abdal*) are in Syria and they are forty men, every time one of them dies, Allah substitutes another in his place. By means of them Allah brings down the rain, gives (Muslims) victory over their enemies, and averts punishment from the people of Syria.'"

The title of 'Abdal was used very early on to distinguish people, and Imam al-Sakhawi re-iterates and re-emphasises that the early scholars accepted that there were those individuals that were not Prophets, but were of meticulous disposition. For when these scholars would come across individuals who were, as Ibn Taymiya said, '*great men of guidance and illumination, of recorded integrity and celebrated virtue,*' they would convey to them the rank of the 'Abdal. Ibn Taymiya himself writes at the end of his *Aqida Wasitiyya*:

The true adherents of Islam in its pristine purity are (the) Ahl al Sunna-wa al-Jama'a. In their ranks the Sidiqin, the Shuhada and the Mu'minin are to be found. Among them are the great men of guidance and illumination, of recorded integrity and celebrated virtue. The 'Abdal and the Imam's of religion are to be found among them and the Muslims are in full accord concerning their guidance.

[*Aqida Wasitiya* (Salafiyya edition) p. 36. Incidentally, the word "Abdal" was later removed from Ibn Taymiya's *Aqida al-Wasitiyya* of the Beirut, al-Maktab al-Islami edition, presided by Zuhayr Shawish].

Motives are questionable of some Muslims today as to why they will focus upon the weaker narrations concerning the 'Abdal and argue that all the narrations concerning them are weak, fabricated or baseless. This ignores the fact that even Ibn Taymiya included the 'Abdal in his *'aqida text* – and of the many other authentic narrations which are never mentioned, such as:

Al-Hakim narrated the following which he graded Sahih, and al-Dhahabi confirmed it:

'Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, said: 'Do not curse the people of Syria, for among them are the al-'Abdal, but curse their injustice.'

Al-Tabarani mentions in his *Mu'jam al-Awsat*:

Anas, may Allah be pleased with him, that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: 'The earth will never lack forty men similar to the Friend of the Merciful (referring to Ibrahim, 'alayhis-salam), and through them people receive rain and are given help. None of them dies except that Allah substitutes another in his place.'" Qatada said, 'We do not doubt that al-Hasan al-Basri is one of them.

Al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi also cites the above in his *Nawadir al-'Usul*, and Ahmad's student al-khallal relates it in his *Karamat al-Awliya'*. Abu Dawud narrates through three different good chains, Imam Ahmad again in his *Musnad* (6:316), Ibn Abi Shayba in his *Musannaf*, Abu Ya'la, al-Hakim and al-Bayhaqi that:

Umm Salama the wife of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace said: 'Disagreement will occur at the death of the Caliph and a man of the people of Madina will come forth flying to Makkah. Some of the people

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of Makkah will come to him, bring him out against his will and swear allegiance to him between the Corner and the Maqam. An expeditionary force will then be sent against him from Syria but will be swallowed up in the desert between Makkah and Madina, and when the people see that, the substitutes (al-'Abdal) of Syria and the best people ('asaba) of Iraq will come to him and swear allegiance to him [...]

Imam Nawawi mentions in his *Bustan al-'Arifin* (1985 edition p. 31) that the hadith master Hammad ibn Salam ibn Dinar (d. 167) was considered to be one of the 'Abdal. Al-Sakhawi in his reference to the aforementioned hadiths on the 'Abdal writes:

What makes this hadith stronger and indicates its currency among the Imams is the statement of our Imam, al-Shafi'i, concerning a certain man: "We considered him one of the *abdal*," and Bukhari's statement concerning another: "They did not doubt that he was one of the *abdal*," and other than these two among the highly meticulous scholars, hadith masters, and imams [...] also used this description for other people, stating that they were of the *abdal*.

The Awliya'

We are yet told of another group of people amongst this community, who like the 'Abdal are neither Prophets nor martyrs, yet they are close to Allah. It is reported that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, once said after the salat:

O people! Listen to this, understand it, and know it. Allah has servants who are neither Prophets nor martyrs and whom the Prophets and martyrs yearn to be like, *due to their seat and proximity in relation to Allah.*" One of the Bedouin Arabs who came from among the most isolated of people twisted his hand at the Prophet and said: 'O Messenger of Allah! People from humankind who are neither Prophets nor martyrs and yet the Prophet's and the martyrs yearn to be like them due to their seat and proximity in relation to Allah?! Describe them for us!'" The Prophet's face showed delight at the Bedouin's question and he said:

"They are of the strangers from this and that place. They frequent this or that tribe without belonging to them. They do not have family connections among themselves. They love one another for Allah's sake. They are of pure intent towards one another. On the Day of Resurrection Allah will place for them pedestals of light upon which He will make them sit, and He will turn their faces and clothes into light. On the Day of Resurrection the people will be terrified but not those. They are Allah's Friends [Awliya'] upon whom fear

comes not, nor do they grieve.”

[Haythami in *Majma' al-Zawa'id* says: “Ahmad relates it, and Tabrani relates something similar, and the men in its chain of transmission has been declared trustworthy.” Also related through several chains by Abu Dawud, Ahmad, Baghawi in *Sharh al-Sunna*, al-Hakim in the *Mustadrak*, Ibn 'Asakir, Ibn Abi al-Dunya in *Kitab al-Ikhwān*, Ibn Jarir al-Tabari, Ibn Abi Hatim, Ibn Mardawayh, and others].

If we examine a very early 'Aqida text, *Fiqh al-Akbar* (The Greatest Understanding) attributed to Imam Abu Hanifa, we see that even very early on, the *Salaf* recognised that there was a special place allocated in the scheme of Divine will, for those 'close' to Allah. Specifically looking at a certain point, the Imam confirms that:

Ayats established by Prophets [upon whom be peace] and miracles [Karamat] by the Awliya are true [real]. [Point 25]

[*Fiqh al-Akbar*, Imam Abu Hanifa (Ahad Press, As-Suq, Brooklyn, New York) translated by Ahmedu Abdul Saabidh].

Here a distinction is made between the Prophets and the rest of the Believers, and within them, some who are given the gifts to perform certain 'miracles.'

Turning to the '*Aqidah al-Tahawiyiyah*, again the levels, degrees or ranks of people that exist does not go unmentioned. Incidentally, Imam Abu Ja'far was born during a period that was said to be the greatest age of hadith and fiqh studies, and he studied with all the living authorities of the day [Bukhari, Muslim, Ibn Majah, Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi and Imam Nasai]. Let us examine some of the points that he included in the creed text:

He writes:

Belief is at the base, the same for everyone, but the superiority of some over others is due to their fear and awareness of Allah, their opposition to their desires, and their choosing what is more pleasing to Allah [point 64].

And affirms that some believers are superior to others:

All the believers are the Friends of Allah [Awliya'] and the noblest of them in the sight of Allah are those who are the most obedient and who most closely follow the Qur'an [Point 65]

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On this point, Imam Tahawi reminds everyone, that taking a covenant with Allah makes them a 'friend of Allah' [or a wali], but he also goes on to make a distinction that exists within them:

We believe in what we know of the Karamat or marvels of the Awliya' and *in the authentic stories about them from trustworthy sources.* [Point 99]

On this last point, he confirms to those Muslims certain gifts that Allah has bestowed upon them. So again, the points are re-emphasised - there is a distinction made at each category of people. When we hear or read about the Awliya', the word *karimat* is often associated – like we have seen in the above 'aqida texts for examples. Regarding the Karimat of the awliya, Imam Nawawi mentions in his *Bustam al-'Arifin* that:

Muslim orthodoxy affirms the existence of miracles vouchsafed for the Awliya' (friends of Allah) and that they occur and exist throughout all eras of history.

Imam al-Tahawi stated that the miracles are to be believed from *authentic sources*. What significance do these miracles have – if any? A miracle is endowed to an individual as a form of authentication – it is almost a sign for people of the love and honour that Allah gives to a certain person – a certain rank that is given from our Creator. Take the example given to us by Allah of Asaf ibn Barkhiya. He was a man 'who possessed knowledge of the Book.' Sulayman 'alayhis-salam had asked his armies of Jinn who could bring the throne of Bilqis to him the fastest. It was not a *jinn*, but rather a man who held that he could bring the throne 'at a twinkling of an eye'. There are countless narrations that ascribe and demonstrate the miracles of the friends of Allah – who were neither Prophets nor Messengers. These incidents include the miracle of 'Umar ibn al-Khatab, may Allah be pleased with him, writing a letter and addressing the Nile to flow after becoming dry; the ability of 'Uthman ibn Affan, may Allah be pleased with him, to decipher the inner natures and states of people by looking at their faces; the ripping off of the iron door of a fortress by 'Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, and there are many many more – from authentic sources.

Ibn Kathir mentions one such incident (amongst others) in his *Tarikh*, where he writes that:

During the Caliphate of 'Umar, may Allah be well pleased with him, there appeared a fire in the desert. 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, asked Tamim Al-Dari, may Allah be pleased with him, to see if he could somehow control the situation. They both went near to the area of the fire and Tamim Al-Dari, may Allah be pleased with him, began to gather the fire with his hands and started shoving the fire into a hole in the ground. This was a karamat of

Tamim Al-Dari, may Allah be well pleased with him.

Imam Tahawi reminds us of a very important point - that the creed of the Ahl al-Sunna is that:

We do not prefer any of the awliya' of the Community over any of the Prophets but rather we say that any one of the Prophets is better than all the awliya' put together [point 98]

No matter how high one may think or how close an individual may appear to be to Allah, he is still far below the rank of any Prophet. An incident comes to mind regarding an old Shaykh. He was sitting in a Mosque when an individual approached him and said to some extent, that if he was a 'Shaykh' he should show some miracles that he would accept him. The old Shaykh listened and then stood up and began to dance around the people who were sitting. Amazed at what he had just seen, the questioner remarked that where was his miracle. The Shaykh sat down and answered – what *was* the miracle was that Allah did not cause the earth to open and swallow him for what he had just done. The point here is that it is not 'breaking the creational norms' that manifest themselves at the hands of the awliya' that should draw people to his side – rather, it should be their teachings and the ability to *transform* people into Khalifah's of Allah. Shaykh Ibn Ajiba mentions that if a person manifests 'miracles' but is not upright, then no consideration should be given to him – the 'ulama have argued that perceived 'miracles' can appear upon people who are not Muslims, like the Jews, Christians and so on – and as Imam Shafi'i said:

Even when you see the heretical innovator flying in the air, do not accept him

[Fuduye', Shehu 'Uthman, *Tariq 'l-Janna*, (Sankore Institute, n.p.d) translated by Abu Alfa Umar Muhammed Shareef, p 13]

The greatest miracle, as so many 'ulama have said, is not that Allah blesses an individual with certain gifts, but rather, as Shaykh 'Uthman Dan Fodio asserts in his *Tariq al-Janna*, the real miracle occurs when:

the one who has broken the creational norms of his soul by taking its low customary nature into being attached to the values of the Shari'ah completely in all movements and stillness. [Ibid, pp 13-14]

This is the true miracle – and this is the gift that the friends of Allah can offer.

What happens when people decide to reject this understanding, which some people are of a higher rank with Allah than others? What happens when the adab that is

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demanding is disregarded? Referring to this question, Allah informs of us in a hadith *Qudsi* that:

Whosoever shows enmity to a friend of mine [Wali] I shall be at war with him
[...]

There are only two times where Allah *declares going to war with someone* – the first I have mentioned and the other is a person taking interest. So to reject this and to go against this earns the punishment of going to war with Allah – and *who* can afford to do that?

19a al-Zarnuji, Imam, *Instruction of the Student: The Method of Learning*, Translated by Grunebaum, G. Zon and Abel, Theodora M, (The Starlatch Press- Chicago) 2001, p vii.

19b al-Hajj, Murabit, *Fatwa Concerning the Obligation of Following Rightly Guided Scholars*, Translated by Shaykh Hamza Yusuf (Zaytuna Institute: Hayward California) 2001, p ix

²⁰ Al-Qur'an 2- 286

²¹ See for a further detailed discussion on the loss of adab, its causes and effects upon Muslims in general in al-Attas, Syed Muhammad al-Naquib, *Islam and Secularism* (Hindustan Publications: Delhi, India, 1984) pp 99–160.

²² Baksh, Nazim, In *The Spirit of Tradition*:
<http://ds.dial.pipex.com/masud/ISLAM/misc/tradition.htm>

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ We seem to be talking far too much, and there is always the danger that the more we talk, the more we will be accountable for. The Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all, were a people of few words, but of great action. Today more than ever is it critical for Muslims to show self constraint with one another and to revisit the command of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, who said “Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him utter what is good or remain silent” [Muslim, Mukhtasar Sahih Muslim, Hadith Number 844; Al-Maqdisi al-Adab Vol I p 41].

According to a report attributed to Ibn Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him, people are warned to beware of indulging in talk on matters that are of no concern to them, or when there is no occasion for them to speak. For a person who speaks out of place has indulged in excess. Ibn Abbas continues: “Engage yourself not in speech either with the learned or the fool. For the former is likely to defeat you, and the latter is likely to abuse you. Mention your brother favourably in his absence, not in a way that you displease him were he to hear you” [Ibid. page 43].

“The best form of speech is that in which a little removes the need to say more, and the meaning is self evident in the words [Ibid].

“A person ought to be reserved in speech and speak only when there is benefit to be achieved by it. In the event of there being any doubt about the benefit of talking, one ought to remain silent” [Al-Nawawi, *Riyad al-Salihin*, p 483].

The Qur’an encourages people to speak out, but only if this serves a worthy purpose. Indeed to remain silent on such an occasion is reprehensible. Muslims are encouraged to be thoughtful and to speak only with discretion and forethought as to the likely effects of the words they utter. For those who do so, the following hadith promises great spiritual reward:

“When a servant of Allah says that which is clear and correct, through his words he distances himself from the hell fire, by a distance greater than what is between the sunrise and sunset” [Ibid].

²⁵ Fuduye’, Shehu ‘Uthman, op cit, p 4

²⁶ Ibid. p 2

²⁷ ‘Abdu Rahman bin Jandab narrated that Kamil bin Ziyad told him:

‘Ali held my hand once, and he walked with me in the direction of the cemetery. When we reached the open desert, he sougled a deep breath before he said to me, ‘O Kamil son of Ziyad, Hearts are like vessels, the best are exceptionally conscious and vast. Learn from what I am going to tell you. There are three types of people: 1) A godly scholar, 2) a student who is seeking salvation, and 3) a ferocious follower of every howler and his own type. The third type of people are biased, and they float with the currents. They neither seek enlightenment through knowledge, nor do they take refuge in a safe recess

during a storm. You must understand that knowledge is better than money, for knowledge will guard you, while you have to be the guard of your money.

Deeds are more exalted than knowledge, while money needs someone to spend it justly in order to render it pure. To love a man of knowledge and to learn at his is a debt one can never repay. Knowledge earns its owner respect during his lifetime and praiseworthy remembrance after his death, while what money can do expired once it is spent. The keeper of a safe dies and what he guards and the treasures remain, however, a man of knowledge lives throughout the ages. Their distinct form many no longer be seen, but their findings are preserved in people's hearts. Although knowledge is preserved in the hearts, yet, if it is acted upon, it will carry its bearer, otherwise when merely memorized, knowledge remains vulnerable. A person may use his religious knowledge for worldly gains. He may add his personal commentaries regarding God's revelations to gain status in this world, and he may use God's favours upon him to take advantage of His creation. He alleges to hold fast to the path of the righteous ones, although his superfluous-ness shows that he has no insight. Whenever he faces a question he does not recognise its answer, doubt and suspicion quickly overtake him. He indulges in mundane pleasures, he is easily driven and allured to satisfy his passion and lust, hoarding money deceives him, and he is not a caller to God. The closest similitude to such a character is a freely grazing cattle. Like that, knowledge dies away when its carrier dies.

However, the earth will never remain devoid of someone who carries the proof of God's sovereignty, and the testimony of His messenger, otherwise, God's revelations and clear signs will be abrogated. Such true human beings are the rare few, although they are the most exalted in God's sight. Through them, Almighty Allah guards His Message, and He will not take them back unto Himself until they have delivered the same to their coequals. These people endeavor to plant such seeds in hearts akin to their own. Hence, knowledge gushes forth from their hearts, and they take from it the terrain the opulent ones judge as rugged and what the ignorant ones deem as reprehensible. In fact, God's people live in this world with bodies whose soul is captivated by the Upper Observer of all. Such are God's vice-regents on earth, and such are the callers of His religion. Ah, ah! I yearn to meet them, and I ask for God's forgiveness for me and for you. Now if you wish we may go back.

[Al-Hafiz al-Imam Abu Nu'aym al-Asfahani (948-1038 C.E.) *Hilyat-al Awliya wa Tabaqat al-Asfiya*].

²⁸ Nawawi, Abi Zakariyyah Yahya bin Sharaf, *Adab al Fatwa Wal Mufti Wal Mustafti*,

'The Etiquette's and Qualifications of Issuing Islamic Judgment, of a Mufti and of the one seeking his opinion,' Translated by Shaykh Muhammad Bashir, (al-Fardani Publishers and Distributors: Birmingham UK) n.p.d, pp 15 – 18

²⁹ Ibn Jama' ah, *Tadhkirat as Same wa al Mutakallim fi adab al 'alim wa al muta' allim* 'The memoir of the listener and the speaker in the training of the Teacher and the student,' translated by Dr. Ghifari, Noor Muhammed (Pakistani Hijra Council: Islamabad 1991) p 11

³⁰ Related in both Bukhari and Muslim

³¹ Al-Tirmidhi

³² http://ds.dial.pipex.com/masud/ISLAM/misc/al_khatib.htm

³³ Yahya, 'Abd al-Wahid, *The Crisis Of The Modern World* (Suhail Academy Lahore: Pakistan, 1999) p 67. Some insight at not only how a student would be expected to act, but also teachers themselves within a traditional educational system can be understood from reading the *Tadhkirat as Same wa al- Mutakallim fi adab al 'alim wa al muta' allim*. A book that is essentially divided into five large chapters each dealing with a specific subject matter: *Chapter one*: On the excellence of knowledge and of the scholar; *Chapter two*: On the adab of the teacher, concerning himself, his students and his lesson; *Chapter three*: On the conduct of the student; with himself, and his teacher and his fellow students and his lesson; *Chapter four*: On the methods of consulting books and the adab associated with it; *Chapter five*: On the manners of the hostels of the educational institutions. Each chapter is then subdivided into detailed explanations concerning the adab required in a given situation, for both teacher and student. Some interesting sub-divisions include:

Chapter one: purity of knowledge from worldly desires; regularity in the recitation of the Qur'an; Warding off bad adab; Venerating the Learned during the lesson; The adab of conducting the lesson; Honouring the student. *Chapter two* includes: Achieving purity of heart; Sincerity of intention for acquiring knowledge; Looking for qualities within a teacher; Showing obedience to the teacher; Giving alms and praying (to Allah) before appearing before the teacher (which mentions a tradition from Imam Shafi'i' who said, " I used to turn over the pages of my book very gently in the presence of Malik for fear of him, so that he may not listen to it," and another from al Rabi' who said "By Allah! I could not dare drink water due to the reverence of Imam Shafi'i' when he was

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looking at me.”); Adab of addressing the teacher; Knowing the rights of the teacher; Expressing gratitude to the teacher; The adab of meeting the teacher; The adab of questioning and answering the teacher; The adab of walking with the teacher; *Chapter three* includes: The adab of placing books during study; The adab of purchasing books; The adab of copying from books.

See: Ibn Jama’ah, op cit.

³⁴ The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: “If a person conceals the weakness of another in this world, Allah will conceal their weakness in the hereafter” [Al-Nawawi, *Riyadh al-Salihin* p 135, Hadith Number 245; al-Ghazali, *Kitab Adab* p 344].

A variant version of the same message is reported in another hadith, which states:

“Whoever protects the honour of his brother, will have Allah protect his countenance from the fire on the Day of Judgment” [Ibid. p 488, Hadith Number 1530].

In yet another hadith we read:

“Do not harm Muslims, and do not revile them, nor pursue their imperfections. For verily, whosoever pursues the imperfections of his brother shall have his own imperfections pursued by Allah” [Sunan of al-Tirmidhi, as quoted in *Principles of State and Government in Islam*, p 85].

Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal was once asked about the correct meaning of the following hadith: “When you hear something about your brother, ascribe to it the best interpretation until you can no longer do so”

To this, he replied: “Find an excuse for him by saying, ‘maybe he said this, or maybe he meant such and such’”

³⁵ Dan Fuduye’, Shehu ‘Uthman, op cit., p 4

³⁶ Imam al-Ghazali, *The Duties of Brotherhood In Islam*, trans., Muhtar Holland (The Islamic foundation: Leicester 1997), UK, p 46

³⁷ Bukhari and Muslim

38 Fuduye', Shehu 'Uthman, op cit., p 4

39 A beautiful hadith that answers many of our questions simply requires to be acted upon. Imam Ahmad records that Khalid ibn Walid narrated that:

A Bedouin came one day to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and said to him, "O Messenger of Allah! I've come to ask you a few questions about the affairs of this Life and the Hereafter." The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, spoke: 'Ask what you wish.' The Bedouin stated: 'I'd like to be the most learned of men,' whereupon the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: 'Fear Allah, and you will be the most learned of men.' The Bedouin spoke: 'I wish to be the richest man in the world,' whereupon the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, replied: 'Be contented, and you will be the richest man in the world.' The Bedouin said: 'I'd like to be the most just man,' whereupon The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, replied: 'Desire for others what you desire for yourself, and you will be the most just of men.'

The Bedouin spoke: 'I want to be the best of men,' whereupon the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: 'Do good to others and you will be the best of men.' The Bedouin said: 'I wish to be the most favoured by Allah,' whereupon the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: 'Engage much in Allah's praise, and you will be most favoured by Him.' The Bedouin said: 'I'd like to complete my faith,' whereupon the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: 'If you have good manners you will complete your faith.' The Bedouin spoke: 'I wish to be among those who do good,' whereupon the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: 'Adore Allah as if you see Him. If you don't see Him, (know that) He sees you. In this way you will be among those who do good.' The Bedouin said: 'I wish to be obedient to Allah,' whereupon the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: 'If you observe Allah's commands you will be obedient.' The Bedouin said: 'I'd like to be free from all sins,' whereupon the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: 'Bathe yourself from impurities and you will be free from all sins.' The Bedouin said: 'I'd like to be raised on the Day of Judgment in the light,' whereupon the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: 'Do not wrong yourself or any other creature, and you will be raised on the Day of Judgment in the light.'

The Bedouin said: 'I'd like Allah to bestow His mercy on me,' whereupon the

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Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: 'If you have mercy on yourself and others, Allah will grant you mercy on the Day of Judgment.' The Bedouin said: 'I'd like my sins to be very few,' whereupon the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: 'If you seek the forgiveness Allah as much as you can, your sins will be very few.' The Bedouin said: 'I'd like to be the most honourable man,' whereupon the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: 'If you do not complain to any fellow creature, you will be the most honourable of men.' The Bedouin said: 'I'd like to be the strongest of men,' whereupon the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: 'If you put your trust in Allah, you will be the strongest of men.' The Bedouin said: 'I'd like to enlarge my provision,' whereupon the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: 'If you keep yourself pure, Allah will enlarge your provision.'

The Bedouin said: 'I'd like to be loved by Allah and His Messenger,' whereupon the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: 'If you love what Allah and His messenger love, you will be among their beloved ones.' The Bedouin said: 'I wish to be safe from Allah's wrath on the Day of Judgment,' whereupon the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: 'If you do not loose your temper with any of your fellow creatures, you will be safe from the wrath of Allah on the Day of Judgment.' The Bedouin said: 'I'd like my prayers to be responded,' whereupon the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: 'If you avoid forbidden actions, your prayers will be responded.' The Bedouin said: 'I'd like Allah not to disgrace me on the Day of Judgment,' whereupon the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: 'If you guard your chastity, Allah will not disgrace you on the Day of Judgment.'

The Bedouin said: 'I'd like Allah to provide me with a protective covering on the Day of Judgment,' whereupon the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: 'Do not uncover your fellow creatures faults, and Allah will provide you with a covering protection on the Day of Judgment.' The Bedouin then asked: 'What will save me from sins?' whereupon the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: 'Tears, humility and illness.' The Bedouin asked: 'What are the best deeds in the eyes of Allah?' Whereupon the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: 'Gentle manners, modesty and patience.' The Bedouin asked: 'What are the worst evils in the eyes of Allah?' Whereupon the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: 'Hot temper and miserliness.' The Bedouin asked: 'What assuages the wrath of Allah in this life and in the

Hereafter?' Whereupon the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: 'Concealed charity and kindness to relatives.' The Bedouin finally asked, 'What extinguishes hell's fires on the Day of Judgment?' Whereupon the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: 'Patience in adversity and misfortunes.'

PART TWO

The Veneration of the Messenger of Allah



LIKE THE SUN, it is seen by the eye from afar, very small yet hurts the eye when you stare at it. How can people understand the reality of this man in this world, when they are people immersed in their dreams - preoccupied in their fantasies?

—Qasida al-Burda, *Imam al-Busiri*

THE MESSENGER OF ALLAH, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is the model to those who endeavor to emulate - he is the model of human perfection and the embodiment of the Qur'an. This chapter aims to convey to the reader the esteem and love in which the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was held by the *Salaf* and those who came immediately after. *However*, simply praising the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, while neglecting the commands of Allah in *all* facets of our life is something that we must avoid. He, may Allah bless him and grant him

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peace, was sent to make known what Allah commanded His slaves to do, and through his character he, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, exemplified and embodied those commands. Praising the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, should come from loving him, and loving him should entail desiring what he desired, which was nothing other than to *follow and to obey Allah*. Our words *must* be accompanied by action: we claim so much yet do so little and the results of our inaction will manifest in many ways.¹ The essence of my point can be best summated in the words of a poet who remarked:

If your love were truthful, you would have obeyed him
Verily the lover is obedient to the one he loves.

This chapter essentially serves as an introduction to the tradition of the praise of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. It precedes a contemporary poem written in this tradition of honouring the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, which was written during the auspicious month of Rabi al-Awwal.² It is accompanied by some introductory notes that seek to shed some light upon what the *Salaf* and the scholars have said and written on areas that we are mis-informed today as being alien to the tradition of Islam. By doing so, this should allow us to understand what the scholars discussed and how they approached the way of praising the noble Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, as well as providing insight into the spectrum of knowledge that those before us possessed and shared. The qualities of the character of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, his words and actions make him a model of both physical and spiritual perfection and as a guide toward its realisation. Even the theologians and poets throughout history unanimously concluded that it is next to impossible to do justice to describe these qualities of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, nor to praise him as he justifiably should. For:

How should not men, angels and jinn praise him
since Allah the Most High Himself has praised him?

The poet's inability to praise the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, stemmed from the fact that he is mentioned in the Qur'an with words of praise. And since it is the Creator and the Lord of all the worlds that utters

blessings upon him, *humans are by extension wholly incapable of praising him as he so deserves*. The Spanish author *Lisan uddin al-Khatib* ponders over this dilemma and poses the question that since:

The verses of the Holy book have praised you.

How could the poem of my eulogy possibly praise your greatness?

Imam al-Busiri highlights the poet's dilemma by asking in his *Hamziyya* that is not the true miracle of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, that *the tongues are incapable of describing him?*

Some may raise the point that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, disliked poets and to some extent, this is true, but this statement requires clarification. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, disliked poets who were steadfast adherents and defenders of pre-Islamic ideals, which ran contrary to the teachings of Islam. *However*, poets who employed their talents in the service of Islam were honoured by the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. So long as poetry did not cross the limits of decency, it was permitted.³ The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was critical of pre-Islamic poetry and of the superstition of the people who attributed supernatural powers to the pagan poets. Moreover, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, called poetry undesirable and misguiding *when it expounded* tribal and familial pride, *contrary* to the Islamic ethos of brotherhood and equality. For such poetry encouraged revenge, blood feuds, incited lust and drunkenness in violation of the Islamic precepts of peace, purity and piety.

When Islam arrived, it came as a boon for mankind, which enlightened the hearts and minds of the people and reformed their old pagan traditions. This also included the poets, who measured themselves against the teachings of Islam and who soon expressed the dominant spirit of the times. Amongst them, we can mention '*Abd Allah bin Rawaba, Ka'ab bin Malik and Hassan bin Thabit*, may Allah be pleased with them.⁴ As a matter of fact, Hassan bin Thabit, may Allah be pleased with him, served as the poet of Medina, and arguably is said to be the first to compile a poem praising the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. His poems contained many rudiments that came to be expounded upon in later theology and poetry, such as his statement:

I witness with Allah's permission that Muhammad

is the Messenger who is higher than heaven.⁵

We are further informed that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, used to place a pulpit in the masjid for Hassan bin Thabit, may Allah be pleased with him, so that he might stand on it and recite poetry in praise of, and on behalf of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. He also used to fashion responses to the accusation of the kuffar. Accordingly, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, used to say: “*may Allah assist Hassan with Ruh al-Qudus till he defends or praises, on behalf of the Messenger of Allah.*”⁶ Much of Hassan’s poetry, may Allah be pleased with him, alluded to the Prophet’s miraculous birth and the light that radiated from the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, such as his line:

When you were born, the earth was shining,
And the firmament barely contained your light,
And we can pierce through, thanks to that radiance
and light, and path of guidance.⁷

Today, perhaps the most uniquely comprehensive, and hence most valued expression of praise of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is a poem, entitled the *Burda*, written by *Muhammad al-Busiri* who died in 1298. Imam al-Busiri wrote this poem when he suffered from a stroke. In anguish and in misery, he turned to the Prophet to compose a poem in his honour. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, appeared to Imam al-Busiri in his dream and cast his mantle over him, just as the Prophet had once done to Ka’b ibn Zuhair, after listening to his poem honouring the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.

Imam al-Busiri was healed by the touch of the Prophet’s mantle and in the morning discovered that he could move once again. The enticing verses of the *Burda* are somewhat lost when translated into English, yet each verse contains certain articles of faith and statements about the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, that are central to the orthodox world-view. This is one of the reasons why it became so immensely popular. We are constantly reminded that true faith is achieved only by loving the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, more than anything in this world – yet have we really understood and grasped this reality? What does it actually mean to love the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace?

