



THE IMPORTANCE OF THE AHL AL-SUNNAH

[The believers are] those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered Prophet, whom they find written down with them in the Torah and the Gospel, commanding them to do right and forbidding them to do wrong, making good things lawful for them and bad things forbidden for them, relieving them of their heavy loads and the chains that were around them. Those who believe in him, honor and help him, and follow the Light that has been sent down with him are successful.

(Surat al-A'raf, 157)

HARUN YAHYA



The Sunnah is the living interpretation of the Qur'an by Prophet Muhammad (saw), the possessor of great moral values who had such great consideration for believers that he would become distressed when they were troubled and would relieve them of their burdens and chains of bigotry.

The Prophet (saw) is the best role model for all humanity. Believers look at his Sunnah and learn how to implement its precepts and practices in their lives. The Prophet's (saw) entire life reveals a seriousness, responsibility, and sensitivity of which not even the slightest detail is neglected. This is the result of our Prophet (saw) having taught "wisdom," alongside the Qur'an, to his community.

Islam can only be practiced together with the Sunnah and Muslims can only apply the Qur'an into real life with its help. The Sunnah, on the other hand, is the bulk of the Ahl al-Sunnah, which is the totality of our Prophet's (saw) authentic hadiths and their subsequent interpretations by the great Islamic scholars.

This book reminds the importance of the subject by explaining the basic tenets of the Ahl al-Sunnah. It should be noted that those who abandon the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (saw) will lose a highly auspicious reward and be deprived of his intercession on the Day of Judgment.



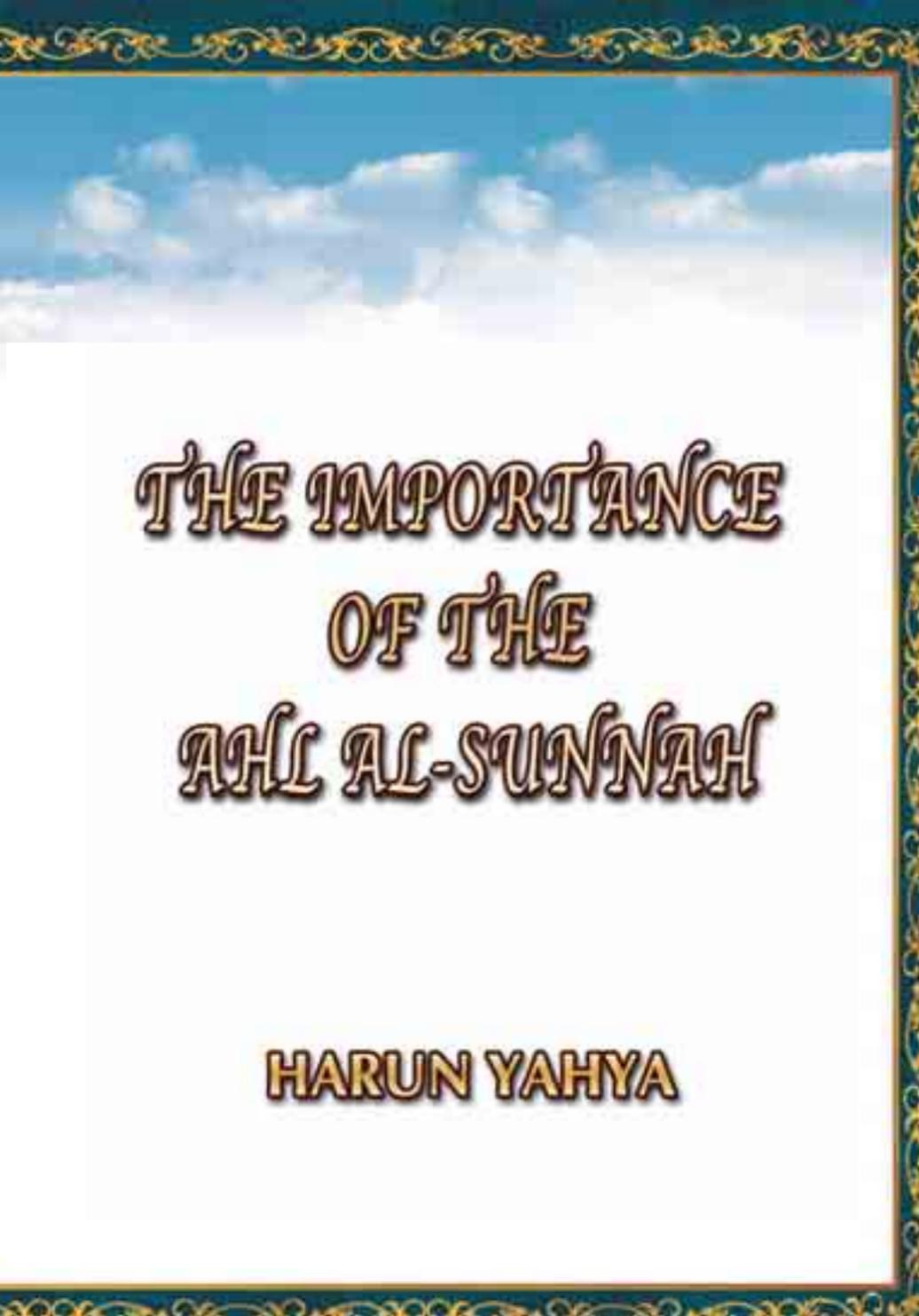
ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Adrian Okar, who writes under the pen-name Harun Yahya, was born in Ankara in 1954. He studied art at Istanbul's Mimar Sinan University, and philosophy at Istanbul University. Since the 1980s, the author has published many books on political, faith-related and scientific issues. Greatly appreciated all around the world, these works have been instrumental in helping many to return their faith to Allah (swt), and, in many others, to gain a deeper insight into their faith. Harun Yahya's books appeal to all kinds of readers, regardless of their age, race, or nationality, for they focus on one objective: to broaden the reader's perspective by encouraging him or her to think about a number of critical issues, such as the existence of Allah (swt) and His unity, and to live by the values He prescribed for them.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

اللَّهُ
رَسُولُ
مُحَمَّدٍ

TO THE READER

- A special chapter is assigned to the collapse of the theory of evolution because this theory constitutes the basis of all anti-spiritual philosophies. Since Darwinism rejects the fact of creation—and therefore, Allah's existence—over the last 140 years it has caused many people to abandon their faith or fall into doubt. It is therefore an imperative service, a very important duty to show everyone that this theory is a deception. Since some readers may find the chance to read only one of our books, we think it appropriate to devote a chapter to summarize this subject.
- All the author's books explain faith-related issues in light of Qur'anic verses, and invite readers to learn Allah's words and to live by them. All the subjects concerning Allah's verses are explained so as to leave no doubt or room for questions in the reader's mind. The books' sincere, plain, and fluent style ensures that everyone of every age and from every social group can easily understand them. Thanks to their effective, lucid narrative, they can be read at one sitting. Even those who rigorously reject spirituality are influenced by the facts these books document and cannot refute the truthfulness of their contents.
- This and all the other books by the author can be read individually, or discussed in a group. Readers eager to profit from the books will find discussion very useful, letting them relate their reflections and experiences to one another.
- In addition, it will be a great service to Islam to contribute to the publication and reading of these books, written solely for the pleasure of Allah. The author's books are all extremely convincing. For this reason, to communicate true religion to others, one of the most effective methods is encouraging them to read these books.
- We hope the reader will look through the reviews of his other books at the back of this book. His rich source material on faith-related issues is very useful, and a pleasure to read.
- In these books, unlike some other books, you will not find the author's personal views, explanations based on dubious sources, styles that are unobservant of the respect and reverence due to sacred subjects, nor hopeless, pessimistic arguments that create doubts in the mind and deviations in the heart.



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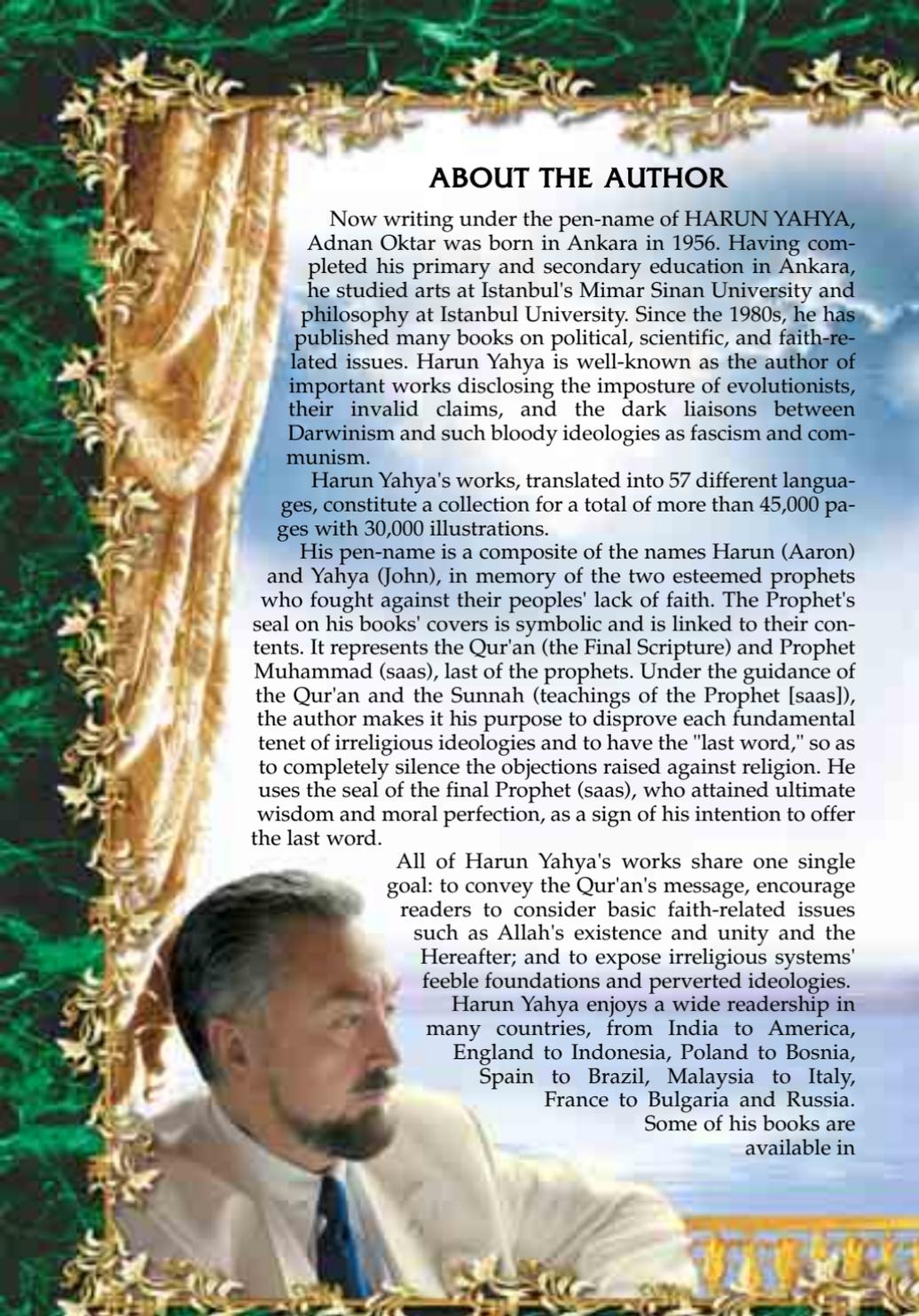
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(Surat al 'Araf, 157)





ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Now writing under the pen-name of HARUN YAHYA, Adnan Oktar was born in Ankara in 1956. Having completed his primary and secondary education in Ankara, he studied arts at Istanbul's Mimar Sinan University and philosophy at Istanbul University. Since the 1980s, he has published many books on political, scientific, and faith-related issues. Harun Yahya is well-known as the author of important works disclosing the imposture of evolutionists, their invalid claims, and the dark liaisons between Darwinism and such bloody ideologies as fascism and communism.

Harun Yahya's works, translated into 57 different languages, constitute a collection for a total of more than 45,000 pages with 30,000 illustrations.

His pen-name is a composite of the names Harun (Aaron) and Yahya (John), in memory of the two esteemed prophets who fought against their peoples' lack of faith. The Prophet's seal on his books' covers is symbolic and is linked to their contents. It represents the Qur'an (the Final Scripture) and Prophet Muhammad (saas), last of the prophets. Under the guidance of the Qur'an and the Sunnah (teachings of the Prophet [saas]), the author makes it his purpose to disprove each fundamental tenet of irreligious ideologies and to have the "last word," so as to completely silence the objections raised against religion. He uses the seal of the final Prophet (saas), who attained ultimate wisdom and moral perfection, as a sign of his intention to offer the last word.

All of Harun Yahya's works share one single goal: to convey the Qur'an's message, encourage readers to consider basic faith-related issues such as Allah's existence and unity and the Hereafter; and to expose irreligious systems' feeble foundations and perverted ideologies.

Harun Yahya enjoys a wide readership in many countries, from India to America, England to Indonesia, Poland to Bosnia, Spain to Brazil, Malaysia to Italy, France to Bulgaria and Russia.

Some of his books are available in

A decorative border with a repeating floral pattern in shades of green and gold, framing the text on a light blue background.

English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Urdu, Arabic, Albanian, Chinese, Swahili, Hausa, Dhivehi (spoken in Mauritius), Russian, Serbo-Croat (Bosnian), Polish, Malay, Uyгур Turkish, Indonesian, Bengali, Danish and Swedish.

Greatly appreciated all around the world, these works have been instrumental in many people recovering faith in Allah and gaining deeper insights into their faith. His books' wisdom and sincerity, together with a distinct style that's easy to understand, directly affect anyone who reads them. Those who seriously consider these books, can no longer advocate atheism or any other perverted ideology or materialistic philosophy, since these books are characterized by rapid effectiveness, definite results, and irrefutability. Even if they continue to do so, it will be only a sentimental insistence, since these books refute such ideologies from their very foundations. All contemporary movements of denial are now ideologically defeated, thanks to the books written by Harun Yahya.

This is no doubt a result of the Qur'an's wisdom and lucidity. The author modestly intends to serve as a means in humanity's search for Allah's right path. No material gain is sought in the publication of these works.

Those who encourage others to read these books, to open their minds and hearts and guide them to become more devoted servants of Allah, render an invaluable service.

Meanwhile, it would only be a waste of time and energy to propagate other books that create confusion in people's minds, lead them into ideological chaos, and that clearly have no strong and precise effects in removing the doubts in people's hearts, as also verified from previous experience. It is impossible for books devised to emphasize the author's literary power rather than the noble goal of saving people from loss of faith, to have such a great effect. Those who doubt this can readily see that the sole aim of Harun Yahya's books is to overcome disbelief and to disseminate the Qur'an's moral values. The success and impact of this service are manifested in the readers' conviction.

One point should be kept in mind: The main reason for the continuing cruelty, conflict, and other ordeals endured by the vast majority of people is the ideological prevalence of disbelief. This can be ended only with the ideological defeat of disbelief and by conveying the wonders of creation and Qur'anic morality so that people can live by it. Considering the state of the world today, leading into a downward spiral of violence, corruption and conflict, clearly this service must be provided speedily and effectively, or it may be too late.

In this effort, the books of Harun Yahya assume a leading role. By the will of Allah, these books will be a means through which people in the twenty-first century will attain the peace, justice, and happiness promised in the Qur'an.

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Abbreviations used:

(*swt* - *Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala*): Glory be to Him (after the name of Almighty Allah)

(*saas* - *sall-Allahu 'alyahi wa sallam*): May Allah bless him and grant him peace (following a reference to Prophet Muhammad)

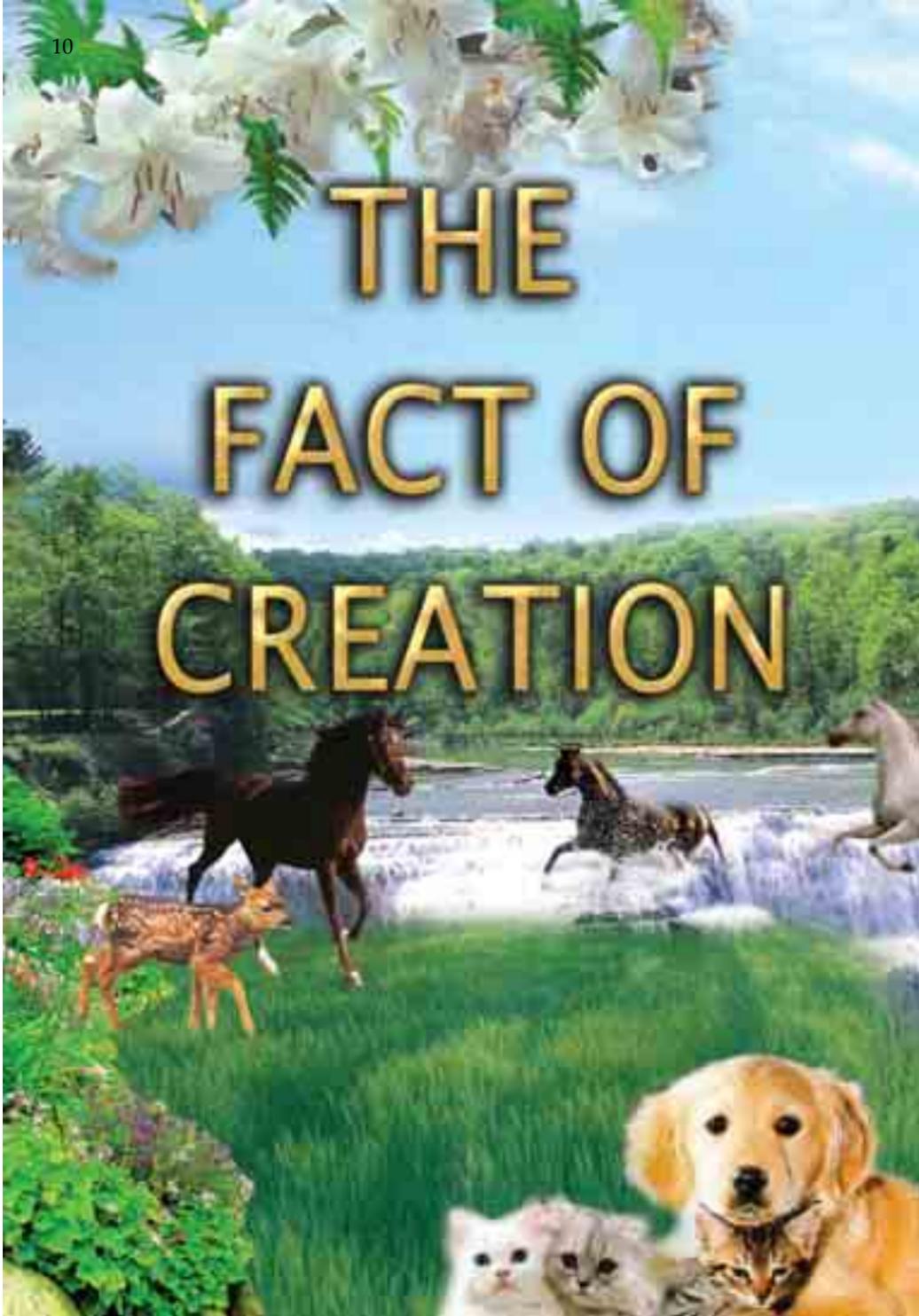
(*as* - *'alayhi's-salam*): Peace be upon him (following a reference to the prophets)

(*ra* - *Radiy Allahu Anhu* or *Anha*): May Allah be pleased with him/her (following a reference to the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad)

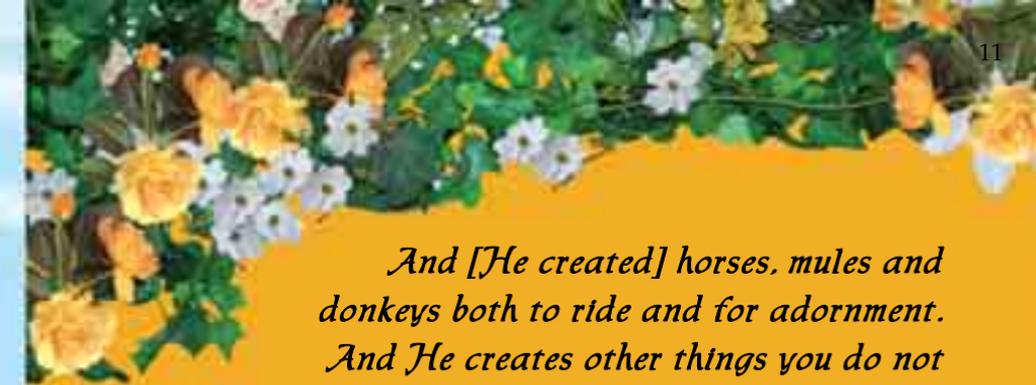
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THE FACT OF CREATION



And [He created] horses, mules and donkeys both to ride and for adornment. And He creates other things you do not know. (Surat an-Nahl, 8)



The beaks of gull species vary according to their feeding habits. The hook-tipped beak of seagulls, for example, and especially of carnivorous seagulls, is well suited to seizing and tearing. The beaks of some species, such as the white terns and sea parrots living by the shores of the Atlantic, however, have a structure permitting them to dive and catch fish while carrying others. The variety among birds of the same type is a means whereby we can come to know the matchless artistry of Almighty Allah (swt).

www.harunyahya.net



The human nose undertakes the responsibility to warm and moisturize the air we inhale. The mucus layer covering the interior surface of the nose releases water vapor to moisture the air that enters. The large numbers of capillaries immediately beneath the mucus layer also warm the passing air, adapting it to the sensitive structure of the lungs. This mechanism resembles the air conditioning system that regulates the levels of temperature and humidity in buildings. The processes summarized in outline here are in fact exceedingly complex.

www.creationofman.net



The eye is linked to the brain by some 600,000 nerves, which receive and arrange 1.5 million messages at one single moment and send them to the brain at a speed of 500 kilometers an hour. When you look at a single point you actually see hundreds of details. Miraculously, the eye distinguishes these from all the messages reaching it, analyzes and forwards each of them to the brain.

www.darwinismrefuted.com



The behavior of worker honeybees is consistent and purposeful. While one bee readies cells for eggs, another moves across the combs to attend the queen and a third forages. Each worker bee knows what to do and how to do it by the inspiration of Almighty Allah (swt).

www.AllahExists.com



Enzymes have been charged with accelerating reactions. They can accelerate a reaction by up to billion times. Were it not for that speed, the reading of this sentence would last 1,500 years. Indeed, in the time it takes you to read this sentence, many reactions that keep you alive would be waiting, and cells, unaware of one another and inactive, would one by one start to die. However, thanks to a flawless creation, this does not happen, and enzymes fully discharge their duties.

www.creationofuniverse.com



Orchids employ various methods to reproduce. Some, for example, do not produce nectar, only the smell of it. They thus deceive bees taken in by that perfume, where there is actually no nectar at all, and make them carry their pollen away. There is absolutely no doubt that the way a plant is able to reproduce the scent of nectar without in reality manufacturing any in order to have its pollen carried off is not a phenomenon that takes place due to the consciousness of these plants themselves. Like all other life forms, plants, devoid of any mind or consciousness, act under the inspiration of Allah (swt).



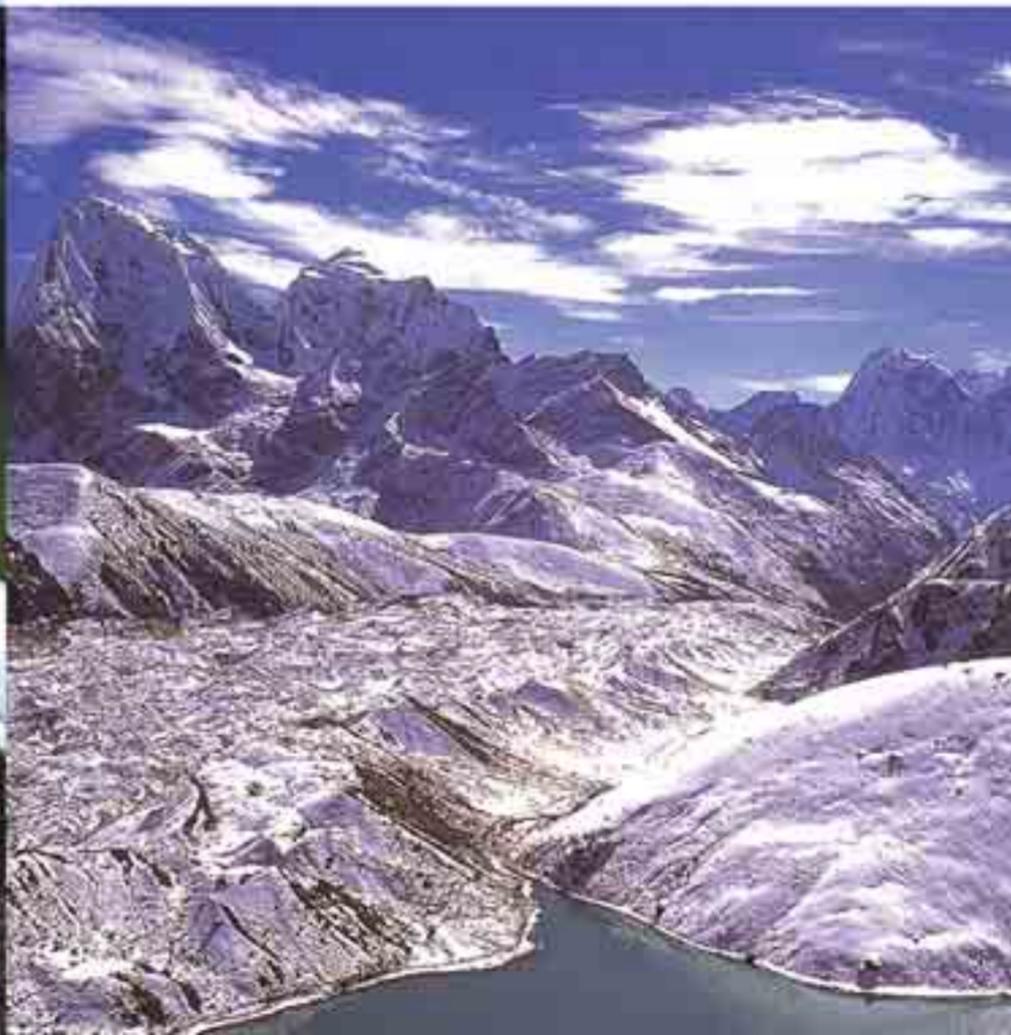
Sea swallows that live by the North Pole beat their wings constantly on an annual flight of 30,000-40,000 kilometers they make every year. These birds live at the North Pole, and every year they migrate from their breeding grounds in North America, Greenland and Siberia and head straight for the North Pole for the winter.

www.evidencesofcreation.com



Have you ever wondered how it is that fish living in the icy polar waters do not freeze? These fish have a gene to produce a protein that raises the temperature of the ice crystals in their skin up to -20 degrees Celsius. This protein bonds to the oxygen molecules in the ice crystals, preventing them from expanding, and thus stopping the fish freezing.

www.miraclesofthequran.com



The theory of evolution claims that birds evolved from small theropod dinosaurs—in other words, from reptiles. The fact is, however, that anatomical comparisons between birds and reptiles refute this claim, as does the fossil record. The fossil pictured belongs to an extinct species of bird known as *Confuciusornis*, the first specimen of which was discovered in China in 1995. *Confuciusornis* bears a close resemblance to present-day birds and has demolished the scenario of avian evolution.