We are living in a materialistic world where values are almost totally defined by tangibility. The love nurtured in the West⁸ has neither parallel nor similarity to the love that Muslims are expected to show towards the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. Love cannot be quantified nor articulated, for true love transcends speech. All of Allah's Messengers and Prophets are also known for their appellations – 'Isa is *Ruh-Allah*, Musa is *Kalim-Allah*, and Allah has bestowed the title of *Habib-Allah* to His beloved, Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.⁹

Despite the aforementioned, why then do some of us often find ourselves today feeling uneasy when we read or hear what some believe to be extraordinary praise concerning the noble Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace? There are some Muslims who will emphasize that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, actually *forbade* his Companions from going into excess of praising him, as the Christians had done with 'Isa, upon whom be peace.¹⁰ Some will even argue that innovations (*bid'a*)¹¹ have been introduced by people who are criticised for expressing their love for the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, in an 'excessive' manner. This not only indicates that we have begun to adopt a mechanistic approach when it comes to expressing and showing our love for the Beloved of Allah, but it also reflects our need to understand just how much the early generation of Muslims loved and venerated the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and which is entrenched in the very heart of the Islamic Tradition.¹²

Miraculously today, with the growth of English published Islamic books, society has also seen the correlated rise in the number of 'enlightened students' – all discussing and debating issues and topics that would make the scholars with their years of study concerned at the printing phenomena.¹³ The current monopoly that exists over publishing houses has resulted in new editions of classical texts that have paragraphs and even entire chapters being deleted. Books produced by 'ulama who were (and remain) giants in their respective areas of expertise, now have interspersed remarks added by contemporary authors. Chapter names have been replaced with new ones that conform to the publisher's ideology and words have been deliberately suppressed and removed. Revised editions have been 'graced' with footnotes that argue just how wrong the author really was. Interpolations have been added giving an entirely new meaning to what was originally written, and the dire consequences of ill-equipped translators who have been given the huge responsibility of translating

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our heritage, has resulted in a number of clumsy, inelegant approximations and deliberate manipulations.¹⁴ If this is the attitude of the translators and publishing houses, how do we expect to learn about our past, when it is being censored and re-engineered today? Do we now after many centuries, feel that we have a better understanding of our Din, than the people who were actually living with the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and then the generations that came after?¹⁵ The *Salaf*¹⁶ went out of their way to demonstrate their love for the Best of Creation,¹⁷ something that is not evident from the plethora of modern publications. In the next chapter, I have tried to convey this high esteem in which the *best of generations*¹⁸ and the *heirs of the Prophets*,¹⁹ held the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and to transmit this as has been done for generations – *and Allah alone grants success.*²⁰



N O T E S

¹Ibrahim Ibn Adham - a third century scholar, a teacher and a companion of Sufyan al-Thawri, was asked about the saying of Allah: "And Your Lord says: Call on Me I will answer your prayer [...]" [al-Qur'an: 40: 60] "We supplicate and we are not answered." So he said to them:

You know Allah, Yet you do not obey Him;

You recite the Qur'an, Yet do not act according to it;

You know Iblis, Yet you have agreed with him;

You proclaim that you love the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, yet you abandon his Sunna;

You proclaim your love for Paradise, Yet you do not act to gain it;

You proclaim your fear for the Fire, Yet you do not prevent yourselves from sins;

You say 'Indeed death is true', Yet you have not prepared for it;

You engage yourselves with finding faults with others, Yet you do not look at your faults;

You eat of that which Allah has provided for you, Yet you do not thank Him;

You bury your dead, yet you do not take a lesson from it.

² In the poem from the Mawlid of Suleiman Chelebi, he writes:

Amina Khatun, Muhammad's mother dear:
From that oyster came a pearl most dear;

For from Abdallah she was great with child,
For days and weeks her time she quietly whiled.

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But as Muhammad's birth was drawing near,
Strange portents happened wonderful and clear;

In the month of Rabi' al-Awwal then The twelfth,
The eve of Monday, when The best of all creation would be born –

What marvels did his mother see ere dawn!
A son like this your son was never known
Since God made well the earth and heavens dome;

And the Mighty One did never woman grant
So beautiful a child as will be yours.

Great happiness and joy are yours,
O dear, The one who sums all virtue shall be here,
He that comes is destined men to lead,
To victory, to wisdom and tawhid,

For love of him the seven skies revolve,
All men and jinn to follow him resolve,

This night the night when he, the one so pure,
Shall bring to mankind's sickness Allah's cure,

This night a world that's sunk in sin and vice
Shall fill with fragrant musk from Paradise,

This night Allah shows mercy to the worlds,
This night the banner of true love unfurls –
A mercy for the worlds is Mustafa!
The sinner's intercessor now is Mustafa!

(Written in 1391, translated by Abd al-Hakim Murad).

The celebration of the Mawlid – or the Milad al-Nabi in the month of Rabi al-Awwal is an occasion that is celebrated throughout almost the entire Muslim world, yet it is not without its critics. Because of this, scholars wrote fatwas either arguing for or against its permissibility. One such fatwa that is of interest in this discussion is by the hadith master and Mujadid (Renewer) Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti's *Husn al-Maqasid fi 'amal al-Mawlid* (edited by Mustafa 'Abd al-Qadir 'Ata, (Beirut 1405/1985) pp 251-262. A translated copy into English of his fatwa is also available: Kaptein, N.J.G, *Muhammad's*

Birthday Festival: Early history in the Central Muslim Lands and Development in the Muslim West until the 10th/16th Century, (E.J Brill: New York 1993) pp 48-70). It is interesting since not only a large number of arguments are put forward for and against the celebration of the mawlid, but he also cites a large number of previous scholars who also discussed its the legitimacy. Before making his own conclusions, al-Suyuti reviews each argument that is put forward against the mawlid, and draws upon his encyclopedic knowledge to put forth a rebuttal. A fundamental argument that is placed against the mawlid is that it is a bid'a – an innovation, and according to the hadith, 'every innovation is misguidance' – critics argue that this also includes the mawlid. However, we have to realise that scholars essentially fall into two groups when discussing the above hadith (see note 11 for a greater discussion on this subject) and unlike those scholars who view that an innovation can be hassana (such as the mawlid), opponents view that it can only be an innovation of misguidance. Al-Suyuti retorts to the accusation of the mawlid being prohibited on the grounds that 'according to the consensus of the Muslims innovations in religion is not permitted,' that:

This is an unacceptable statement, because bid'a are not restricted to what is forbidden or reprehensible, but can be meritorious or compulsory.

He then continues to quote from past authorities and states:

Al-Nawawi – may Allah have mercy upon him – says in his *Tabdhib al-Asma' wa-l-lughat*: "According to the Law, bid'a's are innovations of something that did not exist in the time of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace – and they are divided into good (hassan) and revolting (qabih) [...]" In his book *al-qawaid*, shaykh 'Izz al-din 'Abd al-Salam says: Bida's are subdivided into compulsory, forbidden, meritorious, reprehensible and permitted [...]

Shaykh al Islam, the (greatest) hafiz of his time, Abu l-Fadl ibn Hajar (al-Asqalani) was asked about the observance of the mawlid, to which he literally answered the following: "The legal status of the mawlid is that it is a bid'a, which has not been transmitted on the authority of one of the pious ancestors from the (first) three centuries. Despite this, it comprises both good things as well as the reverse. If one strives for good things in the practicing thereof and the opposite is evaded, it is a good innovation (bid'a hassana). If not, then not."

[Others scholars also wrote about the permissibility of the mawlid such as al-Shawkani in his *al-Badr at-tali*; Mulla 'Ali Qadri in his *al-Mawrid al-Rawi fi al-mawlid al-Nabawi*; Abu Shama (one of the teachers of Imam al-Nawawi) in his book of innovations – *al Ba'ith 'ala inkar al-bid'a wa al hawadith* writes that: 'On that day,

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people give much donations, make much worship, show much love to the Prophet – may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and give much thanks to Allah for sending them His Messenger to keep them on the Sunna and Law of Islam'; Ibn al Jawzi in his *Mawlid al-'Arus*; Ibn Kathir who wrote his *Dhikr Mawlid RasulAllah wa Rida' atih li ibn Kathir*, which is a thirty one page book that was written at the request of one of the muadhinin at the Hanbali Masjid in Damascus – the Jami'a al-Hanabila. In it he writes: 'The Night of the Prophets' birth – may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is a magnificent, noble, blessed and holy night, a night of bliss for the Believers, pure, radiant with lights and of immeasurable price.' Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani in his *al-Durar al-Kamina fi 'ayn al-Mi' at al-Thamina*, mentions that Ibn Kathir wrote this book during his last days of his life and that it 'was spread far and wide'; and many other such as Imam al-Sakhawi, Ibn Hajar al-Haythami etc.]

In discussing the 'bad things' that take place in the mawlid, al-Suyuti also includes the criticism that another scholar Shaykh Taj al-Din ibn 'Umar 'Ali al-Lakhmi al-Iskandari raise that makes the mawlid unacceptable in his eyes. He (Taj al-Din) argues that the mawlid is prohibited particularly when:

[...] accompanied by instruments of idleness like drums and reed-flutes, with the meeting of men with young boys and male persons with attractive women [...]

To this, al-Suyuti writes:

The implicit conclusion of the declaring forbidden of the mawlid only stems from the forbidden matters mentioned which have been added to it, and does not originate from the meeting at which the ceremony of the mawlid is performed. Because these matters would also be revolting and repulsive, should they, for instance, take place at the meeting of the Friday prayer, the rejection of the legal basis of this meeting for the Friday prayer would not necessary stem from this. We have already seen that some of these cases took place in the nights of Ramadhan during the nights of Tarawih by people [...] On the contrary, we hold that the basis for the meeting for the salat al-Tarawih is Sunna and a pious act, and that things which have been added to it are revolting and repulsive. Likewise, we state that the meeting at which the mawlid is performed, in principle has to be regarded as a meritorious act, but that things which have been added to it, are blameworthy and prohibited.

On the same issue of forbidden acts occurring within the mawlid, al-Suyuti also quotes another scholar, Abu 'Abd Allah ibn al-Hajj who also criticises and rejects the forbidden acts (such as singing with musical instruments, the jingling of the tambourine and the playing of flutes) but who 'praises the carrying out of the

ceremonies and the expression of gratitude during the festival.’

Another argument that al-Suyuti includes is the criticism that:

Notwithstanding the fact that the month in which he – may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is born, namely Rabi al-Awwal, is exactly the same as the one in which he died. Therefore joy and happiness in this month are not any more appropriate than sadness in this month.

To which he responds:

[...] the answer to this is that his – may Allah bless him and grant him peace, birth is the greatest benefaction which has ever befallen us, but his death the greatest calamity that has ever been visited upon us. The Law enjoins the expression of gratitude for benefactions, but equanimity, calmness and composure in calamities. The Lawgiver (referring to the Prophet – may Allah bless him and grant him peace) has also prescribed the sacrifice after the birth of a child (‘*aqiqa*), because this is an expression of gratitude and happiness because of the newborn; for the death however, he did not prescribe a sacrifice nor for anything else. On the contrary: even weeping and the expression of sadness are forbidden (on that occasion). So the principles of the Law prove that it is right to express happiness at his – may Allah bless him and grant him peace, birth in this month, albeit without mourning for his death.

In fact, al-Suyuti provides a passage from Ibn al-Hajj’s book – the *Madhkhah*, in which he addresses the questions as to why Monday and the month of Rabi al-Awwal was chosen to be his blessed month of birth, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and why it did not occur in Ramadhan or any of the other sacred months. He quotes Ibn al-Hajj as stating that:

In the first place: it is reported in the Hadith that Allah – He is Praised and Exalted – created the vegetation on Monday. Therein lies a great sign, namely that the creation of food, fruit and the good things by which mankind survives and their souls are developed, took place on that day

In the second place: the word “Rabi” (‘spring’) contains a sign and a good portent in connection with its etymological derivation. (In the spirit) Abu ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Siqilli says: ‘Each man finds his destiny according to his name.’

In the third place: spring is the moderate and best season and in the same manner his Law is the most just and lenient of laws.

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In the fourth place: The Ruler (al-Hakim) – He is Praised and Exalted – wanted to honour the time on which he was born through him. If he had been born at one of the aforementioned times, then one could have thought that he (the Prophet – may Allah bless him and grant him peace) was venerated because of one of them (that is the times).

Al-Suyuti's fatwa has only been very briefly cited, and I am not trying to put forth all the arguments for and against the mawlid here. Rather, readers can refer back to his text and read the fatwa in its entirety. [A recent publication that looks into the arguments against the mawlid and then addresses each one by investigating the classical texts and what previous authorities have stated on the subject is: *Innovation and True belief: The Celebration of the Mawlid, According to the Qur'an and Sunna and the Scholars of Islam*, by Shaykh Hisham Kabbani (ASFA: 199?). At the end of his treatment of discussing whether the mawlid should be considered an evil innovation or one that should be followed, Imam al-Suyuti concludes:

[...] as long as it just consists of a meeting together by the people, a recitation of opposite parts of the Qur'an, the recounting of transmitted accounts of the beginning of (the biography of) the Prophet – may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and the wonders that took place during his birth, all of which is then followed by a banquet that is served to them and from which they eat, whereupon they take their leave without doing anything else – (it) is a good innovation (*bid'a hassana*), for which one is rewarded because of the esteem shown for the position of the Prophet – may Allah bless him and grant him peace, that is implicit in it, and because of the expression of joy and happiness on his – may Allah bless him and grant him peace, noble birth.

Another interesting fatwa worth mentioning is that from Ibn Taymiya himself on the celebration of the Mawlid (in *Iqtida Sirat al-Mustaqim* 2/618). Despite clearly regarding this celebration as an innovation, his fatwa nonetheless contains very interesting comments. One of the concerns of Ibn Taymiya is that similar to those quoted above – namely of indulging in forbidden activities within the mawlid itself. He actually states however that there is a reward in indulging in the good actions therein, and will be recompensed for the bad actions they commit themselves to. He writes that:

And know that from the actions are those that have some good in them, due to their including types of good actions and including evil actions such as innovation etc. So this action would be good with respect to what it includes of good and evil with respect to what it contains of turning away from the religion.

We have seen how al-Suyuti agreed that there are aspects to some mawlid's that occur

and are not actually part of the mawlid – and are indeed reprehensible and should be forbidden outright. However, while even condemning the ‘evil’ done, he himself goes on to find excuses for the ‘innovations’ committed by stating that:

There is no doubt that the one who practices these (i.e. the innovated festive seasons) either the mujtahid or muqallid will have the reward for his good intention and what the action contains of legislated actions, and will be forgiven for what it contains of innovation.

Therefore although technically the mawlid is still a bid’a and thus an evil occurrence according to Ibn Taymiya (as he does not accept the notion of a bid’a hassana) he however allows it by saying those who celebrate it would be ‘forgiven.’ He is more explicit at a later point and writes that ‘its sin is removed from some of the people due to the reason of ijthihad or other than it.’ No where is it more explicit in this fatwa that he actually regards the mawlid as a good innovation – all but in name, where he writes:

So honouring the mawlid, and taking it as a festive season which some of the people have done, there is a great reward due to the good intention and the honouring of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) because of what I have previously stated to you – that it is possible that something be good for some of the people [...]

In summary then, Ibn Taymiya considers the mawlid to *be* an innovation, but one where there is reward in it for the honouring of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, as well as the good intention. He also states that Allah will reward the person for his ijthihad and love, and that any sins would be lifted due to his ijthihad or them being a muqallid. He writes that people will be rewarded for good actions ‘with respect to what it includes of good.’ So despite his criticism of the mawlid in his fatwa, he nonetheless has clear praise for it, and it is because of this praise that has seen Ibn Taymiya being criticised by the very people that propagate much of his works today, and which has resulted in publications of his ‘Iqtida’ having editors exclaiming that: ‘How can they possibly obtain a reward for this???’ such as the editor Muhammad Hamid al-Fiqqi who adds a two page footnote explaining how wrong Ibn Taymiya really is.

³ Narrated ‘Abd Allah Ibn Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him:

A desert Arab came to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and began to speak. Thereupon the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: ‘In eloquence there is magic and in poetry there is wisdom.

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[Sunan Abu Dawud Book 41, Number 499]. (See *note* 3 to part III for a further discussion on the topic of poetry).

⁴ The hadith master and historian *Hafiz Ibn Sayyid al-Nass* (d. 732) compiled a four hundred-page anthology of over 180 male and female companion poets who recited poetry in praise of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. The book is entitled *Minah al-Madh*, and he lists each Companion alphabetically.

⁵ Further poems of Hassan Ibn Thabit can be found in his *Diwan* - Hassan Ibn Thabit, *Diwan*. Edited by Walid N. Arafat. GMS, n.s. 21, 2 volumes. London: Luzac, 1971. See *Diwan*, no. 34, line 8, no. 9. Line 21; also no. 131, line 9

⁶ Shama'il Tirmidhi, under the chapter of poetry

⁷ The text is found in Imam al-Suyuti's *Husn al-Maqasid*, p 5; Hafiz Ibn Kathir's *Mawlid*, p 30; as well as in Hafiz Ibn Hajar's *Fath al-Bari*.

⁸ This is not in reference to 'the West', but more so to where its ideology and 'customs' have spread - thus making this not restricted solely to the Western hemisphere.

⁹ Al-Qadi Iyad writes:

Know that Allah has bestowed a mark of honour on many of the Prophets by investing them with some of His names. For example, He calls Isaac and Ishmael 'knowing' [*alim*] and 'forbearing' [*halim*], Abraham 'forbearing' [*halim*], Noah 'thankful' [*shakur*], Moses 'noble' [*karim*] and 'strong' [*qawi*], Joseph 'a knowing guardian' [*hafiz alim*], Job 'patient' [*sabur*], Jesus and John 'devoted' [*barr*], and Ishmael 'truthful to the promise' [*sadiq al wad*] .. Yet He preferred our Prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, since He adorned him with a wealth of His names in His Mighty Book and on the tongue of His prophets. We have gathered them together after reflecting on the subject and putting our memory to work [...] We have recorded some of these names [...] They are: Ahmad, al-Rauf al-Rahim, al-Haqq, al-Nur, al-Shahid, al-Karim, al-Azim, al-Jabbar, al-Khabir, al-Fattah, al-Shakur, al-Alim, al-Allam, al Awwal, al-Akhir, al-Qawi, al-Sadiq, al-Wali, al-Mawla, Afw, al-Hadi, al-Mumin, al-Quddus/Muqaddas, al-Aziz, al-Bashir, al-Nadhir, Ta Ha, Ya sin.

[Qadi Iyad, *Ash-Shifa*, Translated by Aisha Abdarrahman Bewley (Madina Press: Granada, Spain, 1991) Chapter 'On Allah honouring the Prophet with some of His own

Beautiful Names and describing him with some of His own sublime qualities.' The full title of the book is: *Kitab Ash-shifa bi tarif al Mustafa* or: 'Healing by the recognition of the Rights of the Chosen one.' It is probably the most frequently used and commented book that details the Messenger of Allah's (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) life, his qualities and miracles. Written by an author who was a well-respected Qadi and considered *the Imam of his time in hadith*, as well as a scholar in grammar, tafsir and usul. The shifa is a book almost a thousand years old, which has been so highly admired throughout the Muslim world from the day that it was written].

¹⁰ The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said:

Do not exceed bounds in praising me as the Christians have done with the son of Mary, for I am only His servant. Therefore say, Allah's servant and His Messenger. [Bukhari]

There is nothing indicative in this hadith that prohibits praising the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, in the terms that *he* used when speaking about himself in many other hadiths, such as *Seyyed walad Adam*, or *Habib Allah*; nor the countless number of other qualities bestowed upon him, so long as the Christian terminology (namely 'son of God') and similar ascriptions and ideas are avoided. Ibn Taymiya wrote in a book (that is attributed to him):

The foundation of the religion of Islam is built on praising, glorifying and treating with dignity the leader of all the prophets, may peace be upon them all. Such praise, glorification, and treating with dignity is praise for the entire Religion; and its removal is the end of the Religion. By not giving such respect to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, all Religion comes to an end.

[*Al Sarim al -Maslul*, (Tanta: Egypt, 1960) p 211]

It is upon this aspect of 'praise' of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, that often finds its way as an in expressional term, and which in no matter how many was expressed, will never really do justice to the one being praised. It is recorded that Hassan Ibn Thabit, may Allah be pleased with him, said:

I say, and none can find fault with me But one lost to all sense:

I shall never cease to praise him.

It may be for so doing I shall be forever in paradise With the Chosen

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One for whose support in that I hope,
And to attain that day I devote all my efforts

[Ibn Hisham's notes to his *Sirat al-Rasul Allah*, Translated by Alfred Guillaume, 9th printing (Karachi: Oxford University Press, n.p.d) p. 797]

While the hadith master, *the Shaykh al-Islam*, al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani wrote in his *Diwan*:

By the gate of your generosity stands a sinner, who is mad in love,
O best of mankind in radiance of face and countenance!

Through you he seeks a means [*tawassala*], hoping of Allah's forgiveness of slips;

From fear of Him, his eyelid is wet with pouring tears.

Although his genealogy attributes him to a stone [*hajar*],
How often tears have flowed, sweet, pure and fresh!

Praise of you does not do you justice, but perhaps, In eternity, its verses will be transformed into mansions.

My praise of you shall continue for as long as I live,
For I see nothing that could ever deflect me from your praise.

[Al-'Asqalani, Ibn Hajar, *Selections from the Fath al-Bari*, Translated By 'Abd al-Hakim Murad, M.AT papers series 4 (Cambridge: UK) 2000, p 4].

The diwan written by the Caliph 'Abd al-Hamid Khan ibn al-Sultan which was in its entirety was engraved in the Masjid al-Nabawi in 1777 (but later censored by having paint cover verses) continued in this tradition of praise. He writes:

O my master, [*Ya Seyyidi*] O Messenger of Allah [...] O you who stand on the Station of Praise, singled out by The One Who is Single, Who is not begotten and does not beget [...] I have sought as my means the elect one, the noblest of any that ascended the heavens, the secret of the Unique One. O Lord of beauty! Exalted is Allah Who created him, for such as him in all creation I have never seen [...] Therefore his tireless praise shall never cease to be my task and love of him sustains me in the presence of the Lord of the Throne. Upon him be the purest of endless blessings without cease together with greetings that cannot be stemmed nor counted. And upon his Family and Companions, a glorious folk

all, the oceans of forgiveness, the people of generosity and aid!

[The whole poem can be read in Shaykh al-Alawi's *Shifa al-Fuad*, (Dubai: Dairat al-Awqaf) and also in Shaykh Hisham Kabbani's *Encyclopedia of Islamic Doctrine*, (ASFA: Mountain View, California, 1998) vol. 2, pp 80-82].

There are many hadiths that point to the greatness of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and of the bounty bestowed upon him by Allah, (of which some will be mentioned throughout this work) and of which (as an example) the following hadith demonstrates and singles out his unique attribute as *mustashar al-Haqq* – the one Allah consulted. Hudhayfa, may Allah be pleased with him, said:

The Prophet [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] was absent and he did not come out until we thought that he would never come out again. When he did come out, he fell into such a long prostration that we thought that his soul had been taken back during that prostration. When he raised his head, he said: My Lord sought my advice [*istasharani*] concerning my Community, asking 'What shall I do with them?' I said 'What You will, my Lord, they are Your creation and Your servants!' Then He sought my advice again [*fa istasharani al-thaniya*], and I said to Him the same thing, so He said, 'We shall not put you to shame concerning your Community, O Muhammad.' Then He informed me that the first of my Community to enter Paradise will be seventy thousand, each thousand of whom will have seventy thousand with them and none of them shall incur any accounting. Then He sent me a messenger who said, 'Supplicate and it will be answered to you. Ask and it will be given to you.' I said to His messenger, 'Will my Lord give me whatever I ask for?' He replied, 'He did not send me to you except to give you whatever you ask for.' And indeed my Lord has given me whatever I asked for, and I say this without pride. He has forgiven me my sins past or future while I am still alive and walking about. He has granted me that my Community shall not starve, and shall not be overcome. And He has given me *al-Kawthar*, a river of Paradise which flows into my pond; and He has given me power and victory over my enemies, and terror running in their ranks at a month's distance from my Community; and He has granted me that I be first among the prophet's to enter Paradise; and He has made spoils of war lawful and good for me and my Community, and He has made lawful much of what He has forbidden those before us, nor did He take us to task for it.

[Narrated by Imam Ahmad and Haythami said in *Majma al-Zawaid* (10:68) that its chain was hassan].

11 “Beware of matters newly begun, for every matter newly begun is innovation, every innovation is misguidance, and every misguidance is in the hell fire.”

We often hear this hadith when the discussion of innovation occurs, and more often enough, we are reminded of its literal interpretation. Today, people are ready to define bid'a [innovation] without first understanding the meaning of the Sunna. Generally, it can be envisioned that there are primarily two groups comprising of scholars who hold different opinions. One group holds that innovation changes the Din of Islam. These changes are of two kinds. Firstly, there are good innovations and secondly, there are the bad innovations that are contemptible. The second group of scholars, hold that every innovation is contemptible – and this is the group that *Ibn Taymiya* and *Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahab* adhered to. Since we are reminded most that there is no such category as a 'good innovation,' (or we are told that this is only the understanding of the subcontinent 'mawlis') I thought that it would make a change to mention some of the scholars who actually upheld that there was in existence a good innovation:

Imam Shafi'i (d.204 AH)

Al-Shafi'i divided innovation into two parts; what is good and what is bad (or what is noble and what is contemptible). His interpretation of the meaning of innovation includes every invention after the time of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and the time of the *Khulafa al-Rashidun*. This is narrated by Harmala bin Yahya who said that he heard al-Shafi'i say:

Al bid'atu bid'atan: bid'a mahmuda wa bid'a madhmuma, fa ma wafaqa Al sunna fa huwa mahmud, wa ma khalafa al sunna fa huwa madhmum.

Innovation is of two kinds: the praiseworthy [or noble] innovation and the blameworthy [or contemptible] innovation. Whatever confirms to the Sunna is praiseworthy, and whatever contravenes the Sunna is blameworthy.

[Al-hafiz Abu Nu'aym al-Asbahani cites it in *Hilyat al-Awliya* (9:113); al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani in *Fath al-Bari* (13:253); al-Hafiz Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali in *Jami' al 'Ulum wa al-Hikam* (p 291); Hafiz al Turtushi al-Maliki in *Kitab al-Hawadith wa al-Bida'* (pp. 158-159); he himself divided the bida' into muharrama (forbidden), makruha (disliked) and wajiba (obligatory); p.15; al-Hafiz Abu Shama in *al Ba'ith 'ala inkar al bida' wa al hawadith*, ed Mashhur Hassan Salman (Riyad: Dar al-Raya, 1990/1410) p. 93; Cairo edition p.12; Al-Hafiz al-Suyuti alludes to it in the introduction to his fatwa on the Mawlid entitled *Husn al-Maqasid fi 'amal al mawlid in al-Hawi li al fatawi*]; Al-Hafiz al-Bayhaqi, in *Manqib ash Shafi'i* relates the narration (1:469) in these words:

Innovated matters are one of two kinds: one is an innovation which contravenes something in the Qur'an or the Sunna or a report from a Companion or the consensus of the scholars; this is the innovation of misguidance [*bid'a dalala*]; the other kind is whatever good has been innovated which contravenes none of the above, and this is an innovation that is not blameworthy [*muhdathatun gharu madhmuma*].

In yet another narration, it is related that the Imam said:

Anything that has a foundation in religious law is not an innovation even if the Companions did not do it, because their refraining from doing it might have been for a certain excuse they had at the time, or they left it for something better, or perhaps not all of them knew about it.

[Cited by Dr 'Isa al Mani' al-Humayri in Dubai Fatwa, Awqaaf, of Dubai, p 3., printed and translated by ASFA (n. d)]

Ibn Athir

Ibn Athir said that innovation can be divided into two kinds; one with guidance [*bid'a huda*] and one which is contemptible [*bid'a dalala*]. Innovation, which meets the general needs required by Allah and His Messenger is praised, i.e., good actions and generosity are deeds, which are praised and given good rewards [*thawab*]. An example of this was 'Umar al-Khattab's action in calling for the congregation to perform the Tarawih prayers. This was claimed by himself to be an "excellent innovation." On the other hand, innovation contrary to the wish of Allah and His Messenger is contemptible [Ibn Athir, *al-Nihaya fi Gharib al-hadith wa al-Athar*, vol. I (Maktaba al-Halabi: Egypt (n.p.d) p 79)].

Al-Qarafi

Al-Qarafi divides innovation in accordance with the laws of Islam as to what is obligatory [*Wajib*], recommended [*Mandub*], permissible [*Mubah*], disliked [*Makruh*], and prohibited [*Haram*]. Whenever any action brings about what is good then it should be performed, but if it brings destruction, it should be avoided. In short, he considered that innovation depended on legal regulation of proof [Al-Shatibi, *al-I'tisam*, vol. I, (Dar al-Fikr: Beirut) p 90].

Ibn Hazm (d. 456 AH)

Ibn Hazm said that innovation in religion is anything that is not found in the Qur'an and was not from the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, except for matters which are related to the tradition of the Prophet [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] by his Companions with the intention of good. Thus such a thing as the

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action of ‘Umar al-Khatib calling for congregational Tarawih prayers is permissible [*Mubah*]. He also states that innovation can be contemptible when it cannot be related to, or supported by, or linked to legal proof [Ibid. vol. I, p 161].

Al-‘Izz Ibn ‘Abd al-Salam (d. 660 AH)

The “sultan of the ‘ulama”, Ibn ‘Abd al-Salam is of the opinion that innovation is an action which did not happen during the time of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. Any action that occurs with the basic teachings of the Prophetic traditions and regulations arising there from or analogy [*qiyas*] to the traditions of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is a good innovation. Anything that is contrary to the above is bad and contemptible [Al-‘Izz Abd al-Salam, *Qawa’id al-Ahkam fi Masalih al-Anam*. vol. III (Maktaba al-Kuliyya al-Azhariyya: Egypt) p 204].

Hafiz Abu Shama

One of Shuyukh of Imam Nawawi, he divided innovation into *bida’ mustahsanah* on the one hand, and *bid’a mustaqbaha* on the other, itself subdivided into *haram* and *makruh* [*Al-Ba’ith ‘al Inkar al-Bid’a wa al-Hawadith*, Cairo ed (p.13)].

Al Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani (d. 852 AH)

The “Shaykh al-Islam” and the ‘Amir al-Mu’minin” of hadith, in his commentary of ‘Umar’s saying (may Allah be pleased with him) related by Bukhari about the Tarawih prayers “*What a fine [good/excellent] innovation this is,*” [ni’mat al-bid’a hadhih] explains;

The root meaning of innovation is what is produced without precedent. It is applied in the law in opposition to the Sunna and is therefore blameworthy. Strictly speaking, if it is part of what is classified as commendable by the law, then it is a good innovation [*hassana*], while if it is part of what is classified as blameworthy by the law, then it is blameworthy [*mustaqbaha*], otherwise it falls in the category of what is permitted indifferently [*Mubah*]. It can be divided into the known five categories.

[Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-Bari* (al Halabi: Cairo) 1378/1959; 5:156-157; (Dar al Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya: Beirut) 1410/1989) 4:318]

Imam al-Nawawi (d. 676 AH)

According to his interpretation of the hadith “Every innovation is deviation,” al-Nawawi explains that this tradition of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is regarded as general – specific [‘am – makhsus]. What he meant by ‘general’ was that all innovations are a deviation. On the other hand, a specific innovation is

one, which cannot be related to, or supported by, or linked to legal proof. He noted two definitions, firstly the definition given by those who literally accept this hadith [Every Innovation is..]. According to them, innovation is any action without any previous examples. Secondly, there is the definition given by classical scholars who defined innovation as obligatory, recommended, permissible, disliked and prohibited. Based on the above analysis, al-Nawawi considered that ‘Umar bin al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him, had introduced an innovation when he called for congregational Tarawih prayers. As said earlier, according to ‘Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, this innovation was ‘excellent.’ In the light of this, i.e., that on the one hand as stated in the hadith, “Every innovation is a deviation ..” and on the other that ‘Umar bin al-Khattab said that the introduction of the congregational Tarawih prayer was excellent, al-Nawawi concluded that there are two aspects of innovation. As a general rule, an innovation is a deviation and therefore contemptible, but that a specific innovation can be noble, because of its links to the Prophetic practice. For this reason, al Nawawi believed that there were two types of innovations, namely noble and contemptible.

[Al-Nawawi, *Sharh Sahih Muslim*, vol. VI (Dar al-Fikr: Beirut) pp. 154 – 155]. See note 29 in part III for a further detailed explanation of the ‘good innovation.’

12 What does Traditional Islam imply? In short, it can be summated as the doctrines that are built upon the Qur’an and the Sunna, authorised by the Islamic schools of jurisprudence and agreed upon by the majority of Muslims – Islam that is still followed by the vast majority of Muslims (“Allah’s hand is over the group, follow the largest mass, for verily whoever dissents from them, departs to Hell.” Narrated by al-Hakim and al-Tabari from Ibn Abbas and al-Lalikai in al-Sunna, and al-Hakim also narrated it from Ibn ‘Umar).

The Tradition of Islam is related to the notion of orthodoxy, to authority, to continuity and consistency in the transmission of the truth; to the recognition of the authority of the Qur’an and Sunna, reliance upon classical scholarship as exemplified in the four schools of fiqh, and the following of the majority are all evidential traits of Traditional - orthodox Islam - as distinguishable from the writings of the few, scattered throughout history. Within the Tradition of Islam, a true Islamic landscape emerges, encompassing the richness of scholarly tradition, their illuminating contributions, and the diversity of qualified legal opinion and their acceptance – as opposed to using our own amateurish efforts that ultimately distort our vision:

Narrated by Abu Ya’ la, from Hudhayfa and about which Ibn Kathir said, “It’s chain of transmission is good.” Abu Ya’ la said, “The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, has said: One of the things that concerns me about my nation is a man who studied the Qur’an, and when its grace started to show

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on him and he had the appearance of a Muslim, he detached himself from it, and threw it behind his back, and went after his neighbour with a sword and accused him of associating partners with Allah.' I then asked, "O, Prophet of Allah, which one is more guilty of associating partners with Allah, the accused or the accuser?" The Prophet said, "It is the accuser."

¹³ Perhaps *why* the 'ulama opposed the introduction of the Printing press from as early as the seventeenth century, was not so much that they saw the 'infidel' behind the bid'a, but due to the concern of the *unrestricted, unchallenged and unchecked literature that would flow from them*. Indeed, one scholar actually boasts that the press and its associated publications "*helped loosen the strangle hold of the 'ulama [...] over education*" [Atiyeh, George N, *The Book in the Islamic world; the written word and communication in the Middle East*, Edited by Atiyeh, George N, (State University Press: New York, 1995) p 235].

Not only did the 'ulama protest about the printing presses, but even the secular academics soon began to realise its effects and began to complain that private ownership of them had made it possible for, "*Ignoramuses to infiltrate the ranks of qualified intellectuals*." Undoubtedly, this was something that was to have even more of a dire consequence for the writings concerned with the Din [Ibid. p 36].

By the turn of the nineteenth century, it was clearly visible that the Caliph was in no state to either halt or challenge individuals who privately owned a printing press, and was facing political, economic and military decay. The first contact between the printing press and the 'ulama was disastrous. Europeans made ugly and very faulty copies of the Qur'an, and it was no wonder that many actually believed that the Devil himself was behind a vile creation. Printers for example, made no difference between letters such as *dal* and *dhal*, and as such, once read, the meanings were grotesquely misrepresented [Ibid. p1]. The first printing press was introduced in Lebanon in 1610 by the Maonite church of St. Anthony. However, it was set to 'advance the cause of the book in the Arab world' was also set up by an advocate of Greek Catholicism. American missionaries eventually opened up their 'American Press' in Beirut in 1834, and soon there was intense competition amongst the various denominations of Christianity at winning as many Muslim converts as possible through their various publications. By the early half of the nineteenth century, western novels were being translated and published. Books on politics, medicine, astronomy and science were all read and discussed in the new educational paradigm, each being initially printed by Christian missionaries. As soon as the time was conducive to print and the 'ulama firmly being shackled, "*there mushroomed a number of presses that were not restrained by the [...] norms nor by the promptings of the state or religious institute*" [Ibid. pp 236-238].

There was a strong 'symbiotic' relationship that existed between publication and education. The spread of schools and education was also accompanied by the development of book production [Ibid. p 235]. The readership of these new

publications had been transformed from the religious, to the new class of engineers, doctors and lawyers. Also noticeable, was that the press enabled local languages to be printed as opposed to everything being only available in Arabic [Ibid. pp 5-8]. The majority of publishers, editors and proofreaders were children of the new 'Europeanised educational system' who exerted an incredible degree of influence. The ownership of a printing press made a powerful propaganda tool. Publications were dispersed and read across all the Muslim lands, the audience only too eager to read what was on this new invention, such as the newspapers. The magnetism of the newspaper for example, was such that the newly emerging educated elite actually regarded reading the Qur'an as merely a ritual, whereas the reading of newspapers 'constituted an act of acquiring knowledge' [Commins, David Dean, op cit. p 19]. The Ownership of a press also gave the power to decide what the masses would read and thus be exposed to, this also allowed obscure manuscripts to be resurrected, as were the personalities of the authors. By the end of 1924, coinciding with the dismantling of the Caliphate, the press had achieved a '*pre-eminent position*' [Ibid. p 13].

Today, the publications of books that have been translated into the English language have undoubtedly allowed Muslims to read what otherwise would have been inaccessible to those of us who cannot understand the language of Revelation - Arabic. However, there is an alarming consequence to this. Unknowingly, print is replacing person, and books are replacing transmission. Now, more than ever is there the heightened danger of people trying to take away their own interpretations and understanding of our Din simply from books. This can evidently be seen in the realm of reading the hadith collections. Traditionally, it has been understood that the hadith collections were not easy books to follow, with scholars heavily enumerating upon their contents, in particular both the Sahih of Imam al-Bukhari and Imam Muslim. Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani wrote *17 volumes of commentary upon Imam Bukhari's collection* while Imam al-'Ayni wrote *25 volumes*, yet despite this extensive scholarship, there remained hadiths which even these scholars could not understand. However today, it appears that any Muslim is now encouraged to pick up the Sahih of Imam Muslim and of Imam Bukhari and follow them, having recourse only to their own understanding.

The contemporary scholar, *Yusuf Talal Delorenzo* in his introduction to the translation of the *Adab al-Mufrad* of Imam Bukhari makes a pertinent point. He illustrates that in the classical Madrasah system, the study of the Sahih of Imam al-Bukhari was only studied once the student had dedicated years into the study of various disciplines. Subjects such as Arabic language, rhetoric and literature; rational sciences of logic and philosophy; the disciplines of fiqh and the usul of fiqh amongst others came before even opening the sahih. He continues to explain that:

The place of sahih al-Bukhari was so elevated that only those who had mastered the classical disciplines were considered ready to undertake its study.

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[Imam Bukhari's *Adab al-Mufrad* - Book of Muslim Morals and Manners, translated by Yusuf Talal Delorenzo, al-Saadawi Publications, Alexandria, Virginia, 1997, p ii].

In essence, the Sahih of al-Bukhari was a book that required a guide, a teacher who was authorised by this traditional system - an individual who had gone through it, to teach to others. Unfortunately, the story today is far from this. Anyone can purchase a copy of the Sahih and immediately start to interpret and derive understandings from the hadith from his own understanding. However, Delorenzo points out that:

the book is so full of technical nuances related to *usul al hadith* and *'ilm al rijal'* that an approach in this manner results in a *'fitna [...]* in the sense that the person would be so confused and overcome after undertaking such an uninformed and one-dimensional reading [...] that he or she would face a crisis in their religion. [Ibid. pp ii-iii].

The Dangers of trying to understand the Din at a certain level, unaccompanied by a teacher has always found itself at the forefront of criticism and warnings by the scholars, and even from the early communities:

Ibn Abi Zayd al-Qayrawani mentions in his *Kitab al-Jami' fi al-Sunan* that Ibn 'Uyayna said: *Hadith is liable to misguide all except the jurists [al-hadithu mudillatun illa li al-fuqaha']*.

Ibn Wahb said: *Every memoriser of hadith that does not have an Imam in fiqh is misguided (dall), and if Allah had not rescued us with Malik and al-Layth (ibn Sa'id), we would have been misguided.*

'Ali al-Qari said in his book *Mu'taqad Abi Hanifa al-Imam fi Abaway al-Rasul* [p. 42] that:

The early scholars said: The hadith scholar without knowledge of fiqh is like a seller of drugs who is no physician: he has them but he does not know what to do with them; and the fiqh scholar without knowledge of hadith is like a physician without drugs: he knows what constitutes a remedy, but he does not dispose of it.

Al-Sakhawi in his biography of Ibn Hajar entitled *al-Jawahir wa al-Durar* relates similar views: on the authority of al-Fariqi who said:

One who knows chains of hadith but not the legal rulings derived from them cannot be counted among the scholars of the Law.

The importance of Tradition is that it asserts an *isnad* – a chain of transmission that allows one to identify with whom a particular person has been taught, and who has given him a license to teach. Our Tradition is a tradition of transmission: The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was taught by the angel Gabriel, upon whom be peace, and who in turn was taught by the Lord of All. Even the Qur'an has an *isnad* as Ibn al-Qayyim explains concerning the ayat 81: 19-21:

Allah, glory be to Him, has described His angelic messenger, Jibril, in this sura as being noble, strong, secure with His Lord, obeyed in the heavens and trustworthy. These five qualities contain testimony to the trustworthiness of the *isnad* of the Qur'an and that Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, heard it from Jibril, peace be upon him, and that Jibril heard it from the Lord of the Worlds. This *isnad* should be enough for you in respect of sublimity and majesty.

[Sheikh Kishk, 'Abdu'l Hamid, *The world of the Angels* (Dar al-Taqwa Ltd: London, 1994,) p 48].

Muhammad Ibn Sirin (d.110 AH) said: *This knowledge is the Religion. So be careful as to whom you take your Religion from* [Related by Muslim (Number 114) and by Abu Nu'aym in *al-Hilyat al-Awliya'* (2/278)].

The *isnad* can be seen to act as a barrier to prevent just anyone from pronouncing they have the authority to teach the Din. 'Abd Allah Ibn al-Mubarak (d.181 AH) said:

According to me, the *isnad* is from the Din. If it were not for the *isnad*, whoever wished could have said whatever he wished. He also said: The example of the one who studies his Religion without an *isnad* is like the one who attempts to ascend a roof without a ladder.

[Sharaf Ashab al-Hadith (1/15) of al-Khatib al-Baghdadi]

Sufyan al-Thawri (d.161 AH) said: *The isnad is the weapon of the Believer. So if he does not have a weapon with him, what will he fight with?* [Ibid. (1/15)].

Imam Malik (d.157 AH) said:

This knowledge is the Religion, so look to see from whom you take your Religion. I met seventy people who said: 'The Messenger of Allah said...' at the pillars of the mosque.' (And he pointed to the Mosque of the Prophet then he said) "But, I did not take from a single one of them...because they were not from the people of this affair.

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[Related by al-Baghdadi in al-Faqih wal-Mutafaqih (2/98)]

Although Islamic culture valued writing as a memory aid it also recognised the dangers of the ways books allowed for the decontextualisation of knowledge from the authoritative control of a given teacher or school, and thus could be used for claiming religious authority independent of proper certification by an established teacher or school. Classical Islamic culture, take thirteenth century Baghdad for example, emphasised the importance of internalising knowledge - until knowledge is internalised and recognised by an authoritative teacher to have been integrated properly into the general understanding and conduct of the student, it was not viewed as knowledge at all. Someone once remarked *“sitting before a teacher who passes you knowledge is like taking a photograph - in that by the light, the image of what is in front of you is implanted in your heart. This is education.”* We cannot receive education simply from reading books – and this is the way our Din has been transmitted and preserved throughout the generations. That is a sharp contrast from today’s culture, which allows for a view of the function of knowledge in book form. Today we are witnessing an unprecedented period of time in Islamic history, where we have more access to the teachings of Islam than in any period, yet divisions and confusion remain. With such information, why then are we still arguing about issues that should now be clearly resolved? There is a reason – there is a difference between knowledge and information:

‘Abd Allah Ibn ‘Umar Ibn al-‘As, may Allah be pleased with him, said:

I heard the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, saying, ‘Verily Allah does not take away knowledge by snatching it away from the people, rather He takes it away by taking away the scholars, until there is not one scholar left. So the people will take ignorant leaders, so they will be asked, and they will give rulings without knowledge. So they will be misguided, and they will misguide.’ [Muslim (8/60)]

Anyone can access information, which can take the time your modem downloads from the Internet and for you to read it, but knowledge takes time, struggle and effort. It is taken from a source, a living intermediary where interaction takes place and from where the students not only learn knowledge, but also to absorb the state of their teacher. What has taken scholars years to learn, we find ourselves saying we can learn in a fraction of the time. Imam Malik was asked, “Can knowledge be taken from a man who has not [to his credit any] seeking [of knowledge] nor sitting [with scholars]?” He said, “No” [Reported by al-Suyuti in ‘Is ‘af al-Mubatta’]. However, when those very people disappear and we have confidence in ourselves to perform their function, what can we expect? Just as you would accept a subscription from a doctor knowing and

having the confidence that he or she has studied vigorously to become the expert that they are, why then do we accept that we can become experts in the field of Islamic sciences, simply by reading a few books? Would you go to a doctor, and accept pills from him, if he informed you that he had read a few medical journals, and feels comfortable to prescribe you your pills, based upon the ability to read and at reaching an 'educated guess?' The governing board of Doctors never will accept this practice – as the dangers of such practices would be far more obvious to the specialists than people who would be convinced by using convincing words and phrases. Then what about your Akhirah?

Someone once informed Imam Abu Hanifa:

In the mosque there is a circle (Halaqah) in which the people are looking at fiqh." He asked, "Do they have a head (i.e. a teacher)?" The man replied, "No." The Imam said, "These will never gain knowledge of fiqh."

[Reported by al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, op cit.]

The traditional manner of transmission, not only allowed the student to observe and soak the state of his teacher, but it also more importantly, allowed the teacher to observe the calibre of students receiving knowledge. However, books take this away in that 'ilm presented in book form can be read by anybody, even when they have no understanding to the background of what they are reading. Imam al-Awza 'i said:

This 'ilm was a noble thing when it was received and memorised from the mouths of men. But when it came to be in books, it lost its glow and passed on to people unworthy of it.

[Cited by Khalidi, Tarif, in: *Arabic historical thought in the classical period*, (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1996) p 22].

Imam al-Shafi'i said:

Whoever takes knowledge from books loses the regulations" (*man akhadha al-'ilma min al-kutubi Dayya 'a al-Ahkama*).

[Reported by al-Nawawi in the introduction to al-Majmu']

So we see that the early community of scholars, who despite writing and codifying the laws of Islam, knew of the grave shortcomings of people simply taking their Din solely from books. It is true that we have access to more information about Islam than

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ever before, but knowledge of Islam is being extinguished as fast as our traditional fuqaha are dying. And what occurs as a result of this severing of knowledge is as Abu Hurayra, may Allah be pleased with him, said: "Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, 'A time is approaching in which the knowledge will be taken away, and trials (*Fitan*) will appear, and greed will be present, and *al-Harj* will increase. They said, "And what is *al-Harj*?" He said, "Killing" [Sahih Muslim (8/59)].

'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud, may Allah be pleased with him said:

How will you be when you are covered by a trial in which the young grow up and the old become infirm. If anything of it is abandoned it is said: The Sunna has been abandoned. It was said: When will that occur, O Abu 'Abd al-Rahman? He said: When your scholars pass away, and those ignorant amongst you become many; when those who recite amongst you are many, but those who have understanding of the religion are few; when your leaders are many, but those who are trustworthy are few; when this world is sought with actions of the Hereafter; and when knowledge is sought for other than the Religion.

[Reported by al-Darimi (1/64), al-Lalika'i (Number 123), al-Hakim (4/514) and others, with a sahih chain of narration].

The effects of the printing press upon the Umma, is one worthy of a separate study, since its effects on the Muslim world can still be felt today. Having distinct *advantages*, the mass publication of books does have some drawbacks – *but* this ultimately depends upon *how they are treated*. With the demise of the traditional *fuqaha*, the rise of both the European educational paradigm within the Muslim world and the growth of the print and press, the need to '*ask the people of remembrance*,' is felt no longer when all that is required now is a good library and a certificate to demonstrate ones intellectual capability.

¹⁴ Take for example the recent translation of Imam al-Nawawi's Riyad al-Salihin published in 1999 by Darussalam Publishing House, Riyad (advertised at: <http://www.dar-us-salam.com/h4riyad-us.htm>). This glossy two volume English edition of Imam al-Nawawi's Riyad al-Salihin – is being distributed for free to Islamic schools around the world but carries with it footnotes that contradict many, if not all practices that have full agreement on by consensus [ijma] by the four schools of thought, of which the author (Imam al-Nawawi) himself belonged to. For examples, by the translators:

- Declaring that "in case of breach of ablution, the wiping over the socks is sufficient, and there is no need for washing the feet" (1:31). This ruling invalidates one of the

conditions of wudhu spelled out in the Qur'an and the Sunna, making salat prayed with such a wiping null and void according to the Four Schools, which prohibit wiping over non-waterproof footwear.

- Declaring that expressing the intention (niyya) verbally before salat "is a Bid'a (innovation in religion) because no proof of it is found in Shari'ah" (1:14). This is not only a wanton attack on the Shafi'i School (which Imam al-Nawawi adhered to) but an ignorant violation of the criteria of calling something an innovation in the Din.

- Stating the "Prohibition [of kissing] is only effective if the kissing of hands is also involved." (2:721), whereas Imam Sufyan al-Thawri called the kissing of the hands of the 'ulama a Sunna and that the majority of the scholars concur on its permissibility: Khaythama (d. 85 AH), Talha ibn Musarrif (d. 112 AH), Malik ibn Mighwal (d. 159 AH): Malik heard from Talha, "Khaythama (ibn 'Abd ar-Rahma al-Juli) kissed my hand" and Malik added, "And Talha kissed my hand."

[Ibn Abi Shayba in the Musannaf (8:750) narrate it from Sufyan ibn Uyana with a sound chain; Tamim ibn Salama (d.100 AH) said "It is Sunna." Al-Hassan al-Basri (d. 110 AH) said: "It is *taa*" (an act of obedience to Allah) [Ibn Muflih, al-Adab 2:271]; Sufyan al-Thawri (d. 161 AH): "It is Sunna." Ibn al Muqri al-Rukhsa, p 70 Number 10 through Abu Hatim al-Razi [with the words 'la basa bih' in Ahmad, Al-wara Number 512]; Imam Malik (d. 179 AH) condemned it in a worldly sense, but deemed it *jaiz*, or permissible for the pious scholar [Related by Ibn Battal and al-Abhari as well as Ibn Hajar]; Musa ibn Dawud al-Dubbi (d. 217 AH) said: "I was with Sufyan ibn Uyana and Fudayl ibn 'Ali al-Jufri (d. 203 AH) came, and Sufyan stood up and kissed his hand." [Narrated with sound chains by Ibn Sa'd in his al-Tahdib (6:452) and al-Dhahabi in his Siyar (9:398); Imam Ahmad (d. 241 AH): "There is no harm in it." [Ahmad, Kitab al-Wara p. 113, Numbers 509-10) and Ibn Muflih, al-Adab (2:270); When Imam Muslim (d. 261 AH) met Imam Bukhari (d. 261 AH) he said to him, "Let me kiss your feet, O professor of the two professors." [Narrated by al-Khatib in his Tarikh (13:102) al-Hakim in Tarikh, al-Bayhaqi in al-Madkhal, Ibn Hajar in Hadi al-Sari (p 488) as well as Subki in the chapter of Bukhari in Tabaqat al-Shafiyya]; *Imam Nawawi* says kissing of the hands is "*Mustahabb* – desirable." See Nawawi's Fatawa as well as Ibn Hajar's Fath al-Bari (11:67). So from where do the translators conclude that kissing the hands are prohibited? And was this Imam Nawawi's view?]

- Claiming: "We are uncertain that after saying a funeral prayer, the Prophet [may Allah bless and grant him peace] and his Companions ever stood around the bier and supplicated for the dead body. It is an innovation and must be abolished!" (2:755) This is flatly contradicted by the sound narrations ordering the Companions to make du'a for the deceased directly after burial. The commentator(s) go on to say: "It looks strange

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that believers should persist in reciting supplications in their own self-styled way after the funeral prayer, but desist from them during the funeral prayer to which they have relevance. It implies that prayer is not the object of their pursuit, otherwise they would have prayed in accordance with the Sunna. In fact, they cherish their self-fabricated line of action and seem determined to pursue it.” Yet the commentator(s) a few pages later (2:760) state: “The Prophet [may Allah bless and grant him peace] has instructed his followers that after a Muslim’s burial, they should keep standing beside his grave for some time and pray for his firmness.”

- Omitting (2:760) to translate the words of Imam al-Shafi’i related by al-Nawawi in Chapter 161 (“Supplication for the Deceased after his Burial”): “It is desirable (*yustahabb*) that they recite something of the Qur’an at the graveside, and if they recite the entire Qur’an it would be fine.” Omitting to translate these words which are in the original text of *Riyad al-Salihin* is deceit and a grave betrayal of the trust (*amana*) of the translation of one of the mother books of knowledge in Islam.

As if the above were not enough, the “commentary” goes on to state: “The reference made to Imam al-Shafi’i about the recitation of Qur’an beside a Muslim’s grave is in disagreement with the Prophet’s – (may Allah bless and grant him peace) - practice... the reference made to Imam al-Shafi’i seems to be of doubtful authenticity.” However, al-Za’farani said: “I asked al-Shafi’i about reciting Qur’an at the graveside and he said: *la ba’sa bihi* - There is no harm in it.” This is narrated by Imam Ahmad’s student al-Khallal (d. 311) in his book *al-Amr bi al-Ma’ruf* (p. 123 Number 243). Similar fatwas are reported from al-Sha’bi, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Ishaq ibn Rahuyah, and others of the Salaf by no less than Ibn al-Qayyim and al-Shawkani in their books.

- Stating (2:761): “Qur’an reading meant to transmit reward to the dead man’s soul is against the Prophet’s (may Allah bless and grant him peace) example. All such observances are of no use to the dead.” This is the exact same position as the Mu’ tazila on the issue, who went so far as to deny the benefit of the Messenger of Allah’s, may Allah bless and grant him peace, intercession. It should be noted that the manipulative editors /commentators of *Riyad al-Salihin* deliberately omit any mention of the Companions’ practice, as it is authentically recorded from Ibn ‘Umar that he ordered that Qur’an be read over his grave, which has the status of the Sunna of the Prophet, may Allah bless and grant him peace, as this particular Companion was known to be the staunchest of all people in his adherence to the Prophet’s example, may Allah bless and grant him peace.

- Rephrasing a hadith (2:810-811) by omitting key words which invalidate their position. In chapter 184 of *Riyad al-Salihin* titled “Desirability of Assembling for Qur’an-Recitation: al-Nawawi cites the hadith of Muslim whereby the Messenger of

Allah, may Allah bless and grant him peace, said: “No group of people assemble in one of the Houses of Allah, all of them reciting [plural pronoun] the Book of Allah (yatluna kitab Allah) and studying It among themselves except Serenity (*al-sakina*) shall descend upon them [...]” The editor/ commentator(s) of Riyad al-Salihin rephrased the hadith thus: “*Any group of people that assemble in one of the Houses of Allah to study the Qur’an, tranquility will descend upon them, [...]*” Omitting the key words: “*all of them reciting the Book of Allah.*” Then the same editor/ commentator(s) had the gall to comment: “This Hadith... does not tell us in any way that this group of people recite the Qur’an all at once. This is Bid’a for this was not the practice of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless and grant him peace).” This is tampering compounded with a shameless lie. This misinterpretation and false claim of bid’a is, of course, directed at the Maghribi style of Qur’anic recitation that relies heavily on collective tilawa in order to strengthen memorisation.

- Their statement (2:861): “The right number of rak’ats in the Tarawih prayers is eight because the Prophet [may Allah bless and grant him peace] never offered more than eight rak’ats... It is not in any case twenty rak’ats. Authentic Hadiths prove this point abundantly.” This is a transgressive innovation (bid’a mufasssiqa) as it rejects the command of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless and grant him peace, to “obey the Sunna of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs after me” and the passive Consensus (ijma’ sukuti) of the Companions over twenty rak’ats.

- Their statement (2:905): “Twenty rak’at Tarawih is not confirmed from any authentic hadith, nor its ascription to ‘Umar (is proved from any muttasil (connected) hadith).” This is a blatant lie, as the number of hadith masters who graded as sahih the connected chains back to ‘Umar establishing twenty rak’at Tarawih are too numerous to count. They provided the basis on which the ‘ulama concur in declaring that Consensus formed on the matter among the Companions as stated by al-Qari, al-Zayla’i, al-Haytami, Ibn al-Humam, Ibn Qudama, and a number of other major jurists of the four Schools.

- Another systematic mistranslation for the Chapter-title 338 (2:1294) states: “Prohibition of placing the hands on the sides during salat” when the Arabic clearly states *al-khasira* which means “waist” or “hip” rather than “sides.” The same mistranslation is then repeated in the body of the chapter, then a third time in the commentary. This mistranslation is part of the campaign against the Maliki form of sadl consisting in letting the arms hang down by the sides during the standing part of salat. In some places of North Africa today, such as Marrakech, certain people are actually paid to declare takfir and taddil, in the name of the Sunna, of those who pray with their arms hanging by their sides.

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[Extracted from an unpublished document by Dr. G. F. Haddad]

This is just a brief look at a few chapters of one book, out of the thousand others, which are being distributed around the world being accompanied with their misleading and erroneous remarks.

¹⁵ This was the argument of Muhammad 'Abduh (1849-1905) He proclaimed that 'the later generations are not less, but more qualified to give their decisions on religious matters' [Cragg, Kenneth and Mas'ud Ishaq, op cit., pp 149 – 50].

¹⁶ *The Salaf, or the "early Muslims"* in traditional Islamic scholarship means someone who died within the first four hundred years after the Prophet, may Allah bless him and give him peace, including scholars the four great imams: Abu Hanifa, Malik, Shafi'i and Ahmad bin Hanbal. Anyone who died after this is one of the *khalaf* or "latter-day Muslims."

¹⁷ Apparent hadiths that are cited as evidence that contradict this statement include: Anas bin Malik, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that a person came to Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and said:

O, the best of creation, thereupon Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: He is Ibrahim, upon whom be peace. [Abu Dawud 30,5841]

Narrated 'Abd Allah:

"The Prophet said, 'None has the right to say that I am better than Jonah bin Matta'" [Bukhari 6.60.127].

These narrations follow from the humbleness of the Messenger of Allah as concluded by the 'ulama, but do not stand alone as absolute in their statement. There are numerous places both in the Qur'an and hadith that point to the highest rank concurred upon the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, by Allah, that have been taken into account by scholars who took to answer this question. It is narrated that Ibn 'Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him, said:

Allah has preferred (*faddala*) Muhammad over all Prophets and over the dwellers of the heavens (i.e., the angels). They said: "O Ibn 'Abbas, how did He prefer him to the dwellers of the heavens?" He replied: "Allah Most High said: 'And one of them [the angels] who should say: Lo! I am a God beside Him, that one We should repay with hell' (21:29) but He said: 'Lo! We have given thee (O Muhammad) a signal victory That Allah may forgive thee of thy sin that

which is past and that which is to come, and may perfect His favor unto thee, and may guide thee on a right path' (48:1-2)." They said: "And how did He prefer him over the Prophets?" He replied: "Allah Most High says: 'And We never sent a messenger save with the language of his folk' (14:4) but He said: 'And We have not sent thee (O Muhammad) save unto all mankind' (34:28)"

[Narrated from 'Ikrima by al-Darimi in the Muqaddima to his *Musnad* with a sound chain according to Shaykh al-Talidi (*Tahdid al-shifa*, p 167); al-Bayhaqi in *Dala'il al-Nubuwwa*; 'Abd ibn Humayd in his *Musnad*; Abu Ya' la in his *Musnad*; Ibn Abi Hatim in his *Tafsir*; al-Tabarani in *al-Mujam al-Kabir* (11: 240) with a chain of highly trustworthy narrators according to al-Haythami in *Majma' al-Zawa'id* (8: 254); al-Hakim in his *al-Mustadarak* (2-350, 1990 ed, 2-381) where he declares it sahih and al-Dhahabi concurred; Ibn Marduyah in his *Tafsir*; al-Qadi Iyad in his *ash Shifa*, and also Ibn Kathir in his *tafsir*].