Confuciusornis

Period: Mesozoic Age, Cretaceous

Age: 120 million years

Location: China



A pictorial reconstruction of Confuciusornis (above)



Hornbeams of some 30 to 40 different species occur across much of the North Temperate regions, with the greatest number of species in East Asia, particularly China. A few species occur in Europe and North America. Fossil findings reveal that hornbeams alive today and those that lived tens of millions of years ago were no different. Hornbeams challenge Darwinist claims and proclaim Creation as an obvious fact.

Period: Eocene

Age: 54-37 million years

*Location: Cache Creek Formation,
British Columbia, Canada*



A present-day specimen of hornbeam leaf



One piece of evidence invalidating the scenario of plants' evolution is the ginkgo leaf pictured, which is approximately 50 million years old. This fossil shows that ginkgos have not originated from another plant or transformed into another species. This places evolutionists in a deadlock.

www.evolutiondeceit.com

Ginkgo Leaf

Period: Eocene

Age: 54-37 million years

Location: Cache Creek

*Formation, British Columbia,
Canada*



A present-day ginkgo leaf



The structure of cones, organs on conifers that contain the plant's ovaries, has remained the same for millions of years, as with the structures of all other living species. This cone, 65 to 23 million years old, and identical ones of our day are one of the important examples revealing that throughout these long ages, evolution has never occurred.

www.theprophetmuhammad.org

Pine Cone

Period: Cenozoic era, Paleogene subperiod

Age: 65-23 million years

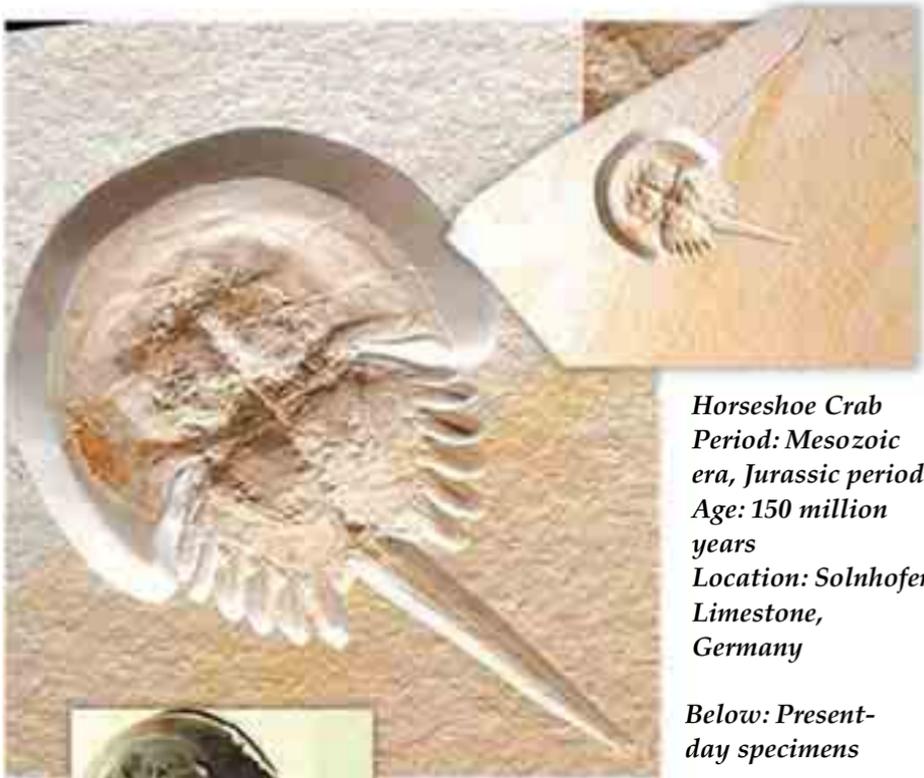
Location: Germany

The illustrations below show present-day cones no different from the fossil specimen.



Horseshoe crabs belong to a subphylum of the arachnids called *Chelicerata*, and are more closely related to spiders and scorpions. The 150-million-year-old fossil of a horseshoe crab shown here demonstrates once again that Creation is a fact and that the process of evolution never occurred.

www.living-fossils.com



*Horseshoe Crab
Period: Mesozoic
era, Jurassic period
Age: 150 million
years
Location: Solnhofen
Limestone,
Germany*

*Below: Present-
day specimens*



The sturgeons, of which only two families remain in existence, have always been sturgeons. They have neither developed from, nor turned into any other species. Fossil finds corroborate the fact that like all other creatures, sturgeons have never undergone any process of evolution.

www.riseofislam.com



Sturgeon

Period: Mesozoic era,

Jurassic period

Age: 144-65 million years

Location: China



There is no difference between the sturgeon in the picture to the side and the 144-million-year-old fossil sturgeon above.



Another scientific discovery showing that there was no process of evolution, as the Darwinists claim, is the fossilized shrimp illustrated here. Since shrimp first came into existence, they have always displayed all the same organs and characteristics as they have today and have undergone no changes in all that time. This shrimp fossil shows plainly that evolution is an imaginary scenario.

www.darwinism-watch.com



Shrimp

Period: Mesozoic era,

Jurassic period

*Age: 150 million
years*

*Location: Solnhofen
Limestone, Germany*

One of the fossils that demonstrate the clear fact of Creation is shown here: the nearly 150-million-year-old remains of a shrimp, which is no different from its present-day counterparts.



The fossil record is sufficiently rich to account for the origin of life, and it reveals a concrete picture: Different species all emerged independently of one another, suddenly, and with all their different structures. No imaginary evolutionary "intermediate forms" existed among them. This is one of the proofs that Almighty Allah (swt) created all living creatures.

www.fossil-museum.com



Crab

Period: Oligocene

Age: 37-23 million years

Location: Denmark

Right: Present-day crabs



Assassin bugs are predatory insects of the *Reduviidea* family. Some of the species are able to transmit to humans a fatal malady known as Chagas' disease. It is this very insect that poisoned Darwin and caused him to spend the rest of his life in pain. This species uses its antenna to inject its poison and liquefies its victim's tissues.

Right: An assassin bug living today



Assassin Bug

Period: Cenozoic era, Oligocene – Miocene epochs

Age: 25 million years

Location: Dominican Republic



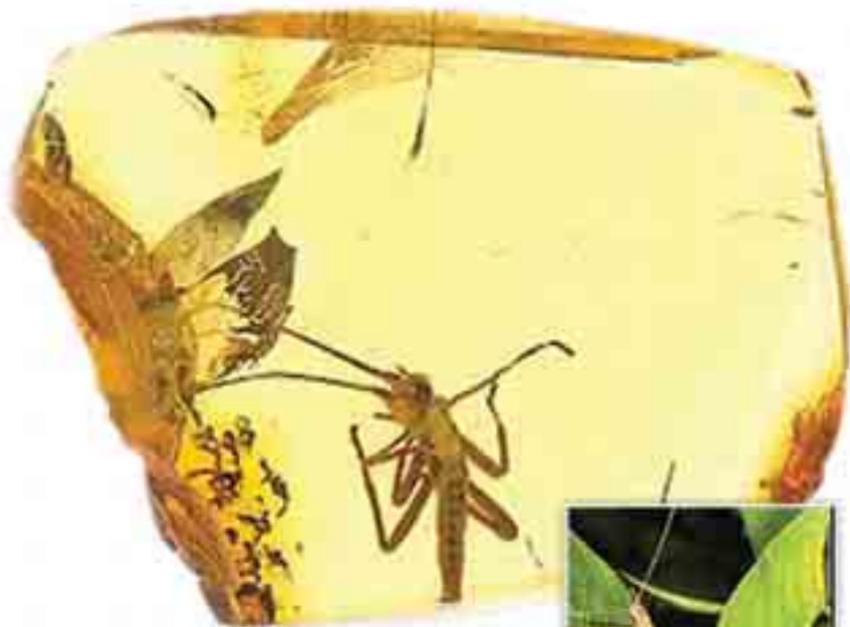
The stick insects are known for their ponderously slow movements and superb camouflage. With their long bodies, antennae and colors, they do indeed resemble slender twigs. Animals that use various forms of camouflage enjoy special protection with their bodily structures, shapes, colors and patterns, all created to match the environments they inhabit.

Stick Insect

Period: Eocene

Age: 45 million years

Location: Russia



To the side can be seen a present-day stick insect.



Darwin knew that his theory could be verified only by the fossil record, for which reason he pinned great hopes on paleontological research. Yet no intermediate-form fossil has been found over the 150 or so years since Darwin's day. So his claims have never been confirmed. Fossils have buried Darwin's theory of evolution, whose invalidity is now a proven fact. One such fossil is this 95-million-year-old fossil squid, identical to living present-day specimens.

www.evolutiondocumentary.com



Squid

Period: Cretaceous

*Age: 95 million
years*

Location: Lebanon



The 37- to 23-million-year-old fossil turtle seen here is no different from turtles alive now, in all its perfect detail. Faced with these proofs, there's one important fact that evolutionists ought to accept. David B. Kitts, an evolutionist in the department of Geology and Geophysics at Oklahoma University, says that "*Evolution requires intermediate forms between species and paleontology does not provide them.*" (David B. Kitts, "Paleontology and Evolutionary Theory," *Evolution*, Vol. 28, September 1974, p. 467)

www.thestoneage.org



Seen from beneath with its perfect details the fossil turtle (top right) is no different from present-day turtles (top left).

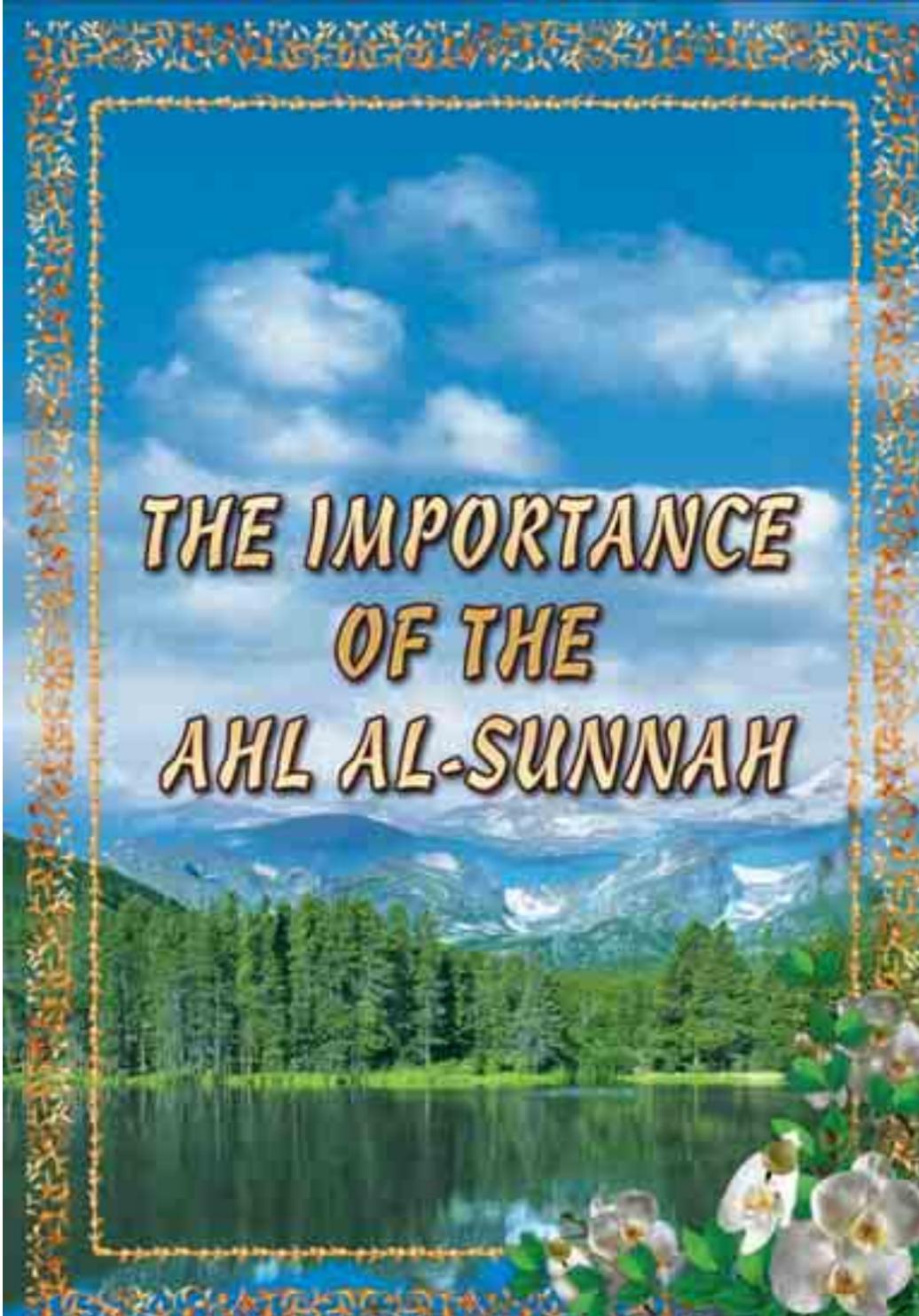


Turtle

Period: Oligocene

Age: 37-23 million years

Location: Brule Formation,
Nebraska, USA



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(Surat al-A'raf, 157)

WHO ARE THE AHL AL-SUNNAH?

The Ahl al-Sunnah are those Muslims who believe and live according to the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Only possessing the

faith of the Ahl al-Sunnah enables one to gain the knowledge of faith that will lead one to eternal salvation and knowledge of Allah (swt). In order to abide by the Sunnah, it is necessary to recognize and follow our Prophet's (saas) application of the Qur'an and that of his Companions, who act as a bridge between us and the Sunnah. Our Prophet (saas) has stated the status of and need for his Companions:

“My ummah will divide into seventy-three sects. And all of them will belong to Hell except for one (which will belong to Paradise).” The Companions asked him to identify the sect and he said, “The one that will follow the path on which I walk and my Companions walk.” (al-Tirmidhi)

This sect that attains salvation is known as “al-Firqah al-Najiyah” (the Saved Sect). Another name for it is “Ahl al-Sunnah wal Jama'ah” (those on the path of the Prophet [saas] and his companions).

All schools agree, in terms of theology and jurisprudence, on the line drawn by the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. These schools strive to understand, explain, and live by the will of Allah (swt) and His Prophet (saas).

When describing the Ahl al-Sunnah, it is also necessary to describe Salafism, a term derived from the word “salaf.” “Salaf” is the general name given to the Prophet's (saas) Companions, who followed him in the finest possible manner, and to those who followed them. *Al-'aqidah al-Salaf* was the belief of all Muslims before the different schools of theology (*i'tiqad*) emerged. In other words, it is the *aqidah* of the generations of the *Ashab al-Kiram* and *Tabi'un*. Its fundamental doctrine is that the Qur'an's verses and the hadiths are to be accepted literally. Over time, two schools of theology appeared: the Maturidiyyah and Ash'ariyyah.

Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi, the founder of the Maturidiyyah school, was born in the village of Maturid, Samarkand, in 238 AH (852 CE) and died in Samarkand in 333 AH (944 CE). His general approach was to employ reason together with revelation and to interpret verses and hadiths, when necessary, by using reason. Most Hanafis and Turks follow this school.

Abu al-Hasan al-Ash`ari, the imam of the Ash`ariyyah school, was born in Basra in 260 AH (873 CE) and died in Baghdad in 324 AH (936 CE). Since his lineage includes the Companion Abu al-Musa al-Ash`ari, he is referred to as al-Ash`ari. Since he was affiliated to the Shafi`i school in deeds, his views were more taken up and disseminated among the Shafi`is. The Malikis also followed his views. Members of the Maturidiyyah and Ash`ariyyah schools differ on very few matters.

The Maturidiyyah and Ash`ariyyah schools represent the Ahl al-Sunnah's belief. Many other views and schools emerged, such as the Kharijites, Mu'tazilah, Murjiah, Jabriyyah, Mushabbihah, and others. These, in turn, have other subdivisions. These groups are not considered part of the Ahl al-Sunnah.

All of the schools within the Ahl al-Sunnah are in the circle of truth (*haqq*) and on the true path. The differences among them do not cause corruption (*fitnah*); rather, they bring mercy. Therefore, those who belong to one of these schools must also appreciate the other schools of truth.

The schools of truth that have emerged in the sphere of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and theology (*i`tiqad*) do not deviate from the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Thus, they do not represent a new religion, but rather are branches that serve Islam in the fields of belief, religious observances, ethics and instruc-

tion. They are the expressions of Islam as it actually is. All emerged as the result of a serious need, and all are based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

Believers must reflect on Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and ethics just as they do on belief, because each one is a component and complement of the others. *Fiqh* enables people to know what will (and will not) benefit them in all areas of life. Religion is made up of faith, religious observance, and good manners.

BELIEVERS ARE TOLD IN THE QUR'AN TO OBEY THE SUNNAH OF THE PROPHET (SAAS)

The Sunnah is indivisible from the Qur'an, for it is the living interpretation of the Qur'an by Prophet Muhammad (saas), the possessor of great moral values who had such great consideration for believers that he would become distressed when they were troubled and would relieve them of their burdens and chains of bigotry.

The Qur'an cannot be understood and implemented in one's life without the Sunnah. For example, in the Qur'an Allah (swt) tells believers to be affectionate toward each other, speak good words, and behave modestly. Commanding the right, forbidding the wrong, communicating the moral values of Islam to all humanity are set out as obligatory duties (*fara'id*). Cleanliness has been made obligatory. However, such matters are explained in the Qur'an in certain ways. Believers learn about the examples how to actually implement all these commands in their lives by means of the practices of the Prophet (saas). In the Qur'an, Allah (swt) reveals:

You have an excellent model in the Messenger of Allah, for all who put their hope in Allah and the

Last Day and remember Allah much. (Surat al-Ahzab, 21)

The Prophet (saas) is the best role model for all humanity. Believers look at his Sunnah and learn how to implement its precepts and practices in their lives. Indeed, as soon as one looks at the Sunnah, one can see that the Prophet (saas) instructed his community in all matters and showed them how to act befitting a Muslim's honor. The Prophet's (saas) entire life reveals a seriousness, responsibility, and sensitivity of which not even the slightest detail is neglected. This is the result of our Prophet (saas) having taught "wisdom," alongside the Qur'an, to his community:

Allah showed great kindness to the believers when He sent a Messenger to them from among themselves to recite His Signs to them, purify them and teach them the Book and Wisdom, even though before that they were clearly misguided. (Surah Al 'Imran, 164)

THE DANGER OF ABANDONING THE SUNNAH

"The loss of the religion starts with the abandonment of the Sunnah. Just as a rope breaks fiber by fiber, so does religion vanish with one by one abandoning the Sunnah."
(ad-Darimi)

Various heresies have appeared during the history of Islam. Different sects have turned away from Islam's essence and adopted heretical beliefs and un-Islamic practices.

In our day, too, some people reject the Sunnah of the Prophet (saas). "We read the Qur'an," they say, "and interpret

it for ourselves without the need for any clarification by the Prophet (saas).” They turn their backs on the Sunnah, the practical application and implementation of the Qur’an.

The fact is that these people who have abandoned the Sunnah in fact ignore the Qur’an’s commandments. That is because the Sunnah is an explanation of the Qur’an and more importantly, the Qur’an orders Muslims to follow it. Allah (swt) has not only made obeying the Qur’an obligatory, but also obeying the Prophet (saas).

For this reason, Islam can only be practiced together with the Sunnah and Muslims can only apply the Qur’an into real life with its help. The Sunnah, on the other hand, is the belief of the Ahl al-Sunnah, which is the totality of our Prophet’s (saas) authentic hadiths and their subsequent interpretations by the great Islamic scholars.

Complying with the Sunnah means obeying the Prophet (saas)

The vital importance of the Prophet (saas) to believers is emphasized, as follows, in the Qur’anic verses addressed to him:

We have sent you bearing witness, bringing good news, and warning so that you might all believe in Allah and His Messenger as well as honor, respect, and glorify Him in the morning and the evening. Those who pledge their allegiance to you pledge allegiance to Allah. Allah’s hand is over their hands. Those who break their pledge only break it against themselves. But as for those who fulfill the contract they have made with Allah, We will give

them an immense reward. (Surat al-Fath, 8-10)

One who has taken a vow of allegiance to the Prophet (saas) has taken it to Allah (swt). Our Lord also tells us that:

Whoever obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah. (Surat an-Nisa', 80)

We can see from this verse just how important such obedience is. All Muslims are obliged to obey him due to his nature as a role model and his identity as a rule-maker. The Qur'an reveals that complying with our Prophet's (saas) commands and rules is just as obligatory as is complying with the verses in the Book of Allah (swt). Indeed, in another verse, our Lord tells us this with regard to the Prophet's (saas) power of forbidding and commanding:

[The believers are] those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered Prophet, whom they find written down with them in the Torah and the Gospel, commanding them to do right and forbidding them to do wrong, making good things lawful for them and bad things forbidden for them, relieving them of their heavy loads and the chains that were around them. Those who believe in him, honor and help him, and follow the Light that has been sent down with him are successful. (Surat al-A'raf, 157)

In another verse, our Lord states:

You should accept whatever the Messenger gives you and abandon whatever he tells you to abandon. Have taqwa of Allah... (Surat al-Hashr, 7)

These verses show that in addition to what the Qur'an prohibits, the Prophet (saas) can prohibit other things to his com-

munity. Therefore, our Prophet (saas) states in one hadith: ***“Avoid that which I forbid you to do and do that which I command you to do to the best of your capacity.”*** (Sahih Muslim, Book 30, Hadith No. 5818)

Other verses refer to the Prophet’s (saas) role as a rule-maker. Muslims take any matter on which they cannot agree to the Prophet (saas) and thereby obtain the best possible outcome.

O you who believe, obey Allah, the Messenger, and those in command among you. If you disagree about something, refer it back to Allah and the Messenger, if you believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is the best thing to do and gives the best result. (Surat an-Nisa’, 59)

So absolute is the Prophet’s (saas) status as rule-maker that Allah (swt) told believers to obey his decisions wholeheartedly and without any doubt:

No, by your Lord, they are not believers until they make you their judge in the disputes that break out between them and then do not resist what you decide and submit themselves [to you] completely. (Surat an-Nisa’, 65)

In another verse, the definitive nature of the Prophet’s (saas) judgment is set out in these terms:

When Allah and His Messenger have decided something, no believing man or woman has a choice about [following or not following] it. Anyone who disobeys Allah and His Messenger is clearly misguided. (Surat al-Ahzab, 36)

Opposing the Prophet's (saas) role as rule-maker and disobeying his rules constitute denial:

But if anyone opposes the Messenger after the guidance has become clear to him, and follows a path other than that of the believers, We will hand him over to whatever he has turned to, and We will roast him in Hell. What an evil destination! (Surat an-Nisa', 115)

Since the Prophet's (saas) status as rule-maker and role model is set out in the Qur'an in such a clear and firm manner, to advocate turning one's back on the Sunnah of the Prophet (saas) means opposing the Qur'an. Following him in everything he did and in every rule of his is the same as following Islam itself. Turning away from his Sunnah, on the other hand, means turning away from the essence of Islam.

Indeed, the Companions lived their lives in such a way that all of their actions and words were in perfect accord with both the Qur'an and the Prophet (saas). One Companion relayed the following quotation:

“Allah (swt) sent us Muhammad (saas) as the prophet at a time when we knew nothing. Whatever we saw Muhammad do, we do the same, in the same way.” (al-Nasa'i, Taqdir I)

Clearly, the idea of “let's go back to the Qur'an, for we have no need of the Sunnah” is incompatible with Islam and stems from a profound ignorance of Islam. Those who hold such a view resemble people who want to enter a palace but are unwilling to use the key that opens its door. The Sunnah saves those who embrace it, for as Dahhak states: ***“Paradise and the Sunnah are in the same position, because those who enter Paradise in the Hereafter are saved, and those who***

cling to the Sunnah in this world [are also saved].” (Tafsir al-Qurtubi, XIII/365) Imam Malik compared the Sunnah to Noah’s (as) ark, for ***“whoever boards it will be saved, and whoever does not will drown.”*** (al-Suyuti, *Miftah al-Jannah*, pp. 53-54)

So great a vehicle of salvation is the Sunnah that in the Qur’an our Lord reveals that the Prophet’s (saas) commands and prohibitions “will bring people to life”:

O you who believe, respond to Allah and to the Messenger when He calls you to what will bring you to life. Know that Allah intervenes between a person and his heart and that you will be gathered to Him. (Surat al-Anfal, 24)

Islam is the totality of the Qur’an and the Prophet’s (saas) Sunnah; there is no question of eliminating either one.

The source that conveys to us the Prophet’s (saas) exemplary behavior, as well as his wisdom and judgments, is the Sunnah, the creed of the Ahl al-Sunnah.