Despite the existence of the aforementioned two hadiths, the majority of scholars (including the following) concluded from evidences derived by the Qur'an and Sunna of the superiority of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, over all creation:

1. Al-Qadi 'Iyad, *al-Shifa' fi Ma'rifati Huquq al-Mustafa* (may Allah bless him and grant him peace);
2. Abu Nu'aym, *Dala'il al-Nubuwwa*;
3. Al-Bayhaqi, *Dala'il al-Nubuwwa*;
4. Al-Faryabi, *Dala'il al-Nubuwwa*;
5. Ibn al-Jawzi, *al-Wafa bi Ahwal al-Mustafa* (may Allah bless him and grant him peace);
6. Ibn 'Abd al-Salam, *Bidayat al-Sul fi Tafdil al-Rasul*;
7. Ibn Dihya, *al-Mustawfa li Asma' al-Mustafa* (may Allah bless him and grant him peace);
8. Al-'Azafi, *Sharh Asma' al-Nabi* (may Allah bless him and grant him peace);
9. Ibn al-'Arabi's Chapter on the Prophetic Names in *'Aridat al-Ahwadh*;
10. Al-Bayhaqi's Chapter on the Prophetic Names in *Shu'ab al-Iman*;
11. Al-Busiri, *al-Burda*;
12. Al-Busiri, *al-Hamziyya*;
13. Al-Busiri, *al-Muhammadiyya*;
14. Al-Suyuti, *al-Khasa'is al-Kubra*;
15. Al-Suyuti, *al-Bahja al-Bahiyya fil-Asma' al-Nabawiyya*;
16. Al-Suyuti, *al-Riyad al-Aniqa fi Sharh Asma' Khayr al-Khaliq*;
17. Al-Jazuli, *Dala'il al-Khayrat*;
18. Al-Fasi, *Sharh Dala'il al-Khayrat*;
19. Al-Sakhawi, *al-Qawl al-Badi' fi al-Salat 'ala al-Nabi al-Shafi*;
20. Al-Qastallani, *al-Mawahib al-Laduniyya*;
21. Al-Zurqani, *Sharh al-Mawahib*;
22. Al-Qari, *Sharh al-Shifa*;
23. Al-Qari, *Sharh al-Shama'il al-Nabawiyya li al-Tirmidhi*;
24. Al-Munawi, *Sharh al-Shama'il al-Nabawiyya li al-Tirmidhi*;
25. Al-Baghawi, *Sharh al-Shama'il al-Nabawiyya li al-Tirmidhi*;
26. Al-Nabahani, *al-Asma fima li Sayyidina Muhammad min al-Asma*;
27. Al-Nabahani, *Wasa'il al-Wusul ila Shama'il al-Rasul*;
28. Al-Nabahani, *Shawahid al-Haqq*;
29. Al-Nabahani, *Nujum al-Muhtadin wa Rujum al-Mu'tadin*;
30. Al-Nabahani, *Jawahir al-Bihar fi Fada'il al-Nabi al-Mukhtar*;
31. Al-Lahji, *Muntaha al-Sul Sharh Wasa'il al-Wusul li al-*

Nabahani; 32. Al-Jamal, *Hashiyat al-Hamziyya*; 33. Al-Haytami, *Hashiyat al-Hamziyya*; 34. Al-Dabbagh, *al-Ibriz min Kalam Sayyidi 'Abd al-'Aziz*; 35. 'Abd Allah al-Ghumari, *Dilalat al-Qur'ani al-Mubin 'ala anna al-Nabiyya Afdatu al-Alamin*; 36. Al-Maliki, Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) *al-Insanu al-Kamil* (esp. p. 181-213, 4th ed.); 37. Sirajuddin, *Sayyiduna Muhammad* (may Allah bless him and grant him peace). This list is by no means exhaustive.

¹⁸ 'Abd Allah Ibn Mas'ud, may Allah be pleased with him, narrates that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said:

The people of my generation are the best, then those who follow them, and then those who follow the latter. After that there will come some people whose witness will go ahead of their oaths, and their oaths will go ahead their witness. Ibrahim (a sub-narrator) said: 'We used to be beaten for taking oaths by saying, 'I bear witness by the Name of Allah or by the Covenant of Allah.' [Bukhari (3.820)]

¹⁹ Kathir ibn Qays said:

I was sitting with Abu al-Darda in the mosque of Damascus. A man came to him and said: 'Abu Darda, I have come to you from the town of the Messenger of Allah, [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] for a tradition that I have heard you relate from the Messenger of Allah, [may Allah bless him and grant him peace]. I have come for no other purpose.' He said: 'I heard the Messenger of Allah, [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] say: If anyone travels on a road in search of knowledge, Allah will cause him to travel on one of the roads of Paradise. The angels will lower their wings in their great pleasure with one who seeks knowledge, the inhabitants of the heavens and the Earth and the fish in the deep waters will ask forgiveness for the learned man. The superiority of the learned man over the devout is like that of the moon, on the night when it is full, over the rest of the stars. *The learned are the heirs of the Prophets*, and the Prophets leave neither dinar nor dirham, leaving only knowledge, and he who takes it takes an abundant portion.' [Sunan Abu Dawud Number 3634]

²⁰ The problem today is that the consequences of the limited availability of classical texts, has resulted in a projection of a pseudo history. Rather than having insight into the broad understanding that the 'ulama had, we are introduced to the writings of a few scholars, and their opinions have been taken as the norm. This is somewhat of a misnomer. Why should we now take the opinions of the few, over that of the opinions

of the majority? Al-Hassan al-Basri said:

Two innovations have appeared in Islam; a man of bad judgment who holds that the Garden will be the reward only for those who see eye to eye with him; and a man of luxury and extravagance who worships this world [...] Reject these two for they are doomed to the Fire.

What we should be mindful of, is the fact that we have been ordered to adhere to the majority of people – the jama'a and to follow the consensus - since the Messenger of Allah said that '*my community shall never agree on error*' [Imam Hakim (1/116)]. Ibn 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, reported Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, as saying: Follow the great mass (as-Sawad al-Azam) for he who kept himself away from it, in fact would be thrown in Hell Fire (Ibn Majah; Mishkat, 1/174, by A.H. Siddiqui). The translator of *Mishkatal-Masabih* - A.H. Siddiqui, writes in the footnote to the above hadith that: There is a good deal of difference of opinion as to what the term Sawad al-Azam implies. The overwhelming majority of the scholars are of the view that As-Sawad al-Azam means the largest group of the learned scholars and pious persons whose opinions are held in high esteem in Islam.

There are legitimate reasons why people differ on certain aspects, based on the understandings or the *ijtihad* of the scholars, and thus, they cannot be condemned as innovations of the ignorant. Another problem that faces us today, is that we do not know who are scholars are or were. As such, when articles or essays are presented which contain many names of scholars, unless we know what status they hold amongst the people of knowledge, their statements in reality mean nothing to us.

P A R T T H R E E

O Sweet and Beautiful Madani

[Have We not] *exalted your fame?*
- al Qur'an 94:4

**In the name of Allah do I begin.
The Most Merciful, The Most Kind.**

For it was Allah, who delivered the Best of Creation,
To the whole of Mankind.

How great is His favour, for us to see.
For Truth has arrived, and falsehood will flee.

May every blessing be upon thee, O sweet and beautiful Madani!

No sweeter man has there ever been.
None more honest and serene.

Your blessed feet have visited the Arsh.
Thou art Allah's light upon this darkened Farsh.

Your sweat is sweeter than the scent of a rose.²
Upon your honour, do I compose this prose.³

May every blessing be upon thee, O sweet and beautiful Madani.

Your City is the one with grandeur and Light,
And the Imams knew it all to be true, upon first sight.⁴

O sweet and precious Madani, with your Sunna I pray,
I might live in harmony.⁵

I long to see the blessed green dome,
For there resides my heart's true home.⁶

They called it *al Munawwarra* – the Radiant abode.
For it was when you O Madani, blessed it with your presence
and made it your home.



Our Iman is not complete, till for you we have true love.⁷
How can this not be, for you are more radiant than the whitest of doves.

May every blessing be upon thee, O sweet and beautiful Madani.

They all flocked to see, from where the light did come,
Upon thy blessed face did they glance, and be overcome.

In jubilation they sang, “*The moon rose over us.*”⁸
And the reality was there.

*“Undoubtedly there has come to you from Allah, a light and a book luminous.”*⁹

The Qur’an reminds me, of the moon that rose over us.
For undoubtedly, it is you O sweet Madani, who was that Light.¹⁰
Delivered to the world, to bring consciousness to a new height.¹¹

Indeed, it was lady *Amina*, who also witnessed this light.
So much so that when she was with child, the sky was so bright.¹²

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It were the Sahaba who would often recite and set up camp.
And they related to others, your presence overcame both sun and lamp.¹³

Hassan Ibn Thabit, the *Ashiq al-Rasul*,
Would often declare that your presence even overshadowed the moon.¹⁴

O sweet Madani, you have turned our darkness into a guiding Light,¹⁵

So why dear brothers, do we fight and not unite?

For the Sahaba knew best, and did not commit sin.
If only they now saw, the state that we are in.¹⁶

The Sahaba described well, the light that they saw.
So why do brothers anger when we agree with what went before? ¹⁷

May every blessing be upon thee, O sweet and beautiful Madani.

You helped me to see, that besides Allah, there is *No other* divinity, And for you
and yours, I have great affinity.

Without your love, O Madani, my heart is lost, and in a muddle.

Every time I cry, and for thee shed a tear:
I long to see thou, O, to be so near!

You have taught me it is Allah I should fear,
But it is only by loving you, O sweet Madani, that we shall draw near.¹⁸

O Allah! To Thee do I only pray,
And I thank Thee, for showing me the Way.

For I know that when in despair, or I am lost in my way,
I would repeat, what the *Pious Predecessors* would also say.

'Abd Allah Ibn 'Umar and Khalid bin Walid,
Who will dare declare them of any evil deeds?

In numbness and in pain, even after your passing, O sweet Madani.
They cried out “**Ya Muhammad !**”
So shall it not suffice for a sinner like me? ¹⁹

May every blessing be upon thee, O sweet and beautiful Madani.

May every moment be spent in saying your Darud. ²⁰
May I never leave sense, of the Madinan Hadud.

I wish that my destiny, be tied with Madina.
For there is the Prophet, and blessed Sakina.

May I become a pious servant of Madina.
Fill my heart, O Allah, with the love of the *Seyyid of Madina*.²¹

For with your love, my heart glides like a kite,
Your radiance has provided me, with a guiding light.

I long to see the day, when I can be near your side.
I will stand and recite Darud.
It will be my honour, and my pride.²²

Upon you, your *ashiqs* lavish great praise.²³
To those who do not understand,
they simply dismiss this as a craze.

I swear by Almighty Allah, that I will never stop,
Reciting your Darud, until the day I do drop.²⁴

All praise and worship is for Allah,
For bestowing the honour on me.
Of being from the Umma, of the blessed Madani.

Excuse me if I cry, O Sayyid of Madina.
To behold your radiant face, that the Sahaba used to see.
What an honour it will be, for an unworthy one, such as me.

The Broken Chain

May every blessing be upon thee, O sweet and beautiful Madani.

Some may claim that you are like any one of us,
But who can claim, to have visited the Arsh?

We say *bashr*, but respect is also due.
*For mankind are like rocks, but a pearl are you.*²⁵

Why cannot they see, the Magnificence of you, O Madani?
The Imam of the Anbiya, and the Leader of Allah's Community.

You travelled the Seven Heavens, and your eyes did not lie.
For Jibril could not pass, but you, O Madani, glided by.²⁶

How can anyone deny Allah's love for you, O sweet Madani?
Whose name has He raised above, for all to see? ²⁷

For it is your blessed name, that is besides Allah's Majesty.
It has been placed there, for the whole of Mankind to see.

The Lord of the World's called you *Rafun* and *Rahim*.²⁸
But still yet, some cannot see,
The majesty and honour, that Allah has bestowed upon thee!

May every blessing be upon thee, O sweet and beautiful Madani.

They call us mad – our love declared a *Bid'a* ²⁹ and that which is something
new.

O! If only they understood, what the majnun of Baghdad, *Shaykh Shibli* knew!
³⁰

We say to our brothers, who do not know,
That this is the Islam of the Companions, and to this we can show;

How they went at length to show their love and respect.
When the Companions would rush to catch the blessed water,

There would be chaos, and simply no order.³¹

So you see, the Love of Rasul has an exceptional rule -
Love him more than yourself – until then, we are all just fools!³²

In sha' Allah, upon us there will be Allah's Karum,
And you, O Madani, will be our hearts Mehrum.

May I one day again, come to your City,
O sweet and precious Madani.
And have true love, like *Uways al-Qarani* ³³

O! Allah, hear the cries of your Ghulam,
Upon Thy blessed, do I send continuous Salam! ³⁴

*May countless blessing be upon thee,
O sweet and beautiful Madani!*



N O T E S

¹ Based upon an original poem by *Ali Raza Qadri Attari* with additional verses, editing, revisions, and notes prepared by *Aftab Malik*

² The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, slept on a rug in the house of Anas, may Allah be pleased with him, and perspired. Anas's mother brought a long necked bottle into which she put his sweat. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, asked her about this. She said, "We put it in our perfume and it is the most fragrant of scents" [Muslim & Bukhari]. Anas, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "I have not smelled amber, musk or anything more fragrant than the smell of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace" [Muslim and al-Tirmidhi].

³ The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was happy with good poetry, since it is related in Bukhari's *Morals and Manners (Adab al-Mufrad)* and elsewhere that he has said, "There is wisdom in poetry." Jabir bin Samarah, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "I attended the assemblies of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) more than a hundred times, wherein the Sahaba (may Allah be pleased with them) recited poetry and related the stories of the Jahilliya. The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) silently listened to them [and did not forbid them]. At times he smiled with them." 'A'isha, may Allah be pleased with her, said:

The Messenger of Allah [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] used to put a mimbar in the masjid for Hassan bin Thabit [may Allah be pleased with him], so that he might stand on it and recite poetry on the praise of, and behalf of the Messenger of Allah [may Allah bless him and grant him peace], or (that) he used to defend the Messenger of Allah (in reply to the accusations of the Kuffar). The Messenger of Allah [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] used to say: 'may Allah assist Hassan with *Ruhul Qudus* till he defends or praises, on behalf of the

Messenger of Allah.' [Shama'il al-Tirmidhi, under chapter of poetry]

Ibn Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him, said concerning the verse "And as for the poets, only those who are lost in grievous error would follow them" [26:224]: "These verses were abrogated, and exceptions were made to them in the following verse: "Save those who have faith, and do righteous deeds, and remember Allah unceasingly, and defend themselves only after having being wronged" (26:227) [Bukhari's Adab al-Mufrad, Hadith 874]. Sharid said, "The Prophet of Allah [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] asked me to recite the poetry of Umayyah ibn Salt for him, and I did so. Then the Prophet [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] started saying, "More, more!" I ended up reciting nearly a hundred verses to him. At the end, the Prophet [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] said, "The man (Umayyah was a pre Islamic poet) was very nearly a Muslim" [Bukhari's Adab al-Mufrad, Hadith 872].

⁴ Imam Malik was asked by the Caliph, Abu Ja'far al-Mansur, "Shall I face the qibla with my face backwards towards the grave of the Messenger of Allah [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] when making du'a?" Imam Malik replied "How could you turn your face away from him, when he is the means [*Wasila*] of you on the Day of Resurrection? Nay, face him and ask for his intercession so that Allah will grant it to you, as He said, "If they had only, when they were wronging themselves, come unto thee and asked Allah's forgiveness, and the Messenger had asked forgiveness for them, they would have found Allah indeed Oft returning, Most Merciful" (4:64) [Qadi Iyad, op cit.].

Imam Ahmad said to Abu Bakr al-Marzawi, "Let him use the Prophet [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] as a means of supplication to Allah." This is found in Imam Ahmad's Manasik narrated by his student Abu Bakr al-Marzawi. Hafiz al-Iraqi relates in Fath al-Mutual, that: "*Imam Ahmad sought blessings from drinking the washing water of Imam al-Shafi'i's shirt [...]*"

Ibn Hajar al-Haythami said that:

When Imam al-Shafi'i was in Baghdad, he would visit the grave of Abu Hanifa, pray two rakats nawafil according to the Hanafi Madhab (out of Ta'dhim to Abu Hanifa), give salam to him, and then ask Allah for the fulfillment of his need through his means (*yatwassal ilAllah tala bibi fi qada hajatih*). When my teachers went over this Riwayah, they noted that Imam al-Shafi'i would have a question of Fiqh that he could not conceive, and after leaving the grave of Abu Hanifa, his inquiry would be answered.

This is related in Ibn Hajar al-Haythami's al-Khayrat al-Hisan.

The Broken Chain

⁵ Allah says, “Believe in Allah and His Messenger, the unlettered Prophet who believes in Allah and His words. Follow him, perhaps you will be guided.” (7:157) “No, by your Lord, they will not believe until they ask you to judge between them in what they disagree about and then they shall find in themselves no impediment touching your verdict, but shall surrender in full submission.” (4:64) i.e. obey your judgment. Allah also says, “You have a good model in the Messenger of Allah for one who hopes for Allah and the Last Day.” (33:21) Muhammad ibn 'Ali al-Tirmidhi said, “To take the Messenger as a model means *to emulate him, follow his Sunna and abandon opposition to him in either word or action.*” Several commentators said words to that effect. *It is said that this was intended as a criticism of those who fail to follow him.* Sahl said that the ayat from the Fatiha (Sura 1), “The path of those whom You have blessed,” *means to follow the Sunna.* Allah promises His love and forgiveness to those who follow the Prophet and prefer him to their own passions and inclinations.

‘A’isha, may Allah be pleased with her, said, “The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) did something as an example in order to make things easier for people but some people still refrained from doing it. When the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) heard about that, he praised Allah and said: ‘What do you think of people who refrain from anything that I myself do? By Allah, I am the greatest of them in knowledge of Allah and the strongest of them in fear of Allah’” (Muslim and al-Bukhari). It is related that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, “The Qur’an is hard and difficult for anyone who hates it. Whoever clings to what I say and understands it and retains it, then it will be like the Qur’an for him. Whoever considers the Qur’an and what I say unimportant and neglects it loses this world and the Next. My community is commanded to take my words and obey my command and follow my Sunna. Whoever is pleased with my words is pleased with the Qur’an. Allah says, ‘Take what the Messenger brings you’” (59:7) (Abu’sh-Shaykh, ad-Daylami and Abu Nu’aym from al-Hakam ibn ‘Umayr). The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, “Whoever follows me is of me and whoever wants to abandon my Sunna is not of me.”

Al-Hassan ibn al-Hassan said that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, “Doing a little of something which is a Sunna is better than doing a lot of something which is an innovation”(al-Darimi). The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, “Allah will bring a man into the Garden by the fact that he clings to my Sunna.” Abu Hurayra, may Allah be pleased with him, said that the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said, “The one who clings to my Sunna when the community is corrupt will have the reward of a hundred martyrs” (al-Tabarani). The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, “The Banu Isra’il split into about seventy-two sects. My community will split into seventy-three. All of them will be in the Fire except for one.” They asked, ‘Who are they, Messenger of Allah?’ He replied, “Those who base themselves on what I and my Companions are doing today” (al-Tirmidhi).

‘Umar ibn al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him, wrote to his governors telling them to learn the Sunna, the shares of inheritance and the dialects, saying, “People will try to argue with you (i.e. by using the Qur’an), so overcome them with the Sunna. The people of the Sunna have the greatest knowledge of the Book of Allah.” When ‘Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, prayed two rak’ats at Dhu’l-Hulayfa, he said, “I do as I saw the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) doing” (Dhu’l-Hulayfa is the miqat for the people of Madina on their way to Hajj.) [Qadi Iyad, op cit., Section 3: The obligation to follow him and obey his Sunna].

⁶ Ibn ‘Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him, related that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said while in prostration: “O Allah, place light in my heart, light in my hearing, light in my sight, light on my right, light on my left, light in front of me, light behind me, light above me, light below me, and make light for me,” or he said: “Make me light.” Salama said: “I met Kurayb and he reported Ibn Abbas [may Allah be pleased with him] as saying: ‘I was with my mothers sister Maymuna when the Messenger of Allah [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] came there, and then he narrated the rest of the hadith as was narrated by Ghundar and said the words: ‘Make me light’ beyond any doubt.” Muslim narrates it in his Sahih, book of Salat al-Musafirin. Imam Ahmad in his Musnad also narrates it with a strong chain, but with the reverse order of the first narration cited above, resulting in the wording “[...] and make me light” or he said: “Make light for me.” Ibn Hajr in Fath al-Bari (1989 ed. 11:142) mentions a narration in Ibn Abi ‘Asim’s Kitab al-du’a which states: “And grant me light upon light” (*wa hab li nuran `ala nur*).

⁷ Anas, may Allah be pleased with him, said that a man came to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and asked, “*When will the Last Hour come, Messenger of Allah?*” “*What have you prepared for it?*” The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, asked. The questioner replied, “*I have not prepared a lot of prayer or fasting or charity for it, but I love Allah and His Messenger.*” The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, “*You will be with the one you love*” (al-Bukhari).

⁸ The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was met with joy and jubilation as he proceeded to enter Medina from the people of Medina. Al-Bara ibn Azib (a Companion) narrated that: [...] “I had never seen the people of Medina so joyful as they were on the arrival of Allah’s Apostle, for even the slave girls were saying, ‘Allah’s Apostle has arrived!’” [...] Bukhari, volume 5, Book 58, Number 262. Muslim narrates that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: “I was sent only as (a) mercy. I was not sent as a punishment.” The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was greeted with the following invocation:

The Broken Chain

*Talaa al-badru alayna, min thaniyyat al-wada,
wajaba al-shukru alayna, ma daa ilillahi da*

The full moon has risen over us, from the mountains of al-Wada,
We shall ever give thanks for it, As long as there will be callers to
Allah.

*Anta shamsun anta badrun, anta nurun fawqa nur,
anta iksiru al-wujud, anat misbah al-sudur.*

You are a sun, you are a full moon.
You are light upon light, You are the quintessence of existence,
You are the lamp in every breast.

*Ashraqa al-badru alayna, fakhtafat minhu al-budur,
Mithla husnik ma raayna, qattu ya wajh al-surur*

The full moon has risen over us, eclipsing all other moons.
Such as your beauty we have never seen, No never, O face of delight!

*Ya habibi ya Muhammad, ya arus al-khafiqayn,
Ya muayyad ya mumajjad, ya Imam al qiblatayn*

O My beloved, O Muhammad, O bridegroom of the East and the
West.

The one Allah vindicated and exalted, O Imam of the two directions!

⁹ Al-Qur'an: 5:15.

¹⁰ There are some Muslims who absolutely refuse to believe that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was a "light" sent to illuminate the world, and hold that to believe it is not only spurious but has absolutely no place in Islam. Because of a stigma that is attached to those who affirm that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was a 'light', many Muslims actually are reluctant to even speak about this. This area often brings up intense heated words and argument, when indeed their need not be any. To those who actually deny any possibility or even reference that the Prophet of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was a light is an actual negation of the fact that Allah Himself refers to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, as "light" in His Glorious Book:

- “[...] Now there has come to you light from Allah, and a clar Book” (5:15)
- “O Prophet! We have sent you as a witness and a bringer of good news and a warner. And as a summoner to Allah by His permission, and as a lamp that gives light” (33:45-46)

This is concurred upon by Imam al-Tabari and Qadi al-Shawkani in their Tafsir’s, who agree that the light was the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace: Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti: “It is the Prophet, [may Allah bless him and grant him peace].” (Tafsir al-Jalalayn, 139); Ibn Jarir al-Tabari: “By Light He means Muhammad, [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] through whom Allah has illuminated the truth, manifested Islam, and obliterated polytheism - since he is a light for whoever seeks illumination from him, which makes plain the truth.” (Jami’ al-Bayan, 6.161); Fakhr al-Din Razi: “There are various positions about it, the first being that the Light is Muhammad [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] and the Book is the Qur’an.” (al-Tafsir al-Kabir, 11:194); al-Baghawi: “It means Muhammad [may Allah bless him and grant him peace], or, according to a weaker position, Islam” (Ma’alam al-Tanzil, 2.228); Qurtubi (Ahkam al-Qur’an, 6.118) and Mawardi (al-Nukat wa al-Uyun, 2.22) mention that interpreting Nur as “Muhammad” [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] was also the position by [the Imam of Arabic grammar Ibrahim ibn Muhammad] al-Zajjaj (d. 311/923). Al-Nasafi in his commentary entitled *Tafsir al-Madarik* (1:276) and al-Qasimi in his *Mahasin al-Tawil* (6:1921) similarly say: “*There has come to you a Light from Allah*: this is the light of Muhammad [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] because one is guided by him. Similarly he has been called a lamp (*siraj*). Imam Ahmad al-Sawi similarly said in his super commentary on *Tafsir al-Jalalayn* (1:258): “*There has come to you a Light from Allah*: that Light is the Prophet [may Allah bless him and grant him peace]. He was named a light because he enlightens the sight and guides it to the correct path; and also because he is the root of every light whether material or spiritual.” Allah said: “O Prophet! Truly We have sent you as a Witness, a Bearer of glad tidings, and a Warner, and as one who invites to Allah by His leave, and as a Lamp spreading Light.” (33:45-46) Ibn Kathir states in his *Tafsir*: “His saying: and a light-giving lamp, that is: your status shows in the truth you have brought just as the sun shows in its rising and illuminating, which none denies except the obdurate.”

Why do we today shrink from saying that the Messenger of Allah is a ‘light’ from Allah when this is the interpretation of the *earliest Qur’anic commentators*?

Ibn Taymiya (in his *Majmu ‘at al-fatawa* [11:94, 18:366]) argued that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, could not possibly be made of light on the grounds that human beings are created from earth into which the spirit is blown, while angels alone are created from light. To support his view, he cites the hadith from ‘A’isha, may Allah be pleased with her, in Sahih Muslim whereby the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said:

The Broken Chain

The angels were created from light, the *jinn* from smokeless fire, and Adam from what was described to you (i.e. in the Qur'an).

However, to deduce from the above that a human being can never be *characterised* as a light contradicts the understandings of the majority of scholars as well as the many reports from the Sahaba, may Allah be pleased with them all, who often compared the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, to a light or a harbinger of light, particularly a sun and a moon, chief among them his poet, Hassan ibn Thabit, may Allah be pleased with him:

tarahhala 'an qawmin faddalat `uqulahum

Wa halla `ala qawmin bi nurin mujaddadi

He left a people who preferred their minds over him

And he dawned on a people with a light made new.

mata yabdu fi al-daji al-bahimi jabinuhu

Yaluhu mithla misbahi al-duja al-mutawaqqidi

Whenever his forehead emerged in pitch-black darkness

It would shine like the blazing luminary of dark night.

Bayhaqi narrated the two verses in *Dala'il al-Nubuwwa* (1:280, 302). The latter verse is also narrated Ibn 'Abd al-Barr in *al-Isti'ab* (1:341) and al-Zarqani in *Sharh al-Mawahib* (1:91). Hassan, may Allah be pleased with him, also said:

Nor has Allah created among his creatures

One more faithful to his sojourner or his promise

Than he who was the source of our light.

Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, may Allah be pleased with him, described the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, thus:

aminun mustafa li al-khayri yad'u ka daw'i al-badri zayalahu al-zalamu

A trustworthy one, chosen, calling to goodness, resembling the light of the full moon set off from darkness.

While 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, would recite the following:

law kunta min shay'in siwa basharin

Kunta al-mudi'a li laylat al-badri

If you were anything other than a human being.

You would be the light in the night of a full moon.

Bayhaqi narrated the above in *Dala'il al-Nubuwwa* (1:301-302).

Al-Zuhri narrated:

'Abd Allah ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib was the most handsome man that had ever been seen among the Quraysh. One day he went out and was seen by an assembly of the women of Quraysh. One of them said: 'O women of the Quraysh, which among you will marry this youth and catch thereby the light that is between his eyes? For verily there was a light between his eyes.' Thereafter Amina bint Wahb ibn 'Abd Manaf ibn Zuhra married him, and after he joined her she carried the Messenger of Allah.

Al-Bayhaqi narrated it in *Dala'il al-Nubuwwa* (1:87). Al-Tabari in his *Tarikh* (2:243), Ibn al-Jawzi in *al-Wafa'* (p. 82-83, chapter 16 of *Abwab bidayati nabiyina*).

There are numerous other instances where the Prophet of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was described as, and referred to, a "light" which can be found scattered throughout these notes. It should be realised that it were the Mu'tazilis who insisted that the Light in verse 5:15 referred only to the Qur'an and not to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. For those wishing to pursue this topic in greater detail, readers are advised to refer to some on-line sources at:

http://www.abc.se/~m9783/nurn_e.html

<http://ds.dial.pipex.com/masud/ISLAM/nuh/masudq7.htm> and

<http://ds.dial.pipex.com/masud/ISLAM/misc/nuremuhammadi.htm>

¹¹ The issue of *when* the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had existed, has been one that the 'ulama have had much to discuss about, and of which (specifically) the *following hadiths* have produced *varying opinions*. 'Irbad ibn Sarya relates that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said:

Verily I was written in Allah's Presence as the Seal of Prophets while verily Adam was still kneaded in his clay.

[Narrated by Ibn Hibban in his *Sahih*, and al-Hakim in his *Mustadrak*]

The Broken Chain

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, also said: "I was a Prophet while Adam was still between the spirit and the body." Al-Tirmidhi narrated it and said it *hassan sahih*, and it is authenticated by al-Hakim 2:609 as *sahih*, and also narrated by Ibn Abi Shayba in his *Musannaf* 14:292, and al-Bukhari in his *Tarikh* 7:374.

Imam Taj al-Din Subki said:

It has been said that Allah created the spirits before the bodies, and the Prophet's reference to his prophecy in the hadith, "I was a Prophet while Adam was still between the spirit and the body" may be a reference to his blessed spirit and to the Reality of Realities (*haqiqat al-haqa'iq*). Our minds fall short of knowing such a Reality, but its Creator knows it, and also those to whom He extends a *madad* of light from Him [*man amaddahu bi nurin ilahi*]. Allah brings to existence whichever of these realities that He likes in the time that He pleases. As for the reality of the Prophet, (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) it is most likely that it was before the creation of Adam, and Allah gave it its prophetic attribute upon its creation; therefore already at that time, he was the Prophet.

[Quoted by al-Suyuti in *Hawi li al-Fatawi*, and by Qastallani at the beginning of his *Mawahib al-laduniyya* 1:31-32.].

Al-Hakim narrated on the authority of 'Umar ibn al Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him, that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said:

When Adam, upon whom be peace, committed the sin he said, "O Lord! I ask You in the name of Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) to forgive me." Allah Almighty said, "How (do) you know him and I did not create him yet?" Adam said, "O Lord! When you created me with Your hands and breathed into me from Your spirit, I looked up and I saw on the Pillars of the Throne had been written There is No God save Allah, Muhammad (is) the Messenger of Allah, therefore I knew you put your name with the name of the Most beloved one of your creatures to you." Allah said, "O Adam, you said the truth. He (Muhammad) is the most beloved one of the creatures to Me, you asked Me by his name, so I forgive you, because had it not been for Muhammad, I would not (have) created you.

[Imam Abi al-Fidaa Isma'il bin Kathir, *Qisaas al-Anbiyaa* (Adam Publishers & Distributors (Delhi) Revised Edn, 1999) p 21].