The prophets call believers to the life-giving path

O you who believe, respond to Allah and to the Messenger when He calls you to what will bring you to life. Know that Allah intervenes between a person and his heart and that you will be gathered to Him. (Surat al-Anfal, 24)

Looking at human history reveals that life began with the prophets. This is a true statement, for no religion can be comprehended and implemented in the absence of a prophet. For

that reason, a messenger has been sent as a guide to every community.

As with the other prophets, Allah (swt) sent Prophet Muhammad (saas) with the perfect religion and the straight path. He has also made him a prophet for everyone until the Day of Judgment. Obeying, respecting, and loving him, in addition to imitating his lifestyle and abiding by his Sunnah, are responsibilities that all Muslims must try to fulfill.

Indeed, in the Qur'an obedience to the Prophet (saas) is considered as the same as obedience to Allah (swt). Believers are told to take the Qur'an and the Sunnah as their guides in matters on which they disagree. The following command is given in the Noble Qur'an:

No, by your Lord, they are not believers until they make you their judge in the disputes that break out between them and then do not resist what you decide and submit themselves [to you] completely. (Surat an-Nisa', 65)

As this verse makes crystal clear, the Prophet's (saas) Sunnah is an absolute and immaculate source of commands, because it is the way of "interpreting, explaining, and applying the Qur'an." Therefore, no believer has the right to make interpretations (*ta'wil*) or be disobedient with regard to the Sunnah, the application of the Qur'an.

When Allah and His Messenger have decided something, no believing man or woman has a choice about [following or not following] it. Anyone who disobeys Allah and His Messenger is clearly misguided. (Surat al-Ahzab, 36)

In another verse, our Lord reveals:

The believers' reply, when they are summoned to Allah and His Messenger so that he can judge between them, is to say, "We hear and we obey." They are ones who are successful. (Surat an-Nur, 51)

Each verse in the Qur'an that deals with obeying the Prophet (saas) states that doing so is obligatory for believers. That is why the Prophet's (saas) practices are impeccable and are under the protection of Allah (swt). To put it another way, everything in the Sunnah is, in essence, based upon revelation.

Nor does he speak from whim. It is nothing but Revelation revealed. (Surat al-Najm, 3-4)

Therefore, when disagreement arises, believers are obliged to turn to the Qur'an and the Sunnah, Islam's two fundamental reference points:

If you disagree about something, refer it back to Allah and the Messenger, if you believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is the best thing to do and gives the best result. (Surat an-Nisa', 59)

Not only did the Prophet (saas) transmit the verses he received from Allah (swt) to humanity, but he also explained them. Therefore, the Sunnah can be regarded as the interpretation of the Qur'an. Viewing it in this way will protect it from corruption, misunderstanding, and distortion and also facilitate its being understood.

Another verse reveals:

Say: "If you love Allah, then follow me and Allah will love you and forgive your sins." (Surah Al 'Imran, 31)

An indication of one's love for Allah (swt), therefore, is fol-

lowing His Prophet (saas), for doing so reveals that he/she is a follower of Allah (swt). No believer can regard obedience to Allah (swt) as sufficient and abandon obedience to the Prophet (saas). The Prophet (saas) gives the following glad tidings to those who comply with the Sunnah: ***“Whoever gives life to my Sunnah certainly loves me, and whoever loves me is with me in Paradise.”*** (al-Tirmidhi)

While the Prophet (saas) imparts the above glad tidings to those who adhere by the Sunnah, in the Qur’an, our Lord warns the terrible consequences that result from rebelling against the Prophet (saas):

As for those who disobey Allah and His Messenger and overstep His limits, We will admit them into a Fire, remaining in it timelessly, forever. They will have a humiliating punishment. (Surat an-Nisa’, 14)

Those who are unable to understand the Sunnah’s importance and who criticize it, despite what has been related above, are acting directly against the Prophet (saas).

The Prophet’s (saas) words and behavior, described as “conforming to sublime morality” by Allah (swt) in the Qur’an, and by Aisha (ra) in her words that ***“the Prophet’s (saas) nature was the Qur’an,”*** constitute a role model for all human beings. Just as one cannot attain true virtue without taking him as a role model, neither can one attain happiness in this world and the Hereafter without doing so.

Those who abandon the Sunnah will lose a highly auspicious reward and be deprived of his intercession on the Day of Judgment. Moreover, turning one’s back on the Sunnah of the Prophet (saas), who was most affectionate toward his ummah and most sensitive to any harm that might befall them, is show-

ing ingratitude to such a great blessing:

A Messenger has come to you from among yourselves. Your suffering is distressing to him. He is deeply concerned about you, and is gentle and merciful to the believers. (Surat at-Tawba, 128)

Those who hold mistaken opinions about the practices of the Prophet Muhammad (saas) fail to comprehend the importance of his role. The duty entrusted to him requires a sense of responsibility so great that even the slightest detail could not be ignored. That is why our Prophet (saas) has so much to tell us on so many subjects, from trade to health, and from solidarity to education.

The Sunnah's fundamental principle is its applicability. ***"Treat the people with ease and don't be hard on them. Give them glad tidings and don't fill them with aversion"*** (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 4, Book 52, Hadith No. 275) is the clearest indication of this. His wife Aisha (ra) stated that he told his people to do that which they could easily accomplish. Therefore, everyone can adopt the Sunnah. His life is an example of applying the Qur'an to one's daily life for every believer.

Another issue is the damaging results that arise when people abandon the Sunnah. Some Muslims, out of ignorance or idleness, have imposed heresy on the Islamic world by coming up with stipulations based on the speculations of people who essentially have no knowledge of Islam, or by following their own interpretations instead of the Sunnah's guidance.

The Islamic world's political and economic problems occurred because the Muslims abandoned the Qur'an and the Prophet's (saas) Sunnah. The ensuing instability will continue until believers understand that they are members of the com-

munity of the same prophet and strive to develop a community worthy of him. The only road for Muslims, therefore, is to adhere tightly to the Qur'an and the Prophet's (saas) Sunnah.

Any examination of the Prophet's (saas) life shows that his attitude toward life was not one-dimensional. For example, many reliable hadiths discuss his various roles: a prophet, a head of state, an army commander, a soldier, and a trader. He prays, fasts, prays during the night, lives in a state of constant devout prayer and contemplation, and remembers Allah (swt). A modest leader, he also marries, buys things, treats and visits the sick, jokes with children, wrestles with his friends, and races his wife on the road.

Muslims can properly discharge their duties as Allah's (swt) servants only by studying and observing the Prophet's (saas) practices. The first source of information for this is the great hadith compilations of Muslim, al-Bukhari, and other classical-era hadith scholars. The vast collections of his words, deeds, and personal attributes, particularly those displayed during his prophethood, were collected with great care by narrators or reporters whom all Sunni scholars consider reliable.

THE BELIEF (*I`TIQAD*) AND ESSENTIALS OF THE AHL AL-SUNNAH

No school of thought (*madhhab*) was needed during the Age of Happiness and the time of the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs, because people learned the faith directly from Prophet Muhammad (saas) and his Companions.

As heretical movements and divisions based on un-Islamic ideas and practices (*bid`ah*) gradually emerged, devout scholars still following the path of the Prophet (saas) and his companions began to identify various measures in beliefs and deeds. They presented people with a purified form of Islam by distinguishing between truth and error. One outgrowth of this effort was the Ahl al-Sunnah schools.

Several important elements separate the Ahl al-Sunnah from heretical movements, some of which attracted gullible persons by opposing the Ahl al-Sunnah's criteria. Therefore, those who follow our Prophet's (saas) path must always be on guard against such types of corruption. Among the first things one needs to do is to learn about and bear in mind the essence of the Ahl al-Sunnah's belief (*i`tiqad*).

Matters upon Which the Ahl al-Sunnah wal Jama'ah Agree

1) Belief in Allah (swt)

Believing in Allah's (swt) names, as referred to in the Qur'an and the Sunnah, is Islam's basic tenet. It is impossible to bestow titles befitting human beings on Allah (swt), for He cannot be compared with His own creation. Each of His names has been mentioned in the Qur'an. Great care must be taken here, and no credence should be given to heretical views.

So long as people consider themselves Muslim, they must harbor no doubts about their faith and must not regard themselves as unbelievers due to any deficiencies they may have, so long as they have faith in their hearts. Having such a misguided perspective as regards their own faith is very harmful in terms of our belief. Indeed, our Lord reveals the following in the Qur'an:

Who could say anything better than someone who calls to Allah, acts rightly, and says: "I am a Muslim"?
(Surah Fussilat, 33)

2) The Ahl al-Sunnah's Belief in the Qur'an

The Qur'an is the word of Allah (swt). It came from Allah's (swt) presence and will return to Him. It is the last and final Divine book, and the only book of truth that will remain valid until the Day of Judgment.

You receive the Qur'an directly from One Who is All-Wise, All-Knowing. (Surat an-Naml, 6)

3) Allah (swt) Cannot Be Seen in This World

Nowhere does Prophet Muhammad (saas) say that he actually saw Allah (swt) in this world. According to the Ahl al-Sunnah, anyone claiming to have seen Allah (swt) before they die is a liar. In one hadith, our Prophet (saas) states: **“None of you will see our Lord before he dies.”** (Sahih Muslim)

4) Believers Will See Our Lord in Paradise

Books of trustworthy hadiths refer to people actually seeing Allah (swt) with their eyes on the Day of Resurrection. However, the Jahmiyyah, Mu'tazilah, and Rafidah schools maintained the opposite.

Allah (swt) is not in any one space or on the Throne. Rather, He (swt) is exalted far above all space.

5) What Happens on the Day of Resurrection?

The Ahl al-Sunnah wal Jama'ah believe in the Prophet's (saas) literal words concerning the Hereafter and the punishment that will be meted out in the grave. According to the Ahl al-Sunnah, the grave is the garden of Paradise for the believers and one of the deepest pits of Hell for the unbelievers.

Questioning by Munkar and Nakir, the two angels who will question each person in the grave, is also a fact. On the Day of Judgment, people's mutual rights in this world will be considered and the rights will be returned to their owners.

Omer Nasuhi Bilmen, a renowned Turkish scholar of *tafsir* and *fiqh*, says the following about the Day of Resurrection:

“When people die, they will be questioned in the grave by two angels, Munkar and Nakir, who will ask: ‘Who is your Lord? Who is your prophet? What is your religion? What is your qiblah?’ This is called the questioning of the grave.

The book in which all deeds are written contains an account of all that a person did while alive. Written by angels, it will be given to its owner in the Hereafter. That person will be told to ‘take your book and read it,’ and thus nothing will remain hidden.

The Just Balance is a measure of justice by which everyone’s deeds are weighed and by which the levels of good and evil deeds can be established.

Al-Sirat, the bridge built over Hell, is by no means easy to cross. Righteous servants of Allah cross it with ease, so much so that some cross it as fast as lightning, and enter Paradise. The unbelievers and unforgiven believers will be unable to cross it and will fall into Hell. Unbelievers will remain there for eternity, while believers will enter Paradise once their punishment has ended.” (Omer Nasuhi Bilmen, *The Great Islamic Catechism*, pp. 32-33)

6) The Intercession (Shafa’ah) of the Prophet (saas)

The prophets and the righteous, who occupy elevated stations in the sight of Allah (swt), will ask Him to forgive those believers who committed sins and to elevate those who are free of sin. This is known as *shafa’ah*, and all Muslims must strive to be worthy of it. Omer Nasuhi Bilmen has said this about the intercession of the blessed Prophet (saas):

“Intercession refers to our Prophet and some other individuals of high standing requesting Almighty Allah to forgive some believers and to raise the ranks of some obedient believers on the Day of Judgment. Our Prophet will make the greatest intercession for immediate reckoning of all people in the Hereafter. His intercession is known as al-Shafa’at al-‘Uzma (the Greatest Intercession), and

his elevated status in Paradise is known as al-Maqam al-Mahmud (the Praised Station).” (Omer Nasuhi Bilmen, The Great Islamic Catechism, p. 33)

7) Belief in Destiny

The Ahl al-Sunnah wal Jama'ah believe in the good and evil of destiny. There are two degrees of belief in destiny:

The first degree is that Allah (swt) is fully aware of what every member of creation has done and will do. He knows their obedience and their rebellion before they ever take place. Almighty Allah (swt) has written the destiny of all that exists on *al-Lawh al-Mahfuz* (the Preserved Tablet). A person's destiny is brought to him by an angel while he is still in an embryonic form, before his soul has been breathed into him.

The second one is that Allah's (swt) will is superior to that of human beings. No one can be a believer or an unbeliever unless Allah (swt) wills it to be so. Muslims must be very sensitive on this subject.

8) The Ahl al-Qiblah Cannot Be Excommunicated (Takfir) Due to Sinning

Someone adhering to the Ahl al-Sunnah's convictions does not excommunicate another believer who prays in the same direction (*qiblah*) as he does or claim that such a person is an unbeliever. Kharijism, Islamic history's first heretical movement, produced its first corruption (*fitnah*) on this very subject.

No matter how many good works someone who has lapsed into denial may perform, he will not benefit from them. Similarly, no matter how many sins a Muslim may commit, he cannot be considered a denier until he says that what is actually allowed is prohibited and that what is actually prohibited is

allowed.

9) The Wonders of the Awliya' of Allah (swt) Are Accurate

Belief in the wonders (*karamah*) of the Awliya' of Allah (swt), the extraordinary states to which Allah (swt) gives rise by their hand, and the discoveries they make in various spheres of knowledge are among the essence of the Ahl al-Sunnah's convictions.

10) The Prophet's (saas) Miraculous Journey

According to the Qur'an and the hadiths, our Prophet (saas) ascended to a world beyond the heavens in both body and soul. It is revealed in the Qur'an that our Prophet's (saas) going to Bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem) is an absolute truth, and reliable hadiths confirm that he rose to the skies.

Glory be to Him Who took His servant on a night journey from the Masjid al-Haram [in Makkah] to the Masjid al-Aqsa [in Jerusalem], whose surroundings We have blessed, in order to show him some of Our signs. He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing. (Surat al-Isra', 1)

In order to create corruption, the deniers and hypocrites, who did not believe in this miracle, dared to mock it, and tried to spread this corruption all over Makkah, for they told everyone that they met about it. One of them asked Abu Bakr (ra): ***"Muhammad (saas) claims to have gone from Makkah to Jerusalem in a single night. What do you say?"*** With his usual exemplary trust and submission, Abu Bakr (ra) ended this spreading corruption by replying: ***"If he says so, then it is true."***

11) The Day of Judgment

The Day of Judgment is the final day of life for the universe, as predetermined by Allah (swt). Everyone will be called to account on the Day of Judgment. No one will return to Earth in a second body, for all of the souls of everyone who has ever lived, from the time of Prophet Adam (as) right up until the Day of Judgment, were created beforehand. No soul will return to Earth with a different body.

12) Appreciating Those Given the Glad Tidings of Paradise

Any inappropriate word spoken against a Companion of the Prophet (saas) who received the glad tidings of Paradise is not in line with the respect due to them and is a great sin toward those great individuals. These Companions are:

- ◆ Abu Bakr (ra)
- ◆ Umar (ra)
- ◆ Uthman (ra)
- ◆ Ali (ra)
- ◆ Talha ibn Ubaydullah (ra)
- ◆ Zubayr ibn Awwam (ra)
- ◆ Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas (ra)
- ◆ Sa'id ibn Zayd (ra)
- ◆ Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf (ra), and
- ◆ Abu Ubaydah ibn Jarrah (ra).

The history of Islam's early days is full of these superior individuals' heroism. The Messenger of Allah (saas) praised these Muslims in his hadiths.

One of the common features of heretical sects is their attack on some of the Companions given the glad tidings of Paradise. There is no room for such views among the Ahl al-Sunnah.

13) To Make No Interpretation of the Qur'an and the Sunnah

Reason and analogy (*qiyas*) are not to be used to make different interpretations of the rulings that are clearly stated in the Qur'an and the Sunnah, because the Companions and the imams of the legal schools commanded so and themselves did so. Believers accept everything that is compatible with the Qur'an and the Sunnah and reject everything that violates them. The main feature distinguishing the Ahl al-Sunnah wal Jama'ah from other groups is how they regard these two sources as the essential sources of all knowledge.

Believers interpret all matters in light of them, instead of following their presumption, whims, and desires. Nobody has the right to oppose the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

THE AHL AL-SUNNAH'S SCHOOLS

Schools of Theology

In terms of theology, there are two schools:

1. The Maturidi school, founded by Imam Maturidi
2. The Ash`ariyyah school, founded by Imam Ash`ari

These two schools are essentially one. However, they differ in terms of about forty matters. These differences, however, consist only matters of detail.

The Maturidi School

The founder of the Maturidi school is Abu Mansur Muhammad ibn Mahmud al-Maturidi, who is commonly known as Imam Maturidi. He was born in Samarkand in 238 AH.

He was of Turkish origin and was taught by students of al-Imam al-Azam Abu Hanifah. He established a fine link between reason and communication in his works and erected an immovable wall against heretical ideas by training students who were highly devoted to the Ahl al-Sunnah's beliefs. He made a considerable contribution to transmitting the Ahl al-Sunnah's convictions to subsequent generations.

Imam Maturidi is the teacher on matters of faith to all Hanafi

Muslims. His school is recognized by many Muslims, especially the Turks. Some of his books have survived to the present day, among them his *Kitab al-Tawhid* and *Ta'wilat al-Qur'an*.

Some of the basic tenets that constitute the essence of the Ahl al-Sunnah's belief are:

- Allah's (swt) existence and oneness: We are responsible for having faith in Allah (swt), Whose work is one with His Being. Allah (swt) has attributes that are part of His Divine essence. Allah's attribute of Kalam exists together with His Being.

- Faith consists of confessing belief verbally and accepting in one's heart. Nobody who confesses verbally but rejects this faith in his heart can be considered a believer. The place of faith is the heart, and no one can overcome it once it is fully established therein.

- Just as it is not right to say that someone who has faith is not a Muslim, it is equally improper and impermissible to say that anyone who fulfils all of Islam's tenets is not a believer. Deeds are not part of faith.

- When a person decides to do something, Allah (swt) creates the power for it to be carried out. This created power accompanies the action. The resulting action causes the person to become worthy of receiving a reward or a punishment, depending on the underlying intention.

- Such serious sins as adultery, murder, or drinking alcohol do not remove a Muslim from the fold of Islam. Whoever commits such sins will be forgiven if he repents.

- Our Prophet (saas) will intercede for those people who belong to his community, even for those who have committed serious sins. This is a grace from Allah (swt).

The Ash`ariyyah School

Abu al-Hasan al-Ash`ari, the founder of this school, was born in Basra in 260 AH. He studied with Abu `Ali al-Jubba'i, a Mu'tazili scholar, until he was forty years old.

Imam al-Ash`ari wrote several books aimed at Mu'tazilah, who were Ahl al-Bid`ah (people of [un-Islamic] innovation), philosophers, naturalists, atheists, Jews, and Christians. The first two of his works that come to mind are the *Risalat al-Iman* and the *Maqalat al-Islamiyyin*. Some twenty of his works have come down to us. It is said that he performed the morning prayer for twenty years while in the same state of ablution with which he had performed the night prayer. He died in Baghdad in 324 AH.

Some members of the Shafi'i and Maliki schools of thought are linked to the Ash`ariyyah in terms of creed. The Ash`ariyyah school is widely accepted, especially in Iraq, Syria, and Egypt.

The views of Imam al-Ash`ari are very important in forming the Ahl al-Sunnah's creed. Apart from the subject of free will, there was no great difference of opinion with al-Maturidi. Some of al-Ash`ari's tenets are as follows:

- The reckoning in the grave (*adhab al-qadr*), the gathering of humanity on the Day of Resurrection (*hashr*), and *as-sirat* (bridge) and *al-mizan* (just balance) are true. The Qur'an is a miracle in terms of its literary style. No one can compose an equivalent document.

- It is essential that a prophet perform miracles. The Awliya' can also exhibit wonders (*karamah*). Prophets perform their miracles to prove their prophethood. A wali, on the other hand, must not attain superiority and must conceal his *karamah*.

- Anyone who received Allah's (swt) revelation through an angel and performs miracles that seem to violate the laws of nature is a *nabi*.

- By the will of Allah (swt), the Prophet (saas) will intercede on the believers' behalf. Also, it is permissible for believers to see Allah (swt), the One and Incomparable, in the Hereafter. He sends good and evil to humanity, creates the deeds that they perform, and bestows upon people the necessary power to perform an action.

The Schools of *Fiqh*

The Ahl al-Sunnah contains four schools of *fiqh*:

- 1) The Hanafi school, founded by Imam Abu Hanifah
- 2) The Shafi`i school, founded by Imam al-Shafi`i
- 3) The Hanbali school, founded by Imam Hanbal
- 4) The Maliki school, founded by Imam Malik

This section shall concentrate on these four imams and their views.

The Hanafi School and al-Imam al-A`zam Abu Hanifah

Al-Imam al-A`zam Abu Hanifah was born in Kufa in 80 AH. His given name was an-Nu`man ibn Thabit. Some historical accounts say that he was of Turkish origin. His father, a wealthy merchant, had presented himself to Ali ibn Abi Talib (ra), who gave him his blessing and prayed for his offspring.

Abu Hanifah memorized the Qur'an at an early age and taught himself Arabic language and literature, jurisprudence (*fiqh*), the hadiths, and theology (*kalam*). He debated people in the region who held heretical views and persuaded most of

them. As a result, his reputation began to spread.

His knowledge, intelligence, virtue, and *taqwa* were very great. Nobility in his teaching and the ease and perfection in his school have met with the favor of all Muslims.

Back then there was a huge need for knowledge concerning fiqh, so al-Imam al-A`zam abandoned commerce and devoted himself to studying jurisprudential matters. At the same time, he continued his study of the Qur'an and the Sunnah and began deriving rulings from them. He also began researching the hadiths and examining those matters over which the Companions disagreed.

During his thirty years in the madrassah, he taught more than 4,000 students, among them such future *mujtahids* (a scholar who derives legal rulings) as Abu Yusuf, Muhammad ibn al-Hasan, and Hasan ibn Ziyad.

He told his students that their knowledge would be based on solid foundations as long as they adhered to the following basic tenets:

- 1) Attend a knowledge circle and assembly, whenever one is held, and understand its general line.
- 2) Spend time with people of knowledge and have contact with all of the intellectual movements of the age.
- 3) Stay with the teacher instructing in important matters.

After spending time with several Islamic scholars, he attached himself to Hammad ibn Abi Sulayman, one of the greatest scholars of that time. Following his death, all eyes turned in Abu Hanifah's direction.

The governor of Iraq, Yazid ibn Amr, offered him the post of *qadi* (religious judge) to sever his influence over the public. When Abu Hanifah rejected this proposition, he was tortured

for days and then imprisoned. However, he was soon released due to the government's fear of the public's reaction.

Abu Hanifah lived for many years in the Hijaz, and returned to Kufa after the Abbasids came to power. However, little changed under Abbasid rule. His response to Caliph al-Mansur's request that he become *qadi* of Baghdad was: "If I am threatened with drowning in the River Euphrates in the event that I decline this proposal, then I prefer to drown. There are many around you who stand in need." At this, al-Mansur had him tortured for several days. This event ruined his health, and he died in Baghdad in 150 AH. Hundreds of thousands of Muslims still visit his tomb every year.

Following al-Imam al-A`zam's death, his students produced books by collecting his *fatwas* and the hadiths he had related, and presenting them in a systematic form. Deriving new rulings in the light of their teacher's views, they spread his ideas throughout the Islamic world. As a result, his teachings gradually became the Hanafi school, which still has many active followers in Turkey, the Balkans, the Caucasus, Siberia, China, Pakistan, Albania, Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Iraq.

Some of al-Imam al-A`zam's works that have come down to the present day are *Al-Fiqh al-Akbar*, *'Alim wa al-Muta'allim*, *Al-Risalah*, *five al-Hashiyyah books*, *al-Qasidat an-Nu'maniyyah*, and *Marifat al-Mazahib*.

Some noteworthy extracts from his works are given below:

"Show people as much love as you can. Greet everyone, even the very lowly. If you gather with others in an assembly and discuss various problems, during which someone expresses an idea to which you are opposed, do not oppose them. If they ask you, give your opinion, speak

what is in your heart, and say that there are such and such opinions on this subject and the proof is as follows. Thus, they will listen to you and understand the degree of your knowledge.

Give knowledge to all who approach you and let each one learn something from you. Give them important things, not trivial ones. Be like a friend to them, even make witty remarks by way of jokes, because friendship and sincerity ensure the continuation of knowledge.

Treat them gently and be tolerant. Show no boredom or weariness to anyone. Comport yourself as like one of them.

Trust no one's friendship until it has been proven. Do not be friends with anyone low or vulgar. Be virtuous, generous, and deep of heart. Your clothes should be clean and new. Have a good horse to ride. Use pleasant scents. Be generous when you give people food to eat and satisfy everyone. Whenever you hear of any strife or corruption, hasten to resolve it. Visit those who visit you and those who do not. Always do good, whether others wish you good or ill. Forgive and turn a blind eye to some things. Abandon those things that distress you and try to do what is right. Visit those of your companions who fall ill, and ask after those you do not see. Take an interest in those who do not come to you." (From Abu Hanifah's bequest to his student Abu Yusuf.)

"Know that deeds go along with knowledge, just as the limbs move thanks to the vision of the eyes. A few good deeds with knowledge are better than much labor with ignorance. This resembles the following proverb: even if a man has little food with him, he will be saved if he knows

the right path. That man is still in a better position than someone who has much food but does not know the way. As Allah (swt) tells us: ‘Are they the same – those who know and those who do not know? It is only people of intelligence who pay heed.’” (Osman Keskioglu, Abu Hanifah, M. Abu Zehra, p. 177)

Some of al-Imam al-A`zam’s advice to Abu Yusuf appears in Ibrahim Haqqi of Erzurum’s *Ma`rifatname*, from which the following extracts have been taken:

“Wish good on other people and give them advice. Go and converse with people when they see and approve of your behavior and wish to talk with you, so that you can discuss knowledge in their circles.