The scholars *differed* regarding the soundness of this report:

Ibn Abd al-Hadi al-Hanbali in his *Sarim Almunki* and Ibn Taymiya in his *fatawa* (and his *Qaida al-Jaliyya*) concluded that there was no evidence to support the authenticity of the above hadith, whereas Imam al-Dhahabi in his *Talkhis al-Mustadrak*, graded it to be da'if, (*weak*) due to the weakness of one of the narrators, 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Zayd. However, Imam al-Hakim al-Naysaburi in his *Mustadrak* and *Kitab al-Tarikh*, declared the hadith of the Intercession of Adam upon whom be peace, to be Sahih, while many other scholars have not only used it for proof, but explicitly declared it to be *Sahih* as well, such as, al-Bulqini, Qadi 'Iyad, al-Suyuti, al-Tabarani, al-Haythami, al-Subki (hassan), Ibn Hajar al-Makki and others. Since Ibn Kathir used the hadith as a part of the make up of his Sirat, it would be erroneous to label those who accept this hadith as committing, kufr, shirk or bid'a, since this was also Ibn Kathir's view who uses this narration as proof. One note about Ibn Taymiya's view on this hadith - after acknowledging its weakness, he however states that it is, '*Salih li istishhad*,' which is a terminology used in 'ulum al-Hadith meaning that the hadith is supported by other evidences [see *Majmu' at al-Fatawa* Ibn Taymiya vol. 2, page 150]. Also, different muhaddithin had *different conditions* for the acceptance of hadith. So one hadith might be sahih according to the conditions of one Imam, while it might not be so for another Imam.

In the chapter concerning the Prophet's superiority over all other Prophets, in his *al-Wafa bi Ahwal al-Mustafa*, Ibn al-Jawzi states:

Part of the demonstration of his superiority to other Prophets is the fact that Adam [upon whom be peace] asked his Lord through the sanctity (*hurma*) of Muhammad [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] that He relent towards him. The most authentic chain for this report is not that of al-Hakim's narration from 'Umar through 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Zayd ibn Aslam who is weak, but that of the Companion Maysarat al-Fajr who narrates it as follows:

I asked: "O Messenger of Allah, when were you [first] a Prophet?" He replied: "When Allah created the earth [Then turned He to the heaven, and fashioned it as seven heavens] (2:29), and created the Throne, He wrote on the leg of the Throne: "Muhammad the Messenger of Allah is the Seal of Prophets" (*Muhammadun Rasulullahi Khâtamu al-Anbiya*). Then Allah created the Garden in which He made Adam and Hawwa' dwell, and He wrote my name on the gates, its tree-leaves, its domes and tents, at a time when Adam was still between the spirit and the body. When Allah Most High instilled life into him he looked at the Throne and saw my name, whereupon Allah informed him that 'He [Muhammad] is the master of all your descendants.' When Iblis deceived

them both, they repented and sought intercession to Allah with my name.

¹² Hafiz Ibn Kathir wrote that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "I am the prayer of Ibrahim, [upon whom be peace] the prophecy of 'Isa [upon whom be peace]. When my mother was pregnant, she witnessed so much light from her body, that she could see the palaces of Syria" [Tarikh Ibn Kathir, vol. II. Sirat al-Nabawiyya]. The Messenger of Allah's uncle, al-'Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him, composed a poem praising the birth of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, in which are found the following words, "When you were born, the earth was shining, and the firmament barely contained your light, and we can pierce through, thanks to that radiance and light, and path of guidance." The text is found in al-Suyuti's *Husn al-Maqasid*, p 5; Ibn Kathir's *Mawlid*, p 30, as well as in Ibn Hajar's *Fath al-Bari*. Ibn Kathir, in his *Mawlid*, p 19, writes, "The Night of the Prophet's [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] birth is a magnificent, noble, blessed and a holy night, a night of bliss for the Believers, pure, radiant with lights and of immeasurable price."

In another narration of the above poem, we read that al-'Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him, said to him:

O Messenger of Allah [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] I wish to praise you. The Messenger of Allah [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] replied: "Go ahead - may Allah adorn your mouth with silver!" He said a poem that ended with these lines: "And then, when you were born, a light rose over the earth until it illuminated the horizon with its radiance. We are in that illumination and that original light and those paths of guidance - and thanks to them pierce through."

Ibn Sayyid al-Nas narrated it with his isnad through al-Tabarani and al-Bazzar in *Minah al-Madh* (p.192-193), also Ibn Kathir in *al-Sira al-Nabawiyya* (ed. Mustafa 'Abd al-Wahid 4:51), and 'Ali al-Qari in his *Sharh al-Shifa'* (1:364) says it is narrated by Abu Bakr al-Shafi'i and al-Tabarani, and cited by Ibn 'Abd al-Barr in *al-Isti'ab* and Ibn al-Qayyim in *Zad al-ma'ad*.

'Irbad ibn Sariya and Abu Imama said that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said:

I am the supplication of my father Ibrahim, and the good tidings of my brother 'Isa. The night I was delivered my mother saw a light that lit the castles of Damascus so that she could see them.

It is narrated by al-Hakim in his *Mustadrak* (2:616-617), Ahmad in his *Musnad* (4:184), and Bayhaqi in *Dala'il al-Nubuwwa* (1:110, 2:8). Ibn al-Jawzi cites it in *al-Wafa'* (p. 91, ch. 21 of *Bidayat Nabiyyina*), and Ibn Kathir in his *Mawlid* and his *Tafsir* (4:360). Haythami cites it in *Majma' al-Zawa'id* (8:221) and said al-Tabarani and Ahmad narrated it, and Ahmad's chain is fair (hassan).

Shah AbdulRahim (d. 1131/1719), father of Shah Wali Allah Muhaddith Dehlawi (d. 1176/1762), would hold mawlid gatherings annually. On such occasions, he would prepare and distribute meals to the poor [Al-Dur al-Thamin, p 8]. This was also the practice of Shah Wali Allah and his son, Shah 'Abd al-Aziz Muhaddith Dehlawi (d. 1239/1834). On every 12th of Rabi al-Awwal they used to invite the masses to their mawlid gatherings, in which they would speak about the auspicious events related to the Prophet's (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) birth. At the end of the celebration, they would distribute food and sweetmeats [Al-Dur al-Munazzam, p 89].

Once, Shah Wali Allah attended a mawlid gathering in Makkah, in which he said that he saw manifestations of light cascading down [Fuyuz al-Haramayn, pp 80-81]. Haji Imdad Allah Muhajir Makki (d. 1317/1899), *the shaykh* of Rashid Ahmed Gangohi (d. 1323/1905), would hold mawlid gatherings each year as a means of obtaining salvation; during those gatherings, while in a standing position he would recite prayers of blessing and peace for the Messenger of Allah [Faysla-i-Haft Mas'ala (with annotation) p 111]. On the 12th of Rabi al-Awwal of each year, the grand Mufti, Shah Mazhar Allah Dehlawi, would hold Mawlid gatherings in great splendour, continuing all night from 'Isha prayer until the Fajr prayer at dawn. Salawat and Salam would be recited while standing after which food and sweetmeats would be distributed [Tadhkara-i-Mazhar-i-Mas'ud, pp. 176-177]. The importance of invoking blessings and peace for the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is stated in Holy Qur'an, which is understood as asserting that angels are at all times reciting praise and blessings on the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace [Qur'an, al-Saffat, 37:1]. In Madina at the blessed funeral bed of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, the angels, men and women, and even children offered Salawat and Salam in groups, for hours in a standing position [Madarij al-Nabuwwa, volume 2, p 440, and examine Fatawa Ridawiyya volume 4, p 54 Ref: Bayhaqi and al Hakim].

Imam Taqi al-Din al-Subki was in a gathering of learned scholars in which the poetry of Imam Sarsari (d. 656/1258) was being recited. Upon hearing a verse in which the poet fervently urged the audience to stand at the time of the Prophet's auspicious remembrance, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, all of the scholars stood in reverence [Tabaqat al-Kubra, Egypt, volume I p 208]. Allah the Most High states, "Speak of the bounty of thy Lord!" [Qur'an, al-Duha 93:11], and Imam Bukhari states that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, *is* the greatest bounty of Allah [Bukhari, volume 2, p 566], hence he should become the object of most publicity. The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, himself spoke

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about his blessed birth from the pulpit [al-Tirmidhi, volume 2, p 201]. On his instruction some of the noble companions also described and publicised the Messenger of Allah's, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, most excellent qualities [Zurqani, volume 1, p 227].

In the year 9AH/630, on the occasion of returning from the battle of Tabuk, al-Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him, recited a poem on the birth of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, in his presence [Ibn Kathir, Milad-i-Mustafa (Urdu translation) pp 29-30, al-Suyuti, Husn al-Maqasid p 5]. On another occasion, the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, himself put the platform (mimbar) on which Hassan bin Thabit, may Allah be pleased with him, stood and sang an ode in his praise [Bukhari volume I, p 65, al-Musnad (Beirut, 1983) volume 6, p 72, al-Dhababi, Siyar al-Alam, al-Nubala (Beirut, 1992) volume 2, pp 513-541] Bukhari, chapter 68, volume I, p 264], for the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace blessed him with a special prayer.

¹³ Ibn al-Jawzi al-Hanbali, narrates that the light of the Messenger of Allah would overcome the light of both the sun and lamp [Al-Wafa, Chapter al-Wilada, Ibn al-Jawzi]. Abu 'Ubayda ibn Muhammad ibn 'Ammar ibn Yasir said: "I said to say to al-Rubayyi' bint Mu 'awwadh: 'Describe for me Allah's Messenger.' She replied: 'If you saw him you would say: The sun is rising.'" Bayhaqi narrates it with his isnad in Dala'il al-Nubuwwa (1:200), and Haythami in Majma' al-Zawa'id (8:280) says that al-Tabarani narrates it in al-Mu'jam al-kabir and al-Awsat and that its narrators have been declared trustworthy.

¹⁴ Ibn Kathir narrates that Hassan Ibn Thabit, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "The Messenger of Allah [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] is the star from which even the moon of the fourteenth night obtains its light" [Tarikh Ibn Kathir, vol. III].

¹⁵ "He will bring you out of the darkness into the light" [5:16]. Ibn Kathir also mentions that Ka'ab Ibn Malik, may Allah be pleased with him, recited a poem in the presence of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace of which consisted the lines [...] "We have come to you, and you have transformed our darkness into light, and have removed the barriers of ignorance" [Tarikh, and Sirat al-Nabiwiyya, Ibn Kathir, under the heading of "Miracles"]. 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, would recite the following; "If you were anything other than a human being You would be the light in the night of a full moon." Bayhaqi narrated the above in Dala'il al-Nubuwwa (1:301-302) and relates that 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, added after saying the above: "The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was like this, and no one other than he was like this."

¹⁶ Contemplate over the preceding sayings of the Sahaba and scholars.

¹⁷ As in 33:46, Allah calls the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, *sirajun munir*, “a shining Lamp,” an expression which Hassan Ibn Thabit, may Allah be pleased with him, used to describe the Messenger of Allah as the “light” in [5:15]. Furthermore, in the description of the battle of Badr, he narrated that the Messenger of Allah’s face shone like the full moon of Badr, and in his mournful eulogy for the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, he also mentions also the radiant light that shone at the Prophets birth; “And he who is guided to the blessed light, is well guided” [Hassan Ibn Thabit, Diwan. Edited by Walid N. Arafat. GMS, n.s. 21. 2 Vols. London: Luzac, 1971. See Diwan, no. 34, line 8; no. 9. Line 21; also see no. 131, line 9]. In the last section of his Sira, Ibn Ishaq quotes the poem of Hassan Ibn Thabit, may Allah be pleased with him, which he recited after the loss of the Messenger of Allah:

Tell the poor that plenty has left them
With the Prophet who departed from
them this morning.

He was the light and the brilliance that we followed.

He was the sight and hearing second only to God [...]

He was the source of our light, blessed in his deeds, just, and upright.

O best of men! It was as it were a river without which I have become lonely in
my thirst.

[*The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ibn Ishaq’s “Sirat Rasul Allah,”* Trans. A. Guillaume (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955) pp. 690 –91]. Ka ‘b ibn Malik said:

I greeted the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) and there was lightning in his face. Whenever the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) was happy, his face would be illuminated as if it were a piece of the moon.

Bukhari and Muslim narrated it, as well as Ahmad in his Musnad. Bayhaqi in *Dala’il al-Nubuwwa* (1:301) also relates these descriptions of the Prophet by the Companions and others.

¹⁸ Whoever obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah [4:80]. Say: If you love Allah, then

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follow me and Allah will love you [3:31].

¹⁹ The seemingly sensitive issue of whether or not Muslims can say the words ‘Ya RasulAllah’ needs to be clarified, since this issue divides the Muslim community and causes a great deal of friction among the Muslim communities throughout the world. There are basically two “schools of thought,” over this issue - one contends that stating ‘Ya RasulAllah’ is shirk and that any Muslim proclaiming it in fact goes outside the boundaries of Islam. Contrary to this position, the other School believes that it is indeed permissible to say so, however, they do not insist that one *must* proclaim this - rather, it is *permissible* to do so. Unfortunately, the two polar positions have produced two extremities: while one body of Muslims will call shirk to those who profess it, the other body of Muslims will declare those who do not proclaim Ya Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) anything but orthodox. In reality, an absence of the proclamation does not weaken ones Din, while to make the proclamation does not nullify your Din. To blanket condemn everyone who makes this call as being *mushriks* or people of innovation - reflects ignorance of the accuser. Perhaps these *few* references will shed some light upon the issue:

Some time after the Messenger of Allah had died, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, ‘Abd Allah Ibn ‘Umar’s, may Allah be pleased with him, leg became numb. A man said to him, “Remember the person whom you love the most.” Ibn ‘Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, replied, “Ya Muhammad” [Imam Bukhari’s *Adab al-Mufrad*- Book of Muslim Morals and Manners, translated by Yusuf Talal Delorenzo, al-Saadawi Publications, Alexandria, Virginia, 1997, hadith Number 967].

Ibn Taymiya wrote that:

in the same way as ‘Abd Allah ibn Umar’s [may Allah be pleased with him] foot became numb and he remembered the one he loves most, ‘Abd Allah Ibn Abbas’s [may Allah be pleased with him] foot also became numb. Someone also said to him to remember the one who he loves the most. ‘Abd Allah Ibn Abbas said *Ya Muhammad!* and his foot immediately recovered from numbness

[*Al-Kalim al-Tayyib* chapter on Khadirat Rijluhu, Ibn Taymiya].

Imam Nawawi mentions in his *Adhkar* both the narrations whereby Ibn ‘Umar and Ibn ‘Abbas, may Allah be pleased with them, would cry out Ya Muhammad whenever they had a cramp in their leg. The text can be found (amongst other editions) in: 1970 Riyadh edition, p 271; 1988 Ta’if edition, p 383; Makkah edition, p 370; ‘Abd al-Baqi Beirut edition, p 286.

Narrated Abu Hurayra:

I heard the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) say: "By the one in whose hand is Abu al Qasim's soul, 'Isa bin Maryam shall descend as a just and wise ruler. He shall destroy the cross, slay the swine, eradicate discord and grudges, and money shall be offered to him but he will not accept it. Then he shall stand by my graveside and say: Ya Muhammad! and I will answer him.

[Abu Ya'la relates this with a sound chain in his Musnad (Dar al Ma'mun edition 1407/1987) 11:462; Ibn Hajar cites it in al-Matalib al-'Aliya (Kuwait, 1393/1973) 4:23, under the chapter 'The Prophet's life in his grave' and No.4574; Haythami comments in his Majma' al-Zawa'id (8:5), under the chapter entitled: 'Isa bin Maryam's Descent' that: Its sub-narrators are the men of sound (sahih) hadith']

Al-Haytham ibn Hanash [al-Nakha'i] said:

We were in 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar's house when he felt a cramp in his leg, whereupon one man said to him: 'Remember (or mention) the dearest of people to you," so he said: 'Ya Muhammad!' and he seemed relieved of his cramp.

[Narrated by al-Nawawi in *al-Adhkar* (op. cit.,) Ibn al-Qayyim – without the interjection *Ya* – in *al-Wabil al-Sayyib* (1952 ed. p 195) and al-Shawkani's *Tuhfa al-Dhakirin* (Cairo ed. pp. 291-292, 1970 Beirut ed. pp. 206-207). This report is narrated by Ibn al-Sunni from Muhammad ibn Khalid al-Bardha'i who said: Hajib ibn Sulayman [al-Manbij] narrated to us: Muhammad ibn Mus'ab narrated to us: Isra'il narrated to us: From Abu Ishaq: From al-Haytham ibn Hanash, as cited by al-Shawkani in the *Tuhfa* (see below)]

A blind man went to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and said:

Invoke Allah for me that he might help me. The Messenger of Allah [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] replied: "If you wish, I will delay this, and it would be better for you, and if you wish, I will invoke Allah for you." The blind man replied: "Then invoke Him." The Messenger of Allah [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] said to him: "Go and make wudhu', offer two rakats of prayer, then say 'O Allah, I am asking you and turning to you with your Prophet Muhammad [may Allah bless him and grant him peace], the Prophet of mercy: O Muhammad [Ya Muhammad], I am turning with you to my Lord with your intercession concerning the return of my sight [another version has: so that He

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will fulfil my need. O Allah, allow him to intercede (with You) for me].

This is related by Ahmad (4:138 Number 17246-17247), Tirmidhi; Ibn Majah; Nasai; al-Hakim; Tabarani (in his al-Kabir) and has received the mark of vigorously authenticated by *at least* fifteen hadith masters, including *Ibn Hajar al Asqalani, al-Dhahabi, al-Shawkani* and even *Ibn Taymiya*.

Despite the Messenger of Allah's absence, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, he still ordered the man to say 'O Muhammad,' since the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace did not say: "Go and make wudhu' and come back to me," or 'in front of me.' For those who will then next say that this was only allowed at the time that the Messenger of Allah was amongst the Sahaba, they need to also realise that the very invocation which the Messenger of Allah gave the blind man, was used after the Prophet's lifetime, as authenticated as Sahih amongst others: al Bayhaqi, Abu Nu'aym, al-Mundhiri and al-Tabarani in al-Kabir. They relate on the authority of 'Uthman ibn Hunayf's nephew, Abu Imama ibn Sahl ibn Hunayf that:

A man would come to 'Uthman ibn Affan [may Allah be pleased with him] for a certain need, but the latter would not pay him any attention nor look at his need, upon which he complained to 'Uthman ibn Hunayf who told him to 'go and make wudhu,' then go to the mosque and pray two rakats, then say this supplication ..' and he mentioned the invocation of the blind man, 'then go (to 'Uthman again).'" The man went, did as he was told, then went to 'Uthman ibn Affan's door, to which the door attendant came, took him by the hand and brought him to 'Uthman ibn Affan who sat with him on top of the carpet and said: "Tell me what your need is." After this, the man went out and met 'Uthman ibn Hunayf and said to him: 'may Allah reward you! Previously he ('Uthman ibn Affan) would not look into my need nor pay attention to me, until you spoke to him.' Uthman ibn Hunayf replied, 'I did not speak with him, but I saw the Prophet [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] when a blind man came to him complaining of his failing eye-sight.'

Hafiz Ibn Kathir, Imam al-Tabari and Ibn Athir wrote that:

During the caliphate of Abu Bakr [may Allah be pleased with him] there was a battle against the false prophet Musaylima. When the battle commenced, the Muslims lost their footing, at which Khalid bin Walid [may Allah be pleased with him] and the rest of the Companions called out, "*Ya Muhammad!*" and proceeded to win the battle.

[Tarikh al-Tabari, Tarikh Ibn Kathir and Tarikh Qamil by Imam Tabari and Hafiz

Ibn Kathir, under chapter Musaylima kadab]

Qadi Shawkani wrote:

If one is in trouble or experiencing some difficulty, they should perform two units of nawafil and then supplicate (to Allah) the du'a [...] '*Ya Muhammad!*' [...] and Allah will grant them what they want in that their problems or troubles should go away. The scholars of hadith say that this hadith is authentic and it is recorded by Tirmidhi, Hakim, Nas'ai, Ibn Majah and Tabarani.

[Tuhfa al-Dhakhirin chapter on Salat al-Hajah, Qadi Shawkani]

Ibn Sa'd wrote:

After Rasul Allah [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] had passed away, Arwa bint Abdul Muttalib [may Allah be pleased with her] recited the following: "*Ya Rasul Allah!* You were our (place of) hope.

[Tabqat Ibn Sa'ad Chapter: Wafat al-Nabi, Ibn Sa'ad].

Seyyid Mawdudi wrote that:

When Hajaj bin Yusuf levied a new tax on the new Muslims, they left Basra crying with their fuqaha all saying, *Ya Muhammad! Ya Muhammad!*

[Khilafat wa Malukiyat, Sayyid Mawdudi, p 270 and also recorded in the Tarikh by Ibn Athir]

Some often fail to realise that we are all required to recite the tashahhud during salat – without it the prayer becomes invalid. The part that is of interest is where we recite: *as-salamu 'alayka ayyuha al nabi – wa rahmatullah wa barakatuh*. The point here is that the saying of *ayyuha al nabi* is actually the same as saying *ya nabi*.

It is significant to note that neither Imam Bukhari, Imam Nawawi nor Qadi Shawkani for that matter ever raised such a notion as to say that calling out *Ya Muhammad!* amounted to shirk. This practice is often condemned by observers who look to people that often misunderstand the context within which the calling occurs. Imam al-Suyuti mentions that if a practice is sound and has basis in the Shari'ah and is being polluted by the mistakes of the people – do you condemn the activity, rather than correcting the people?

20 "*Allah and His angels are praying on the Prophet, Oh believers, pray on him*" [33:56].

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Anas Ibn Malik, may Allah be pleased with him, said that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "Gabriel called me and said, 'whoever prays one prayer on you, Allah prays on him ten times and raises him up by ten degrees'" [Ibn Abi Shayba]. 'Amir Ibn Rabi'a said that he heard the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, say, "The angels will continue to bless anyone who blesses me, as long as he continues to do so, so do a lot, or even a little" [Ibn Majah and al-Tabarani]. Abu Hurayra, may Allah be pleased with him, said that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "Whenever anyone greets me with peace, Allah will return my soul to me, so that I can return the greeting" [Abu Dawud and al-Bayhaqi]. Ibn Mas'ud, may Allah be pleased with him, said from the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, "The nearest people to me on the Day of Rising, will be those who have said the most prayers on me" [Al-Tirmidhi]. The Messenger of Allah said, "Dust be upon the face of the man who does not bless me when I am mentioned in his presence" [Muslim, from Abu Hurayra]. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "Whoever blesses me in a book or a letter, the angels continue to ask forgiveness for him, as long as my name is on it" [Al-Tabarani].

21 The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, called himself the Seyyed of *all* human beings. In addition he called his grandson al-Hassan a Seyyed in absolute terms. (*Inna waladi hadha sayyiduna*). He also ordered the Ansar, when he saw Sa'd ibn Mu'adh coming, as related by Bukhari in his Sahih: *Qumu li sayyidikum* or "Stand up for your master." The implications of that term on the basis of these narrations are that it entails *leadership, rank, and respect*. The word 'master' is used both in the lofty senses mentioned above, as well as in the possibly lowly senses of 'sahib' [owner], as in 'sahib al-bayt,' 'sahib al-kalb,' the owner of the house, of the dog etc. There are further language usages that taint the word 'master,' such as the Western/European concept of the word in the context of slavery, where the words 'slave' and 'master' infer abuse and injustice but which are *absent from 'abd, mamluk, and sahib, not to say Seyyed*. That is partly why the Christians have "lord" instead of 'master' in a similar context, but they also use it for "THE Lord," and so when it comes to Prophets the doctrinal aberration of ascribing divine lordship becomes too glaring, and so Muslims prefer to use 'master.'

22 Those who often argue that standing out of respect for anyone is an act that is prohibited by Islam, (or at the very best, *makruh*) will often quote the following two hadiths in their favour:

1. 'Abd Allah bin 'Abd al-Rahman related that Anas said: "No one was dearer to them (the companions) than Allah's Messenger (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) yet when they saw him they did not stand up because they

knew of his dislike of that.” [Related by al-Tirmidhi].

2. Mahmud bin Ghaylan related that Mu’awiyya came out (from a place) so ‘Abd Allah bin al-Zubayr and Ibn Safwan stood up when they saw him. Mu’awiyya said: sit down for I heard the Prophet say: Let he who is pleased by people standing before him, await his place in Hell. [Narrated by Abu Dawud and al-Tirmidhi]

Al-Tirmidhi cites the first hadith in Kitab al-Adab and asserts that this hadith is *hassan sahib gharib min hadha al wajh*. This makes us note that this hadith does not relate to ‘aqa’id or ‘ibadat, but to adab. *Imam Nawawi* comments upon this hadith and points out that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, stood up in respect for some of the Companions and they stood up out of respect for each other in the Prophet’s presence and he did not forbid nor criticised them for it [See Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, *Fath al-Bari fi sharh al-Bukhari* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1993), vol. 12, p 322]. Interestingly, various books and commentaries upon hadiths address the issue of standing up in respect to someone. However, books of fiqh rarely discussed the issue, which is an indication that standing up in respect was not perceived to be a subject of legal inquiry.

As for the hadith narrated in Abu Dawud and al-Tirmidhi through Abu Mijlaz from Mu’awiyya, this again appears in the section of adab. With this hadith, there is a discrepancy that occurs in the various transmissions. Abu Dawud reports that when Mu’awiyya appeared, Ibn ‘Amir stood up and al Zubayr remained sitting. According to Tirmidhi’s version, both Ibn Zubayr and Ibn Safwan stood up, with no mention of Ibn ‘Amir at all. So there is a disagreement as to who exactly stood up and who remained sitting. Also, most of the transmitted versions go back to Abu Mijlaz, of whom not much is known about him as a transmitter. In a different version of this narration, Ibn Baridah reports that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: ‘Whoever likes men to stand before him let him await his place in Hell.’ This version is not accepted by any of the six books of hadiths.

Regarding this hadith, both *Imam al-Tabarani* and *Imam Nawawi* explain that the hadith does not actually prohibit standing up or not standing up. Rather, it says that whoever *is pleased with people standing up for him* is doomed. In other words, the prohibition applies to the person being stood up for, not the person or persons that are standing. The hadith they conclude, calls for the humility of leaders, but says nothing of the followers [*Fath al-Bari*, op cit., vol. 12, pp 318-322].

If one really wanted to investigate further into this area, one will find that there are in actual fact other hadiths that can be cited as prohibitions of standing:

Abu Dawud narrated that Abu ‘Umamah reported that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, came out to the believers leaning on

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a cane. Upon seeing him the believers stood up, so the Prophet said: “Do not stand up as the *ajim* stand up for each other.” However, Imam al-Tabarani argued that this hadith is weak due to problems in its chain of transmission.

Another hadith is related by Jabir, who relates that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, felt ill during prayer so he sat down, but the believers continued to stand. The Prophet of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, saw this and signaled for them to sit down. After the prayer had been completed, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: “You were about to do as the Persians and Byzantines do. They stand while their kings sit down. Do not do that!” In another hadith, Anas related that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: “Those before you have been ruined by the fact that they have glorified their kings by standing up as their kings sit down.”

It is clear from reading the above hadiths that there is a central theme connecting them all – namely the prohibition of standing. There is some appeal to this argument as it can be identified that from the collective memories of the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all, that they recalled that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, took some issue with them standing up before him. However, in this case, this approach is not reasonable. *The problem lies with conflicting evidences which support the contrary.* For example:

Usama ibn Sharik narrates:

I went to see the Messenger of Allah [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] while his Companions were with him, and they seemed as still as if birds had alighted on top of their heads. I gave him my Salam and I sat down. (Then the Bedouins came in and asked questions which the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) answered...) The Prophet then stood up and the people stood up. They began to kiss his hands whereupon I took his hand and placed it on my face. I found it more fragrant and cooler than sweet water.

This was narrated by Abu Dawud in his Sunan, al-Hakim in his Mustadrak, Tirmidhi in his Sunan, Ibn Majah in his Sunan and Ahmad in his Musnad.

Tirmidhi narrates that Abu Kurayyab reported that two Jews kissed the Prophet's hands and feet. Notably, Abu Dawud, al-Bukhari, Muslim and al-Bayhaqi narrate through a variety of transmissions, that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah be pleased with him, told the Companions to stand up for Sa'd. According to these reports, after Sa'd's judgment was accepted by Banu Quraydha (a Jewish tribe), Sa'd returned to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and the Companions upon seeing him, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, told the

companions to 'stand up for your master' (*Qumu li sayyidikum*) [Shaykh Albani insists that the reason why the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, told the companions to stand up, was so that they could assist Sa'd off his horse saddle. He uses a narration that is not found in neither the *Adab al-Mufrad* nor *Fath al-Bari*]. It is also narrated by Abu Dawud that Abu Hurayra reported that when the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, would stand up to leave, the companions would also stand up and remain standing until he left the Mosque. Furthermore, in *Fath al-Bari*, there is a discussion as to whether the Prophet's standing up to greet Fathima or 'Ikrimah bin Abi Jahal or the Prophet's milk brother could also be related to the issue of standing [*Fath al-Bari*, op cit., vol. 12, p 321].

It is also reported by Tirmidhi and al-Nisa'i that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, would stand up when he would see a passing funeral. In one famous incident, the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, stood up for a Jewish woman's funeral. When informed that the deceased was Jewish, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace is reported to have commented: 'But isn't she a soul?' Nonetheless, the scholars have debated whether this rule on standing up for funerals has been abrogated. *Imam Malik*, *Imam Abu Hanifa* and *Imam Shafi* said that the standing has been abrogated, while *Imam Ahmad*, *Ishaq* and other Maliki fuqaha have said that it is a matter of personal choice. *Imam Nawawi* said that standing up for funerals is not preferred. Other Shafi'i scholars (such as Mutwali) said that standing is recommended [Refer to Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti, *Sharh al-Suyuti 'ala Sunan al-Nisa'i* (Beirut: Dar al Qalam, n p d) vol. 2, pp 43-44].

Returning to the issue of standing, the question then should be, how did the earlier Muslims reconcile the various reports? How did they understand them? The jurists have adopted various positions depending upon how they understood and interpreted the injunctions. *Al-Ayni*, the Hanafi scholar and author of *'Umdat al-Qari fi Sharh al-Bukhari*, said that no set rule was reached by the scholars on the issue of standing because the disagreement over the matter [Badr al-Din Ahmad al-'Ayni, *'Umdat al-Qari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, n p d) vol. 11, p251]. *Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani* agreed with this assessment. He concluded that no final rule was reached because of disagreement [*Fath al-Bari*, op cit., vol. 12, p 317]. However, al-'Izz Ibn 'Abd al-Salam and *Ibn Hajar* further add that if the failure to stand up will result in insult or create a *mafsada* (corruption) then it becomes forbidden *not* to stand up (i.e. that they should stand) [Ibid. p 323]. As mentioned earlier, *Imam Nawawi* held that the prohibition applies to people who demand and who *enjoys people standing in their presence*. As to the person who is doing the standing, *Imam Nawawi* relied on the principle that people should be given their rightful place (*bi 'umumiyati tanzili al-nasi manazilahim*). This means, according to *Imam Nawawi* that one should stand up before one's elders and the wise [Ibid p 323]. *Imam Nawawi* demonstrated at length that standing out of respect for scholars is permissible in *al-Tarkhis fi al-Ikram bi al-Qiyam*, or, 'The Permissibility of Honouring, by standing up, those whose who possess

excellence and distinction among the people of Islam: In the spirit of piousness, reverence and respect, not in the spirit of display and aggrandisement.’ *Imam al-Suyuti* mentions in his *Tabyid al-Sahifa*, that when Imam Abu Hanifa visited Sufyan after the death of the latter’s brother, Sufyan stood up, went to greet him, embraced him, and bade him sit in his place, saying to those who questioned this act: ‘This man holds a high rank in knowledge, and if I did not stand up for his science, I would stand up for his age, and if not for his age, then for his godwariness [*wara*’], and if not for his godwariness, then for his jurisprudence [*fiqh*].’ Al-Hakim narrates in *Ma’rifat ‘ulum al-hadith* [p 104] that when al Dhuhuli went to see Imam Ahmad, the latter stood up for him and the people were astounded. Then he told his son and his companions: ‘Go to Abu ‘Abd Allah [al-Dhuhili] and write his narrations.’ *Ibn Hajar*, *al ‘Ayni* and others held that it is recommended that one stand up for the leader, a just Imam, and elder or knowledgeable person. Al-Baghawi, in his *Sharh al-Sunna*, al-Bayhaqi and al-Ghazali said that standing up out of compassion or respect is permissible [Husayn bin Mas’ud al-Baghawi, *Sharh al-Sunna* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1994) vol. 7 p 213; *Fath al-Bari*, op cit., vol. 12, pp 320 and 323].

Imam Tabarani held that the standing depended upon the intention. If one stands up to promote arrogance and conceit, then standing is prohibited. If one is merely showing respect, then it is permitted. *Ibn Kathir* concluded that what was prohibited was the imitating of the Kuffar; but standing up to one who arrives from travel, or to a governor in his place of governorship is permitted [See Shaikh Muhammed bin Jameel Zaynoo, *The Methodology of the Saved Sect*, Translated by Aboo Naasir ‘Abid bin Basheer (Invitation To Islam: 1999), pp 181-185. The author adheres to the view of Ibn Kathir, but while dismissing any other possibility as ‘The Forbidden Standing’, he clearly negates any possibility of other than his view. He also alludes to the reason why the companions were told to stand for Sa’d, for the reason to ‘...help him down.’ As mentioned earlier, this version of the hadith does not appear in either the *Adab al-Mufrad* nor *Fath al-Bari* (See al Albani, *Silsilat al-Hadiths al-Da’ifa*, vol. 3 p 637; al Albani, *Silsilat al-Hadiths al-Sahiba* (Beirut: al Maktaba al-Islami, 1972) vol. 1, pp 103-106). *Ibn al-Qayyim* and *Ibn al-Hajj* disagreed and contested that standing up in all circumstances is reprehensible because one can never know whether the one you stand for is truly pious or knowledgeable or not. *Ibn Rushd* concluded that standing up is of four types:

1. It is prohibited for one to arrogantly and self-conceitedly want others to stand up in his presence
2. It is reprehensible to stand up to one who is not conceited or arrogant but of whom it is feared that he or she will become conceited or arrogant when people stand in his or her presence
3. It is permissible to stand up as a sign of respect before someone who you do not fear will become arrogant

4. It is recommended that one stand up to greet someone who arrives after travelling

[*Fath al-Bari*, op cit, vol. 12, p 320; Al Albani in his *Silsilat al-Hadiths al-Da'ifa*, vol. 3, pp 637-8, discusses the authenticity of some of the hadith on standing. Shaykh Albani vehemently attacks those who endorse standing for anyone, yet he strangely endorses Ibn Rushd's categorisation, but adds that only the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is immune to arrogance or conceit. Thus he implies, standing is not permissible].

- 23 Imam al-Ghazali wrote:

Love is the inclination of one's nature towards the wishes of the beloved. When it is very vehement, it is termed *Ishq*. There is a steady increase in this so much so, that the Ashiq becomes enslaved of the beloved for no price. They sacrifice their wealth and treasures and resources their beloved. Take the example of Zulayaka, for example, who sacrificed all her beauty and wealth in the love of Yusuf, upon whom be peace.

- 24 "Supplications are suspended between heaven and earth, and nothing from it ascends until you send salat on your prophet" [al-Tirmidhi].

- 25 Imam al-Busiri says in his Qasida al-Burda: 'Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is a human being, but not like humankind; he is a ruby, while people are as stones.'

- 26 In his Night journey, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, went pass the Lote tree – the furthest boundary, and drew close to Allah [He drew near and hung suspended and was two bows' lengths away or nearer (53:9)], and a point even where Gabriel could not pass, since he would have been annihilated. [Nor did] "The heart lie about what it saw," [53:10], and "The eye did not swerve nor sweep away," [53:16], refers to the immense favour that Allah, Most High, bestowed solely upon the Messenger of Allah – Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.

- 27 "*And [have We not] exalted thy fame?*" (94:4) Mujahid said: "Meaning, every time I [Allah] am mentioned, you [Muhammad] are mentioned." Ibn Kathir mentioned it in his Tafsir. Al-Shafi'i narrated the same explanation from Ibn Abi Najih and so did Ibn 'Ata' as cited by al-Nabahani in *al-Anwar al-Muhammadiyya min al-Mawahib al-Laduniyya* (p. 379). Al-Baydawi said in his *Tafsir*: "And what higher elevation than to

have his name accompany His Name in the two phrases of witnessing, and to have his obedience equal His obedience?”

²⁸ Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, means praised, and Ahmad means the greatest of those who give praise and the most sublime of those who are praised. Hassan Ibn Thabit, may Allah be pleased with him, said, “It is taken for him from His [Allah’s] own name in order to exalt him. The One with the Throne is praised [Mahmud] and he is Muhammad.” Two of Allah’s names are the Compassionate, the Merciful [Al-Rauf, Al-Rahim]. They are similar in meaning. He calls them in His Book when He says, “Compassionate, merciful to the believers.” [9:128].

29 The linguistic approach in support of ‘good’ innovation

The objection to there being a possibility of existence of a good bid’a stems from the misinterpretation of the term *Kullu* [“every”, or “all”] in the hadith to be all encompassing without exception, whereas in Arabic, it may mean “nearly all” or, “the vast majority.” This is how Imam al- Shafi’i understood it or else he would have never allowed for any innovation whatsoever to be even considered good, and he considered a *hujja* [proof] that is, reference without peer for questioning regarding the Arabic language. Imam al-Bayhaqi narrated in his *Manaqib al-Shafi’i* (2:42-46):

Al Hassan related from Mahmud al Misri and he was one gifted with Eloquence – that Mahmud said; I saw ash- Shafi’i when I was little, and I heard Ibn Hisham – and I never set eyes on one from whom I took wisdom Such as Ibn Hisham: I was al- Shafi’i’s sitting companion for a long time, and I never heard him use a word except that if that word were carefully considered, one would not find [in its context] a better word than it in the entire Arabic language.

Mahmud also said; I heard Ibn Hisham say al-Shafi’i ’s discourse, in relation to language, is a proof in itself.” It is also related from al Hassan ibn Muhammad al Za’ farani; A group of the people of pure Arabic [qawmum min ahl al ‘arabiyya] used to frequent al-Shafi’i’s gathering with us and sit in a corner. One day I asked their leader: “You are not interested in scholarship, why do you keep coming here with us?” They said, “We come to hear al-Shafi’i’s language.”

The word *Kull*, is taken here to mean the part by the whole, what is known as a *synecdoche* in the English language. This is illustrated by the use of *Kull* in verse 46:25 of the Qur’an in a selective or partial sense not a universal sense; “*Destroying all things by the commandment of its Lord. And morning found them so that naught could be seen save their dwellings.*”

Thus, the dwellings were in fact not all destroyed, although “all” things had been

destroyed. "All" here means specifically the lives of the unbelievers of 'Aad and their properties except their houses. The same applies with the hoopoe-bird's expression when Allah says that Balkis has been given in abundance from "everything" in Sura al Naml [27:23], whereas she was not given any power over Sulayman nor any share of his Kingdom. Similarly when Allah says, "Every soul [*kullu nafsin*] shall taste death," [3:185] it is understood though that not mentioned, Allah Himself is excluded from the meaning.

There are also other verses in the Qur'an where there are generalisations, such as mentioned in Surat al Najm [53:39], where Allah decrees that ".A man can have nothing, except what he strives for." Despite this, a Muslim can benefit from his Muslim brethren – such as the prayers of the Angels, the funeral prayer that is read over him, charity given by others in his name, and the prayers of others for him. Again, we are told in Surat al Anbiya [21:98] that, "Verily, you and what you worship apart from Allah are the fuel of hell." The generalisation here is "what you worship," because it is well known that 'Isa, his mother, and angels were all worshipped other than Allah Himself – but will not be the fuel of hell, and so is not meant by this verse. Also, where Allah mentions in Surat al 'Anam [6:44] regarding the heedlessness of past nations that were sent Messengers, "But when they forgot what they had been reminded of, We opened unto them the doors of everything," but the doors of Mercy were not opened for them [(Shaykh) Nuh Ha Mim Keller, *Bida and Sunnah in The Shari'ah*, Qalam International, August 1998, Issue II, vol. I, pp. 5-6].

Hadith evidences alluded to support the existence of 'good' innovation

Umar bin al Khattab said that his actions of calling the Muslims to congregational Tarawih prayers, in the mosque was an excellent innovation [Sahih al Bukhari, vol. III, 'Alam al Kutub, Beirut, pp. 97-98]. He did this in spite of the fact that during the time of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, the Tarawih prayers were performed in their respective houses, because he [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] was worried that if they were performed in congregation in the Mosque, then they might be given an obligatory status. During the time of Abu Bakr, the Tarawih prayers were also performed in their respective houses.

Abu Amana al-Bahili stated that, "Verily Allah obligates you to perform the Ramadhan fast and did not say [for you] to stay awake at night." The action of staying awake at night as a pious act towards Allah in the Mosque is a noble innovation on the basis that staying awake at night remembering Allah is a worthy act to perform.

Ibn 'Umar stated that Duha prayers in congregation at the Mosque is a noble innovation. "*The best innovation I did is this innovation*" [Ibn Hajar al Asqalani, Fath al-Bari, vol. III, Maktaba al Halabi, Egypt, p 795]. Ibn 'Umar when questioned by Mujahid on the Duha prayers in the congregation, stated that it was an innovation. He confirmed his innovation as a good innovation when questioned by 'Ali Shaiba [Sahih

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Muslim, vol. I (Maktaba al-Misriya: Egypt) p 229].

From the tradition of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, it is understood that innovation from the viewpoint of the Shari'ah can be divided into good and bad [hassana wa sayyi'a]. This is exemplified by the following four points;

The Prophet told Bilal that whoever lives according to his Prophetic practice [Sunnah] will be given a good reward commensurate with his performance. Whosoever innovates a deviation will not be accepted by Allah and His Prophet, and will be made responsible in proportion to the deviation brought about [Sunan al-Tirmidhi (al-Jami al-Sahih) vol. IV, Dar al-Fikr, Beirut 1983, pp.150-151]. It is understood that on one hand, innovation in accordance with the tradition of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is good, while on the other, innovation which is contrary to the tradition of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is bad and contemptible.

Jurair bin 'Abd Allah, reported the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: "Whosoever invents a good regulation then practices it, for him there is a good reward ...and whosoever invents a bad regulation and practices it, will be responsible for it ..." [Izat 'Ali 'Atiyya, al-Bid'a a Thiduha wa al-Islam Minha, p170].

This tradition of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, indicates that innovation exists and that there are two categories, i.e., that which brings about good and that which brings about evil.

The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "Whosoever creates his own actions or activities, these will be rejected" [Narrated by Muslim, by 'A'isha]. Ibn Abbas reported that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "Whosoever creates his own actions or activities based on ideas not found in the Qur'an and the Prophetic practice, then it is left to Allah (i.e., to His judgment)" [Al-Darimi, Sunan al-Darimi, vol. I (Dar al-Fikr: Beirut) p 53]. Here it is shown that whosoever invents anything that is contravention to the Qur'an and the Sunnah, is rejected. However, inventions for which there is no detailed basis in the Qur'an and the Sunnah but which are not contrary to them, are permissible.

Both Bukhari and Muslim in their Sahih relate from Abu Hurayra that at the dawn prayer, the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said to Bilal, "Bilal, tell me which of your acts in Islam you are most hopeful about, for I have heard the footfall of your sandals in paradise," and he replied, "I have done nothing I am more hopeful about than the fact that I do not perform ablution at any time of the night or day without praying with that ablution whatever has been destined for me to pray." Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani says in his Fath al Bari that the hadith demonstrates the permissibility to use personal reasoning [ijtihad] in choosing times for acts of worship, as Bilal reached this conclusion by himself unaided by the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. Similarly, is the example in Bukhari about Khubayb who asked to pray two rak'as before being executed by the Mushrikin in Makkah. He was the first to establish the Sunnah of two rak'as for those who are steadfast in going to their death.

Both Bukhari and Muslim relate that Rifa'a Ibn Rafi said, "When we were praying behind the Prophet [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] and he raised his head from bowing and said, "Allah hears those who praise Him," a man behind him said, "Our Lord, Yours is the praise, abundantly, wholesomely, and blessedly therein." When he rose to leave [after the prayer], the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, asked, "who said it?" and when the man replied that it was he, the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "I saw thirty odd angels each striving to be the one to write it." Ibn Hajar said in his *Fath al Bari*, that the hadith indicates the permissibility of initiating new expressions of dhikr in the prayer other than the ones related through hadith texts, as long as they do not contradict those conveyed by the hadith.

Bukhari relates from 'A'isha that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, dispatched a man at the head of a military expedition who recited the Qur'an for his companion at prayer, finishing each recital with *al Ikhlas* [112]. When they returned, they mentioned this to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, who told them, "Ask him why he does this," and when they asked him, the man replied, "Because it describes the All Merciful, and I love to recite it." The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said to them, "Tell him Allah loves him." There are no scholars who hold that to do the above is recommended, since the acts of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, are far superior, though his confirming the above *demonstrates his acceptance of various forms of obedience and acts of worship, and show that he did not hold them as reprehensible innovations.*

What can be easily seen from the preceding three hadiths, is that they all concern the prayer, of which the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "*Pray as you have seen me pray,*" despite which he [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] *accepted the above examples of personal reasoning, even though they were not acts initiated by himself.*

Bukhari relates from Abu Sa'eed al Khudri that a band of the Companions of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, departed on one of their journey's and approached an encampment of some desert Arabs and asked them to be their hosts, but who refused to have them as their guests. A scorpion stung the leader of the encampment and his followers tried everything to cure him, and when all had failed, one said, "If you would approach the group camped near you, one of them might have something." So they came to them and said, "O band of men, our leader has been stung and we have tried everything. Do any of you have something for it?" And one of them [amongst the Sahaba] replied, "Yes, by Allah. I recite healing words [*ruqya*] over people, but by Allah, we asked you to be our hosts and you refused, so I shall not recite anything unless you give us a fee." They then agreed upon a herd of sheep, so the man went and began spitting and reciting the *Fatiha* over the victim until he got up and walked as if he were a camel released from its hobble, nothing the matter with him. They then paid the agreed fee, which some of the Companions wanted to divide

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up, but the man who had done the reciting told them, “Do not do so until we reach the Prophet [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] and tell him what has happened, to see what he may order us to do.” They came to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and told him what had occurred, and he said, “How did you know it was the words that heal? You were right. Divide up the heard and give me a share.”

The hadith is explicit that the Companion had *no previous knowledge or example from the Prophet*, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, that the Fatiha can be recited to heal – but did so anyway by means of personal reasoning. However, since his reasoning did not go against the Shari’ah and not contravene anything that had been legislated, the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, *confirmed this act even though there was no precedent from himself*.

Bukhari relates from Abu Sa’eed al-Khudri that one man heard another reciting al Ikhlas over and over again, so when morning came he went to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and sarcastically mentioned it to him. The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, “By Him in whose hand is my soul, it equals one third of the Qur’an.” Despite this not being the practice of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, himself (restricting himself to this Sura), the Prophet did not find anything in it that was reprehensible and was in the general parameters of the Sunna.

Ahmad and Ibn Hibban relate from ‘Abd Allah Ibn Burayda that his father said, “I entered the mosque with the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) where a man was at prayer, supplicating, “O Allah, I ask you by the fact that I testify You are Allah, there is no god but You, the One, the Ultimate, who did not beget and was not begotten, and to whom there is no equal,” and the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said, “By Him in whose hand is my soul, he has asked Allah by His greatest name, which if He is asked by it, He gives, and if supplicated, He answers.” This supplication was spontaneous and was not taught by the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, but who nevertheless confirmed it since it confirmed to the Shari’ah. [(Shaykh) Keller, *Ibid*, pp. 6-8]

In conclusion we can learn from the aforementioned hadiths that:

The first is that the word “every” is not absolute nor universal, since there are examples in the Qur’an and Sunna where cases of generalisations are qualified by restrictions.

Secondly, the Sunna of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was his way or custom to accept [new] acts that were not initiated by himself but nevertheless were good and did not conflict with established Shari’ah; and to reject those that were in conflict with the Shari’ah.

And finally, the third point is that new matters cannot be rejected simply because

they did not exist at the time of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, but must be evaluated according to the Shari'ah.

The Sunna of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is his way of acting, ordering, accepting and rejecting, and the way of the *Khalifah Rashidun* who also followed his model in acting, ordering, accepting and rejecting. Newly begun practices therefore, must be examined in the Sunna – in the way that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, accepted or rejected newly begun practices. As have been mentioned, many of the Sahaba initiated new practices through their own *ijtihad* – practices that were not initiated by the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, himself. The Sahaba did so due to their belief and conviction that they were acts that were good, and were done in accordance to Allah's command, "And do the good, that haply you may succeed." [22:77], and the hadith of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, "He who inaugurates a good Sunna in Islam earns the reward of it and all who perform it after him without diminishing their own rewards in the slightest."

³⁰ Muhammad bin 'Umar relates:

I was sitting in the company of Abu Bakr bin Mujahid in Baghdad, when Shaykh Shibli came before them, whereupon Abu Bakr bin Mujahid stood up and hugged him, kissed his forehead and sat him by his side. Muhammad bin 'Umar said I asked Abu Bakr bin Mujahid, "You are the Shaykh, whilst the whole of Baghdad regards Shibli as Majnun [crazy]. Why have you treated him with so much respect?" To this, Abu Bakr bin Mujahid replied, "I have done nothing strange. I have treated him exactly as I have seen the Messenger of Allah, [may Allah bless him and grant him peace], treat him. In my dream, I saw the Messenger of Allah [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] kiss Shibli between his two eyes. I asked the Prophet [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] "Why did you treat Shibli this way?" To which the Messenger of Allah [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] replied, "I love him because after every Salah, he recites the last verse of Surah Tawba, after which he recites *Sallah Labo 'alaika Ya Muhammad* three times."

[Hafiz Ibn al-Qayyim, *Jilal al-Afham*, p 80]

³¹ Bukhari relates from Mahmud ibn Rabi' that:

When the Prophet [may Allah bless him and give him peace] performed his ablution, the Companions almost fought over the excess water.

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[Al-Misri, Ahmed ibn Naqib, *Reliance of the Traveller*, translated by (Shaykh) Nuh Ha Mim Keller, Sunna Books 1994, p 930].

Bukhari narrates in his sahih in the Book of Clothing, under the chapter entitled 'What is mentioned about grey hair,' that 'Usman ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Mawhab said:

My family sent me to Umm Salama with a cup of water. Umm Salama brought out a silver bottle that contained one of the hairs of the Prophet, and it used to be that if anyone came under the evil eye or ill health they used to send her a cup of water through which she would pass this hair (for drinking). We used to look into the silver bottle: I saw some reddish hairs. Anas said: "When the Prophet shaved his head (after pilgrimage), Abu Talha was the first one to take his hair"

Anas also said:

The Prophet [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] threw stones at al-Jamra, then sacrificed, then told the barber to shave his head right side first, then began to give the hair away to the people." He said: "Talha was the one distributing it" [Muslim, Tirmidhi and Abu Dawud]

He also said:

When the Prophet [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] shaved his head in Mina, he gave me the hair from the right side and he said: 'Anas! Take it to Umm Sulaym [his mother].' When the Companions saw what the Prophet [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] gave us, they began to compete to take the hair from the left side, and everyone was getting a share from that. [Ahmad narrated it]

Ibn al-Sakan narrated through Safwan ibn Hubayra from the latter's father - Thabit al-Bunani said:

Anas ibn Malik said to me (on his death-bed): 'This is one of the hairs of Allah's Messenger [may Allah bless him and grant him peace]. I want you to place it under my tongue.' Thabit continued: 'I placed it under his tongue, and he was buried with it under his tongue.'

Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, said:

I saw Khalid [ibn Walid] asking for the Prophet's (may Allah bless him and

grant him peace) forelock and he received it. He used to put it over his eyes and then kiss it.

It is known that he then placed it in his head cover around which the turban is tied and never faced battle again except he won. [al-Waqidi (Maghazi), Ibn Hajar (Isaba)].

Ibn Abi Zayd al-Qayrawani relates that Imam Malik said:

Khalid ibn al-Walid owned a *qalansiyya* which contained some of the Prophet's [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] hair, and that is the one he wore the day of the battle of Yarmuk.

Ibn Sirin (one of the tabi 'in) said:

One hair of the Prophet [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] in my possession is more precious to me than silver and gold and everything that is on the earth and everything that is inside it. [Bukhari, Bayhaqi (Sunan kubra), and Ahmad].

Hafiz Ibn Hajar in Fath al-Bari, Volume 10, page 353, said:

They used to call the silver bottle in which the hair of the Prophet, [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] was kept *jiljalan* and that bottle was in the home of Umm Salama.

Hafiz al-'Ayni wrote in 'Umdat al-Qari, Volume 18, page 79:

Umm Salama had some of the hairs of the Prophet [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] in a silver bottle. When some people became ill, they would go and obtain blessings from these hairs and they would be healed by means of their blessings. If a person were struck by the evil eye or any sickness, he would send his wife to Umm Salama with a mikhdaba or water-pail, and she would pass the hair through that water and then drink the water and he would be healed, after which they would return the hair to the bottle.

Imam Ahmad narrates in his Musnad (4:42) from 'Abd Allah ibn Zayd ibn 'Abd Rabbih with a sound (sahih) chain as stated by Haythami in Majma' al-Zawa'id (3:19) that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, clipped his nails and distributed them among the people.

Narrated Jabir bin 'Abd Allah:

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I fell ill and Allah's Messenger [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] and Abu Bakr came to visit me on foot. The Prophet [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] came to me while I was unconscious. Allah's Messenger [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] performed ablution and poured the Remaining water of his ablution over me whereupon I became conscious and said, 'O Allah's Messenger [may Allah bless him and grant him peace]! How should I spend my wealth? [Or how should I deal with my wealth?]' But the Prophet [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] did not give me any reply till the Verse of the laws of inheritance was revealed. [Bukhari volume 9, Book 92, Number 412]

In Bukhari and Muslim:

The Companions would compete for with one another for the water of the Prophet's [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] ablution in order to wipe it on their faces.

Imam Nawawi in *Sharh Sahih Muslim* said: "In these narrations is evidence for seeking blessings with the relics of the friends of Allah" (*fibi al-tabarruk bi athar al-salihin*). The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, used to heal the sick with his saliva mixed with some earth with the words: "*Bismillah*, the soil of our earth with the saliva of certain ones among us shall heal our sick with our Lord's permission" [Bukhari and Muslim].

The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had everyone in Madina then Makkah bring their newborn, upon whom he would read and into whose mouth he would do *nafth* and *tifl* (breath mixed with saliva). He would instruct their mothers not to suckle them that day until nightfall. Bukhari, Abu Dawud, Ahmad, Bayhaqi (Dala'il), Waqidi, etc. all narrate this.

'Utban ibn Malik was one of the Companions of the battle of Badr. After he became blind he said to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace:

I would like you to pray in my house so that I can pray where you prayed." The Prophet [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] went to his house and asked where exactly he would like him to pray. He indicated a spot to him and the Messenger of Allah [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] prayed there.

[Bukhari and Muslim]

The version in Muslim reads: "I ('Utman) sent for the Prophet [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] the message: 'Come and lay for me a place for worship [*khutta li*

masjidan].” Imam Nawawi in *Sharh Sahih Muslim* said: “It means: ‘Mark for me a spot that I can take as a place for worship by obtaining blessing from your having been there [*mutabarrikan bi aathaarika*]...’ In this hadith is evidence for obtaining blessings through the relics of the Friends of Allah (*al-tabarrik bi aathaar al-salihin*).”

‘Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, feared that the taking of the tree of the bay ‘a to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, as a place of prayer might lead to a return to idol-worship and he had it cut [Bukhari, Ibn Sa’d (1:73)]. It is known, however, that he derived blessings even from walking in the same spots where the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had walked and praying exactly where he had prayed both at the Ka’ba and on his travels, and that he watered a certain tree under which the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had prayed so that it would not die [Bukhari and Bayhaqi (*Sunan* 5:245)]. Suwayd ibn Ghafalah reported:

I saw ‘Umar [may Allah be pleased with him] kissing the Stone and clinging to it and saying: ‘I saw Allah’s Messenger [may Allah bless him and grant him peace], bearing great love for you.’

This hadith has been narrated on the authority of Sufyan with the same chain of transmitters (and the words are):

He (‘Umar) said: ‘I know that you are a stone, nor would I consider you of any worth, except that I saw Abu al-Qasim [that is the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace] bearing great love for you.’ And he did not mention about clinging to it. [Muslim: 7: 2916]

Qadi ‘Iyad relates in his *Shifa’*, in the chapter entitled ‘*Esteem for the things and places connected with the Prophet* [may Allah bless him and grant him peace]” that Imam Malik would not ride an animal in Madina and used to say: ‘I am too shy before Allah to trample with an animal’s hoof on the earth where Allah’s Messenger [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] is buried.’ Imam Malik gave a fatwa that whoever said: ‘The soil of Madina is bad’ be given thirty lashes and jailed.

Al-Tabarani in *al-Awsat* and *al-Kabir* (4:16), and Imam Ahmad in his *Musnad* (5:67-68) with a sound chain as stated by al-Haythami in *al-Zawa’id* (4:211) narrated through Handhalah Ibn Hudhaym that the latter went with his grandfather, Hudhaym, to the Prophet [may Allah bless him and grant him peace]. Hudhaym said to the Messenger of Allah [may Allah bless him and grant him peace]:

I have sons and grandsons, some of whom are pubescent and others still children.” Motioning to the young child next to him, he said: “This is the youngest.” The Prophet [may Allah bless him and grant him peace]

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brought this young child whose name was Handhalah next to him, wiped on his head, and told him, “*barakallahu fik*,” which means: ‘may Allah bless you.’ After that, people started to bring Handhalah a person with a swollen face or a sheep with a swollen udder. Handhalah would place his hand on that part of his head the Prophet [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] wiped, then touch the swollen part and say *Bismillah*, and the swelling would be cured.

Ibn Abi Shayba narrated in his *Musannaf* (4:121), in the chapter entitled: ‘*Touching the grave of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace*,’ with a sahih chain as judged by Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalani, and Qadi ‘Iyad in his book *al-Shifa*’, in the chapter entitled: ‘*Concerning the visit to the Prophet’s [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] grave, the excellence of those who visit it and how he should be greeted*:’

Yazid ibn ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Qusayt and al-‘Utbi narrated that it was the practice of the Companions in the masjid of the Prophet [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] to place their hands on the pommel of the hand rail (*rummana*) of the pulpit (*minbar*) where the Prophet [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] used to place his hand. There they would face the qibla and supplicate (make du‘a) to Allah hoping He would answer their supplication because they were placing their hands where the Prophet [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] placed his while making their supplication. Abu Mawduda said: ‘And I saw Yazid ibn ‘Abd al-Malik do the same.’

The Tabi‘i, Thabit al-Bunani said he used to go to Anas Ibn Malik, kiss his hands, and say: “These are hands that touched the Prophet [may Allah bless him and grant him peace]” He would kiss his eyes and say: “These are eyes that saw the Prophet [may Allah bless him and grant him peace].” Abu Ya‘la narrated it in his *Musnad* (6:211) Ibn Hajar mentions it in his *al-Matalib al-‘Aliya* (4:111) and al-Haythami declared it sound in *Majma’ al-Zawa‘id* (9:325).

According to Bukhari in his *Adab al-Mufrad*, ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Razin related that one of the Companions, Salama ibn al-Aku’, raised his hands before a group of people and said: “With these very hands I pledged allegiance (*bay‘a*) to the Messenger of Allah [may Allah bless him and grant him peace].” Upon hearing this, all those who were present got up and went to kiss his hand. Another version of this hadith was also related by Ahmad. Abu Malik al-Ashja‘i said that he once asked another Companion of the Tree, Ibn Abi Awfa, “Give me the hand that swore bay‘a to the Messenger of Allah [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] so that I may kiss it.” Ibn al-Muqri related it. Bukhari in *al-Adab al-Mufrad* also relates that Suhayb saw Seyyedina ‘Ali kiss both the hand and feet of the Prophet’s [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] uncle al-

'Abbas, and that Thabit kissed the hand of Anas because it had touched the Prophet's hand, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.

The *first* hadith that Imam Ahmad related from Anas ibn Malik in his Musnad is:

The whole Community of the people of Madina used to take the hand of the Prophet [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] and rush to obtain their need with it.

'A'isha the Mother of the Believers said:

The Messenger of Allah [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] when he had a complaint, would recite the last three suras of Qur'an, over himself and blow." She said, "When his pain was great, I would recite it over him and wipe him with his right hand hoping for its blessing."

[Narrated by Imam Malik in his *Muwatta'*, Book 50, Number 50, 4:10.]

Usama ibn Sharik narrates:

I came to see the Prophet [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] while his Companions were with him, and they seemed as still as if birds had alighted on top of their heads. I gave him my salutations and I sat down [Then Bedouins came and asked questions which the Prophet [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] answered] ... The Prophet [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] then stood up and the people stood up. They began to kiss his hand, whereupon I took his hand and placed it on my face. I found it more fragrant than musk and cooler than sweet water.

Narrated by Abu Dawud (Number 3855), Tirimidhi (2038 - hassan sahih), Ibn Majah (3436), al-Hakim (4:399), and Ahmad (4:278). Al-Hafiz Imam Bayhaqi cites it in Branch 15 of his *Shu'ab al-Iman* entitled: *The Fifteenth Branch of Faith, Namely A Chapter On Rendering Honour To The Prophet, Declaring His High Rank, And Revering Him (al-khamis `ashar min shu`ab al-iman wa huwa babun fi ta`zim al-nabi sallallahu `alayhi wa sallama wa ijlalihi wa tawqirih)* volume 2, p 200 (Number 1528).

From Safwan ibn 'Asal al-Muradi:

One of two Jews said to his companion: "Take us to this Prophet [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] so we can ask him about Musas ten signs... [the

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Prophet [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] replied in full and then they kissed his hands and feet and said: 'We witness that you are a Prophet [...]