May each student consider him your son. Let labor directed toward [acquiring] knowledge increase every day. Do not chat with those who do not listen to you and people in the markets. Have no fear of speaking the truth to anyone. Perform more, not fewer, religious observances than the masses. Do not sit and talk with deniers and Ahl al-Bid`ah, but invite them to the religion when the circumstances are appropriate. I bequeath these things to you and to everyone. May you follow this path and lead the people to the true path.”

The Shafi`i School and Imam al-Shafi`i

Imam al-Shafi`i was born in Gaza in 150 AH. Islamic scholars have considered it significant that he was born in the same year that Abu Hanifah died. Imam al-Shafi`i lost his father at an early age and spent much of his childhood in poverty.

He moved to Makkah and began studying the hadiths. In addition, he memorized the Qur’an at an early age and subsequent-

ly attached himself to Imam Malik. From this point on, after this ground in Islamic learning, he devoted himself to the study of fiqh.

At the age of 34 he was unjustly accused of spreading Shiite propaganda by the governor of Yemen and imprisoned. Nine people affiliated to al-Shafi'i were killed – the man himself was only spared after last-gasp interventions of a number of powerful supporters.

After two years studying and researching in Makkah he returned to Baghdad. By this time al-Shafi'i's fame had begun spreading throughout the Islamic world. He began looking for a more comfortable environment and chose Egypt as his adopted home.

The governor and people of Egypt welcomed al-Shafi'i's arrival. He was protected by the governor until the end of his lifetime and a share set aside for the line of the Prophet (saas) was given to him.

Imam al-Shafi'i spent his life on the path of Islam, left many works for the subsequent generations and was responsible for training a great number of students as a legacy. In addition, he struggled relentlessly against such heretical sects as the Mu'tazila and other deviant organizations. He passed away in 204 AH in Egypt.

He left behind himself such invaluable works as the *Ahqam al-Qur'an*, *As-Sunan*, *Kitab al-Umm* and *Musnad ash-Shafi'i*. Many Muslims in Iraq, Eastern Anatolia, India, Palestine, the Hijaz, the Philippines, Yemen, Egypt and Syria act according to the Shafi'i school and his influence and contribution to Islamic learning and understanding is still felt in the Muslim world today.

Imam al-Shafi'i describes the essence of the school he estab-

lished in these terms: **“Not everyone may know the hadiths of the Prophet. If I propose any idea or put forward any tenet without knowing that these are in contravention of the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah, then it is the word of the Messenger by which people must abide. That is my school. If I relate a hadith from the Messenger of Allah but do not act in its light, what earth will bear me and what sky will give me shade? The hadith of the Prophet is of sublime importance to me.”**

Some of Imam al-Shafi'i's sayings:

“If one of you wishes to content all the people, he cannot. The servant must be careful to have moral sincerity. Every good work he performs must remain between him and Allah.”

“The pursuit of knowledge is better than supererogatory prayer. Because supererogatory prayer benefits only the individual, whereas knowledge benefits the entire community.”

“If anyone gives secret advice to his brother in faith, he will have engaged in good counseling and adorned him with good manners. If he seeks to give advice openly in public it will have no effect. He will, in a sense, have condemned the other party, and thus shamed him.”

“Let he who desires the bliss of the Hereafter have sincerity in knowledge.”

“Whoever tries to give advice through his deeds is also a guidance.”

“The following three conditions are signs of the genuine nature of one's love for his brother in religion:

- 1) To tolerate a few small errors without reproaching the other party, and accept that person for what he is.**
- 2) To cover up any unbecoming actions performed openly.**
- 3) To forgive any wrong directed towards oneself.”**

The Maliki School and Imam Malik

According to the most reliable accounts, Imam Malik ibn Anas was born in Madinah in 93 AH. As the son of a family steeped in the study of hadiths, he made considerable progress in this field in a very short space of time. He was placed at the side of the famous scholar Ibn Hurmuz at a young age and remained with him for the next 13 years. He began teaching at the age of 17, and the interest that onlookers shown in him actually proved to be greater than the interest his own teachers aroused. Despite being 13 years older, Abu Hanifah knelt before him and received instruction from him.

The works written about Imam Malik generally refer to his superior memory and intelligence and describe his patience, forbearance, sincerity, foresight, and grandeur as exemplary. This is what Imam Malik is renowned for. He occupies a critical position in the science of the hadiths and was well-respected for how scrupulous he was when determining the authenticity of the traditions. He carefully researched those reporting traditions and only accepted those which were completely reliable.

Imam Malik never acted in haste when issuing *fatwas*. When consulted about a problem he would say, **“Go now and let me investigate this problem.”** Asked why he behaved in this way, he would respond, **“I shall have to account for fatwas. Because I have a sincere fear of the Day of Judgment.”**

Like Imam Abu Hanifah, Imam Malik too attracted the wrath of Caliph al-Mansur, and was tortured in prisons for days on end. Years later, however, al-Mansur realized the error of his ways and apologized to Imam Malik. Imam Malik spent the final years of his life in sickness, dying in the blessed city of Madinah in 179 AH.

Members of his school can today be found in Tripoli, Libya, Tunisia, Morocco, the Hijaz, Egypt, Algeria and along the African coast. Imam Malik's most important work, which he spent 40 years writing, is *al-Muwatta'*. As the result of his study of more than 100,000 traditions, he used 1,720 of these in his book. Bediüzzaman Said Nursi praised Imam Malik and his great work *al-Muwatta'* in his own collection.

The Hanbali School and Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal

Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal was born in Baghdad in 164 AH. His life coincided with the most illustrious period of the Abbasid state. Despite losing his father at an early age, he enjoyed an excellent education in the study of religion. He received instruction from several well-known scholars, but was most influenced by Imam al-Shafi'i. For that reason, he began studying the hadiths; this was a difficult sphere of knowledge to pursue, requiring much travel from one country to another as it did, and especially at an early age.

He had the greatest respect for the teachers who instructed him. During their lifetime he never gave any personal opinion regarding the hadiths, and issued no *fatwa* on any subject until reaching the age of 40, the age of maturity. This demonstrates his humility – it shows that he did not wish to give major opin-

ions on matters until he felt mature enough to handle this kind of serious intellectual responsibility. With his knowledge and modesty, he quickly became a renowned and respected scholar.

His discourses generally directed his audiences' attention to three subjects. Seriousness, modesty and spiritual peace dominated his conversation. He did not like to mock anybody and was naturally very respectful of people with whom he conversed.

He would only relate hadiths when requested to do so. In order not to make a mistake he would read the hadiths from their sources rather than relying on memory. Again, this shows his meticulousness and his commitment to the truthful relaying of the sayings of the Prophet (saas).

He made special requests that the hadiths he related to his students should be written down. He also demanded that the *fatwas* he issued should be described in writing lest they might be misunderstood.

He struggled against heretical movements right up to the end of his life. That resulted in him having serious problems with the ruler of the time, Caliph al-Mutasim. He was arrested and imprisoned in Baghdad. The difficulties he endured elevated him even further in the public eye. The oppression continued even after his release. He was forbidden to hold discourses, and permission was even denied for him to go to the mosque to perform the prayer. One after another his students were cast into prison. His feet were shackled and he began the journey from Baghdad to Tarsus to be brought into the presence of the Caliph, and died on the road in 128 AH.

His school was prevented from spreading because the Hanafi, Maliki and Shafi'i schools had already spread in Islamic

lands during the emergence of the Hanbali school. For that reason, his school has found its feet mainly in Saudi Arabia.

Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal's most important work is *al-Musnad*.

He specialized in knowledge of the hadiths. It is reported that he had memorized a million hadith al-sharif. He narrated 30,000 hadiths in *al-Musnad*. According to the great scholar Kohistani, he narrated 50,700 traditions. His piety, *taqwa*, and high morality were above all praise.

Subjects Imagined To Represent Sources of Disagreement among the Schools Are Actually Sources of Mercy for the Muslims

Differences among the schools of the Ahl al-Sunnah wal Jama'ah are actually of enormous benefit to the Islamic world, rather than being damaging to it. Each imam of the four legal schools taught his own *ijtihad*, but they never attempted to eradicate one another out of mutual hostility. As stated in the hadiths, it is clear that a disagreement based on mutual respect will be a mercy, and history confirms that this is indeed the case. The way that a member of one school is able to imitate another school when necessary is the clearest indication of this.

Indeed, Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz says this on the subject:

“I would be unwilling for the community of the Messenger of Allah not to disagree over matters of fiqh, because it would be difficult for people if they all agreed on a similar view. If someone abided by the words of one of them, that would be the Sunnah for him.” (Muhammad Abu Zahra, Tareekh al-Madhahib al-Islamiyyah)

It is a known fact in the belief system of the Ahl al-Sunnah

that all sincere ideas, *ijtihad* and interpretation in the field of implementation facilitated the spread of Islam to different environments and lands.

The most important factor in preparing the ground for these different interpretations of the Companions is the different interpretation of the hadiths. After the Qur'an, the Sunnah, in other words the hadiths, is the most important point of reference in Islam. The imams of the schools have stressed the importance of holding fast to the Sunnah and stated that whoever abandons the Sunnah will be among the losers.

They emphasized the importance of abiding by the Sunnah of the Messenger (saas) as follows.

Al-Imam al-A'zam:

“People have been saved as long as there have been those among them who have occupied themselves with the hadiths. Whenever they seek knowledge outside the hadiths, then corruption arises. Avoid issuing commandments on the basis of your own personal opinions on any matter regarding the religion of Allah, but follow the Sunnah. Anyone who abandons the Sunnah will fall into deviation.” (ash-Sharani, al-Mizan 1: 51)

Imam al-Shafi'i:

“If I arrive at a different commandment having related a hadith of the Messenger of Allah, what sky will shade me, what earth will bear me?”

Imam Malik:

“The Sunnah is like the ark of Nuh (as). Whoever boards that ark will be saved, but whoever does not will drown.”

Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal:

“Many bid'ahs have arisen. Whoever is ignorant of the hadiths will fall into those bid'ahs.”

There is no disagreement among the imams of the schools of the Ahl al-Sunnah with regard to the virtues of the Sunnah. Some differences have, however, emerged regarding the understanding of these hadiths. The fact that the imams of the schools possessed different or more or less knowledge of the hadiths compared to one another led to various different rulings being issued. The school imams would first turn to the Qur'an whenever an issue was brought to them. In the absence of any relevant provision on the subject in the Qur'an, they would then consider the Sunnah of the Prophet (saas). If they couldn't find it in the Sunnah, then they would look into how the Companions behaved. In the event that no definitive conclusion could be drawn from this either, a decision was taken on the basis of *ijtihad*. Since *ijtihad*s could differ, some differences arose between the schools.

Ultimately, it is impossible for any one person to have a complete mastery of the hadiths. This always needs to be remembered. Indeed, as Imam al-Shafi'i stated:

“I know of nobody who knows all of the Sunnah, or all of the hadiths. Only if the knowledge of all the scholars of the hadiths were collected together could all the Sunnah be known. Since the hadiths of scholars are widely dispersed, there will of course be hadiths unknown to a particular scholar. The hadiths one scholar does not know will be known by another.”

Some have considered deeds performed by the Prophet (saas) at various times as compulsory observances, while others have interpreted them as supererogatory. There are several instances of this in the schools of the Ahl al-Sunnah. In addition, the inability to fully understand an action taken by the Prophet (saas) or else an action of his being witnessed only in its second

half also led to the emergence of various differences.

The Companions' words are another reason for the differences between the schools of thought. For example, the Hanafis and Malikis prefer the Companions' words to analogical reasoning (*qiyas*), while in some circumstances the Shafi'is do not accept a Companion's report. This has led to different *fatwas* being issued. In addition, different climates, geographical features, traditions, and customs have also given rise to this phenomenon.

The imams of the schools have kept disputes outside the sphere of personal passions and sought only to gain Allah's (swt) approval. They have never claimed that only their own views represented the truth; rather, they have said that their approach could be more suitable.

Indeed, Imam al-A`zam Abu Hanifah has said: ***“Our thoughts consist of an opinion and are the best opinion we have. If someone else proposes a better opinion, then that one should be followed, rather than ours.” (Muhammad Abu Zahra, Tareekh al-Madhahib al-Islamiyah)***

When one examines the imams' lives, one sees that rather than mutual accusations, there were always bonds of mutual respect among them. In his *Catechism*, Omer Nasuhi Bilmen reports that this respect is a sign of the Ahl al-Sunnah:

“The adherents of each of the four schools of these four mujtahids all believe that their own school is better, more accurate, and more efficacious and proper in terms of the Sunnah. Otherwise, there would be no meaning in their choosing that particular school. But they never even think of denigrating the other schools. They respect all four schools. That respect is a sign of the Ahl al-Sunnah.” (Omer Nasuhi Bilmen, The Great Islamic Catechism, p. 42)

The schools' disagreements were constructive, rather than destructive. This also does not contradict Allah's (swt) command that Muslims should avoid disputes with one another, for such differences have actually always been a mercy for the believers.

DEFENSE OF THE SUNNAH

THE SUNNAH SHOULD BE PROOF (DALIL)

In his “11th Flash,” Bediuzzaman describes the Prophet’s (saas) Sunnah as follows:

“The Most Noble Prophet (saas) said: ‘Whoever adheres to my Sunnah when my community is corrupted shall receive the reward of a hundred martyrs.’

Yes, following the Sunnah of the Prophet is certainly most valuable. And at times when innovations are prevalent, following it is even more valuable. And particularly when the Prophet’s community is corrupted, to comply with a small portion of it signifies a powerful belief and fear of God. Following the Sunnah directly recalls the Noble Prophet (saas), and that recollection and remembrance is transformed into recollection of the Divine Presence. The moment the Sunnah is complied with in even the least significant dealings, in the conduct of eating, drinking, or sleeping, such habitual, natural acts become meritorious acts of worship in compliance with the Shari`ah. Through such commonplace actions, a person thinks of following the Noble Prophet (saas) and conceives of them as conduct of the Shari`ah. Then he recalls that he is the owner of the Shari`ah. And from that his heart turns to Almighty

Allah, the True Lawgiver, and he gains a sort of sense of the Divine Presence and worship.

And so, due to this mystery, one who follows the Sunnah of the Prophet (saas) transforms all of his acts into worship and may make his whole life fruitful and yielding of reward.” (The Eleventh Flash, First Point)

It is necessary in religion for Sunnah to be proof. These proofs are of various kinds, and all have been definitively proven and unanimously agreed upon by the scholars among the Ahl al-Sunnah.

Seven articles show that the Sunnah represents proof in Islam:

1. *’Ismah* (the Prophet’s [saas] infallibility)
2. Allah’s (swt) approval of the Prophet’s (saas) Companions’ following the Sunnah
3. The Noble Qur’an
4. The Prophet’s (saas) Sunnah
5. The Qur’an is to be understood with the Sunnah
6. The Sunnah is also based on revelation
7. *Ijma`* (consensus)

First Proof: *’Ismah* (the Prophet’s [saas] infallibility)

The first proof is that Allah (swt) protected the Prophet (saas) from any imperfection and error. He is free of anything that might have impacted negatively upon communicating the message, and all scholars concur that Allah (swt) did not allow him to fall into error or make a mistake in such matters.

Thus, all reports regarding the message are true and comply with what is in Allah’s (swt) sight, and Muslims must abide by them.

The Prophet’s (saas) words on rulings have also been protect-

ed from falsehood and are items of religious proof.

The following saying of the Prophet (saas) is a proof that he is protected against error:

“O people, I do not command you [to do] anything except what Allah (swt) has commanded you. I do not prohibit to you anything except what Allah (swt) has prohibited to you.”

The fact that the Prophet (saas) is free of error in all reports regarding the message is by itself sufficient evidence that all types of Sunnah are proof, because each is, in fact, part of the message. His entire life constitutes Islam’s pillars, and his social and family life, Companions, battles, manners of eating and drinking, and everything else are all exemplary forms of behavior that explain Islam to the community.

The Prophet (saas) is also protected against whatever might harm the message. This makes his every action, advice, command, recommendation, and prohibition a clear proof. In other words, there is no need for any further report. Our blessed Prophet (saas) has been protected from error and honored with the status of *`ismah*.

Second proof: Allah’s (swt) approval of the Prophet’s (saas) Companions’ following the Sunnah

Our Prophet (saas) encouraged his community to cling tightly to the Sunnah and told them not to oppose him. Thus, the Companions obeyed his commands and followed his every word, thought, and deed to the best of their ability. They regarded all things emanating from him as matters requiring obedience and regarded his every action as a religious proof.

In the event of worldly matters requiring resolution (*ijtihad*),

they consulted with the Prophet (saas) and asked him how and why this should be done.

Sometimes, when they could not understand a command, they asked the Prophet (saas) about it and tried to grasp its underlying truth and wisdom (*hikmah*). In addition, when something happened to them they did not seek an explanation only in the Qur'an. As long as the possibility existed, they sought the Prophet's (saas) advice on all matters.

If something happened to a Companion when he was far away, he would first seek a resolution in the Qur'an, then in the Sunnah, and only when the Sunnah provided no answer would he resort to *ijtihad*. When he returned to the Prophet's (saas) side, he would relate the matter to him to learn if his decision had been correct. The Prophet (saas) would either approve of his decision or point out his error so that he would not make the same mistake again.

Allah (swt) has approved of all events that happened at the time of the Prophet (saas) and the Companions, for there is no mention of their having made mistakes in their behavior. Approval of something at the time of the revelation is a strong proof at the same level as revelation.

Third Proof: The Noble Qur'an

The Qur'an, Allah's (swt) Book of truth, contains numerous verses on how the Sunnah is a proof in itself. These verses have been classified into several groups. Sometimes, a verse may appear in more than one group.

The First Group of Verses:

These verses show the obligatory nature of belief in the Prophet (saas). Belief in the Prophet (saas) means to recognize

and accept his prophethood as well as what he relayed from Allah's (swt) presence, whether or not they are mentioned in the Qur'an. Such verses state that opposing the Prophet (saas) and refusing to recognize his stipulations are incompatible with belief:

So believe in Allah and His Messenger, and in the Light We have sent down. Allah is aware of what you do. (Surat at-Taghabun, 8)

Say: "O humanity, I am the Messenger of Allah to all of you, of Him to Whom the kingdom of the heavens and Earth belongs. There is no deity but Him. He gives life and causes to die." So believe in Allah and His Messenger, the unlettered Prophet, who believes in Allah and His words, and follow him so that, hopefully, you will be guided. (Surat al-A'raf, 158)

Al-Qadi 'Iyad (544/1149) said: ***"Belief in Prophet Muhammad (saas) is specifically obligatory; no belief is complete without it."* (Al-Qadi 'Iyad, Al-Shifa', 2:1)**

Imam al-Shafi'i (204/819) said: ***"Allah has made the completion of the beginning of belief - to which everything else is subordinate - belief in Allah and then in His Messenger. So if a person believes in Him but not in His Messenger, the designation denoting completion of belief does not apply to him until he believes in Him and His Messenger."* (al-Shafi'i, Al-Risalah, p. 75)**

Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (751/1350) said: ***"The verse incorporates, among the requisites of belief, that they do not go anywhere - when they are with him - except with his permission. It is all the more fitting that they do not adopt any position or enter any path of knowledge except after his***

permission..." (Ibn al-Qayyim, I'lam al-Muwaqqi'in, 1:58)

The Second Group of Verses:

These verses indicate that the Prophet (saas) elucidated and explained the Qur'an in line with Allah's (swt) command and that he taught both the Book (the Qur'an) and wisdom (the Sunnah) to his community. Imam al-Shafi'i and other scholars interpreted wisdom as the Sunnah.

We have only sent down the Book to you so that you can make clear to them the things about which they differ, and as a guidance and a mercy to people who believe. (Surat an-Nahl, 64)

Allah showed great kindness to the believers when He sent a Messenger to them from among themselves to recite His signs to them, and to purify them and teach them the Book and Wisdom, even though before that they were clearly misguided. (Surah Al 'Imran, 164)

Imam al-Shafi'i said: ***"Allah (swt) mentioned the Book, and that is the Qur'an. He also mentioned wisdom. I have heard those whose opinions I trust among the people of knowledge of the Qur'an say that "wisdom" means the Sunnah of Allah's Messenger (saas). This supports what Allah (swt) said - and Allah knows best - because the Qur'an is a reminder (dhikr) and wisdom follows it. Also, Allah mentioned that He lavished favor on His creatures by teaching them the Book and wisdom. It is therefore impermissible - and Allah knows best - to say that wisdom here is anything other than the Sunnah of Allah's Messenger (saas). That is because it is coupled (maqrurah) with the Book, and that***

Allah has made obedience to His Prophet a strict obligation, imposing upon people the absolute duty to follow his commands. Thus it is not permissible to say about anything that it is a strict obligation, except about Allah's Book and the Sunnah of His Messenger (saas)...” (Al-Shafi’i, Al-Risalah, p. 78)

The Third Group of Verses:

These verses show that absolute compliance with the Prophet’s (saas) commands and prohibitions are obligatory, that obeying him is the same as obeying Allah (swt), and that any opposition to him or change in his Sunnah is forbidden.

Obey Allah and the Messenger so that, hopefully, you will gain mercy. (Surah Al ‘Imran, 132)

O you who believe, obey Allah and obey the Messenger. Do not make your actions worthless. (Surah Muhammad, 33)

Obey Allah and the Messenger and beware. If you turn your backs, know that Our Messenger is only responsible for clear transmission. (Surat al-Ma’ida, 92)

Ibn al-Qayyim said: ***“Allah ordered obedience to Himself and to His Messenger. He repeated “obedience” in the phrase ‘and obey the Messenger’ to demonstrate that obedience to him ... is compulsory. He revealed that when the Prophet (saas) issues a command, whether or not that command is to be found in the Qur’an, complete obedience to him individually is compulsory, because he has been given the Book and the Sunnah, which is similar to it in value.”***

Allah (swt) reveals the importance of obedience to the

Messenger:

Any good thing that happens to you comes from Allah. Any bad thing that happens to you comes from yourself. We have sent you to humanity as a Messenger. Allah suffices as a Witness. Whoever obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah. If anyone turns away, We did not send you to them as their keeper. (Surat an-Nisa', 79-80)

The Fourth Group of Verses:

These verses reveal that obeying the Prophet (saas) in all of his words and deeds, as well as adopting him as a role model is necessary in order to be loved by Allah (swt).

Say: "If you love Allah, then follow me and Allah will love you and forgive your wrong actions. Allah is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful." (Surah Al 'Imran, 31)

You have an excellent model in the Messenger of Allah, for all who put their hope in Allah and the Last Day and remember Allah much. (Surat al-Ahzab, 21)

Muhammad ibn `Ali al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi said: *"Following the Messenger's (saas) example means taking him as one's leader, following his Sunnah, and not contravening him in speech or deed."*

The Fourth Proof: The Prophet's (saas) Sunnah

Many hadiths and accounts show the Sunnah as proof. These have been classified into three groups:

The First Group of Hadiths:

The Prophet (saas) is free of falsehood in those matters revealed to him in the Qur'an and in the form of hadiths.

The Prophet's (saas) expounded and stipulated rules were Allah's (swt) expositions and stipulations. They emanated from Allah's (swt) presence; not his.

Acting according to the Sunnah is acting according to the Qur'an.

Allah (swt) commanded the ummah to accept and practice the Prophet's (saas) words, obey his commands, and follow his Sunnah.

Whoever obeys the Prophet (saas) and holds fast to the Sunnah obeys Allah (swt) and attains the true path of guidance.

Faith is complete only if one adheres to all that he brought. He speaks nothing but the truth. The best guidance of all is his guidance.

Anything not brought and approved of by the Prophet (saas), but which people invented according to their whims and desires, is an innovation that must be rejected and avoided.

In his *Al-Madkhal*, Imam al-Bayhaqi relates that Talha ibn Nudayla narrated:

When prices soared in Madinah, the Prophet (saas) was asked: "O Messenger of Allah, set the market prices for us." He replied: "Allah will not ask me of any sunnah (practice) that I originated among you without His commanding me to do so. But ask Allah for His favor."

Narrated from `Abd Allah ibn `Amr by Ibn Hibban (354/966):

The Prophet (saas) said: "Every servant of Allah possesses some propensity, and every propensity has its course:

either to the Sunnah or to innovation. If one's propensity is for the Sunnah, he has succeeded. If otherwise, he has perished." (Ahmad, Musnad, 2, 158)

Narrated from Ibn `Abbas:

The Prophet (saas) said: "I have left among you two matters. If you hold fast to them, you shall never be misguided: Allah's Book and His Prophet's Sunnah." (Al-Bayhaqi, Al-Sunan al-Kubra, 10:114 #20108; al-Hakim, 1:93=1990 ed. 1:171; and Malik, al-Muwatta')

Narrated by al-Bayhaqi:

`Abd Allah ibn `Amr said: "I used to write down everything that I heard from the Messenger of Allah (saas), intending to memorize it. The Quraysh forbade me, saying: 'You write everything you hear from him, but he is a human being who speaks sometimes in anger and sometimes in contentment.' Therefore I stopped writing. I mentioned this to the Messenger of Allah (saas), and he said: 'Write! By Him in Whose Hand is my soul. Nothing but truth ever comes out of this,' and he pointed to his mouth." (Ibn `Abd al-Barr, Jami` Bayan al-`Ilm, 2:27)

The Second Group of Hadiths:

The common subject matter in this group may be summarized as Muslims finding the truth by adhering to the Sunnah and being prohibited from practicing only what is in the Qur'an and from making do with independent opinions in abandoning the Sunnah.

Ibn Majah narrates from Anas, Thabit, and Aisha (ra) that the Prophet (saas) said:

"If it is something that pertains to your world, then it is up

to you; if it is something that pertains to Islam, then it is up to me." (Ibn Majah, Ahmad, Ibn Hibban in his Sahih [1:201 #22], and Abu Ya`la in his Musnad [6:198, 6:237]. Also narrated by Muslim and al-Daraqutni in his Sunan [1:382])

The Third Group of Hadiths:

These hadiths tell Muslims to heed, memorize, and then transmit the Prophet's (saas) words to those who will come later. They promise a great reward for those who engage in these activities.

These commands of the Messenger of Allah (saas) necessitate that the Sunnah is proof.

Al-Bayhaqi (451/1066) said:

"If it were not fixed and obligatory for the Sunnah to be proof, then the Prophet (saas) would not have said in his Last Khutba, after teaching whoever saw him the matter of their religion: 'Pay attention! Communicate everyone my words.'"

It is narrated from Abu Hurayrah that the Prophet (saas) said:

"Whoever preserves forty hadiths for my ummah in the affair of their religion, Allah will raise him up on the Day of Resurrection in the company of the people of discrimination and the people of knowledge." (Abu Nu`aym, Hilyah, 4:189)

The Fifth Proof: The Qur'an Is to Be Understood with the Sunnah

No one, in the absence of a revelation descending upon oneself, can possibly understand Islam's rulings and details from

the Qur'an alone. Therefore, one should look into the Sunnah, which was revealed together with the Qur'an, for the Prophet (saas) inferred this through his own *ijtihad* and Allah (swt) approved it. There is no other way.

If the Sunnah were not a proof (the source for rulings), then it would be unreliable for any scholar to look into it and draw support from it. In that event, nobody would understand their exact responsibilities, rulings would disappear, and obligations would be cancelled.

It is impossible for scholars (*mujtahid*) to act alone and according to their personal opinions on this matter, because the Qur'an is at the highest level of miraculous inimitability (*i'jaz*). Due to its eloquence alone, it contains many secondary meanings, secrets, and treasure troves of knowledge that only Allah (swt) knows.

The Prophet (saas) expounds the Qur'an, and no one can devise rulings based only on it. In fact, explaining the Qur'an is one of his duties. In the Qur'an our Almighty Lord says:

It is not devoutness to turn your faces to the East or to the West. Rather, those with true devoutness are those who have iman in Allah and the Last Day, the Angels, the Book and the prophets, and who, despite their love for it, give away their wealth to their relatives and to orphans and the very poor, and to travelers and beggars and to set slaves free, and who establish salat and pay zakat; those who honor their contracts when they make them, and are steadfast in poverty and illness and in battle. Those are the people who are true. They are the people who have taqwa. (Surat al-Baqara, 177)

This verse shows that praying (*salat*) and giving *zakat* are obligatory observances. But how exactly are Muslims supposed to pray, and when? How many *rak'ahs* (prayer cycles) are called for? Who has to pray? We can find answers to these questions only in the Sunnah, for through it our Prophet (saas) demonstrates the correct way to pray and thus enlightens us. The same is true for *zakat* and other obligations.

In another verse our Lord reveals:

So [give] glory to Allah when you start the night and when you greet the day. (Surat ar-Rum, 17)

From this verse, it appears that, in essence, the time of glorifying is at the morning, evening and night. But what is meant by “[give] glory” here, we learn this from our Prophet’s (saas) Sunnah. Is it the *salat* commanded in the verse “do *salat*”? Or is it reciting “*Subhan Allah*”? Were we not told by the Prophet (saas) we would be unaware that this expression was related to the morning, evening, and night prayers.

As for giving in His way, our Lord tells us: **“As for those who hoard up gold and silver and do not spend it in His Way, give them the news of a painful punishment” (Surat at-Tawba, 34)**. What does “spend” mean in this verse? Giving away all assets, as understood by the Companions at the time of the verse’s revelation, or just a part of them? If so, how much?

Hundreds of other matters are only mentioned in the Qur’an and then fully explained in the Sunnah. Our Prophet (saas) elucidates the Muslims’ forms of religious observance, what these are and the shape they take, and how they are to be implemented through his own example.

In his *Al-Ihkam*, Ibn Hazm says:

“Where in the Qur'an does it state that: Dhuhr prayer is four rak`ahs? Maghrib is three rak`ahs? Ruku` is done in such-and-such a way? Sujud is done in such-and-such a way? Qur'anic recitation in the prayer is done in such-and-such a way? Salam is given at the conclusion of prayer in such-and-such a way? What one must avoid when fasting? The modality of zakat for gold and silver, sheep, camels, and cattle? The determination of the zakatable capitals and amount of their zakat? The rituals of hajj from the time one stands in `Arafah? The modality of prayer at `Arafah and Muzdalifah? The modality of stoning at the three jimar in Mina? The description of the pilgrim's sacralized state (ihram)? What must be avoided while wearing ihram? Cutting off the thief's hand? What prepared foods are prohibited? The description and definition of butchering and sacrificial slaughter? The modalities of penal rulings (ahkam al-hudud)? The description of enacting divorce? The rulings that pertain to selling? The exposition of usurious transactions (al-riba)? The modalities of juristic verdicts and appeals? Those of solemn oaths, water-dams (al-ahbas), life tenancy resulting in ownership of the tenant's heirs (al-`umra), collection of sadaqah, and all the other topics of the Law?

We find in the Qur'an only comprehensive clauses (jumal). In all of this, the reference is none other than what is transmitted from the Prophet (saas). It is the same with scholarly consensus (al-ijma`) for the latter formed over but a few matters that we all gathered in a single book. ... Therefore, it is indispensable to refer back to the hadith.” (Ibn Hazm, Al-Ihkam fi Usul al-Ahkam, 2:79-80)
 Other hadiths state that we cannot understand the Qur'an

solely with our own reason, and that this is impossible without the Sunnah. The Companions and the Followers narrated countless hadiths about this truth and reached complete agreement on this issue. Some relevant traditions are as follows:

Al-Bayhaqi (in *Al-Madkhal*) and al-Lalika'i (in *Sharh Usul I'tiqad Ahl al-Sunnah*) narrated that Umar (ra) said:

"Beware of those who put forward opinions, for they are the enemies of the Sunnah. They have despaired of memorizing the Prophet's (saas) narrations and have resorted to forwarding opinions. As a result, they have gone astray and misguided others."

Abu Hatim (354/965) reports Ibn Mas'ud as saying:

"Knowledge of everything is in the Qur'an, but humanity's vision cannot find it out."

Ahmad ibn Hanbal narrates that `Imran ibn Husayn (ra) said:

"The Qur'an was revealed, and Allah's Messenger (saas) instituted the Sunan." Then he said: "Follow us [the Qur'an and the Sunnah] or, by Allah, if you do not you shall go astray."

Narrated by Abu Nadra by Ibn al-Mubarak in *Al-Zuhd*:

The people were rehearsing the narrations of hadith, whereupon a man stood and exclaimed: "Enough of that, bring us something from Allah's Book!" `Imran ibn Husayn became angry and said: "You and your friends all read the Qur'an. Allah Almighty and Exalted mentioned zakat in His Book; where, then, is it mentioned that it consists of five parts out of every 200 parts? Allah Almighty and Exalted mentioned prayer in His Book; where, then, is it mentioned that dhuhr consists in four rak'ahs?" Then he mentioned all the other prayers. He continued: "Allah

mentioned circumambulation in His Book; where, then, did He say that circumambulation consists of seven circumambulations? And where did He say that coursing between Safa and Marwa is sevenfold? We rule according to what is there [i.e., in the Qur'an], but the Sunnah explains it."

Similarly, Ibn `Abd al-Barr narrates the following reply:

Mutarrif ibn `Abd Allah ibn al-Shikhkhir replied: "By Allah, we certainly do not seek a substitute for the Qur'an, but only one who is more knowledgeable of the Qur'an than we."

Al-Lalika'i narrates (in *Sharh Usul*) from `Abdus ibn Malik al-`Attar that:

Imam Ahmad said: "The Sunnah, according to our definition, consists of the reports transmitted from the Messenger of Allah (saas), and the Sunnah is the commentary of the Qur'an and contains its directives (dala'il)."

Jabir ibn `Abd Allah (ra) said:

"The Messenger of Allah (saas) was among us while the Qur'an was being revealed to him, and he knew its explanation. Whatever he put into practice, we put into practice."

These verses, hadiths, and narrations show that the Sunnah is a blessing that enables us to understand and apply the Qur'an in our daily lives.

The Sixth Proof: The Sunnah Is Also Based on Revelation

What emanates from the Prophet (saas) is either words or

deeds designed to communicate the message of Allah (swt), or other forms of behavior that lie outside that communication.

The First Part

This is a sure and certain revelation. As we know, the Messenger of Allah (saas) was protected against error here. Hanafi scholars refer to this as “manifest or external revelation” (*wahy zahir*). The revelation in this part is sometimes revealed with a statement showing that it is a Divine revelation and sometimes in another way. That which comes with an accompanying statement to the effect that it is Divine, implies either worship (*ta’abbud*), miraculous inimitability (*i’jaz*) or challenge (*tahaddi*), in other words, the Qur’an.

Revelation without the characteristics of *i’jaz* and *tahaddi* is *al-hadith al-qudsi*. This is also a form of Divine revelation. By using such words as “The Lord of Glory said ...” before every hadith, the Prophet (saas) imparted tidings from Allah (swt). Such reports cannot be mistaken or based on deceit. The Prophet’s (saas) report shows that it is Allah’s (swt) word, just as it shows that the Qur’an is His word. If there is no accompanying statement to show that the report is from Allah (swt), then it is a prophetic hadith (*al-hadith an-nabawi*). These verses show that the Prophet’s (saas) hadiths and practices are of the nature of Divine revelation:

... nor does he speak from whim. It is nothing but Revelation revealed. (Surat an-Najm, 3-4)

“... I follow nothing except what is revealed to me. I fear, were I to disobey my Lord, the punishment of a Dreadful Day.” (Surah Yunus, 15)

... Allah has sent down the Book and Wisdom to you and taught you what you did not know before. Allah's favor to you is indeed immense. (Surat an-Nisa', 113)

As stated elsewhere, the "wisdom" referred to here is the Sunnah.

Abu Dawud and al-Bayhaqi identify and establish this report with accompanying statements:

"Revelation would descend upon the Messenger of Allah (saas), and Jibril (as) would tell him the Sunnah that explained it." (ad-Darimi, Muqaddimah, 49)

The Second Part

This part consists of the Prophet's (saas) words and behavior that are not specifically concerned with communicating the message. These may or may not have been affirmed by Allah (swt).

If Almighty Allah (swt) has approved an action taken by the Prophet (saas), that action is considered a revelation, even if not openly instructed by way of revelation. Such approval shows that the action is true, correct, and acceptable in His sight. In addition, even if each of his actions has not been reported by way of direct Divine revelation, Allah (swt) tells us to abide by each one of the Prophet's (saas) words and deeds. This being the case, someone who follows an action done by the Prophet (saas) that has not been imparted by way of revelation has adhered to Allah's (swt) instruction to obey him. Thus, such matters emanating from him actually enjoy the status of Divine revelation.

This account also supports the subject. The Prophet (saas) said: ***"Verily I make lawful only what Allah has made lawful***

in His Book, and I prohibit only what He has prohibited in His Book.” (Abu Dawud, Sunan, 5; al-Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah)

Al-Bayhaqi says: ***“If the expression ‘His Book’ is saheeh, the Messenger of Allah (saas) meant that what was revealed to him, the revelation, has been divided into two kinds: Wahy Matluw (the Qur’an) and Wahy Ghayr-Matluw (all information and inspiration from Allah other than the Qur’an).”***

Ibn Mas‘ud (ra), like Imam Shafi‘i (ra), has also said that anyone abiding by the Sunnah of the Prophet (saas) will thus be living by the command of the Book of Allah (swt). This is because the obligatory nature of following in the path of the Messenger of Allah (saas) is a provision set out in the Qur’an itself. Those provisions based on the *ijtihad* of the Prophet (saas) and approved of by Allah (swt) form part of this second section. Hanafi scholars refer to this as “non-manifest or internal revelation” (*wahy batin*).

Seventh Proof: Ijma‘ (consensus)

From the first days of Islam right up to the present we see that no *mujtahid* imam looking at the subject with knowledge and good conscience has ever rejected this notion, that of adhering tightly to the Sunnah and using it as a source of proof and acting in its light as due. On the contrary, we see that they have adhered closely to the Sunnah, acted in the light of the line drawn by it, encouraged others to act in its light, forbidden any opposition to it and have relied on the rules established by it both for themselves and for others. In addition, we also see that they have fiercely opposed any opposition to or trivialization of the Sunnah; indeed, they have regarded it as comple-

mentary to and explanation of the Qur'an, and that in the event any sound hadith disagreeing with an *ijtihad* which had previously been made on the basis of the Book or some other form of proof came to their attention they would immediately revise their opinions and consider the provision in question. It is not without reason that the beloved wife of the Prophet (saas), Aisha (ra) said: **“The Prophet’s conduct was nothing but the Qur’an”** (Sahih Muslim).

Indeed, the following has come down to us: **“If you find any sound hadith, that is my madhhab (school). Put aside any statement of mine disagreeing with it.”** (Al-Subki, *Majmuat al-Rasa’il Muniriyyah*, 2, 98) Most other *mujtahids* have reported words with a similar significance.

For the Ahl al-Hadith, the common view held by *mujtahids* and Islamic scholars in general is this: the Ahl al-Hadith are the greatest helpers of the religion and the most powerful protectors against the attacks and doubts of the irreligious. The enemies of basic Islamic truths are only the *ahl al-bid’ah*, *fajarah* (wicked evil-doers) and *kafirun* (unbelievers).

There is a wide and overwhelming consensus (*ijma'*) of opinion among Islamic scholars with regard to the subject of the Sunnah constituting proof; they have agreed on a definitive conclusion.

GREAT ISLAMIC SCHOLARS AND SOME OF THEIR VIEWS

Heading the list of references on the Ahl al-Sunnah are the Islamic scholars who authored the six great hadith books collected together and known as the *al-Kutub as-Sitta* (Six Books).

Imam al-Bukhari

Born in Bukhara in 194 AH he was raised by his mother following the death of his father Ismail ibn Ibrahim; he too had been a great religious scholar of the time. He began studying the hadiths at the age of seven and at ten years of age, he had memorized a staggering 70,000 hadiths. He received instruction from well-known scholars in Makkah, Madinah, Nishapur and Basra; it is for this reason that his name began to become known beyond his hometown. Many famous Islamic scholars, including Muslim, Abu Dawud, al-Tirmidhi, and Ibn Sa'id, have regarded his works as an absolutely trustworthy reference and made use of his ideas in their own studies and their own writings. He has been regarded by all as the greatest expert on hadiths who has ever lived.

Imam al-Bukhari studied over 600,000 traditions; only 7,275

of these were examined as part of his own work. This work, the result of sixteen years of intellectual labor, is regarded as the most reliable collection of hadiths in the history of Islam. Titled *al-Jami' al-Sahih*, it was later abridged by Imam az-Zubaidi under *al-Tajrid al-Sarih (Summarized Sahih al-Bukhari)*, which contains more than 2,000 hadiths.

Imam al-Bukhari died in 256 AH, leaving behind a work that would act as a guide for Muslims for many centuries to come. His place in the honored tradition of the Islamic scholars is engraved in stone and his mighty efforts can never be erased.

Imam Muslim

Imam Muslim was born in Nishapur in 204 AH, and began studying the hadiths in his early teens. Like all great scholars, he was not afraid to set out on voluminous journeys to seek knowledge and wisdom; he carried out profound inquiries into the subject by visiting Iraq, Hijaz, Egypt, and Damascus. He benefited from sources of hadiths and other related works on the tradition of Allah's Final Messenger (saas). Wherever he went, his efforts increased him in knowledge and he openly stated that he was most influenced by the work of Imam al-Bukhari.

In his works on the subject of the hadiths, Imam Muslim employed his skills by relaying the sayings and actions of the Prophet (saas) exactly as they had been narrated, not altering a single letter in case this led to misunderstandings amongst the believers. He collected an impressive 300,000 authentic hadiths and retained only 3,030 of them in his famous collection (*Jami'*) known as *Sahih Muslim*. This book is now regarded as the second most trustworthy collection of hadiths after the *Sahih al-Bukhari*. His *Sahih* has served the Islamic world for hundreds of years as

the second volume of the *al-Kutub as-Sitta*.

His teacher Abdul Wahhab al-Farra' is reported as saying this about him: **“Muslim is a scholar of the people and a repository of knowledge. I know nothing about him that is not good.”**

Imam al-Tirmidhi

Imam al-Tirmidhi was born in 209 AH in Termez (*Tirmidh*), in Transoxiana. Despite receiving instruction in Khorasan, Iraq, and Hijaz, his main education took place in Bukhara; this was also the birthplace of Imam al-Bukhari. Indeed, he received instruction in the hadiths from al-Bukhari and Muslim.

Al-Tirmidhi did not restrict himself to collecting traditions, but also contributed to the development of the knowledge of Hadith. His *Sunan al-Tirmidhi* contains 3,962 hadiths. This book is regarded as another of the most reliable works on the subject.

The greatest difference between the *Sunan al-Tirmidhi* and other hadith collections is its orderly arrangement of subjects. Every topic, great or small, is considered separately in such a way that no confusion can arise between them. His ability to collate works and then organize them in a manner which makes the search for knowledge easier for the Muslim reader is one of his greatest qualities. Al-Tirmidhi also wrote the first book about the life of the Companions.

Abu Dawud

Abu Dawud was born in 202 AH. Like al-Bukhari and Muslim, he traveled to almost all of the Islamic lands of his time and was taught by more than fifty scholars. He made use of the

works of al-Bukhari and Muslim. When he completed his own works, other people researching the hadiths made use of the works of Abu Dawud. He was appreciated by the Islamic *ulama* on many matters and pointed out as a scholar acting with his knowledge.

From a total of 500,000 hadiths, he included 4,800 in his work known as the *Sunan Abu Dawud*. In selecting hadiths, he gave pride of place to those concerning rulings and matters of legality. His works have also received widespread acceptance among researchers from different schools.

Imam al-Nasa'i

Imam al-Nasa'i was born in Khorasan in 225 AH. He traveled through the centers of Islamic learning and received instruction on hadiths from a great many scholars. His works have survived down to the present day and are still used as reference books all over the world by Muslims and non-Muslim students of the Islamic traditions.

On his arrival in Damascus from Egypt he was subjected to pressure from the Umayyad administration and was martyred as the result of this horrid torture. His tomb is said to lie between the hills of Safa and Marwah, although this is not an established fact by any means.

His work *al-Mujtaba* is considered a more delicate and intricate collection than others on the subject of the hadiths; it is the third volume in the *al-Kutub as-Sitta*.

Ibn Majah

Ibn Majah was born in Qazwin in 209 AH. Like other scholars of hadith, he traveled to Khorasan, Basra, Makkah,

Damascus and Egypt in order to reach a high standard in the science of hadith studies. As well as the *Sunan Ibn Majah*, he also wrote other texts on history and tafsir. His most well-known book is regarded as the sixth volume in the *al-Kutub as-Sitta*. Some scholars, however, regard Imam Malik's *al-Muwatta'* as the sixth volume.

Of the 4,341 hadiths in the *Sunan ibn Majah*, 1,339 are used only by Imam Maja in his own work and by nobody else in their respective works.

Imam al-Ghazali

Hujjat al-Islam Abu Hamed Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Ghazali is one of the greatest figures in *fiqh* and *tasawwuf* in the entire history of Islam. He was born in Tus, modern-day Iran, in 450 AH (1058 CE). Although his father was not well-off, great pains were taken by his noble parents to make sure he was provided with a good upbringing.

Having completed his studies in Tus, al-Ghazali moved to Gurgan to continue his education. The shaking of political authority in Anatolia also affected al-Ghazali. As a result, he migrated to Nishapur, becoming the student of the famous scholar Abu al Ma'ali al-Juwayni. Following the death of his teacher, he was appointed by Nizam al-Mulk Tusi as chief professor in the Nizamiyya madrassah. Within a short space of time, al-Ghazali was able to make his voice heard among the people, and the number of his students began rising with every passing day.

He left the madrassah as the result of an illness he suffered in 488 AH, and spent the next decade away from the public gaze. Immediately after this period he returned to his students in

Baghdad and began teaching them from his own work, *Ihya' al-'Ulum al-Din*. When the unity of the Muslims in Anatolia wavered, he was recalled to Tus by the Seljuk vizier. Under the patronage of Sultan Sanjar, all available opportunities were placed at his disposal over the next twelve years. He continued to occupy himself with learning and preaching until the last day of his life in 505 AH (1111 CE).

Imam al-Ghazali's ideas represented a turning point in the history of Islamic thought. In the late years of his life, he waged a struggle against those ideas which were intrinsically opposed to those of the Ahl al-Sunnah and he eliminated several tendencies which he strongly believed would lead Muslims onto the wrong road.

Al-Ghazali wrote in one of his books:

“As we have said on the subject of the title of Muslim, there is an example and a sign in the essence of marafat (cognizance), and this is understood by those possessing it. Nobody apart from those who have no dealings with this world, who do not actively occupy themselves with it and who spend their lives seeking and desiring nothing but Allah can seek this truth. This is a long and difficult endeavor. Let us therefore indicate that which is the food of all. This is the creed of the Ahl al-Sunnah. For those who hold this belief in their hearts, it will be the seed of bliss and salvation.” (Kimiya' al-Sa'adat)

Imam al-Ghazali's main works include:

1. The *Ihya' al-'Ulum al-Din* (The Revival of Religious Sciences) is al-Ghazali's best-known and largest work. It deals with the subjects of *fiqh* and *tasawwuf*. It contains major sections each with four books, consisting of forty books in total. Ever since it

was written it has been one of the most frequently read books of the Islamic world.

2. The *al-Iqtisad fi al-Itiqad* (The Median in Belief) deals with matters of faith and conviction.

3. The *Tahafut al-Falasifa* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers) is a collection of criticisms of Aristotelian philosophy.

4. The *Kimiya' al-Sa'adat* (The Alchemy of Happiness) deals with faith, deeds, morality, and *tasawwuf*. It is the Persian resume of *Ihya'*.

5. The *Bidayat al-Hidayah* (The Beginning of Guidance) was written in a style accessible to the ordinary public, and is a book of instruction on the subjects of religion and ethics.

Large and small, the total number of works penned by Imam al-Ghazali is 75.

Sayyid Ibrahim Haqqi of Erzurum

Hadrat Ibrahim Haqqi of Erzurum was born in the township of Hasankale, Erzurum, in 1703. Since his grandfather was descended from the line of the Prophet (saas), he qualifies as a sayyid on the maternal side of his lineage.

Hadrat Ibrahim Haqqi made the acquaintance of Ismail Faqirullah during a trip to the Tillo region in Siirt with his father, and settled there for a time. On the death of his father, the dervish Osman Effendi, Haqqi returned to Erzurum and continued his education from where he had left it in his earlier life. He received lessons in Arabic and Persian from Muhammad Hazik, the mufti of Erzurum. Having made great progress in Turkish, Arabic and Persian he was able to write beautiful poetry in all three languages.

In 1728, he returned to Siirt and continued attending lectures by Ismail Faqirullah, eventually marrying his daughter and thus becoming his teacher's son-in-law. Returning from the hajj in 1728, he wrote his book *Lubb al-Qutb*; this consisted of extracts from the works of great Islamic scholars of the past.

Invited to court by Sultan Mahmud I in 1747, he enjoyed the opportunity of making use of the palace library. On his return from Istanbul to Erzurum, he began to write short treatises (*risalas*). Following his second visit to Istanbul, he withdrew to his home in Hasankale and devoted himself completely to writing books.

On his second *hajj*, the holy pilgrimage to Makkah, he engaged in exchanges of information by establishing contact with famous Islamic scholars in Aleppo, Damascus, Makkah, Madinah and Jerusalem.

On his return from his travels, he wrote his famous work the *Ma'rifatname* (Book of Gnosis). In addition to that, he wrote 54 other important works. He died in Siirt in 1780, his body being placed in the tomb built for his teacher Sheikh Ismail Faqirullah.

Some extracts from the sayings of Sayyid Ibrahim Haqqi are as follows:

“The best of good morality is to go to he who does not come to you. It is for you to forgive he who oppresses you. If you speak, tell the truth. If you make promises, keep them. If you do good, keep it secret. If you see ill-nature in anyone, avoid following his example.

Greeting everyone is the greatest moral quality. Modesty yields increase. The greatest wisdom is to get on well with people. Anyone who seeks fault among the people will find his own faults the subject of discussion. Anyone

accepting advice will be spared shame.

One must not obey servants in those matters which are sinful in the sight of Allah. One cannot expect anything good from those who tell lies. If you enjoy people's speaking with you, speak with them in the same manner. Accept the apologies of those who apologize. Respect those older than you so that those younger than you will respect you. The most useful treasure is the love in people's hearts." (Ma'rifatname)

Imam Rabbani

His real name was Ahmad Sirhindi al-Farooqi. He was born in Sirhind, an Indian town, in 1564. Since he was descended from Hadrat Umar al-Farooq (ra) through the lineage of his father, he was known by the appellation of al-Farooqi.

He is one of the great figures of *tasawwuf* in the tradition of the Ahl al-Sunnah. He began receiving instruction in Sufism under the authorization of Muhammad al-Baqi Billah, a Naqshbandi Shaykh. He came into conflict with the Emperor Jahangir; he was accused of "damaging the essence of the faith," and was imprisoned in Gwalior Fort in 1619.

Since he supported the beliefs of the Ahl al-Sunnah and was totally against all heretical movements, he was regarded as worthy of the esteemed title, *Mujaddid Alf Thani* (the Reviver of the Millennium). His *Maktubat* (Letters), the collection of letters he wrote to his friends and students, is one of the main references in *tasawwuf*.

Below are some extracts from his *Maktubat*:

"A person must first correct his belief. That correction must be compatible with those of the Ahl al-Sunnah wal Jama'ah, who are the companions of the Garden. While

one may hope for forgiveness of indolence in one's deeds, there can be none for indolence in one's beliefs."

"Attaining happiness in both worlds depends only, and only upon following the Messenger of Allah (saas). In order to follow him, it is necessary to comply with and exercise the rules of Islam among people, annihilate from the people the things that are peculiar to disbelief, and eradicate from the people the things that are the signs of disbelief."

"The time for working righteous deeds is the period of youth. A virtuous person will realize the value of this period and will not waste it. Old age is not a period attained by everybody. Even if one attains, he may not be able then to collect himself together. And even if he does, he is no longer strong enough to perform any deed. Old age is the age of feebleness and senility..."