[Narrated by Ibn Abi Shayba (Book of Adab, Chapter entitled *A Man Kissing Another Man's Hand When He greets Him*), Tirmidhi (Book of Adab) who declared it *hassan sahih*, al-Nasa'i, Ibn Majah (Book of Adab), and al-Hakim who declared it sahih.]

Narrated Usayd ibn Hudayr:

AbdurRahman ibn Abu Layla (quoting Usayd ibn Hudayr, a man of the Ansar) said that while he was given to jesting and was talking to the people and making them laugh, the Prophet [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] poked him under the ribs with a stick. He said: 'Let me take retaliation.' The Prophet [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] said: 'Take retaliation.' Usayd replied: 'You are wearing a shirt but I am not.' The Prophet [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] then raised his shirt and the man embraced him and began to kiss his side. Then Usayd said: 'This is what I wanted, Apostle of Allah [may Allah bless him and grant him peace]!'"

[Narrated in Abu Dawud, Book 41, Number 5205.]

Ibn 'Abd al-Barr relates, in his *Isti'ab fi Ma'rifat al-as-hab* (p. 673), that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, after forbidding two or three times the use of *khaluq* (a kind of perfume mixed with saffron), and finding that Sawad ibn 'Amr al-Qari al-Ansari was wearing it, nudged him in the mid-section with a palm-tree stalk (*jarida*) and scratched him. The latter asked for reparation; when the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, bared his own stomach to him, he jumped and kissed the Prophet's stomach, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. Ibn Ishaq's version of a similar account in the *Sira*, mentions that Sawad was standing in the ranks of the Companions of Badr at the time of this incident. The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was arranging the ranks with his *migra'u* and he nudged Sawad's stomach with it, scratching him inadvertently, with the words: "Align yourself with the others." Sawad said: "Ya Rasulallah, you hurt me, so give me reparation." The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, handed him the tree stalk and said: "Take reparation." Sawad approached him and kissed his belly. The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: "What made you do that, O Sawad?" He replied, "Ya Rasulallah, the time has come for what you see, and I loved that my last action in this dunya be to touch you."

Narrated Buhaysah al-Fazariyyah:

My father sought permission from the Prophet [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] then he came near him, lifted his shirt, and began to kiss him and embrace him out of love for him.

[Narrated in Abu Dawud, Book 9, Number 1665.]

Narrated Abu Burda:

When I came to Madina. I met 'Abd Allah bin Salam. He said, 'Will you come to me so that I may serve you with Sawiq (i.e. powdered barley) and dates, and let you enter a (blessed) house in which the Prophet [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] entered? [Bukhari, Volume 5, Book 58, Number 159].

Bukhari and Tirmidhi narrate from Qatada:

I asked Anas [may Allah be pleased with him] to describe the sandals of Allah's Messenger [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] and he replied: 'Each sandal had two straps'; and from 'Isa ibn Tahman: Anas took out a pair of shoes and showed them to us. They did not have hair on them.

The remark refers to the Arabian practice of not removing the hair from the leather from which shoes were made.

Bukhari, Malik, and Abu Dawud relate that 'Ubayd ibn Jarir said to 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar:

I saw you wear tanned sandals. He replied: "I saw the Prophet [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] wearing sandals with no hair on them and perform ablution in them, and so I like to wear them."

Al-Qastallani in his *Mawahib al-Laduniyya* said that Ibn Mas'ud, may Allah be pleased with him, was one of the Prophet's, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, servants and that he used to bring for the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, his cushion (*wisada*), his tooth-stick (*siwak*), his two sandals (*na'layn*), and the water for his ablution. When the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, rose he would put his sandals on him; when he sat he would carry his sandals in his arms until he rose. Qastallani mentions the following from one of the greatest Tabi'in:

Abu Ishaq (al-Zuhri) said: al-Qasim ibn Muhammad (ibn Abu Bakr al-Siddiq) said: 'Of the proven blessing of the likeness of the Prophet's [may Allah bless him and grant him peace] sandal is that whoever has it in his possession for

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tabarruk, will safeguard him from the sedition of rebels and the mastery of enemies, and will be a barrier against every recreant devil and the evil eye of the envious. If the pregnant woman holds it in her right hand at the time of labour, her delivery will be easier by Allah's change and His might.

Al-Qastallani also said that Abu al-Yaman ibn 'Asakir wrote a volume on the image of the Prophet's sandal, and so did Ibn Hajj al-Andalusi. He relates the account of a pious shaykh by the name of Abu Ja'far Ahmad ibn 'Abd al-Majid:

I cut the pattern of this sandal for one of my students. He came to me one day and said: 'I saw a wonder yesterday from the blessing of this sandal. My wife was suffering from a pain which almost took her life. I placed the sandal on the spot of her pain and said: O Allah, show me the blessing of the owner of this sandal. Allah cured her on the spot.

Al-Munawi and al-Qari mentioned in their commentary on Tirmidhi's al-Shama'il that Ibn al-'Arabi said that the sandals are part of the attire of prophets, (upon whom be peace) and the people only left them due to the mud in their lands. He also mentioned that one of the names of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, in the ancient books is *Sahib al-Na'layn* or "The wearer of the two sandals." Ashraf 'Ali al-Tahanawi wrote a treatise entitled *Nayl al-shifa' bi na'l al-Mustafa* (*The attainment of cure through the sandals of the Elect One*) found in his book *Zad al-Sa'eed* (Provision for the fortunate). Muhammad Zakariyya Kandhalwi said in his translation of Tirmidhi's Shama'il:

Maulana Ashraf 'Ali Thanwi has written in his kitab *Zaadus Sa'eed* a detailed treatise on the barakaat and virtues of the shoes of The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. Those interested in this should read that kitab (available in English). In short, it may be said that it [the Prophet's (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) sandal] has countless qualities. The 'ulama have experienced it many a time. One is blessed by seeing the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace in one's dreams; one gains safety from oppressors and every heartfelt desire is attained. Every object is fulfilled by its tawassul (means, petition, request). The method of tawassul is also mentioned therein.

Imam al-Dhahabi summarises all of the above as manifestations of the Companion's intense love for the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. He writes concerning the Sahaba's actions in *Mujam al-Shuyukh* (1:73) that:

[...] they enjoyed his presence directly, kissed his very hand, nearly fought each other the remnants of his ablution water, shared his purified hair on the day of

the greater Pilgrimage, and even if he spat, it would virtually not fall except in someone's hand so that he could pass it over his face [...] Don't you see the Companions in their intense love for the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, asked him, 'should we not prostrate to you?' and he replied no, and if he had allowed them, they would have prostrated to him *as a mark of utter veneration and respect, not as a mark of worship*, just as the Prophet Joseph's brothers prostrated to Joseph, upon whom be peace.

32 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him, told the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, "I love you more than anything except my soul which is between my two sides." The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, replied, "None of you will believe until I am dearer to him than his own soul." 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "By the One who sent down the Book on you, I love you more than my soul which is between my two sides." The Prophet said, "'Umar, now you have it!" [al-Bukhari]

33 Imam Ahmad relates in his *Kitab al-Zuhud*, that the Messenger of Allah – may Allah bless him and grant him peace, ordered people that should they meet Uways, to have him ask forgiveness on their behalf: The Messenger of Allah said:

Uways ibn 'Amir will dawn upon you with the assistance of the people of Yemen from the tribe of Murad and Qaran. He was a leper and was healed except in a tiny spot. He has a mother whose rights he keeps scrupulously. If you are able to let him ask forgiveness for you, do it. Al-Hassan al-Basri also related: "More people will enter Paradise through the intercession of a certain man from my community than there are people in the tribes of Rabi'a and Mudar." Al-Basri said, "That is Uways al-Qarani."

[Ahmad, *al-Zuhud* (Dar al-Kutub al 'ilmiyya: Beirut 1993) pp 413-16]

The narration concerning 'Uways is that he embraced Islam in Yemen, and greatly desired to travel to Madina to meet the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. But his old mother wanted him to stay home and take care of her. She gave him permission to go on the condition that as soon as he got to the Prophet's house, he would turn around and would return without going any where else. As the narration unfolds, we are told that the Prophet happened to be out when he reached there. But Uways was obedient to the promise he'd made to his mother, so he never did get to meet the Prophet. For his love for the Prophet and his filial piety, he was raised to the same station as the Sahabah, the Prophet's Companions. And Allah knows best.

34 “Invoke blessings upon me abundantly on Friday because it is a day that is (particularly) witnessed and the angels witness it (abundantly). As soon as a person invokes blessings on me his invocation is shown to me until he ends it.” Abu al-Darda’ said: “Even after (your) death?” The Prophet replied: “Verily, Allah has forbidden the earth to consume the bodies of Prophets.” Related by Ibn Majah with a sound chain through Abu al-Darda’. Also related with a sound chain from Aws ibn Aws al-Thaqafi by Ahmad, Ibn Abi Shayba, Abu Dawud, al-Nasa’i, Ibn Majah, al-Darimi, Ibn Khuzayma, Ibn Hibban, al-Hakim (sahih, confirmed by Dhahabi), Tabarani in his Kabir, and Bayhaqi in many places, some with the initial addition of the following: “The best of your days is Friday, for in it Adam was created, and in it his soul was taken back, and in it is the Blowing of the horn, and in it is the universal Seizure, therefore invoke blessings upon me abundantly on Friday,” etc. [see also Jala al-Afham p 145 by Hafiz Ibn-al-Qayyim].

Imam Nasa’i narrates that there are some angels who visit the earth. Their duty is to go to the person who sends salutations upon the Prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace and then to take those salutations to the Prophet Muhammad may Allah bless him and grant him peace.

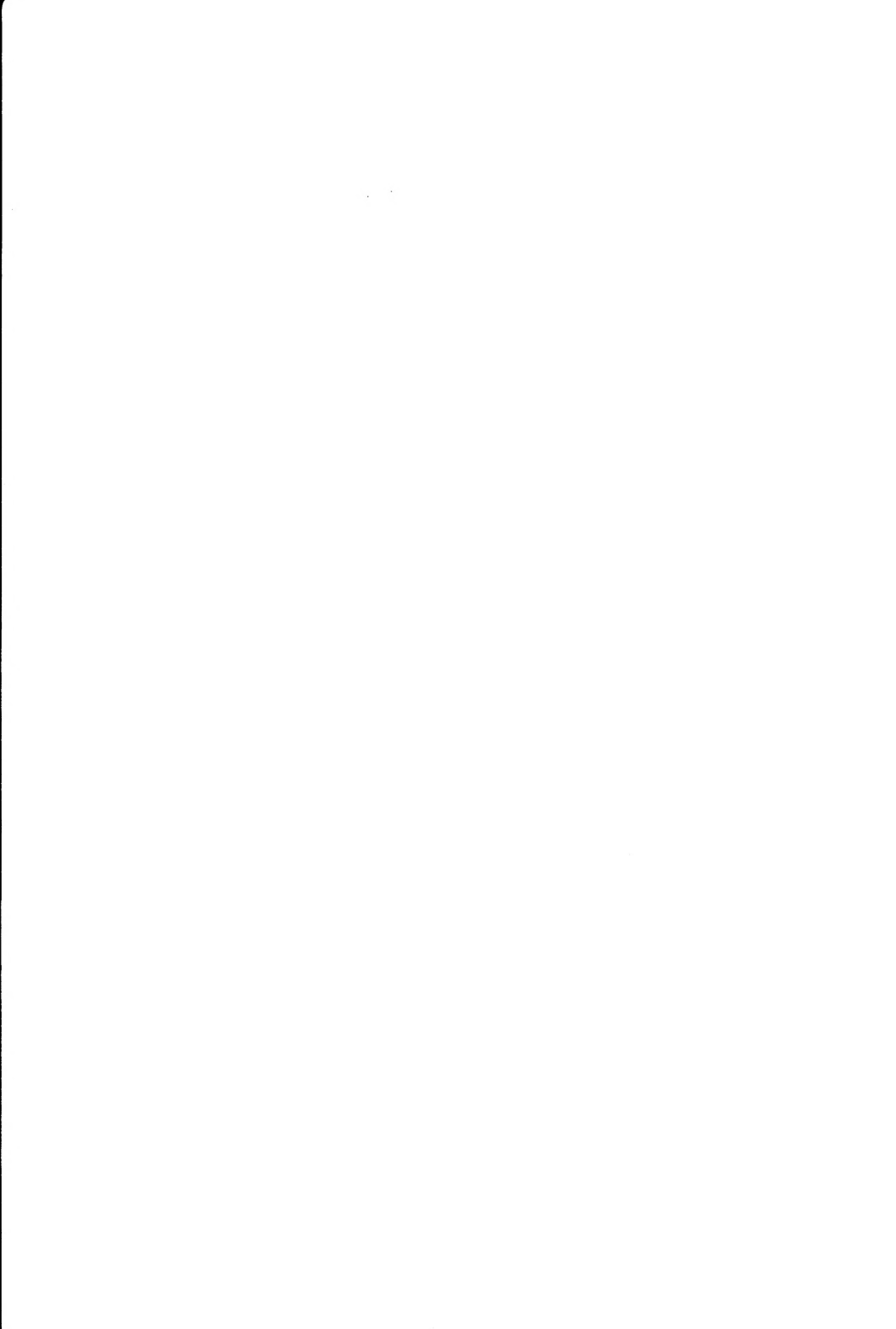
Notes

B I O G R A P H I E S



*“Say: ‘Are those who know and those
who do not know equal?’”*

(39:9)



[All dates correspond to AH -After Hijra]

Abu Dawud is Abu Dawud Sulayman ibn al-Ash'ath al-Sijistani born in 203. He is said to have examined five hundred thousand hadiths, and selected four thousand eight hundred for his book known as the Sunan Abu Dawud, which was the fruit of twenty years labour. His encyclopaedic knowledge of hadiths, photographic memory, upright character and his kindness are generally recognised by all the traditionists.

Abu Hurayra is 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Sakhr al-Dawsi, a Companion, May Allah be pleased with him, of the Messenger of Allah, May Allah bless him and grant him peace. He is considered to be one of those Companions with the greatest memory and is one of the most prolific narrators of hadith. Hadith are related from him that are not related by others. He lived most of his life in Madina, where he died in 59, at the age of seventy-seven.

Abu Nu'aym is Ahmad ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Ahmad. Born in Isfahan in 336, he was a Shafi'i scholar, hadith master and historian. He perhaps is best remembered for his ten-volume *Hilya al-Awliya* ('The Adornment of the friends of Allah').

Al-Bayhaqi is Ahmad ibn al-Husayn ibn 'Ali ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Musa, Abu Bakr al-Bayhaqi al-Naysaburi al-khusrawjirdi al-Shafi'i. Born in 384, he was the Imam, hadith master and authority in the foundations of doctrine. The works of al-Bayhaqi count among the treasures of Islamic knowledge for their meticulousness, reliability, and near-perfection in the estimation of the scholars. Among those which we can mention are:

- *Ma'arifa al-Sunan wa al-Athar* ('The Knowledge of Sunnas and Reports') in about twenty volumes, which lists the textual evidence of Shafi'i school under fiqh sub-headings.
- *Al-I'tiqad 'ala Madhhab al-Salaf Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jama'a* ('Islamic Doctrines According to the School of the Predecessors Which is the School of the People of the Prophet's Way and Congregation of His Companions') in about forty brief chapters.

- Dala'il al-Nubuwwa ('The Signs of Prophet hood') in about seven volumes, the foremost large book exclusively devoted to the person of the Prophet, May Allah bless him and grant him peace, as *al-Qadi 'Iyad's* al-Shifa' fi Ma'rif Huquq al-Mustafa ('The Healing concerning Knowledge of the Elect Prophet's Rights') is the foremost condensed book on this noble subject.
- Shu'ab al-Iman ('The Branches of Belief') in about fourteen volumes, in which al-Bayhaqi provides an exhaustive textual commentary on the hadith of the Prophet, May Allah bless him and grant him peace whereby, 'Belief has seventy-odd branches.'

Al-Dhahabi is Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn 'Uthman ibn Qaymaz ibn 'Abd Allah, Shams al-Din Abu 'Abd Allah al-Turkmani al-Diyarbakri al-Fariqi al-Dimashqi al-Dhahabi al-Shafi'i. Born in 673, he was the Imam, the Shaykh al-Islam, head of hadith masters, perspicuous critic and expert examiner of the hadith, encyclopaedic historian and biographer, and foremost authority in the canonical readings of the Qur'an. The 'Commander of the Believers in Hadith' (Amir al-Mu'minin fi al-Hadith), Shaykh al-Islam *Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani* said of him: "He was the most prolific of the scholars of his time. People yearned to obtain his books, travelling to him for that purpose and circulating them through reading, copying, and audition. He is among those who have total mastery in the field of narrator-criticism." *Al-Suyuti* said: "Hadith scholars today depend on four figures in the field of narrator-criticism and other related fields: al-Mizzi, al-Dhahabi, al-'Iraqi, and *Ibn Hajar*." Al-Dhahabi wrote extensively, and among which we can make mention of just a few of his works:

- Tarikh al-Islam, the largest biographical encyclopaedia in Islam.
- Siyar A'lam al-Nubala' ('Lives of the Elite of the Nobility'), a unique encyclopaedia of biographical history, shorter than Tarikh al-Islam but often containing new material.
- Al-Mu'in fi Tabaqat al-Muhaddithin, a compendium of hadith scholars.
- Tabaqat al-Qurra' ('Biography-Layers of the Qur'anic Scholars').

- Tadhhib Tahdhib al-Kamal, an abridgment of al-Mizzi's 35-volume compendium of historical biographies for hadith narrators cited in the Six Books of hadith. [The two Sahihs and the Four Sunan]
- An epistle entitled al-Nasiha al-Dhahabiyya written when al-Dhahabi was around fifty-five years of age and addressed to *Ibn Taymiya* towards the end of his life. In this brief but scathing epistle the author distances himself from his contemporary and admonishes him without naming him, calling him 'an eloquent polemicist who neither rests nor sleeps.' *Ibn Hajar* voiced no doubt as to the authenticity of this epistle as attributed to al-Dhahabi, nor al-Sakhawi who called it 'a glorious statement of doctrine.'

Al-Hakim is Muhammad ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Hamdawayh ibn Na'im al Dabi, Abu 'Abd Allah al-Hakim al-Naysaburi. Born in Nishapur in 321, al-Hakim was a Shafi'i scholar, hadith master and Imam. He heard ahadith from nearly two thousand shaykh's. It has been said that al Hakim's works on ahadith and other subjects amount to approximately fifteen hundred volumes. Despite this, he is perhaps most famous for his four volume al-Mustadrak 'ala al-Sahihayn ('The addendum to the two "Sahih" collections of Bukhari and Muslim') in which he collected ahadith that met the criteria and standards employed by both Imam Bukhari and Muslim in their collections.

Al-'Izz 'Abd al-Salam is 'Izz al-din Abu Muhammad 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn 'Abd al-Salam ibn Abi al-Qasim ibn Hasan ibn Muhammad ibn Muhadhhab al-Sulami al-Dimashqi al-Shafi'i. Born in Damascus in 578 he excelled and acquired such a proficiency in the sciences that he is often referred to as the 'Sultan al-'Ulama.' An erudite Shafi'i scholar, mujtahid Imam, the Shaykh al-Islam, he wrote a number of books on Shafi'i jurisprudence, Tafsir, government, Tasawuff and legal principles the most famous perhaps is *Qawa'id al-Ahkam fi masalih al-Anam* ('The bases of legal rulings in the interests of mankind').

Al-Suyuti is 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Kamal al-Din Abi Bakr ibn Muhammad ibn Sabiq al-Din, Jalal al-Din al-Misri al-Suyuti al-Shafi'i, also known as Ibn al-Asyuti. Born in 849, he was a mujtahid Imam, Renewer of the tenth Islamic century, foremost hadith master, jurist, philologist and historian. He authored

works in virtually every Islamic science that it is difficult to name a field in which al-Suyuti did not make outstanding contributions to. Among them can be counted his ten-volume hadith work *Jami' al-Jawami'* ('The Collection of Collections'); his Qur'anic exegesis *Tafsir al-Jalalayn* ('Commentary of the Two Jalals'), of which he finished the second half of an uncompleted manuscript by Jalal al-Din Mahalli in just forty days; his classic commentary on the sciences of hadith *Tadrib al-Rawi fi Sharh Taqrib al-Nawawi* ('The Training of the Hadith Transmitter: An Exegesis of Nawawi's 'The Facilitation'); and many others. He memorised the Qur'an at eight, completed several works of Sacred Law, fundamentals of jurisprudence, and Arabic grammar; after which he devoted himself to studying the Sacred Sciences under about a hundred and fifty shaykhs. A giant among contemporaries, he remained alone, producing a sustained output of scholarly writings until his death at the age of sixty-two.

Al-Tabari is Muhammad ibn Jarir ibn Yazid ibn Kathir, Abu Ja'far al-Tabari (d. 310), one of the major mujtahid Imams and the founder of a school of Law which remained for 150 years after his death, then disappeared. He is the author of a massive commentary on the Qur'an; an equally large universal history; a biographical history entitled *Tarikh al-Rijal*; an encyclopaedia of jurisprudence entitled *al-Basit* and a medium-sized work entitled *Latif al-Qawl fi Ahkam Shara'i al-Islam*, which he abridged into a smaller work; a book on the dialects and sciences of the Qur'an entitled *al-Qira'at wa al-Tanzil wa al-'Adad*; the unfinished book of *al-Fada'il* on the immense merits of the Companions; *al-Manasik* on the rituals of Pilgrimage; *Sharh al-Sunna* ('Explanation of the Sunna'); *al-Musnad* ('Narrations With Uninterrupted Chains'); the unfinished *Tahdhib al-Athar* ('Classification of Transmitted Reports'); *Tabzir Uli al-Nahi* ('Admonishment for the Wise') for the people of Tabaristan; *Ma 'alim al-Huda* ('Sign-Posts of Guidance'); *Ikhtilaf al-Fuqaha'* ('The Differences Among the Jurists'); *Tartib al-'Ulama'* ('Classification of the Scholars of Knowledge') amongst others. Al-Tabari limited his *Tafsir* of the Qur'an and his great history to thirty volumes each out of compassion for his students, as he originally intended to write three hundred volumes respectively.

Al-Tirmidhi is Abu 'Isa Muhammad ibn 'Isa al-Tirmidhi. Born in Makkah in 206, he traveled a great deal to acquire ahadith and had the opportunity to associate with *al-Bukhari*, *Muslim*, *Abu Dawud* and other eminent hadith scholars. He possessed a remarkably sharp memory. His hadith collection –

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Jami' al-Tirmidhi is recognised for its importance and is included amongst the al-Kutub al-Sitta ('the Six books').

Hassan al-Basri is Abu Sa'id ibn Abu al-Hassan, May Allah be pleased with him. Born in Madina in 21, he met many of the Companions and transmitted many ahadith. He went thirty years without laughing. Imam *al-Ghazali* said of him that "His speech was the closest of any to that of the Prophet's, and his guidance the closest of any to that of the Companions." He died in Basra in 116.

Hassan ibn Thabit is Hasan ibn Thabit al-Khazaraji al-Ansari Abu'l Walid, May Allah be pleased with him, the Poet of the Messenger of Allah, May Allah bless him and grant him peace. He praised the Prophet, May Allah bless him and grant him peace and defended Islam with his tongue and eloquence. He died in Madina in 54.

Ibn Abbas is ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib al-Hashimi 'Abu al Abbas, May Allah be pleased with him, – the cousin of the Prophet of Allah, May Allah bless him and grant him peace. One of the greatest scholars of early Islam, and the first exegete of the Qur'an. Ibn 'Abbas is renowned for his knowledge of both sacred and profane tradition and for his critical interpretations of the Qur'an. From his youth he gathered information concerning the words and deeds of The Messenger of Allah, May Allah bless him and grant him peace from other Companions. He gave classes on interpretation of the Qur'an, his commentaries on which were later collected. The Messenger of Allah, May Allah bless him and grant him peace, made the following prayer for him: "Oh Allah, give him understanding in the Din and the knowledge of interpretation." He taught many of the important followers. He died in 61.

Ibn 'Abd al-Barr is Yusuf ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Barr. Born in Cordova in 368, Ibn 'Abd al-Barr was a major hadith master, Maliki scholar and author. If *al-Baghdadi* was considered the hadith master of the East, Ibn 'Abd al-Barr was considered the hadith master of the West.

Ibn 'Ata' Allah is Taj ad-Din Abu'l Fadl Ahmad bin Muhammad bin 'Abd al-Karim bin 'Ata' Allah al-Iskandari al-Judhani al-Shadhili. A Maliki faqih, born in Alexandria, Egypt he descended from a distinguished family of Maliki

scholars. Studying under some of the most renowned scholars in Alexandria, he received a traditional Islamic education in such disciplines as Qur'an recitation, hadith, tafsir, grammar, usul, philosophy and fiqh. He was one of the teachers of *Taqi'd Din al-Subki*.

Ibn al-Athir is Abu Al-Hassan 'Ali 'Izz Al-Din Ibn Al-Athir (d 1233). Ibn al-Athir spent a scholarly life in Mosul, but often visited Baghdad. He was for a time with Saladin's army in Syria and later lived in Aleppo and Damascus. His chief work was a history of the world, *al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh* ('The Complete History'), starting with the creation of Adam. Ibn al-Athir's older brother, Majd al-Din ibn al-Athir (1149-1210), who worked in Mosul for its ruler and was a scholar of note, made a collection of the sayings and acts of the Prophet Muhammad, May Allah bless him and grant him peace, and a dictionary of obscure terms in hadith collections. The youngest brother, Diya' al-Din ibn al-Athir (1163-1239), was a noted author and literary critic who worked for Saladin and became vizier to Saladin's son, al-Malik al-Afdal.

Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani is Ahmad ibn 'Ali ibn Muhammad al-Kinani, Abu al-Fadl Shihab al-Din Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani. Born in Cairo in 773, Ibn Hajar was a Shafi'i Imam and hadith master who was conferred the rank of Commander of the Faithful in Hadith. Also known as the Shaykh al-Islam, Ibn Hajar wrote a great deal of works upon hadith, history, biography, Tafsir, poetry and Shafi'i jurisprudence. He perhaps is most well known today for his fourteen-volume commentary of *Sahih al-Bukhari – Fath al-Bari bi sharh Sahih al-Bukhari* ('The victory of the Creator: a Commentary on the Sahih of Bukhari'). When he died, fifty thousand people attended his funeral prayer, including the Khalifah.

Ibn Hajar al-Haythami is Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn Hajar, Abu al-Abbas Shihab al-din al-Haythami al Makki. Born in western Egypt in 909, he was the Shafi'i Imam of his time and represents the foremost resource for fatwa for the entire late Shafi'i School. He authored many books covering hadith and hadith commentary, jurisprudence and 'aqida.

Ibn Hazm is 'Ali ibn Ahmad ibn Sa'id ibn Hazm, Abu Muhammad al-Farisi al-Andalusi al-Qurtubi al-Yazidi (d. 465), praised by *al-Dhababi* as 'the peerless imam, the Ocean of sciences and disciplines, the jurist, hadith master, scholar of kalam, man of letters, Zahiri minister, and prolific author.' He was born into

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a princely family of Cordova where his education first cantered on Arabic poetry, philosophy, and kalam. An example of Ibn Hazm's extreme positions is his declaration that any type of analogy (qiyas), or imitation (taqlid), or legislative opinion (ra'y) was outside the pale of Islam, a position in which he contravened the totality of the scholars of Ahl al-Sunna. An example of his positions is his explanation of the Prophet's, May Allah bless and grant him peace, hadith: "Let no-one urinate in still, non-running water then use it to bathe." Ibn Hazm stated the following inferences:

- The interdiction to bathe applied only to the one who urinated; thus, anyone other than him may use that water to bathe;

- It applied only if one urinated into the water. He and anyone else might therefore use the water to bathe if the urine reached the water indirectly, for example after falling on high or nearby ground first, or being poured in it from a container;

- It applied only if one urinated in it, not defecated in it.

Al-Nawawi said of the above opinions: "All this which Ibn Hazm held is in contravention of the consensus of the scholars, and is the ugliest example of hardened literalism reported from him." In addition, Ibn Hazm in his books violated Islamic etiquette in his revilement of past scholars with whom he disagreed, to the extent that Abu al-'Abbas ibn al-'Arif compared his tongue to al-Hajjaj's sword. As a result some scholars had him exiled and his books burnt and condemned, while others considered them mines of "pearls mixed with trinkets." Nevertheless, Ibn Hazm is considered a reference on the determination of scholarly consensus (ijma') - which he restricted to the Companions' time - and scholarly difference (khilaf). He is also highly respected in hadith and its sciences. His commentary on his own al-Mujalla ("The Brilliant Treatise"), al-Muhalla ("The Adorned Treatise"), is considered a masterpiece of fiqh literature. *Ibn 'Abd al-Salam* said: "I did not see, in all the books of knowledge in Islam, anything like Ibn Hazm's al-Muhalla nor like Shaykh Muwaffaq al-Din's [Ibn Qudama] al-Mughni."

Ibn al-Jawzi is 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn 'Ubayd Allah ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Hammadi ibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Ja'far ibn

'Abd Allah ibn al-Qasim ibn al-Nadr ibn al-Qasim ibn Muhammad ibn 'Abd Allah ibn al-Faqih 'Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Faqih al-Qasim ibn Muhammad ibn Khalifat Rasul Allah - Allah bless and greet him - Abi Bakr al-Siddiq, Abu al-Faraj ibn al-Jawzi al-Qurashi al-Taymi al-Bakri al-Baghdadi al-Hanbali. Born in 509, he was with Shaykh 'Abd al-Qadir al-Gilani, the Imam of Hanbalis and foremost orator of kings and princes in his time whose gatherings reportedly reached one hundred thousand, a hadith master, philologist, commentator of Qur'an, expert jurist, physician, and historian of superb character and exquisite manners. Ibn al-Jawzi was a prolific author of over seven hundred books

Ibn Kathir is 'Imad Al-Din Isma'il Ibn 'Umar Ibn Kathir. Theologian and historian who became one of the leading intellectual figures of 14th-century Syria. As a scholar, Ibn Kathir is best remembered for his 14-volume history of Islam, *al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah* ("The Beginning and the End"), a work that utilised nearly all the available sources and formed the basis of a number of writings by later historians. Ibn Kathir was also a noted scholar of hadith; his *Kitab al-Jami'* is an alphabetical listing of the Companions of the Prophet and the sayings that each transmitted, thus reconstructing the chain of authority for each hadith.

Ibn Mas'ud is 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud, May Allah be pleased with him, one of the earliest Companions, renowned for his knowledge, especially about the Qur'an and matters of fiqh. He died in Madina in 32.

Ibn al-Mubarak is 'Abd Allah Ibn al-Mubarak, a renowned scholar from Khorasan. Born in 118, he possessed an extensive knowledge of fiqh, literature, grammar, language and poetry. He wrote several books, and was the first to compose a book on Jihad. He learned fiqh with *Imam Malik*. Ibn al-Mubarak once said that: "I studied adab for thirty years and I studied knowledge for twenty years." When Sufyan ibn 'Uyayna was told that Ibn al-Mubarak had died, he said: "May Allah have mercy on him. He was a man of fiqh, knowledge, worship, asceticism and generosity. He was courageous and a poet." *Ahmad ibn Hanbal* said concerning him: "In the time of Ibn al-Mubarak, there was no one who sought after knowledge more than him."

Ibn al-Qayyim al Jawziyya is Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr ibn Sa'd, Shams al-Din Abu 'Abd Allah al-Zur'i al-Dimashqi al-Hanbali, known as Ibn Qayyim al-

Jawziyya (d. 751), often confused with *Ibn al-Jawzi* (d. 597). A specialist in Qur'anic commentary, hadith, fiqh and its principles, Arabic philology and grammar, and the foremost disciple of *Taqi al-Din Abu al-Abbas Ahmad ibn 'Abd al-Halim ibn Taymiya al-Harrani* (d. 728). Ibn al-Qayyim followed the same path as his teacher in his infamous poem entitled *al-Qasida al-Nuniyya* ('Ode Rhyming in the Letter N'). The poem itself could not be openly circulated in Ibn al-Qayyim's lifetime but only secretly, and it seems that he never abandoned it, for the Hanbali historian Ibn Rajab heard it from its author in the year of his death as stated in his *Dhayl Tabaqat al-Hanabala* (2:448).

Ibn Rushd is Abu al-Walid Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Rushd. Born in 520 in Cordova, he descended from an important Spanish family: his grandfather (of the same name) Ibn Rushd (d. 520) was a well-known Maliki scholar, a qadi and Imam of the Great Mosque of Cordova. His father too was a qadi, and Ibn Rushd was a philosopher, jurist, physician, qadi and the foremost authority of the Maliki school of Law and its principles in Cordova in his time. There was no one higher than him in the matter of legal ruling (fatwa) for crucial issues. *Al-Dhahabi* in *Siyar A'lam al-'Ulama'* (15:452) quotes al-Abbar as saying: "No one of his scholarly perfection, his erudition, or his high manners was ever raised in Andalus." Ibn Usaybi'a in *Tabaqat al-Atibba' wa Tarikh al-Hukama'* (2:75) says: "He was the peerless authority of his time in the Law and knowledge of juristic differences, and he excelled in medicine [...] speculative theology, and philosophy."

Ibn Taymiya is Ahmad ibn 'Abd al-Halim ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Abi al-Qasim ibn Taymiya, Taqi al-Din Abu al-Abbas ibn Shihab al-Din ibn Majd al-Din al-Harrani al-Dimashqi al-Hanbali (661-728). A student of Ibn 'Abd al-Da'im, al-Qasim al-'Irbili, Ibn 'Allan, Ibn Abi 'Amr al-Fakhr, Ibn Taymiya mostly read by himself until he achieved great learning. He taught, authored books, gave formal legal opinions, and generally distinguished himself for his quick wit and photographic memory. Among his most brilliant students were *Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya*, *al-Dhahabi*, *Ibn Kathir*, and Yusuf ibn 'Abd al-Hadi. His opinions and manner created intense controversy both in his life and after his death, to the point that scholars were divided into those who loved him and those who did not. Some considered him an anthropomorphist [*mujassim*] because of what he mentioned in '*al-'aqida al-Hamawiyya*' and '*al-'aqida al-wasitiyya*' and

other books of his, such as Allah's hand, foot, shin, and face being literal attributes of Allah (*Sifatun Haqiqiyatun lillah*) and that He is established upon the Throne with His Essence (*wa annahu mustawin 'ala al-'arshi bi dhatihi*). His student *al-Dhahabi* praised him lavishly as 'the brilliant shaykh, imam, erudite scholar, censor, jurist, mujtahid, and commentator of the Qur'an,' but acknowledged that Ibn Taymiya's disparaging manners alienated even his admirers. The grammarian Abu Hayyan praised Ibn Taymiya until he found out that he believed himself a greater expert in the Arabic language than Sibawayh, whereupon he disassociated himself from his previous praise. Other former admirers turned critics were the qadi al-Zamalkani and *al-Dhahabi* himself, in whose *al-Nasiha al-Dhahabiya* he addresses Ibn Taymiya with the words: 'When will you stop criticising the scholars and finding fault with the people?'

Among Ibn Taymiya's controversies in kalam was his division of tawhid into two types: tawhid al-rububiya and tawhid al-uluhiya, respectively, Oneness of Lordship and Oneness of Godhead. The first, he said, consisted in the acknowledgment of Allah as the Creator of all, a belief shared by believers and non-believers alike. The second was the affirmation of Allah as the one true deity and only object of worship, a belief exclusive to believers. His natural conclusion was that "whoever does not know tawhid al-uluhiya, his knowledge of tawhid al-rububiya is not taken into account because the idolaters also had such knowledge." He then compared the scholars of kalam to the Arab idol-worshippers who accepted tawhid al-rububiya but ignored tawhid al-uluhiya. He spent much of his years in and out of jail or defending himself from various 'abhorrent charges' according to *Ibn Hajar*. Because he officially repented, his life was spared, although at one point it was officially announced in Damascus that: "Whoever follows the beliefs of Ibn Taymiya, his life and property are licit for seizure." After spending the years 719-721 in jail, he was jailed again in 726 until his death two years later for declaring that one who travels to visit the Messenger of Allah, May Allah bless him and grant him peace, commits innovation. About fifty thousand people attended his burial.

Ibn Wahab is Abu Muhammad 'Abd Allah ibn Wahab al-Fihri al-Misri, one of the greatest hadith scholars of his time. He studied with *Imam Malik* for about twenty years and also transmitted the *Muwatta'*. It is narrated that he said: "I met three hundred and sixty scholars. If it had not been for Malik, I would have

been misguided in knowledge.” Concerning him, *Imam Malik* said: “Ibn Wahab is an Imam,” while *Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal* said he “was a sound scholar, a faqih with abundant knowledge.” He died in 197.

Imam Abu Hanifa is Nu'man bin Thabit bin Zuta bin Mah. Called ‘The Imam’ by *Abu Dawud*, and ‘The Imam, one of those who have reached the sky’ by *Ibn Hajar*, he is known in the Islamic world as ‘The Greatest Imam’ (al-Imam al-‘Azam) and his school has the largest number of followers among the four schools of Ahl al-Sunna. Born in Kufah in 80, an intellectual centre of Iraq, the son of a merchant, Abu Hanifa at a young age took up the silk trade for a living and eventually became moderately wealthy. In early youth he was attracted to theological debates, but later he turned to law and for about 18 years was a disciple of Hammad (d. 738), then the most noted Iraqi jurist. After Hammad’s death, Abu Hanifa became his successor. He also learned from several other scholars, notably the Makkan traditionist ‘Ata’ (d. 732) and al Ja’far al-Sadiq (d. 765). He is the first of the four mujtahid imams and the only Successor (tabi’i) among them, having seen the Companions Anas ibn Malik, ‘Abd Allah ibn Abi Awfa, Sahl ibn Sa’d al-Sa’idi, Abu al-Tufayl, and ‘Amir ibn Wathila. By Abu Hanifa’s time a vast body of legal doctrines had accumulated as a result of the endeavour to apply Islamic norms to legal problems. The disagreements in these doctrines had rendered necessary the development of a uniform code. Abu Hanifa responded by scrutinising the current doctrines in collaboration with his students, (several of them outstanding scholars). Imam Abu Hanifa is the first in Islam to organise the writing of fiqh under sub-headings embracing the whole of the Law, beginning with purity (tahara) followed by prayer (salah), an order which was retained by all subsequent scholars such as *Imam Malik*, *Imam al-Shafi’i*, *Abu Dawud*, *al-Bukhari*, *Muslim*, *al-Tirmidhi*, and others. All these and their followers are indebted to him. *Imam al-Shafi’i* used to say of him, “In jurisprudence, all scholars are the children of Abu Hanifa.” When Imam Abu Hanifa had died, so many people had assembled for the funeral prayer, that the prayer had to be performed six times - the first congregation being no less attended by fifty thousand mourners. *Al Khatib al-Baghdadi* noted that for a full twenty days, people continued on performing the funeral prayer for him.

Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal is Abu ‘Abd Allah Ahmad al Shaybani al-Marwazi, born 164 in Baghdad, he was bestowed the title of the Imam of the Ahl al-Sunna. *Al-Dhababi* says of him: “The true Shaykh of Islam and leader of the

Muslims in his time, the hadith master and proof of the Religion.” He travelled extensively in search of hadith, and it was in Baghdad where he met *Imam al-Shafi’i*, with whom he studied usul al-fiqh and fiqh. When *Imam al-Shafi’i* departed from Baghdad, he said: “I did not leave behind me anyone more virtuous (afdal), more learned (a’lam), more knowledgeable (afqah) than Ahmad ibn Hanbal.” It is said of him that he knew no less than one million hadiths by heart. His Musnad is perhaps the largest single collection of ahadith that we have today, containing between thirty to forty thousand ahadith. It was estimated that the number of men present at his funeral was eight hundred thousand, and of women, sixty thousand.

Imam al-Bukhari is Abu ‘Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Isma’il al Bukhari, born in Bukhara in 194. He immersed himself in the study of hadith. His Sahih is said to have been heard by ninety thousand of his students, and is considered by almost all traditionalists to be the most reliable collection of hadith. A Shafi’i scholar who became the greatest Imam in hadith the world has ever known. Hearing hadiths from nearly one thousand Shaykh’s, he never wrote any hadith without first praying two rak’ats. The mistaken claim that all sahih ahadith have been preserved only in the jami’ of Bukhari and *Muslim* has been clearly indicated by the scholars of hadiths as not being true. *Ibn Kathir* highlighted that there are many authentic hadith that have been left out of both the Sahih of *Muslim* and *Bukhari* and can be found in other hadith collections of *al-Tirmidhi*, *Abu Dawud* and *Al-Nisa’i* for example. Hafiz Ibn Salah wrote that many authentic hadith have been collected by *al-Hakim* in his *Mustadrak*, meeting the principles and criteria adopted by both *Muslim* and *Bukhari*. In the preface of the *Fath al-Bari* by *Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani*, notes that there are approximately nine thousand six hundred and eight two narrations in sahih Bukhari, but each narration has been repeated many times. The total number of individual narrations in Bukhari is actually two thousand six hundred and twenty three.

Imam al-Ghazali is Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad, Abu Hamid al-Tusi al-Ghazali al-Shafi’i, ‘the Proof of Islam’ (Hujjat al-Islam), “Ornament of the Faith,” “Gatherer of the Multifarious Sciences,” “Great Siddiq,” absolute mujtahid, a major Shafi’i jurist, heresiographer and debater, expert in the principles of doctrine and those of jurisprudence. Born in 450, al-Ghazali is unanimously considered the Renewer of the Fifth Islamic

Century. *Ibn al-Subki* writes: “He came at a time when people stood in dire need of replies against the philosophers than the darkest night stands in need of the light of the moon and stars.” Al-Ghazali’s *Magnus opus* the *Ihya’ ‘Ulum al-Din* which ranks comfortably as one of the most widely read books in Islam, having earned the praise of the scholars and the general acceptance of the Community.

Imam Malik is Abu ‘Abd Allah Malik ibn Anas ibn Malik ibn Abi ‘Amir ibn ‘Amr ibn al-Harith ibn Ghayman ibn Khuthayl ibn ‘Amr ibn al-Harith al-Isbahi. He was the Shaykh al-Islam, the Proof of the community and the Imam of the Abode of Emigration. His contemporaries pointed out that he was the man of knowledge that the Messenger of Allah, May Allah bless him and grant him peace, mentioned when he said: ‘Very soon will people beat the flanks of camels in search of knowledge, and they shall find no-one more knowledgeable than the Knowledgeable scholar of Madina.’ He was born in 93 in Madina from a family that had been long settled there although originally from the Yemeni desert. Being among the third generation, Imam Malik was considered as a *Tabi’* at *Tabi’in* – a follower of the followers. He gained notoriety and dignity of being among the prominent transmitters of *Isnad ‘ali* (an *isnad* with only two chains of authority between the transmitter and the Messenger of Allah, May Allah bless him and grant him peace).

He excelled in the science of legal opinion, but very infrequently gave a legal opinion. He was extremely cautious lest that he would give a wrong opinion and mislead people. His book, *al-Muwatta’* (“The trodden path”) was written to preserve the essence of the Sunna, as well as being a book of *fiqh* which also included the legal opinions of the *Sahaba* and *Tabi’un*, as well as Imam Malik’s own legal opinion’s based upon *ijtihad* and the consensus of the scholars of Madina. The *Muwatta’* was the first comprehensive book of *fiqh* ever written in Islam, and has been preserved intact. Almost all the *hadiths* contained within the *Muwatta’* are included in the *Sahih* of *al-Bukhari* and *Muslim*. Regarding it, Abu Bakr ibn al-‘Arabi (the Maliki jurist par excellence) remarked: “The *Muwatta’* is the first foundation and the core, while *al-Bukhari*’s book is the second foundation in this respect. Upon these two, all the rest have been built, such as *Muslim* and *al-Tirmidhi*.” Within the lifetime of Imam Malik, the *Muwatta’* spread to the four corners of the Muslim world, attracting students from East to West.

Imam Muslim, is Abu al-Husayn ‘Asakir al-Din Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj ibn Muslim al-Qushayri al-Nisaburi, born in 202. His Sahih was almost compiled simultaneously with that of *Imam al-Bukhari’s*, and was to be considered superior by some, its equal by others, and second to it by most. He attended the lectures of most of the great hadith scholars of his day, including *Ahmad ibn Hanbal*. *Imam Nawawi* and *Imam Dhahabi* mention that Imam Muslim compiled his Sahih from three hundred thousand ahadith that he knew. The total number of ahadith in Sahih Muslim is twelve thousand. If repetitions can be left out, the actual number is four thousand.

Imam Nawawi is Yahya ibn Sharaf ibn Murri ibn Hasan Abu Zakariyya ‘Muhyi al-Din’ al-Nawawi al-Shafi’i. Born in southern Syria in 631, Imam Nawawi was the scholar of his time in knowledge, piety, a hadith master and biographer. He mastered many sciences and produced many great works on Shafi’i jurisprudence, hadith, history and legal opinion - his *Minhaj al-Talibin* (‘The seekers road’) has become the main reference for the Shafi’i School. Other masterful works of his include *Riyad al-Salihin* (‘The garden’s of the righteous’) *Kitab al-Adkhar* (‘The Book of the remembrance of Allah’) and his eighteen volume commentary of Sahih Muslim – *Sharh Sahih Muslim*.

Imam al-Qurtubi is Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Abu Bakr ibn Farah Abu ‘Abd Allah al-Ansari al-Qurtubi. A Maliki scholar and hadith specialist, he is one of the greatest Imams of Tafsir. His twenty volume commentary of the Qur’an - *al Jami li Ahkam al Qur’an* (‘The compendium of the rules of the Qur’an’) was unlike previous commentaries in that he recorded the legal rulings contained in the Qur’an; its canonical readings; Arabic grammar, and which verses abrogates others and which were abrogated. Scholars have used it extensively ever since it was written. He died in 671.

Imam al-Shafi’i, is Abu ‘Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Idris al-Shafi’i. Mujtahid Imam. He belonged to the tribe of the Quraysh, to whom his mother was related and was born in Ghazza or ‘Asqalan in 150, the year of *Imam Abu Hanifa’s* death. When he was about 20 he travelled to Madina to study with *Imam Malik*. During the course of his travels, al-Shafi’i studied at most of the great centres of jurisprudence and acquired a comprehensive knowledge of the different schools of legal theory. He also spent a period of study in Baghdad with an important jurist of the Hanafi School, al-Shaybani. After some further

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travels, he returned to Egypt in 815/816 and remained there for the rest of his life. His great contribution was the creation of a new synthesis of Islamic legal thought. Most of the ideas with which he worked were already familiar, but he had the insight to structure them in a new way. Primarily he dealt with the question of what the sources of Islamic law were and how these sources could be applied by the law to contemporary events. He laid down the foundations of fiqh in his *Risala*, which he said he revised and re-read four hundred times, then said: "Only Allah's Book is perfect and free from error." Like *Imam Abu Hanifa* and *al-Bukhari*, he recited the entire Qur'an each day at prayer, and twice a day in the month of Ramadan.

Imam Taqi al-Din Subki is 'Ali ibn 'Abd al-Kafi ibn 'Ali ibn Tamam Abu al-Hasan Taqi al-Din al-Subki. Born in Egypt in 683, he was the Shafi'i Imam and scholar of his time, brilliant intellectual, hadith master, Muffasir and Islamic judge who was described by *Ibn Hajar al-Haythami* as "the mujtahid Imam whose Imamate, greatness and having reached the level of ijtihad are agreed upon." *Al-Dhahabi* described him thus: "the most learned, eloquent, and wisest in judgement of all the Shaykhs of the age." Al-Subki educated the foremost scholars of his time.

Khatib al-Baghdadi is Abu Bakr Ahmad ibn 'Ali al-Shafi'i, born near Baghdad in 392. He was an authority on both asma' and hadith having many of his teachers as students. He is best known for his monumental biographical dictionary of literary figures, called *Tarikh Baghdad*. He provided the biographies of some seven thousand eight hundred and thirty one eminent men and women, mostly being hadith specialists who were either born in Baghdad, or came from elsewhere and taught in the City. He is regarded as the greatest hadith master of his time in the East, rivalled in the West only by *Ibn 'Abd al Barr*. He was one of the foremost scholars whom we witnessed in his science, precision, memorisation, and accuracy in the hadith of the Messenger of Allah, May Allah bless him and grant him peace. He was an expert in its minute defects, its chains of transmission, its narrators and transmitters, the sound and the rare, the unique and the denounced, the defective and the discarded. He wrote ten thousand pages totalling a hundred and four books, many of them remaining to our time authoritative manuals in hadith science noted for their insight and wide compass. *Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani* said in his introduction to *Sharh Nukhba al-Fikar*: "There is hardly a single discipline among the sciences

of hadith in which al-Khatib did not author a monograph.” Then he cited the hadith master Ibn Nuqta’s praise: “Whoever gives credit where credit is due knows that hadith scholars, after al-Khatib, all depend on his books.”

Qadi ‘Iyad is ‘Iyad ibn Musa ibn ‘Iyad ibn ‘Imran Abu al-Fadl al-Yahsabi. Born in Ceuta in 496, Qadi ‘Iyad was the Imam of his time in hadith and its sciences. He was a scholar of Tafsir, a faqih in usul, a scholar in grammar, language and Arabic speech. He was a Maliki scholar par excellence, and the Qadi of Granada. He wrote many books, including a commentary on the Sahih of *Imam Muslim*, the *Kitab Tartib al-Madarik wa Taqrib al-Masalik* on *Imam Malik* and the notable men around him. He perhaps is most well known for his *Kitab Ash-shifa bi tarif huquq al-Mustafa* (‘Healing by the recognition of the Rights of the Chosen One’) – perhaps the most frequently used and commented book in which the Messenger of Allah’s life, his qualities and his miracles are described in every detail, May Allah bless him and grant him peace.

Qadi Shawkani is Muhammad ibn ‘Ali ibn Muhammad ibn ‘Abd Allah al-Shawkani. Born in Yemen in 1173, he was a major scholar in Shari’ah and hadith. He authored 114 works in hadith, biography, Tafsir, fundamentals of Islamic jurisprudence and ‘aqida. His greatest work though is his eight-volume hadith commentary *Nayl al-awtar min asrar muntaqa al-akhbar* (‘The realisation of desires from the secrets of selected hadiths’).

Shah Wali Allah – a great intellectual figure of the eighteenth century, a prolific writer in Arabic and Persian. Born 1214, he wrote a large number of works, biographical, legal, as well as on Tasawuff. He had a particular respect for Imam Malik’s *al-Muwatta’*, writing two commentaries upon it, although his most influential teacher, al-Kurdi followed the Shafi’i madhab, and this seems to have been the dominant influence on Shah Wali Allah’s jurisprudence. A number of schools from the sub-continent all construe Shah Wali Allah as an intellectual progenitor.

Shaykh ‘Uthman Dan Fodio is Abu Muhammad ‘Uthman Dan Fuduye’ of the Turudbe Fulani clan. Born in Mratta in Gobir in 1168. A Maliki scholar, philosopher, and considered as the Renewer of the twelfth century. Travelling from teacher to teacher in the traditional way and reading extensively in the Islamic sciences, Uthman’s reputation increased, as did the size and importance

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of the community that looked to him for religious and political leadership. He was the focus of a network of students and the author of a large corpus of writings in Arabic and Fulani that covered most of the sciences and enjoyed, and still enjoy wide circulation and influence. His Magnus opus the 'Ihya al-Sunna wa Ikhmad al-Bid'a ('The Revival of the Sunna and Destruction of Innovation') demonstrated his vast scholarship. Shaykh Uthman's importance lies in his activities as founder of a *jama'a*, which brought the Hausa states and some neighbouring territories under a single central administration for the first time in history.

A P P E N D I X



THESE HADITH ARE CITED in the Six Books of authentic traditions for the most part, and are referred to indicate the deviant nature of Wahhabism by the 'ulema. They have been collated from the following two books:

a) al-Sayyid al-'Alawi ibn Ahmad ibn Hasan ibn 'Abd Allah ibn 'Alawi al-Haddad: *Misbah al-anam wa jala' al-zalam fi radd shubah al-bid'i al-Najdi al-lati adalla biha al-'awamm* ["The Lamp of Creatures and the Illumination of Darkness Concerning the Refutation of the Errors of the Innovator From Nejd by Which He Had Misled the Common People"] published 1325H.

b) al-Sayyid Ahmad ibn Zayni al-Dahlan (d. 1304/1886). Mufti of Mekka and Shaykh al-Islam in the Hijaz region of the Ottoman state: *Khulasat al-kalam fi bayan umara' al-balad al-haram* ["The Summation Concerning the Leaders of the Holy Sanctuary"] (A History of the Wahhabi Fitna in Nejd and the Hijaz) pp. 234-236.

The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said:

1. "They [the Khawarij] transferred the Qur'anic verses meant to refer to unbelievers and made them refer to believers."
2. "What I most fear in my community is a man who interprets verses of the Qur'an out of context."

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3. "The confusion [fitna] comes from there (and he pointed to the East = Nejd in present-day Eastern Saudi Arabia)."
4. "A people that recite Qur'an will come out of the East, but it will not go past their throats. They will pass through the religion (of Islam) like the arrow passes through its quarry. They will no more come back to the religion than the arrow will come back to its course. Their sign is that they shave (their heads)."
5. "There will be in my Community a dissent and a faction, a people with excellent words and vile deeds. They will read Qur'an, but their faith does not go past their throats. They will pass through religion the way an arrow passes through its quarry. They will no more come back to the religion than the arrow will come back to its original course."
6. "The apex of disbelief is towards the East [Nejd]. Pride and arrogance is found among the people of the horse and the camel [Bedouin Arabs]."
7. "Harshness and dryness of heart are in the East [Nejd], and true belief is among the people of Hijaz."
8. "O Allah, bless our Syria and our Yemen!" They said: "Ya Rasulallah, and our Nejd!" He didn't reply. He blessed Syria and Yemen twice more. They asked him to bless Nejd twice more but he didn't reply. The third time he said: "There [in Nejd] are the earthquakes and the dissensions, and through it will dawn the epoch [or horn] of shaytan."
9. A version has, "The two epochs [or horns] of shaytan." Some scholars have said that the dual referred to Musaylima the Arch-liar and to Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Wahhab.
10. Some versions continue with the words: "And in it [Nejd] is the consuming disease," i.e. death.

11. Some books of history mention the following version in the chapters devoted to the battles against the Banu Hanifa: "At the end of times a man will come out of Musaylima's country and he will change the religion of Islam."

Note: Most of the Khawarij were from the Nejd area, from the tribes of Banu Hanifa, Banu Tamim, and Wa'il. Musaylima was from the Banu Hanifa, and Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab is from Tamim.

12. Abu Bakr said concerning the Banu Hanifa (the tribe of Musaylima the Liar): "Their valley [Nejd] will not cease to be a valley of dissensions until the end of time, and the religion will never recover from their liars until Judgment Day," and in another version: "Woe to al-Yamama without end."

13. When 'Ali killed the Khawarij, someone said: "Praise be to Allah Who has brought them down and relieved us from them." Ali replied: "Verily, by the One in Whose hand is my soul, some of them are still in the loins of men and they have not been born yet, and the last of them will fight on the side of the Antichrist."

14. "A people that recite the Qur'an will come out of the East, but it will not go past their throats. Every time a generation of them is cut down another one will come until the last one finds itself on the side of the Antichrist."

15. "There will be a huge confusion within my Community. There will not remain one house of the Arabs except that confusion will enter it. Those who die because of it are in the fire. The harm of the tongue in it will be greater than that of the sword."

16. "There will be a dissension (in which people will be) deaf, dumb and blind (this means they will be blind and not see the true issue nor listen to the voice of truth): whoever tries to control it, the dissension will control him."

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17. "A shaytan will appear in Nejd by whose dissension the Arabian island will quake."

18. On the authority of al-`Abbas: "A man will come out of the Wadi Abu Hanifah [in Nejd] (whose appearance is) like a bull that lunges against its yoke. There will be much slaughter and killing in his time. They will make the possessions of Muslims lawful for themselves and for trade among themselves. They will make the lives of Muslims lawful for themselves and for boasting among themselves. In that confusion the despised and the lowly will attain positions of power. Their idle desires will keep company with them the way a dog keeps company with its master."

19. On the authority of Abu Sa`id al-Khudri: "Verily in the wake of this time of mine comes a people who will recite Qur'an but it will not go past their throats. They will pass through religion the way an arrow passes through its quarry. They will kill the Muslims and leave the idolaters alone. If I saw them, verily I would kill them the way the tribe of `Aad was killed [i.e. all of them]."

20. "There will be towards the end of time a people who will say to you what neither you nor your forebears ever heard before. Beware of them lest they misguide you and bring you confusion."

21. "They will pass through Islam like an arrow passes through its quarry."

22. "They recite Qur'an and consider it in their favor but it is against them."

23. "Some people will be standing and calling at the gates of hell; whoever responds to their call, they will throw him into the Fire. They will be from our own people [i.e. Arabs] and will speak our language [Arabic]. Should you live to see them, stick to the main body (jama`a) of the Muslims and their leader. (If there is no main body and no leader,) isolate yourself from all these sects, even if you have to eat from the roots of trees until death overcomes you while you are in that state."

24. "You will see the barefoot ones, the naked, the destitute, the shepherds and camel herds take pride in building tall structures in abundance."

25. "One of the signs of the change of religion is the affectation of eloquence by the rabble and their betaking to palaces in big cities."

After reading such collection of narrations regarding the fitna from the Nejd, one can see why the 'ulama were so staunch and unambiguous in their polemics against Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab and all those who followed him.



C H R O N O L O G Y



- 1703 Birth of Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahab
- 1744-45 Expelled from 'Uyaynah Settled in Ad Dir'iyah Capital of the Prince Muhammad Ibn Sa'ud—ruler of the Nejd (Alliance of the Theologian and Prince)
- 1746 Wahhabi-Saudi state declares Jihad against rest of Muslim
- 1765 Muhammed Ibn Sa'ud dies. His son Abd al-'Aziz I reigns 1765—1803
- 1792 Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahab dies
- 1792 Wahhabis attacks attracts Ottoman attention
- 1801 Wahhabis capture and attack Shia tombs and shrine in Karbala. A massacre ensues.
- 1802-1803 Sa'ud I captures Mekka: Wahhabi massacre of Ta'if
- 1804 Sa'ud I captures Medina

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- 1806 Second Wahhabi conquest of Medina
- 1811 The Wahhabis ruled all Arabia,
- 1812 Ottomans capture Mekka and Medina
- 1814 Sa'ud I dies and his son Abd Allah Ibn Sa'ud succeeds him
- 1815 Abd Allah accepts peace by the capture of Ar Ra's in al Qasim by Egyptians
- 1816 Peace short lived—Ibrahim Pasha commanding forces
- 1818 The Wahhabis were driven into the desert and Abd Allah is beheaded in Istanbul, and the local Wahhabis are executed
- 1821-1833 Wahhabis gain control over the Persian Gulf coast of Arabia.
- 1836-1838 Ottoman-Egyptian force invades and occupies Nejd, installs collateral branch of Al-Saud as rulers.
- 1865 First British contact with the Saudi family
- 1889 The Saud family fled for refuge into the neighboring state of Kuwait.
- 1891 The al-Rashid rulers of Hail (now in northern Saudi Arabia) conquer Riyadh, drive Al-Saud into exile in Kuwait, and recognize Ottoman suzerainty.
- 1902 Abd al-'Aziz Ibn Saud (later first king of Saudi Arabia) retakes Riyadh and founds modern Saudi state as Sultan of Nejd.

- 1912 Abd Al-'Aziz begins establishing settlements of Ikhwan ("brotherhood"—not to be confused with the Ikhwan al-Muslimin: The Muslim Brotherhood established by Hassan al-Banna in Egypt) of Wahhabi tribesmen in an effort to harness religious zeal on behalf of Saudi state.
- 1912 (*cont.*)
- 1915 Anglo-Saudi Treaty
- 1921-1922 British repeatedly repel Ikhwan threats to Kuwait, Transjordan, and Iraq, leading to Treaty of Uqayr defining Nejd's northern borders. Ikhwan raids continue as late as 1927.
- 1924-1927 Abd al-'Aziz conquers Hashemite Kingdom of Hijaz, including holy cities of Mekka and Medina; drives Hashemite family off Arabian Peninsula and becomes King of Nejd and Hijaz.
- 1928-1929 Abd al-'Aziz puts down rebellion of Ikhwan.
- 1932 Abd al-'Aziz proclaims Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- 1933 Oil concession granted to Standard Oil of California.
- 1938 Oil discovered in commercial quantities near Dhahran.
- 1945 President Roosevelt and King Abd al-'Aziz meet aboard USS Quincy in Great Bitter Lake, Egypt.
- 1947-1962 US builds and uses Dhahran Air Base.
- 1951 US Military Training Mission established.
- 1962 US deploys small force of F-100s to Saudi Arabia in

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reaction to Yemeni civil war.

1979-1989

US deploys small force of F-15s to Saudi Arabia in reaction to Iranian revolution, then deploys AWACS during Iran-Iraq war.

1979

'Radical' Wahhabis seize and occupy Grand Mosque in Mekka.

1989

Governor of Asir arrests conservative preacher on morals charges, provokes large demonstrations.

1990-1991

Coalition forces invited to use Saudi bases during Gulf war.