"... Each of these seventy-three groups claims to obey the religion. Each group says that it is the one that will be saved [from Hell]. It is declared in the fifty-third ayat of Surat al-Muminun and in the thirty-second ayat of Surat ar-Rum: "... each party exulting in what it had." However, among these various groups, the sign, the symptom of the one that will be saved is given by our Prophet (saas) as follows: 'Those who are in this group are those who follow the way which I and my ashab follow.' After mentioning himself, the Messenger of Allah (saas) did not need to mention his ashab; yet his mentioning them may come to mean: 'My way is the way which my ashab follow. The way to salvation is only the way which my ashab follow.'"

"He who says that he follows the Messenger of Allah

(saas) though he does not follow the way of his ashab is wrong... Those who follow the way of his ashab are no doubt the Ahl al-Sunnah wal Jama'ah. May Allah (swt) give plenty of rewards to the superiors of this group, who worked undauntedly without falling tired! The group that will be saved [from Hell] is only this one. For, he who speaks ill of our Prophet's (saas) ashab is certainly deprived of following them. Such is the case for the sect of Shiite and the group of Kharijites.

The same provision is issued with regard to the Mutazila group. This is a path that emerged subsequently. Other groups who are not members of the Ahl al-Sunnah are subject to the same comparison.” (Maktubat al-Rabbani)

Sayyid ‘Abd al-Qadr al-Gaylani

‘Abd al-Qadr al-Gaylani, whose title was Abu Muhammad, is also known as Muhyi’al-Din, Qutb-e Rabbani, al-Ghaus al-A‘zam and Sultan al-Awliya’ (the sultan of the saints). He is both a sayyid and a sharif. He was born in 1078 in the Persian province of Gaylan. It was in this town that he was eventually to begin his religious studies. He later moved from Gaylan to Baghdad, where he continued his education. Selecting the Hanbali school, he concentrated on this school in *fiqh* and became well-acquainted with *tasawwuf* while preaching at the Abu Said madrassah. His Sufi path, al-Qadiriyyah, was named after him.

Among the books that have come down through the generations from him are *Al-Ghunya*, *Al-Fath al-Rabbani*, and *Futuh al-Ghayb*; these mainly consist of his sermons and advice. Shaikh al-Gaylani died in Baghdad in 1166. His tomb, which is visited

by millions of people every year, lies in Baghdad.

Some of his writings are as follows:

“Acting by the Qur’an elevates you to the level of the Qur’an and installs you there. Acting with the Sunnah (the hadiths of the Prophet) elevates you to the Prophet, the Messenger of Allah (saas). With his heart and spiritual protection the Prophet (saas) is indivisible from the hearts of the friends of Allah, even for a single moment. It is he who beautifies the hearts of the friends of Allah, who gives them fragrance. It is he who purifies their essence and cleanses them of negative feelings and beautifies them.

Remember Allah that He may remember you. Remember Allah that this remembrance (dhikr) cleanses your sins. May you remain without sin. May you be an obedient believer, free of sin. At that time He will remember you. That remembrance will so enfold and occupy you that you will have no time to desire anything else. That will be your sole aim and desire.

O people! Islam weeps. It has placed its head in its hands. It is beset by the fajarah, the fasiqun, the ahl al-bid’ah, oppressors, those who bear false witness, those who lack the virtue they claim to possess. It seeks the help of pure and devout Muslims against them.

May you eat and drink as if you eat and drink for the last time. May your meeting with your family be one of farewell. May your meeting with your Muslim brother be one of farewell. Always remind your heart that it is entrusted and that it is in a constant state of farewell. How can anyone whose destiny is in the hands of another not be in a state of entrustment and farewell? He knows not what tomorrow will bring, how matters will end, not what des-

tiny will bring him.

Therefore, repent at once, and endeavor not to sin again. Escape your sins and run towards your Lord with speedy steps. When you repent, repent both internally and externally. Repentance lies at the heart of being an acceptable servant in the sight of Allah. Remove and dispose of the shirt of sin with a sincere repentance and true modesty before Allah.

O you who turn your back on the way of Allah and concern yourself with the affairs of this world! I regard you as one who pleases other people but who angers Allah. It is quite certain that you will soon be taken from this world. Death will take you from it. You will be seized by the one who seizes much painfully, much powerfully and in many forms, and will be taken hence. You will lose and abandon all you have in a single moment.” (Al-Fath ar-Rabbani)

Hadrat Shah Naqshband

Born near Bukhara in 1318, his real name was Muhammad Bahauddan Uways al-Bukhari. He was spiritually and theologically trained by Sheikh Muhammad Baba as-Samasi, the sheikh of the Khajagan order. Shah Naqshband, who traveled to Samarkand in his youth, was a member of the Hanafi school and attracted a wide popular following with his works and preaching on the topics of morality and knowledge.

The Naqshbandi order he founded spread to India in the time of Imam Rabbani. After the capture of Istanbul, the order was adopted by the ruling Ottomans. The presence of many Naqshbandi shrines (*dargahs*) in Istanbul was a sign of just how far the movement had spread among the populace.

The truth propagated by Shah Naqshband throughout the

course of his life is the pillar of Islam, namely, that those who do not hold fast to the book of Allah (swt) and who do not obey the commands of the Prophet (saas) cannot attain salvation. It informs that the people must not depart from the line drawn by the Qur'an and the Sunnah of Allah's Final Messenger (saas). One who follows or imitates another individual on a different path, and thus ignores the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (saas) is ultimately spiritually doomed. In one of his books, Shah Naqshband expresses his devotion to the Messenger of Allah (saas) in the following terms: ***“Whatever the Messenger of Allah (saas) did, I have done it exactly as he did and have neglected none of the Sunnah. I have fulfilled it all and enjoyed the results. I have seen his work in myself.”***

Mawlana Khalid al-Baghdadi

Mawlana Khalid al-Baghdadi was born in Shahrzur, near Baghdad, in 1778. He received instruction in Qur'anic commentary (*tafsir*), the hadiths, jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and *tasawwuf* from several famous scholars. When his shaykh died, he began teaching students in his place. Thousands of people from all over the Islamic world attended his classes. After teaching for eight years he traveled to Damascus and from there to the Hijaz. In 1809, Shaykh Abdullah al-Dahlawi invited Mawlana Khalid to India. After completing his studies there, he returned to Baghdad. In 1826, he died in Damascus. Ibn 'Abidin, one of the great Hanafi scholars, led his funerary prayers.

Mawlana Khalid opened the introduction to his work with the following quotation from the *Maktubat al-Rabbani*:

“It must be well considered and understood that it is Allah alone Who bestows blessings on all, creates all things, and

preserves all entities at all times. The superior and excellent attributes in His servants are His blessing and endowment. In order for us to attain the infinite blessings of Paradise, its endless joys and His approval and love, Allah commands us to comply with the beloved Prophet (saas)."

"Adhere strictly to Allah's commands and prohibitions for so long as you live. I advise you to remember Allah constantly, to seek shelter in Him, not to give your hearts to this transitory world but to seek the infinite Hereafter, to prepare yourselves for death and the solitude of the grave and the Day of Judgment, to adhere tightly to the Prophet's (saas) Sunnah, to turn your faces away from bid'ah, and to pray for the success of Muslims and for the defeat of apostates and the enemies of the religion." (From Mawlana Khalid's letter to a friend from Diyarbakir.)

Ahmad Dhiya al-Din Gumushkhanewi

Ahmad Dhiya al-Din Gumushkhanewi was born in Gumushane in 1813. Brought to Trabzon when he was ten, he began studying with the city's scholars. When his older brother was summoned for military service, he spent some time working in commerce at his father's side. In 1831, he settled in Istanbul, despite his family's opposition, where he continued his studies. He influenced many prominent figures of the time, among them Sultan Abd al-Hamid II, through his discourses.

Gumushkhanewi devoted twenty-eight years of his life to writing books and preached Islam for sixteen years. Collecting donations from his followers, who numbered more than 1 million, he founded a joint "solidarity and investment fund," which he used to establish a printing press, a publishing house, four separate libraries containing 18,000 books, and various founda-

tions.

Hadrat Gumushkhanewi is known for the great importance he attached to the Sunnah and for constantly teaching his students the hadiths. By establishing libraries across Turkey and being active in educational activities, he did all in his power to help Muslims advance. He fought in the Ottoman-Russian war of 1877-78 and provided considerable moral support to the Turkish troops.

On his return from a visit to Egypt in 1880, he turned the Gumushkhanewi *dargah* over to his successor Hasan Hilmi Effendi, and from then on only attended the Friday lectures. He died on Mount Yusa in Beykoz district on 13 May 1893, where he was spending the summer months in a tent. He was recognized as the greatest Islamic scholar of his time.

The Master's works include:

- ◆ The *Jami` al-Usul*, which describes the fine points of particularly the Naqshbandi order. It contains collections from works held in esteem by all movements of tasawwuf that are compatible with the Ahl al-Sunnah;

- ◆ The *Ruh al-`Arifin*, which describes the various ranks within tasawwuf;

- ◆ The *Majmu`at al-Ahzab*, which describes the Ahl al-Tasawwuf's daily religious observances;

- ◆ The *Kitab al-`Arifin*, which deals with supplication.

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi was born in 1873 in Nurs, a small hamlet in the province of Bitlis in eastern Turkey. Although he began his religious education at the age of nine, he could not get used to the madrassah and left it. At the age of 12, he had

a dream about Prophet Muhammad (saas), which impelled him to return to his studies. At the age of 21, his name became known in eastern provinces and was given the name Bediuzzaman (The Wonder of the Age).

One of his major goals in life was the establishment of Madrassah al-Zahra University in Van. In 1907 he came to Istanbul and explained his project to Sultan Abd al-Hamid II but his efforts to convince him failed. Upon this, he rented a room in Sekerci Han in Fatih, Istanbul and settled there.

Although he had no connections with the events of 31 March, he was arrested during the incidents but then he was acquitted. Following the events of 31 March, he left Istanbul and proceeded with his studies in Van, Tbilisi, Damascus, Beirut, and Izmir. With the advent of the World War I, he participated in Teskilat-i Mahsusa (the Ottoman intelligence agency). In 1916, he was in Pasinler as the militia commander and was taken as a prisoner of war. During the Bolshevik Revolution, getting advantage of the disorder, he ran away and succeeded to come to Istanbul with difficulty.

Said Nursi's life changed with the rebellion of Sheikh Said, to whom he did not actually lend support. Said Nursi tells why he did not support the rebellion: ***“The Turkish Nation has been the flag man of Islam for ages. This nation has brought up many walis and martyrs. One cannot draw one's sword to the grandsons of such a nation. We are Muslims, we are brothers. Do not let brothers struggle with one another. This is not acceptable in terms of Sharia. Swords are drawn to the outer foes, are not used within the nation. In this time, our sole salvation is in the enlightenment and guidance through Qur'an and the signs of faith. It is to remove***

ignorance, our greatest foe. Stop your efforts, for it would come to nothing. It is likely that, because of a few killers, thousands of innocent men and women perish.”

Despite everything, together with many leaders of the district, an official inquiry about Bediuzzaman was opened and he was brought to Istanbul. Then he was exiled to Barla, a village of Egridir. In this village, he wrote three-quarters of the *Risale-i Nur Collection*, a famous commentary of the Qur’an.

As the number of his followers increased, he was sent to Eskisehir, where he underwent trial again and was sentenced to eleven months imprisonment. Pressure upon him increased gradually. In 1934, he was sent from Barla to Isparta. After serving his sentence together with his 120 friends, he was exiled to Kastamonu. He was arrested again in 1943 and sent back to Ankara. Following this, investigations about him were opened in Isparta and Denizli. Following his detention for nine months together with over a hundred friends, he was acquitted of all charges. Despite the decision of acquittal, pressures did not relent. The sentence passed, that of twenty months of imprisonment, was annulled by a higher court.

When, in 1951, he was sued in relation to one of his articles in a journal, he found the opportunity to come to Istanbul, where he had not been to for twenty-seven years. He was acquitted again.

In 1956, the publishing of the *Risale-i Nur Collection* was allowed, for no one could find any element of crime in it. During the last days of his life, he traveled all around the country and after a long journey from Istanbul to Urfa, he passed away in 1960. Following the coup of 27 May, his funeral was taken from Urfa by plane to Isparta, where he was buried at an unknown place.

His Works:

- The Words
- Letters
- The Flashes Collection
- The Rays Collection
- Epitomes of Light (*Mathnawi al-Nuriya*)
- The Staff of Moses (*Asa-yi Musa*)
- Kastamonu Letters
- Barla Letters
- Emirdağ Letters
- Signs of Miraculousness
- The Ratifying Stamp of the Unseen
- The Damascus Sermon
- The Debates (*Munazarat*)
- *İki Mekteb-i Musibetin Şahadetnamesi*

Some quotations from his works:

“Being subject to the Sunnah is certainly very precious. Especially at a time when the bid’ahs have increased, being subject to Sunnah is very precious. Especially at a time when disorder reigns among the ummah, complying with the moral principles of the Sunnah establishes important piety and a profound faith.” (Flashes, p. 48)

“I considered the Sunnah as ropes hanging down from the heavens and ascending to it; the one who clings them ascends and attains happiness. Those who object and rely on their reasoning, on the other hand, become like the pharaoh, who was stupid enough to ascend to heavens on a long minaret.” (Epitomes of Light, p. 72)

“Our Creator assigned us Prophet Muhammad (saas), as the greatest tutor and the most perfect grand master, and

the truest guidance that does not err or make anyone err. And He sent him as the last messenger.” (The Staff of Moses, p. 34)

“... Prophet Muhammad (saas), whose essential being was the source, seed, life, and means of the mighty tree of the World of Islam...” (Flashes, The Thirtieth Flash)

“The best, the most righteous, the most shining and wealthy path of guardianship among others is to be subject to the Sunnah.” (Letters)

Unorthodox and heretical movements within Islam are just as dangerous as those movements coming from outside. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi pointed out these internal dangers:

“What gives me pain are only the dangers that Islam is subject to. In the past, dangers used to come from outside; therefore, it was easy to resist them. Now they come from inside. The wolf is inside the body. Now resistance is harder. I am afraid the community’s constitution cannot bear it, for it does not perceive the foes. It assumes its greatest foe, who sucks its blood, is a friend. If the community’s foresight becomes blind, then the castle of faith is in danger. That is my suffering, my sole suffering. I even do not have the time to think about the suffering and difficulties I personally face. If only I personally faced something a thousand times more difficult, but the future of the castle of faith were secure...”

Suleyman Hilmi Tunahan

Born in Silistire in 1888, Suleyman Hilmi Tunahan was educated in Istanbul madrassahs by the most famous tutors of the day and graduated with the highest degrees. From 1930 on, he worked in the Department of Religious Affairs and served as a

preacher in the Sultanahmet, Yeniciami, Sehzadebasi, and Kasimpasa mosques.

Judicial inquiries were opened against him several times; each time he was acquitted. During this period when people started to forget the Qur'an, he dedicated himself to educating young people. His work is clear indication of the importance he attached to teaching of the Qur'an.

He continuously advised his students to follow the Qur'an and our Prophet (saas) and protect young people from heretical movements. He died in 1959.

Suleyman Hilmi Tunahan and his followers were affiliated to Imam al-Maturidi in theology and Imam Abu Hanifah in *fiqh*. Suleyman Effendi followed the path of *tasawwuf* established by Imam Rabbani.

Kemal Kacar, his son-in-law and student, explains his superior personality as follows:

“Suleyman Effendi’s spiritual aspect in the knowledge of the inner and the hidden, that is in tasawwuf, is known to who possess it. External and apparent intelligence cannot appreciate it. Indeed, a person, who may be Muslim, educated and intelligent, may come across such a person having the knowledge of tasawwuf and the ability to guide, but still, under no circumstances, can be aware of his blessings unless that person informs him about himself via the Divine will. We, on the other hand, have not a speck of doubt about his [Suleyman Effendi’s] spiritual aspect. We have acknowledged it not by way of knowledge but by experiencing it.” (Hizir Yilmaz, Suleymancilik Hakkinda Bir Inceleme [An Examination on the Phenomena of Suleymancilik], p. 11)

Sayyid AbdulHakim al-Arwasi

Sayyid AbdulHakim al-Arwasi was born in 1865 in the Baskal'a district of Van. His father, Mustafa Effendi, was a man of tasawwuf who dedicated himself to Islamic education. Following the education, AbdulHakim al-Arwasi Effendi was educated in Qur'anic commentary, hadith, jurisprudence, and Islamic theology in Iraq.

When he was fourteen, he started to receive an education in tasawwuf from Fahim Effendi and became his student. After reaching a certain level of maturity, when he was around twenty years old, he returned to homeland and spent all that he had to establish a madrassah and a library that the students could use for free. However, this madrassah was looted by the Armenians and the Russians during the World War I. Eventually, he was compelled to leave Van. However, out of 150 of his companions, only twenty-nine reached Istanbul alive.

In 1919, AbdulHakim Effendi settled in a madrassah in the Eyup area of Istanbul, which was allocated for him and his companions. He began to teach in the Sulaymaniyya Madrassah, but was dismissed in 1924-25, when the religious lodges were closed down. In 1930, following the Menemen incidents, he was arrested and later acquitted. Then he started to preach in the Beyoglu Aga and the Beyazid Mosques. During his final years, he was arrested and exiled several times. During these years, he guided Necip Fazil Kisakurek, an Islamic poet, to faith.

He died in Ankara in 1943. His burial was as simple and modest as his life.

AbdulHakim Effendi wrote two books: *Ar-Riyad-ut-Tasawwufiyya* and *Rabita-i Sharifa*. The answers he gave in his letters and conversations were also compiled in a book.

Mahmud Sami Ramazanoglu

M. Sami Ramazanoglu was born in 1892 in Adana and eventually became the shaykh of the Erenkoy congregation. After obtaining his degree from the Dar al-Funun Law School, he concentrated on *tasawwuf*. He preached for a while in mosques and became involved with commerce. After living for some time in Damascus, he went to Zihni Pasha Mosque in Erenkoy, Istanbul where he endeavored to guide the people. In 1979, he went to Saudi Arabia, where he eventually died after dedicating his long life to spreading Islam.

Mehmet Zahid Kotku

In 1897, Mehmet Zahid Effendi was born into one of Bursa's Caucasian families. Zahid Kotku, who was 18 years old during the World War I, was drafted and spent six years in the army: three at the front and three in Istanbul. Following his tour of duty, he went to the Gumushane lodge and received a certificate to teach at the age of 27. After the lodges were closed, he married and became an imam in Bursa.

He preached in Fatih's Iskenderpasha Mosque for twenty-two years and died in 1980. A great crowd of people from throughout Turkey and Europe attended his funeral service in Istanbul's Sulaymaniyyah Mosque. The number of his followers continued to increase even after his death. In distant cities of Turkey and even outside Turkey, many people loved him.

Mehmet Zahid Kotku's services to Islam were mainly in the form of conversations, during which he enlightened his students about religious matters and daily issues concerning Muslims. Through his sermons, books, and conversations, he played an important role in imparting Islamic values to Turkish

youths. His knowledge, as well as his tolerant and modest nature, also attracted people.

He made a great effort to solve the problem of Muslim countries' underdeveloped industrial sector, by working with other people to establish the Gümüs Motor factory. But this attempt failed, due to inexperience and technical inadequacies.

In his book *Tevbe* (Repentance), he stated:

“One should be very cautious in complying with the Sunnah in all affairs. Unless otherwise necessary, one should not neglect any of its practices. We should be meticulous with the practices [of the Messenger of Allah] in manners of eating, clothing, conversation, prayers, ablution and cleanliness, as well as good form.”

Necip Fazil Kisakurek

The great intellectual Necip Fazil Kisakurek was born in 1904 in Cemberlitas, Istanbul, into a family that came from Kahramanmaras. In 1912, he attended a French school and then the American College in Gedikpasha. In Heybeliada, where his family moved due to his mother's illness, he attended the Navy College. In 1917, he started his study of philosophy at Dar al-Funun. In 1924, he was sent to Sorbonne University in Paris. After a year, he discontinued his education and returned home.

Due to his nature, he could not hold a position for a long time. For this reason, he left his position in 1938. In 1941, he worked as an instructor in the State Fine Arts Academy and Robert College. During these same years, he also worked as an author and poet.

His acknowledgement of Islam's essence occurred during

these years. The movement he initiated, the Great Eastern Movement, became a nightmare for the enemies of Islam. Between 1943 and 1972, he traveled and lectured throughout Turkey. Eight cases were launched against him, and he ended up staying in prison for three-and-one-half years. He continued his intellectual struggle against the enemies of Islam and various heretical movements until his death in 1984. His book, *Dogru Yolun Sapik Kollari* (The Erroneous Branches of the Righteous Path) saved many people from going astray.

In this important book, Necip Fazil explained the views of all heretical sects and showed Ahl al-Sunnah wal Jama'ah, the path of the Messenger of Allah (saas) and his Companions, as the righteous way.

Some extracts from his works are as follows:

“The second and third ages of the Muslim calendar – during which heretical branches spread, became popular and danced with joy in an atmosphere of festival – witnessed two triumphal arches that rendered the entire units on the way of Sunnah and religious community a monument. An arch with four gates that direct Islamic principles of faith and rules of deeds, and another arch with two gates that strengthen directly the aspects related to creed ... One of them is in deeds, and the other is in creed ...

In deeds: Imam Malik, Imam al-A`zam, Imam al-Shafi`i, Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal;

In creed: Imam al-Maturidi, Imam al-Ash`ari.

They represent the border guardians of the righteous path and constitute the police forces of the Ahl al-Sunnah.

The Book is the Qur'an; the Sunnah is every word, order and act of the Messenger of Allah (saas) ... Ijma; the collected decrees upon which the ummah, that is, the

Companions who deserve the quality of being an ummah, agreed ... Qiyas; rulings that leading religious scholars make through analogy...

In an ascending order, ranks melt into one another and finally gather together in one absolute: In Allah's book and the Prophet's (saas) Sunnah...

The path of Ahl al-Sunnah wal Jama'ah is that straight street brought out by these heroes among a thousand lines of disorder. On this street, those raising the triumphal arch with four gates, in terms of both creed and deeds, are the greatest engineers of the external front having brought about the seed of the subsequent architects of creed..."

(Necip Fazil Kısakürek, Dogru Yolun Sapik Kollari: Arinma Caginda Islam [The Erroneous Branches of the Righteous Path: Islam in the Era of Purification], p. 95)

FARDS IN THE RELIGION

Every Muslim must know thirty-three binding duties (*fards*) of Islam. These are:

Articles of belief: 6

Pillars of Islam: 5

Fards of salat: 12

Fards of wudu': 4

Fards of ghusl: 3

Fards of tayammum: 3

ARTICLES OF BELIEF

The articles of belief are six:

- 1) Belief in Allah (swt), the One and Only
- 2) Belief in His angels
- 3) Belief in the books He sent
- 4) Belief in the prophets He sent
- 5) Belief in the Day of Judgment
- 6) Belief in destiny (that everything takes place according to His will).

PILLARS OF ISLAM

The five fundamental observances revealed in the Prophet's (saas) hadith constitute the pillars of Islam. The Messenger of

Allah (saas) said:

“The religion of Islam is based on five fundamental principles: attesting that there exists no deity but Allah, that Muhammad is His servant and His messenger, praying, fasting and pilgrimage.” (Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim)

PRAYER (SALAT)

Our Prophet (saas) stated that the first act of worship that people will give an account of in the Hereafter is the prayer (*salat*) and the servant will be saved if he has fulfilled them and that he will be among the lost if he failed. (al-Tirmidhi)

In a hadith al-sharif related by Umar (ra), people asked Allah’s Messenger (saas) which act of worship was most pleasing to Allah (swt). The Prophet (saas) answered: ***“To offer prayer at the right time. Whoever abandons his prayer, he has no religion. The prayer is the pillar of the religion.”*** (al-Bayhaqi)

In one verse, Allah (swt) reveals the following:

Recite what has been revealed to you of the Book and establish salat. Salat precludes indecency and wrongdoing. And remembrance of Allah is greater still. Allah knows what you do. (Surat al-‘Ankabut, 45)

Prayer may be performed either alone or in congregation in the mosque led by an imam. However, the Friday and *eid* prayers are performed in congregation. Muslims relay their desires by praying alone to Almighty Allah (swt). They seek forgiveness of their sins directly from Allah (swt), for there is no intermediary between the believer and Him.

The Prophet (saas) was very conscientious about his prayers

and continued to pray until he was so exhausted that he could no longer stand. One of the Companions asked him why he exhausted himself so much though he was given the good news of the Garden. He (saas) replied: ***“Should I not be a grateful servant?”*** (Ahmad)

Some of the hadiths of our Prophet (saas) about prayer are the following:

“The similitude of five prayers is like an overflowing river passing by the gate of one of you in which he washes five times daily.” (Sahih Muslim, Book 004, Number 1411)

“Between a man and disbelief there is only the giving up of prayer.” (Sahih Muslim)

“The distinguishing factor between them and us is the prayer. Therefore, the one abandoning the prayer has resembled an unbeliever.” (al-Tirmidhi)

“To offer prayers with the congregation is twenty-seven times more meritorious than to offer it alone.” (Sahih al-Bukhari)

“If they were to know what excellence lies in the night prayer and morning prayer, they would have definitely come even if crawling (on their knees).” (Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim, Book 004, Number 0877)

“... when a servant goes to the mosque, after performing wudu properly, and there is no other object of his going except (offering) prayer, he is elevated by one rank at each step and one sin of his forgiven.” (Sahih Muslim)

“The most eminent among human beings (as a recipient of) reward (is one) who lives farthest away (from the mosque), and who has to walk the farthest distance. He who waits for the prayer, to observe it along with the Imam, his reward is greater than one who prays (alone) and then goes

to sleep." (Sahih Muslim, Book 004, Number 1401)

"When you see that a person is attached to the mosque and looks after it (devotedly), give the testimony of faith for him." (al-Tirmidhi and ibn Majah)

"A time will come when the conversation of the people in the mosques will center around their worldly affairs. You must not sit with such people. Allah has nothing to do with them." (al-Bayhaqi)

After every fard prayer, Allah's Messenger (saas) used to say: **"There is no god but Allah. He is One and without a partner. Unto Him belongs Sovereignty and unto Him belongs all praise. In His Hand is all good and He has power over all things. O Allah! No one can withhold what You bestow, and no one can bestow what You decide to withhold, and the prosperity of no prosperous one can make him independent of You i.e., even the wealthiest and most powerful person is a beggar at the door of Your mercy."** (Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim)

"If anyone extols Allah (recites Subhan Allah) after every prayer thirty-three times, and praises Allah (recites Al-hamdu lillaah) thirty-three times, and declares His Greatness (recites Allah-u-Akbar) thirty-three times, ninety-nine times in all, and says to complete a hundred: 'La ilaha illa Allah wahdahu la sharikah lahu, lahu al-mulk wa lahu al-hamd, wa huwa 'ala kulli shay'in qadir' (There is no god but Allah, having no partner with Him, to Him belongs sovereignty and to Him is praise due, and He is Potent over everything), his sins will be forgiven even if these are as abundant as the foam of the sea." (Sahih Muslim, Book 004, Number 1243)

The most important element in performing the prayer is

to be in a spirit of fear filled with respect. In order to be in this spirit, the Prophet (saas) advised us: “When you pray, pray like the one who says farewell to his lower self, his desires and his life, and turns to his Lord.” (Ibn Majah)

Aisha (ra) relates how meticulous the Prophet (saas) was about prayers:

“Allah’s Messenger (saas) talked to us and we talked to him, we laughed and conversed. But when the time for prayer came, presumably out of Divine majesty, he became as if he did not know us and we did not know him.”

Timings of the Prayer

Prayer is performed at five specific times of day. In addition to the daily ones, prayer is also performed in congregation once each Friday and twice a year on the Islamic eids (feasts).

1. *Salat al-fajr* (morning prayer): a *sunnah* prayer consisting of 2 *rak’ahs* and a *fard* prayer consisting of 2 *rak’ahs*

2. *Salat al-zuhr* (noon prayer): a *sunnah* prayer consisting of 4 *rak’ahs*, a *fard* prayer consisting of 4 *rak’ahs*, and a final *sunnah* prayer consisting of 2 *rak’ahs*

3. *Salat al-’asr* (afternoon prayer): a *sunnah* prayer consisting of 4 *rak’ahs* and a *fard* prayer consisting of 4 *rak’ahs*

4. *Salat al-maghrib* (evening prayer): a *fard* prayer consisting of 3 *rak’ahs* and a *sunnah* prayer consisting of 2 *rak’ahs*

5. *Salat al-’isha’* (night prayer): a *sunnah* prayer consisting of 4 *rak’ahs*, a *fard* prayer consisting of 4 *rak’ahs*, and a final *sunnah* prayer consisting of 2 *rak’ahs* (a *witr* prayer*)

* The *witr* prayer consists of three *rak’ahs* and is performed after the night prayer’s final *sunnah*. Its time ends with the end of the night prayer’s time and the beginning of the morning

prayer's time.

The *witr* prayer commences with the statement of intention: "I intend to offer today's *witr* prayer for the sake of Allah." It is normally performed in two *rak'ahs*. After the pause in a sitting position at the end of the two *rak'ahs* and reciting the *tahiyat*, one rises for a third *rak'ah*. After reciting the *basmalah*, *Surat al-Fatiha*, and several Qur'anic verses, the *takbir* position is assumed, "*Allahu akbar*" is said with the hands folded together, and then the *du'ah qunut* are offered. The words "*Allahu akbar*" are spoken while moving on to the *ruku'* and *sajdah* positions. One then sits down, recites the *tahiyat*, *salli-barik*, and *rabbana du'ahs*, and then turns his or her head to the right and then to the left. (Ibn Abidin, *Radd al-Mukhtar*, [Egypt: 1966], 2:5)

The *witr* prayer is not mentioned in the Qur'an; however, it does appear in various hadiths, some of which are as follows:

***"Allah is single and loves what is single, so observe the witr, O you who follow the Qur'an."* (Sahih al-Bukhari; Sahih Muslim; al-Tirmidhi; and Sunan Abu-Dawud, Book 8, Number 1411)**

***"Allah the Exalted has given you an extra prayer that is better for you than the red camels (i.e., high breed camels). This is the witr, which Allah has appointed for you between the night prayer and the daybreak."* (Sunan Abu-Dawud, Book 8, Number 1413)**

The *Fards* of the Prayer

Prayer has twelve *fards*, some of which must be observed before beginning the prayer. They are known as the conditions or prerequisites of prayer. Others, known as the "pillars of prayer," are observed while praying.

The Prerequisites of Prayer:

1. Purity from *hadath*: Cleansing oneself of invisible impurities by performing *wudu'* or *ghusl*, as appropriate, or *tayammum* (when it is impossible to perform the former two).

2. Purity from *najasat*: Cleansing oneself of visible impurities on one's body or clothing before praying.

3. Covering of *satar*: Covering what needs to be covered. For men, this consists of everything between the navel and the knee; for women, it is the whole body, excluding the hands, face, and feet. If one-quarter of what must be covered becomes uncovered while praying for as long as it takes one to perform one pillar of *salat*, the prayer is invalid.

4. Facing the *qiblah*: Facing toward the Ka`bah while praying. If the one praying turns his or her chest away from the *qiblah* (approximately 45 degrees), the prayer is invalid.

5. Prescribed time: There is a specific time for each fard and *wajib* prayer. Prayers must be performed within the times set out for them. The prayer cannot be performed beforehand. It is also a sin to leave it for later without a legitimate justification.

6. Making the *niyyah*: Calling to mind the prayer to be performed. The imam must intend to fulfill his role, and the congregation must intend to follow the imam.

The Pillars of Prayer

1. *Takbir Tahrimah*: After preparing one's intention, one says "Allahu akbar," raises his or her hands, and recites the *takbir*.

2. *Qiyam*: Standing while praying. If one has a valid excuse not to stand, he or she may pray while seated.

3. *Qira'at*: Reciting at least three short Qur'anic verses dur-

ing *qiyam*.

4. *Ruku`*: Bending so that one's hands will touch one's knees.

5. *Sujud (sajdah)*: Placing one's forehead and nose, along with one's toes, knees, and hands on the ground. It is not sufficient for the forehead and nose to merely touch the ground; the forehead must feel the ground's hardness. In large crowds, those in the back rows may rest their foreheads on the backs of those in the front rows.

6. *Qa'dah Akhirah*: Sitting at the end of the prayer long enough to recite the *tahiyat*.

The *Mustahabbat* of the Prayer

Things that the Prophet (saas) did only once or twice are referred to as *mandub* or *mustahabb*. For example, saying *tasbih* more than three times in *ruku`* and *sajdah* or reciting, during the *qira'at*, more verses than the Sunnah requires. *Mustahabbat* have been legitimized as complementing the *sunnahs*.

According to the Hanafis, the following *mustahabbat* are *mandub* (recommended):

1) Men, while saying the *takbir tahrimah*, should take both hands out of their outer garment, for this is closer to modesty. If it is cold, however, they do not have to do so. Women have to raise their hands under their outer garment so that their arms will not be exposed.

2) During the *qiyam*, one should look at where the forehead will rest during *sajdah*, at the feet's upper surface during *ruku`*, at the nostril flaps during *sajdah*, at the lap during the *qa'dah*, and at the shoulders when turning one's head. The individual must strive to perform an excellent prayer with *khushu`* (humility). The Messenger of Allah (saas) has described excel-

lence (*ihsan*) as:

“That you worship Allah as if you are seeing Him, for although you don’t see Him, He, verily, sees you.” (Sahih Muslim, Book 001, Number 0001)

3) Try to keep the mouth closed when yawning. If this is not possible, one should cover it with the back of one’s hand.

4) Try not to cough.

5) During *iqamah*, when the muezzin says “*Hayya ‘ala al-falah*,” the imam and congregation should stand. If the imam is not near the *mihrab*, each row through which he’ll pass must stand. (See al-Bukhari, Salat, 9; Abu Dawud, 106-107)

When the words “*qad qamat as-salat*” (prayer has been established) are spoken, the imam begins the prayer, thereby confirming the *muezzin*’s words. However, there is nothing wrong with beginning the prayer after the *iqamah*’s end. Indeed, in the view of the Shafi’i, Malaki, and Hanbali, as well as Abu Yusuf, this is actually what is best. (Prof. Hamdi Donduren, *Delilleriyle Islam Ilmihali* [Islamic Catechism with Proofs] [Erkam Publishing])

The Friday Prayer

Muslims gather together in places of worship on the blessed day of Friday so that they listen to and benefit from the imam’s sermon. After they pray the Friday prayer together, they go about their daily affairs. In the hadith al-sharif we are told:

“Of all the seven days on which the Sun rises, the best and most superior is Friday. It was on a Friday that Adam was admitted to Paradise and a Friday on which he was taken out of Paradise and sent down to world, and the Hour will also be on a Friday.” (al-Tirmidhi)

Omer Nasuhi Bilmen said this about the Friday prayer:

“The time of the Friday prayer is that of the noon prayer. The adhan is read in minarets for the Friday prayer. On going to the mosque, the first sunnah of the Friday prayer is performed with four rak`ahs, just like the sunnah of the noon prayer. Then another adhan is read out in the mosque. The congregation listens to a sermon delivered from the minbar. Qamat is then performed, and the congregation prays two fard rak`ahs of the Friday prayer all together. After one fard, the final sunnah, consisting of four rak`ahs, are performed, just like the first four sunnah rak`ahs of the noon prayer. The Zuhr Akhir consisting of four rak`ahs is then performed ... Two more rak`ahs are then performed, just like the sunnah of the morning prayer, with the intention of offering ‘the sunnah of the time.’ Two rak`ahs are fard ayn for those in whom the prerequisites of the Friday prayer are found. There are twelve other prerequisites for the Friday prayer, in distinction from the other prayers. Six are prerequisites of its being wajib, and the other six involve its performance.” (Omer Nasuhi Bilmen, The Great Islamic Catechism, p. 153)

Our Prophet’s (saas) recommendations regarding Friday

Invoking blessings on the Prophet (saas):

Allah’s Messenger (saas) said: ***“Invoke blessings much and often on me on a Friday.”*** (al-Bayhaqi)

Whatever bliss and good our Prophet’s (saas) people had in this world and will have in the Hereafter they attain by the agency of the Prophet (saas). Allah (swt) granted them bliss both in this world and the Hereafter due to the Prophet’s (saas) sake. Because this is undoubtedly the case, Muslims

should send blessings and salutation to the Prophet (saas) on Friday and night in abundance.

The Friday prayer and gathering of Muslims:

The Friday prayer is obligatory upon all free, healthy adult men who are able to walk and see. In the time of our Prophet (saas) and the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs, Friday was the congregational days of the Muslims. Yet, this excellent tradition of gathering together on Friday to pray together faded over time. Abu Dawud and al-Tirmidhi related in a hadith: ***“Whoever will omit three Fridays without a valid reason because of heedlessness, Allah shall set a seal on his heart.”***

Performing the major ablution on Friday:

Our Prophet (saas) advised the Muslims to perform the major ablution before arriving at the mosque for Friday prayers.

Smelling good on Friday:

Especially on Fridays, Allah’s Messenger (saas) made sure that the smell which he chose to wear upon his person was a beautiful one. Smelling good on that day is more virtuous than on the other days of the week.

The Prophet (saas) said:

“Anyone who takes a bath on Friday and cleans himself as much as he can and puts oil (on his hair) or scents himself; and then proceeds for the prayer and does not force his way between two persons (assembled in the mosque for the Friday prayer), and prays as much as is written for him and remains quiet when the Imam delivers the sermon, all his sins in between the present and the last Friday will be forgiven.” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 2, Book 13, Number 33)

Coming early for the Friday prayer:

During our Prophet's (saas) time, believers came to the Friday prayer as early as possible. They sought to know why those who could not come were absent. If anyone who attended the prayer had any trouble, his problems were solved.

Listening to the Friday sermon:

Omer Nasuhi Bilmen writes:

“When the preacher ascends to the minbar, the congregation must listen and be silent, not greet one another, and not perform the supererogatory prayer. So much so, that when the blessed names of our Prophet (saas) are recited during the sermon, it is more virtuous for them to invoke blessings and peace upon him and make do with listening. According to a report from Imam Abu Yusuf, invoking blessings and peace [on the Prophet (saas)] should be performed silently.” (Omer Nasuhi Bilmen, The Great Islamic Catechism, p. 153)

A sermon by Allah's Messenger (saas) about the Friday prayer

“O people, return to Allah in penitence before you die, and hasten to perform righteous deeds before you are made to engage (yourselves in worldly pursuits); weld (the relation) between you and your Lord with your abundant mention of Him; make frequent sadaqah openly and secretly, for you will be provided with sustenance and be granted succor, and your condition will be ameliorated. Bear in mind that Allah has made the Friday prayer compulsory for you at this place of mine, on this day of mine and during this month of mine and in this year of mine until the Day of Resurrection. He who abandons it during my lifetime or after I (have died), while he has a just or

tyrant ruler, making little of it (prayer) or denying it, Allah will neither unite his gathering nor bless his affairs. Be aware, his prayer will not be valid and his zakat or hajj will not be accepted. As long as he does not repent, neither his fasting nor his virtue will be accepted. So, he who repents, Allah will restore for him His Grace (and forgive him).” (Ibn Majah)

The Tarawih Prayer

This prayer is a *sunnah mu’akkad* for men and women, because the Prophet (saas) performed it and his Companions (*Ashab al-Kiram*) and the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs continued to do so after his death. It is *sunnah* to pray this prayer in congregation. (Zaylai, *Nasbur Raya*, 2:152; al-Shawqani, *Nayl al-Awtar*, 3:50; al-Zuhayli, *Al-Fiqh al-Islami wa Adillatuh* [1405/1985], 2:43)

Tarawih is performed only during the month of Ramadan after the night prayer and before the *witr* prayer. It is *mustahabb* (recommended) to pray it after midnight or after one-third of the night has passed. Although it can be performed alone, it is more virtuous to pray it in congregation.

According to the Hanafi school and based on Umar’s (ra) actions, this prayer consists of twenty *rak’ahs*. Toward the end of his caliphate, he performed this prayer as twenty *rak’ahs* as head of state at al-Masjid al-Nabawi. None of the Companions opposed him. The Prophet (saas) said:

“You must then follow my sunnah and that of the rightly guided caliphs. Hold to it and stick fast to it.” (Sunan Abu Dawud, Book 40, Number 4590)

Prayer surahs

Surat al-Fatiha

Surat al-Fil
Surah Quraysh
Surat al-Ma'un
Surat al-Kawthar
Surat al-Kafirun
Surat an-Nasr
Surat al-Masad
Surat al-Ikhlash
Surat al-Falaq
Surat an-Nas

Supplications

Subhanaka

“Subhanaka allahumma wa bi hamdika wa tabaraka ismuka wa ta'ala jadduka (wa jalla sanauka*) wa la ilaha ghairuka.”

* The words “*wa jalla sanauka*” are recited only in funeral prayers.

“O Allah, how perfect You are and praise be to You. Blessed is Your name and exalted is Your majesty. There is no deity but You.”

At-Tahiyatu

“At-tahiyatu lillahi was-salawatu wat-tayyibatu. As-salamu `alayka ayyuha al-nabiyyu wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuhu. As-salamu `alayna wa `ala `ibad il-Lahis-Salihin ash hadu an la ilaha ila Allah wa ashhadu anna Muhammadan `abduhu wa rasuluhu.”

“Greetings, prayers, and goodness belong to Allah. Peace be on you, O Prophet, and the mercy of Allah and His blessings. Peace be on us and on the righteous servants of Allah. I bear

witness that there is no deity but Allah and bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger.”

Allahumma salli

“Allahumma salli `ala Muhammadin wa `ala ali Muhammadin kama sallayta `ala Ibrahima wa `ala ali Ibrahima. Innaka hamidun majid.”

“O Allah, let Your mercy come upon Muhammad and the family of Muhammad, as You let it come upon Ibrahim and the family of Ibrahim. Truly You are Praiseworthy and Glorious.”

Allahumma barik

“Allahumma barik `ala Muhammadin wa `ala ali Muhammadin kama barakta `ala Ibrahima wa `ala ali Ibrahima. Innaka hamidun majid.”

“O Allah, bless Muhammad and the family of Muhammad, as You blessed Ibrahim and the family of Ibrahim. Truly You are Praiseworthy and Glorious.”

Rabbana atina

“Rabbana` atina fid-dunya hasanatan wa fi al-akhirati hasanatan waqina `adhab an-nar.”

“Our Lord, grant us good in this world and good in the Hereafter and save us from the chastisement of the Fire.”

Rabbana aghfirli

“Rabbana aghfirli wa li walidayya wa li al-mu`minina yawma yaqum al-hisab.”

“O our Lord, cover (us) with Your Forgiveness - me, my parents, and (all) believers, on the Day that the Reckoning will be established.”

Du`ah Qunut

“Allahumma inna nasta`inuka wa nastaghfiruka, wa nu`minu bika, wa natawwakkalu `alayka, wa nusni `alayika al-khayrah, wa nashkuruka wa la nakfuruka wa nakhla`u wa natruku man yafjuruka.”

“O Allah, we seek Your assistance and ask for Your guidance. We beseech Your forgiveness and return to You in repentance. We cherish faith in You and place our trust in You. We attribute all goodness to You. We are grateful to You and refuse to be ungrateful to You. We abandon and forsake all those who reject You.”

“Allahumma iyyaka na`budu wa laka nusalli wa nasjudu wa ilayka nasa`a wa nahfidu, wa narju rahmataka wa nakhsha `adhabaka; inna adhabaka al-jidda bi al-kuffari mulhiq.”

“O Allah, You alone do we worship, unto You alone do we pray; unto You alone do we prostrate, and for You alone do we strive. Unto You alone do we flee for refuge. We cherish hope in Your mercy and we fear Your retribution. Verily, Your punishment is bound to catch up with those who reject the truth.”

WUDU' (RITUAL ABLUTION)

Before praying, one's face, hands, arms, elbows, and feet must be washed, and one's head must be wiped. This is known as *wudu'* (ritual ablution). In addition, it is essential that one's body and clothes, as well as the place where the prayer is to be performed, be clean.

Fards

1. Washing the hands and the arms together with the elbows.
2. Washing the face.
3. Wiping one quarter of the head.
4. Washing the feet and heels.

Sunnahs

1. Making the intention.
2. Starting the ablution by reciting the *basmalah*.
3. Washing the hands to the wrists prior to ablution.
4. Cleaning the teeth using a *miswak* or a toothbrush. If these are not available, one can use one's fingers.
5. Washing the relevant parts of the body consecutively and without pause.
6. Rubbing thoroughly when washing.
7. Taking water into mouth three times.
8. Gargling if one is not fasting.
9. Putting water into the nostrils three times and blowing it out with the left hand.
10. Washing each relevant part of the body three times.
11. Washing pairs (e.g., feet, arms, hands) beginning with the right one.
12. Beginning with the tips of the fingers and toes when washing the hands and feet.
13. Rubbing the beard (if one has one).
14. Turning any rings one is wearing so that water runs underneath them.
15. Wiping the ears.
16. Wiping the neck.

17. Wiping the whole head.
18. Washing between the fingers and toes.

Ghusl (Full Ablution)

The Arabic word *ghusl* means washing; *ghusl* means to wash the whole body: *taharat al-kubra* (the major cleaning). *Ghusl* must be performed to cleanse a major impurity (*janabah*) and at the end of menstruation and lochia.

It consists of three *fards*:

1. Taking water into the mouth and rinsing it as far as the throat.
2. Placing water inside the nostrils and washing the nose.
3. Washing the whole body from top to bottom.

Tayammum (Dry Ablution)

Tayammum is to be performed when no water is available or one is unable to use it due to illness or a similar condition. It consists of using clean earth or a similar clean substance to remove any *hadas* (a state that requires *wudu'* or *ghusl*).

“Tayammum is set out in the Book and the Sunnah. The verse, “If you cannot find any water, then do tayammum with pure earth” (Surat al-Ma’ida, 6), ordains tayammum if a person cannot find water. The hadith “Earth has been made for me purifying and as a mosque (place for prayer)” (Ahmad ibn Hanbal) also shows that tayammum using something like earth is acceptable.” (Ahmed Davudoğlu, Selamet Yollari [Ways to Safety], 1:154)

Fards

- 1) Make one’s intention.
- 2) Rub hands on clean ground.
- 3) Wipe the face and arms.

Sunnahs

- 1) Recite the *basmalah*.
- 2) Wipe the limbs in succession.
- 3) Wipe the limbs without pause.
- 4) After rubbing the hands on clean ground, move them first forwards and then backwards.
- 5) Keep the fingers open.
- 5) Shake the hands, after removing them from the clean ground, to remove any debris.

FASTING

Fasting is one of the five core obligatory acts of worship, and its rewards are great. Fasting, making the intention to refrain (and then actually doing so) from sexual intercourse, eating, and drinking from sunup until sunset, has a number of religious, moral, social, and health benefits.

For example, people who fast acquire patience; are able to resist difficulty, thirst, and hunger; can control their lower self; and obtain a better understanding of the meaning of want and poverty. As a result, they acquire such great virtues as compassion, affection, helping others, and being a useful member of society. They understand the true worth of the blessings they enjoy and learn to avoid waste.

Fasting also leads to spiritual elevation, strengthens the individual's will power, and encourages the development of feelings of love, compassion, and an eagerness to help others.

Fasting, a mandatory duty for every sane and healthy Muslim adult, lasts for the entire month of Ramadan.

Almighty Allah (swt) reveals:

O you who believe, fasting is prescribed for you, [just]

as it was prescribed for those before you – so that, hopefully, you will have *taqwa* ... (Surat al-Baqara, 183)

This moral and behavioral training cleanses one's soul of evil and develops such emotions as love, affection, and compassion. It is also highly beneficial to human health, as modern medicine has proven.

The Messenger of Allah (saas) said:

“Fast (the month of Ramadan) to heal your bodies from diseases.”

Suhur

The Prophet (saas) used to eat *suhur* (the pre-dawn meal during Ramadan) but, as opposed to his practice of eating *iftar* (breaking the fast at sunset), would eat *suhur* at a late hour.

According to a hadith al-sharif narrated by Anas bin Malik (ra), the Messenger of Allah (saas) said: ***“Take suhur as there is a blessing in it”*** (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 3, Book 31, Number 146). Rising before dawn and eating *suhur* is done with the intention of fasting. Indeed, *Al-Fatawa al-Hindiyyah* reports that:

“To get up for suhur in Ramadan is an intention. Najm al-Din Nasa’i agrees. However, rising for suhur applies solely as the intention to fast for that day. It does not apply to the intention to fast on other days.” (I:195)

The Preconditions for Fasting

According to Omer Nasuhi Bilmen:

1) Being Muslim, of sound mind, and an adult are essential for being responsible for fasting. Those who do not meet these criteria are exempt. However, a rational Muslim child who has reached the age of discretion can fast as supererogatory.

2) Being healthy and in a permanent abode are essential for offering fast. Therefore, those who are sick or travelling do not have to fast. However, they must make up the days missed.

The Prophet's (saas) Sayings on Fasting

Our Prophet (saas) stressed the virtue of fasting and explained its subtleties. In our Prophet's (saas) hadiths related to fasting he said:

“The reward on every virtuous deed is increased from ten to seven hundred times, but the standing Command of Allah (about fasting) is that the fast is an exception. There are two moments of special joy for the man who fasts. One is when he breaks the fast, and this he experiences in his earthly existence, and the other will be in the Hereafter when he will be presented before the Lord.”
(Sahih Muslim)

The most distinctive feature of fasting is that, it's unlikely that one will perform it for display. Therefore, it does not have the risk of drifting a believer into hypocrisy. It is obligatory upon all adult Muslims who have no excuse. Our Prophet (saas) said:

“When the month of Ramadan comes, the gates of the Garden are thrown open, and the gates of Hell are shut; and the devils are put behind the bars.” (Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim)

“In Paradise there is a gate which is called Rayyan through which only the observers of fast would enter on the Day of Resurrection. None else would enter along with them. It would be proclaimed: ‘Where are the observers of fast that they should be admitted into it?’ And when the last of them would enter, it would be closed and no one would enter it.” (Sahih Muslim, Book 006,

Number 2569)

“The fast is a shield; and when anyone of you keeps a fast, he must not utter indecent word nor engage in a noisy scene, and were anyone to quarrel with him and call him names he should simply say ‘I am keeping fast.’” (Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim)

“(Allah says about the fasting person), ‘He has left his food, drink and desires for My sake. The fast is for Me. So I will reward (the fasting person) for it.’” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 3, Book 31, Number 118)

Other matters related to fasting

Intentionally breaking the fast in Ramadan, which is obligatory, is a monumental sin. Indeed Allah’s Messenger (saas) said:

“The expiation for spoiling a fast in Ramadan is like the expiation for zihar.” (Fath al-Qadir)

Our Prophet (saas) ate his *iftar* before performing his regular prayer in the evening. He hastened his *iftar* and advised his relatives to do likewise. He broke his fast with dates and water. While doing this he said: ***“O Allah! For Your sake have I fasted, and now I break the fast with the food that comes from You. Accept our fasts. No doubt You hear everything and know everything.”*** (Abu Dawud)

ZAKAT

Zakat is a duty upon those Muslims whose annual wealth has reached a certain point, and who are sane and adults. It consists of giving poor Muslims a specific amount from their assets, generally 2.5 percent, each year. Islam does not consider this charity; rather, it is the right of poor people to a portion of the goods bestowed upon better-off people by Allah (swt).

This system of social solidarity, which brings with it peace and mutual aid, reduces the people's excessive passion for money and prevents feuding over wealth by reinforcing mutual love and respect. Thus, it plays an important role in establishing social peace and security.

Paying zakat gains one the good pleasure of Allah (swt), prevents goods from becoming the individual's main objective rather than just a means, develops excellent feelings (e.g., thinking about others, compassion, and benevolence), and imparts social peace.

Omer Nasuhi Bilmen writes:

“The linguistic meaning of zakat implies ‘cleanliness, abundance, multiplication, and fine praise,’ whereas its religious significance is ‘giving a specific amount of goods, at a specific time, to those Muslims who have a right to it for the sake of Allah.’

Zakat demonstrates the servants’ devotion to their role as servants. This is why it is also referred to as sadaqah. Sadaqah, however, is wider-ranging than zakat, for it contains both obligatory and non-obligatory connotations.

Paying zakat is known as tazkiyah, and the giver of zakat as muzakki. The praise uttered regarding witnesses is also known as tazkiyah.

Paying zakat is compulsory (fard). It was made compulsory before fasting, during the second year of our Prophet’s (saas) hijrah. It is one of Islam’s core pillars. Zakat, in the form of a specific amount of cash and commercial goods, must be paid once a full year has passed and without delay, for these are the right of the poor. Any delaying in paying this right without a valid reason is unacceptable...

It is more virtuous to pay zakat openly, for this sets an

example for others and serves as an encouragement. Any doubts as to whether that person has paid zakat are thus done away with. Since zakat is compulsory, there can be no showing off in doing so. This does not apply to supererogatory sadaqah, however. It is more virtuous to do this in secret and to avoid any element of show.” (Omer Nasuhi Bilmen, The Great Islamic Catechism, 5:311)

Our Prophet (saas) was the one who expended the most from what Allah (swt) gave to him. If anyone wanted anything from the Messenger (saas), he would certainly give, whether it was much or whether it was little; he always gave whatever he could. The pleasure he took from giving was more than the happiness of the person who received. Our Prophet (saas) specified four types of possessions from which to give alms (zakat):

- 1) Agricultural products and fruits,
- 2) Animals (camel, cattle),
- 3) Gold and silver,
- 4) All sorts of commercial goods.

THE HAJJ

All adult Muslims who have enough money and are in good health must perform the *waqfah* (the ritual of standing) at Arafat and visit the Ka`bah at a specific time once in their life.

The hajj brings together millions of Muslims of different languages, colors, nationalities, and cultures. However, each one of them has the same objective: to turn to Allah (swt) by performing the same observance together and to draw closer to each other. It also allows Muslims to discuss their problems and find common solutions to them.

Everyone who performs this duty wears the same ritual garment (*ihram*), which serves as a strong reminder of the day

when, after death, they will appear in His presence to account for themselves. It permits believers to turn to Allah (swt) in a sincere manner, and thus is a means whereby their repentance is accepted and their sins are forgiven. Seeing the holy sites also strengthens their religious feelings by bestowing a spiritual enthusiasm upon them.

The prohibitions imposed on those in *ihram* bring with them love and compassion for all creation, prevent any harm (even to insects), and bestow patience in the face of troubles. People who perform this compulsory duty demonstrate their duties as servants of Allah (swt) and become more useful to those around them. At the very least, they learn not to harm others.

THE EXCELLENT MODEL OF THE PROPHET'S (SAAS) LIFE

*You have an excellent model in
the Messenger of Allah, for all
who put their hope in Allah and
the Last Day and remember
Allah much. (Surat al-Ahzab, 21)*

Islam has two fundamental sources, the Qur'an and the Sunnah, neither of which can be separated from the other. If they were separated, we would be unable to grasp Islam's real meaning. In order to attain true happiness in the Hereafter, believers should have a very good understanding of these two sources and practice them correctly. The Sunnah of the Prophet (saas), who embodied the Qur'an's morals, is a live interpretation of the Qur'an.

In one hadith, the Messenger of Allah (saas) said:

“At the time of disorder among my ummah, the one who revives one of the forgotten Sunnah of mine will get the reward of a hundred martyrs.” (Ibn Majah)

The time heralded by the Prophet (saas) appears to be close. In order to deserve this promised reward, it is vital that all

Muslims embrace his Sunnah. In the conduct of his daily life, our Prophet's (saas) excellent moral values and practices set the best example for believers. Each one of his acts is under Allah's (swt) protection.

The Prophet's (saas) Moral Excellence and Good Manners

In the Qur'an, Allah (swt) told our Prophet (saas): **"Indeed you are truly vast in character"** (Surat al-Qalam, 4). According to one hadith al-sharif, the Messenger of Allah (saas) said: ***"I am sent only that I may perfect moral virtues"*** (al-Bayhaqi), stressing that his life abounded with examples that all believers had to adopt.

The Messenger of Allah (saas), who had displayed the best examples of moral excellence even before Allah (swt) blessed him with prophethood, also set an example for humanity through his distinguished personality and moral excellence while spreading Islam. Ever since that time, various sections of humanity have done their best to follow his example.

Aisha (ra) reported:

"It was not the nature of the Messenger of Allah (saas) to talk indecently, nor did he engage himself in the use of obscene language. Nor did he shout in the bazaar. He did not avenge a bad deed with a bad one, but forgave it, and thereafter did not even mention it." (al-Tirmidhi)

Her answer to a question about the Prophet's (saas) morals is very revealing in this regard:

"O mother of the believers, please describe the Messenger of Allah's (saas) morals." She answered: "Can you recite Surat al-Mu'minin? Read its first ten verses. The Messenger of Allah's (saas) morals were just like

these verses.” (Sahih al-Bukhari)

The Prophet’s (saas) words, **“The best of you are those who possess the best of manners,”** (Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim) stress that every Muslim should strive to reach this goal. Thus, believers should avoid all evil in their lower selves and strive to attain this moral excellence.

“As hot water melts ice, so a good temper melts and annihilates one’s sins. As vinegar decomposes honey and makes it inedible, so a bad temper spoils and annihilates one’s worships.” (at-Tabarani)

“The dearest to me among you, and the nearest to me on the Day of Resurrection will be those who displayed the best manners.” (al-Tirmidhi)

“In Allah’s sight, there is no sin worse than having evil qualities, for one who has such qualities falls into sin before being able to get out from the other.” (al-Isbahani)

“The one with good morals and characters already owns the best of this world and the Hereafter.” (at-Tabarani)

“A believer with good manners and good moral disposition gets the same reward as he who spends his nights in prayer, and observes fast during days, always.” (Abu Dawud)

“On the Day of Resurrection, the most weighty item in the Scales of the Deeds will be good manners.” (Abu Dawud and al-Tirmidhi)

Our Prophet (saas) made the following supplication before performing his prayer: **“O Lord! Lead me on the best of moral manners. No one, but You, can guide to moral excellence. And remove bad manners from me. No one, but You, can remove them.”** (Sahih Muslim)

The Virtue in Being Forgiving

It is stated in the Qur'an: "... **But if you pardon, exonerate, and forgive, Allah is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful**" (Surat at-Taghabun, 14). Thus, Muslims should be very tolerant and forgiving of each other.

The Prophet (saas) stressed the importance of forgiving others and said that doing so would help consolidate feelings of mutual goodwill among believers. In addition, he did not bear any grudge toward anyone and forgave even his enemies.

Indeed, the Prophet (saas) said:

***"Modesty increases one's ranks. Be modest so that Allah may increase your ranks. Forgiveness only increases one's honor. Forgive, so that Allah may give glory to you."* (al-Isbahani)**

Muslims should waive their rights over each other. Thoughts of animosity and revenge should have no place among them. Forgiveness, which increases one's rank in both worlds, helps to develop feelings of solidarity. Allah's Messenger (saas) said:

***"Maintain your relationship with one who cut it off from you, give to one who disappointed you, and pardon one who oppressed you."* (al-Bayhaqi)**

***"Show mercy, and you will be shown mercy. Forgive, and Allah will forgive you. Woe to the vessels that catch words (i.e., the ears). Woe to those who persist and consciously continue in what they are doing."* (Ahmad Dhiya' al-Din, Ramuz al-Ahadith, 1:70/10)**

Encouraging Commerce and the Virtue of Truthfulness

Great Islamic scholars present the Prophet's (saas) truthfulness as a major quality of his prophethood. Both the Muslims and the Makkan polytheists accepted the truth of his honesty.

With the rise of Islam, the Prophet (saas) called upon all people to be honest in their lives:

“Truthfulness leads to righteousness, and righteousness leads to Paradise. And a man keeps on telling the truth until he becomes a truthful person. Falsehood leads to wickedness and evil-doing, and wickedness and evil-doing lead to the (Hell) Fire.” (Sahih al-Bukhari)

“Observe truthfulness as a duty and always speak the truth, for truthfulness puts you on the path of virtue, and virtue leads you to Paradise, and when a person tells the truth as a rule, and makes truthfulness a way of life, he attains the place of sincerity and faithfulness, and, with Allah, his name is written as a truthful. And stay strictly away from falsehood, for falsehood puts you on the path of immorality, and leads you to Hell, and when a man takes to lying, the sequel is that his name is written, with Allah, as a great liar.” (Sahih Muslim)

“Nine tenths of provision (rizq) comes from trading.” (Gharib al-Hadith)

Countless hadiths state that those involved with commerce should pay great attention to truthfulness. For example, the Prophet (saas) gave the good news that an honest trader will be together with martyrs in the Hereafter. Those who do not give priority to truthfulness will meet with inconceivable difficulties in both worlds.

“The traders will be resurrected on the Day of Resurrection with the sinners except those of them who were Allah-fearing, pious and truthful.” (al-Tirmidhi)

“On the Day of Judgment, the truthful merchant will be under the shadow of the Great Heavens.” (al-Isbahani)

“The seller and the buyer have the right to keep or return

goods as long as they have not parted or till they part; and if both the parties spoke the truth and described the defects and qualities (of the goods), then they would be blessed in their transaction, and if they told lies or hid something, then the blessings of their transaction would be lost.” (Sahih al-Bukhari)

“The one who sells his goods attains provision; the one who withholds and hoards them, to raise prices, becomes subject to Allah’s curse.” (Sahih Muslim)

“Abstain from swearing much while selling (your goods), for though it may help to push up the sales, ultimately it will destroy blessings.” (Sahih Muslim)

While Muslims engage in commerce, it is important that they do not neglect their prayers and other religious duties. Indeed, if they do so, while trying to attain this world’s blessings they may endanger their life in the Hereafter. Our Prophet (saas) said:

“Allah did not tell me to collect goods and become a merchant. Rather, He told me to remember Him, to become one who prostrated [in prayer] and worship until death comes.” (Ibn Mardawayh)

“Whoever sold a defective thing to anyone without disclosing the defect to the buyer would be caught, permanently, in the wrath of Allah.” (Ibn Majah)

All acts of a believer that comply with Allah’s (swt) statements are considered acts of worship.

In Abu Bakr’s (ra) era, Muslim merchants traveled as far as the Philippines to spread Allah’s message. Muslims living there today are the descendants of the first generation of Filipino Muslims who were converted by those long-ago merchants.

As this example shows, as long as people do not forget their duties to Allah (swt), they can be useful to Islam regardless of in which position they may be.

“The cleanest food is that which has been earned by the labor of one’s hand.” (Sahih al-Bukhari)

The Virtue of Generosity

The characteristic which most befits a faithful Muslim is that of patience when he is in a grave situation and in a state of deprivation. Even then, the one who firmly believes in Allah (swt) and His Messenger (saas) will use whatever means he has at his disposal in the best way, in Allah’s (swt) Way. In the Qur’an, our Lord warns people not to be deceived by satan’s plots – for many have a fear for the future to the degree where they become stingy with their worldly possession:

Those who are tight-fisted with the bounty Allah has given them should not suppose that that is better for them. No indeed, it is worse for them! What they were tight-fisted with will be hung around their necks on the Day of Resurrection. Allah is the inheritor of the heavens and the Earth and Allah is aware of what you do. (Surah Al Imran, 180)

The Prophet (saas) made a very clear distinction between generosity and waste. He did not say “no” to the wishes of those who asked for anything, and tried to meet the requests of people who asked him. Due to his natural kindness, he did not turn aside the person who asked for assistance or guidance. In a hadith it is stated that our Prophet (saas) recommended a person in need to take on debt in his name.

Ali (ra) described our Prophet’s (saas) generosity:

“He was the most generous and the most truthful of all the people. He had a finer chest than anyone else, was truer in utterance than anyone else, had the gentlest nature and the noblest lineage. Those who saw him stood suddenly in awe of him and those who shared his acquaintance loved him. Those who described him said they had never seen anyone like him before or since.” (al-Tirmidhi)

Some of our Prophet’s (saas) words about generosity:

“Allah is generous, He likes generosity and virtuous conduct, and does not like evil conduct.” (al-Kharaythi)

“Generosity is a tree among the trees of the Garden. Its branches have hung down to the Earth. Whoever holds on its branch, that branch leads him to the Garden.” (Ibn Hibban)

“Allah created all His virtuous servants generous and with good manners.” (al-Daraqutni)

“There are two traits that Allah likes and two traits that He dislikes. Those He likes are; generosity and moral excellence. Those He dislikes are; stinginess and evil conduct.” (al-Daylami)

“Offering people a lot, saluting everyone and speaking good words are among those traits deserving [Allah’s] forgiveness. Allah has some servants who are given fortunes to be spent for the good of the public. If any of these fail to give them away, He takes those fortunes from them and gives them to others.” (at-Tabarani)

“A generous-hearted man is nearer to Allah and men, and he is close to Paradise and far away from Hell. The miser, on the other hand, is distant from Allah and men, distant from Paradise but close to Hell.” (al-Tirmidhi)

The Virtue of Cooperation

Cooperation had a great place in our Prophet's (saas) life. He informs us that the best of all aids given are the ones given in secret. Our Prophet (saas) says:

“Seven are (the persons) whom Allah would give protection with His Shade on the Day when there would be no shade but that of Him (i. e. on the Day of Judgment, and they are): ... a person who gives charity and conceals it (to such an extent) that the right hand does not know what the left has given: and a person who remembered Allah in privacy and his eyes shed tears.” (Sahih Muslim, Book 005, Number 2248)

Satan inspires fear for future in people so as to hinder them from giving away from that which Allah (swt) has blessed them with. This way, he drifts them into stinginess. Our Prophet (saas) says that this is a great danger for believers.

“Spend and do not calculate, (for) Allah would calculate in your case; and do not hoard, otherwise Allah would be withholding from you.” (Sahih Muslim, Book 005, Number 2244)

“He who gives time to one who is financially hard up (in the payment of debt) or writes off his debt, Allah will provide him His shadow.” (Sahih Muslim, Book 042, Number 7149)

“If any owner of gold or silver does not pay what is due on him, when the Day of Resurrection would come, plates of fire would be beaten out for him; these would then be heated in the fire of Hell and his sides, his forehead and his back would be cauterized with them. Whenever these cool down, (the process is) repeated during a day the extent of which would be fifty thousand years, until judg-

ment is pronounced among servants.” (Sahih Muslim, Book 005, Number 2161)

The Virtue of Modesty, Detriments of Arrogance

The Prophet (saas) was the highest example of what humanity was meant to be. His modesty served as a wonderful example for all of his people.

At the time of hajj, he fulfilled his duties just the same as his followers; he rode on a camel like everyone else, or he would be mounted on a mule, he visited the sick, participated in the funerals of Muslims who has passed away and did not make any distinction between the poor and the well-off; he accepted slaves' dinner invitations. While many leaders of communities consider themselves to be above their peers, and regard certain jobs and tasks to be beneath them, people saw the Prophet (saas) repairing his own shoes or mending his clothes. When he saw kids playing around, he greeted them with a smile.

These known words of Abu Bakr (ra), our Prophet's (saas) closest friend and the first caliph, indicates that he took our Prophet's (saas) modesty as model:

“O people! I have been made your leader albeit I am not the best among you. But the Qur'an has been revealed and Allah's Messenger's (saas) Sunnah is apparent. All I can be is to be his humble follower. I will certainly not open a new era. If I act virtuously, be around to help me. If I go astray, correct me. I put an end to my words here by asking for forgiveness both for myself and for you.” (Mevaziu's-Sahaba [Cases of the Companions of the Prophet (saas)], p. 17)

The Prophet (saas) said:

“He who humbles himself to Allah a degree, Allah elevates him because of that, and if anyone expresses a degree of haughtiness before Allah, Allah will lower him a degree because of that till He renders him the lowliest of the lowly.” (Ibn Majah)

During a conversation, Allah’s Messenger (saas) said, “He who has in his heart the weight of a mustard seed of pride shall not enter Paradise.” A person (amongst his hearers) said: “Verily a person loves that his dress should be fine, and his shoes should be fine.” The Prophet (saas) remarked: “Verily, Allah is Graceful and He loves Grace. Pride is disdainful of the truth (out of self-conceit) and contempt for the people.” (Sahih Muslim, Book 001, Number 0164)

“Allah elevates the one who shows modesty towards his brother in Islam. And he degrades the one who shows superiority.” (at-Tabarani)

Zayd bin Thaabit (ra) said:

“Allah’s Messenger (saas) showed courtesy to everyone, without making discrimination between them. Whatever we discussed, he discussed the same. If we discussed some worldly affairs, he also spoke of it. When we spoke of the Hereafter, he too spoke of the Hereafter. When we spoke of food, he also spoke of it. He responded to those around him with a warm smile and did not intervene to halt the conversations, unless the subject was of an unfavorable nature.”

The Prophet (saas) treated every believer equally, showing every one of them respect.

“Allah’s messenger (saas) did not pull out his hand until

the one who shook his hand left his.” (Ibn Majah)

“I never said that when any man brought his mouth to the ear of the Messenger of Allah (saas) and he withdrew his head until the man himself withdrew his head, and I never saw that when any man took him by his hand and he withdrew his hand, until the man himself withdrew his hand.” (Abu Dawud)

The Prophet (saas) said:

“He will not enter the Paradise who has in him vanity (equal to) the weight of a mustard-seed and he will not enter in the Hell-fire who has in his heart faith (equal to) the weight of a mustard-seed.” (Ibn Majah)

“The proud and the boastful cannot enter the Garden.” (Abu Dawud)

“Three (are the persons) with whom Allah would neither speak, nor would He absolve them on the Day of Resurrection: the cruel ruler, the rich who does not give the alms and the proud destitute.” (Sahih al-Bukhari)

“Shall I inform you about the people of the Fire? They comprise every cruel, violent, proud and conceited person.” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 8, Book 73, Number 97)

“Allah herds anyone with a grain of mustard-seed of pride in his heart headlong into Hell.” (al-Bayhaqi)

Our Prophet (saas) had a dignified way of speaking and one could always see a smile on his face. He never broke anyone’s heart or hurt their feelings by speaking harshly to them. Anas ibn Malik (ra) tells how our Prophet (saas) set the best example to all people with this noble trait:

“I remained in the service of the Messenger of Allah (saas) for ten years. He never once told me ‘Oof.’ When I did something, he never asked me, why did you do so? When I

did not do a certain task, he never asked me why I did not do it. (al-Tirmidhi)

The Prophet (saas) said:

“On the Day of Resurrection, the boastful will be gathered together under feet like grains. Anything considered to be little will be above them and bigger than them. Then they are cast into a dungeon of Hell. Hell’s fire surrounds them all. They are watered from the corpses of the people of Hell that burn and melt.” (al-Tirmidhi)

“Just as how Allah increases the forgiver’s grandeur and honor, He glorifies the ones who show modesty.” (Sahih Muslim)

“Allah has revealed to me that you must be humble, so that no one oppresses another and boasts over another.” (Abu Dawud)

“Allah certainly glorifies the one who shows modesty for His sake.” (Sahih Muslim)

Honoring Trusts

In the Qur’an, honoring trusts is indicated to be a distinctive characteristic of believers.

Allah (swt) states in the Quran that **“[Believers are] those who honor their trusts and their contracts”** (Surat al-Muminun, 8).

Above all other people amongst mankind, believers should particularly be precious about keeping their promises and honoring trusts which have been put in them by other people. Setting an example in displaying these manners is among our Prophet’s (saas) Sunnah.

Ali (ra) relates that he witnessed one of our Prophet’s (saas) conversations with one of his Companions:

“O Allah’s Messenger, tell me the easiest and most difficult aspects of this religion.” Our Prophet (saas) answered: “The easiest is to attest that there exists no deity but Allah (swt), that Muhammad is His servant and messenger; what is most difficult, however, is honoring trusts, for those who are not meticulous in matters of trusts have no religion. Neither their prayers are accepted, nor their alms (zakat).” (al-Bazzar)

“... speak the truth when you speak; fulfill a promise when you make one; render back honestly when a trust is placed in your charge...” (al-Bayhaqi)

“Just as how it is not possible to talk about the prayer of someone with no ablution, it is not possible to talk about the [perfected] faith of someone who does not honor his trusts.” (at-Tabarani)

“The signs of a hypocrite are three: when he speaks, he is false; when he promises, he fails; and, when he is trusted, he betrays.” (Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim)

Allah (swt) reveals the following in the Surat an-Nahl:

Be true to Allah’s contract when you have agreed to it, and do not break your oaths once they are confirmed and you have made Allah your guarantee. Allah knows what you do. (Surat an-Nahl, 91)

The Virtue in the Remembrance of Allah (swt)

The essence of all acts of worship is to remember Allah (swt). All obligatory acts incumbent upon us have in essence the remembrance of Allah (swt) at their core.

Indeed, the Prophet (saas) said:

“Allah will give shade, to seven, on the Day when there will be no shade but His. (One of these seven persons is)

... a person who remembers Allah in seclusion and his eyes are then flooded with tears.” (Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim)

Yet in another hadith, the virtue in saying the *kalimah* (“There is no deity but Allah”) is explained thus:

“Allah said, ‘Were the seven heavens and their inhabitants, and the seven earths put in a pan and the kalimah in the other, the kalimah would outweigh them.’” (at-Tabarani)

In one way or another, the Prophet (saas) always occupied himself with the remembrance of Allah (swt). He said that the best way of being with Allah (swt) is His remembrance. Related verses read:

[People with intelligence are] those who remember Allah, standing, sitting and lying on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth... (Surah Al ‘Imran, 191)

Remember your Lord in yourself humbly and fearfully, without loudness of voice, morning and evening... (Surat al-A‘raf, 205)

During his life, our Prophet (saas) strictly adhered to the teachings of the Qur’an and acted on the special knowledge which Allah (swt) had blessed him with. As the Islamic collections of hadith reveal, he did not neglect to occupy himself with Allah’s (swt) remembrance while sitting, walking, eating, before sleep, during ablution, putting on his clothes, traveling, entering a mosque, in brief, at any time.

Allah’s Messenger (saas) said:

“Allah (swt) has said: ‘I am with My servant when he remembers Me and his lips move mentioning Me. If he

remembers Me inwardly, I shall remember him inwardly. If he remembers Me among an assembly, I shall remember him among an assembly that is better than they are. If My servant approaches me for a span, I approach him one arsin (a unit of length – app. 68 cm or 26.7 in.). If My servant comes to Me walking, I run towards him; that is, I quickly answer his wishes.” (Sahih al-Bukhari)

“Shall I not tell you the best of your deeds and the purest in the estimation of your Lord, through which your ranks are raised highest, better for you than spending gold and silver and better for you than that you meet your enemy and Allah’s enemy and they kill you?” They said, “Yes, Messenger of Allah, do show us this precious deed.” He said, “It is to remember Allah.” (al-Tirmidhi)

The Virtue in Commitment among Believers

Do those who take the unbelievers as protectors, rather than the believers, hope to find power and strength with them? Power and strength belong entirely to Allah. (Surat an-Nisa’, 139)

In another verse it is told that believers should be like well-built walls – strong and resolute (Surat as-Saff, 4). Believers differ from other people in their trust, sacrifice and commitment they feel for one another. Those who try to experience these virtues outside the community of believers will face great disappointment both in this world and beyond. Indeed, the Prophet (saas) said the following about this issue:

“Whoever retreats from our congregation a span, he would be taking the bond of Islam connecting him to the religion out of his neck.” (Abu Dawud)

“It is not permissible for a Muslim to shun his brother for

more than three nights, that is they meet, and this one turns away and that one turns away. The better of the two is the one who says the greeting first.” (Malik, al-Muwatta’, Book 47, Number 47.4.13)

Muslims do not disclose one another’s faults. This is an indication of their commitment to one another. What is becoming to a true Muslim is to support other Muslims in correcting their errors, rather than disclosing them and humiliating them before others.

The following words of Prophet Muhammad (saas) verify these:

“He who sees something which should be kept hidden and conceals it will be like one who has brought to life a girl buried alive.” (Abu Dawud)

“Every Muslim is a Muslim’s brother. He should neither harm him himself nor leave him alone when others treat him unjustly. Whoever will fulfill the need of a brother, Allah will fulfill his need, and whoever will remove the distress of a Muslim, he will find a distress of his removed on the Day of Requital, and whoever will hide the secrets of a Muslim, his sins will be hidden from others’ view by Allah on the Last Day.” (Sahih Muslim)

Muslims should love one another only for Allah’s (swt) good pleasure. An understanding of love based on one’s earthly desires is incompatible with the Qur’an and the Prophet’s (saas) Sunnah. Our beloved Prophet (saas) said: “On the Day of Resurrection, the Lord will proclaim: ‘Where are the servants who love each other because of My Power and Glory? Today, when there is no shadow save Mine, I shall give them a place under it.’” (Sahih Muslim)

“None will have the sweetness (delight) of Faith till he loves a person and loves him only for Allah’s sake...”
(Sahih al-Bukhari)

“The one with perfected faith loves the one he loves not because he has an interest but only for Allah’s sake. This is true faith.” (at-Tabarani)

“If an individual loves someone for Allah and tells him that he loves him for Allah, both of them enter Paradise. The degree of the one who loves is greater.” (al-Bazzar)

“Among the servants of Allah there are those who are neither prophets nor martyrs whose position in relation to Allah will be an object of desire by the prophets and martyrs on the Day of Resurrection.” The people said, **“Messenger of Allah, tell us who they are,”** and he said, **“They are people who have loved one another for Allah’s sake and were giving gifts to one another without being related or having (common) property. I swear by Allah that their faces will be light and that they will be placed upon light, neither fearing when men fear nor grieving when men grieve.”** (Ahmad)

“You will not enter Paradise till you believe and you will not believe till you love one another.” (Sahih Muslim)

“Whoever helps for Allah, avoids help for Allah, loves for Allah, marries for Allah and helps those who marry for Allah, then his faith attains perfection.” (al-Tirmidhi)

“Always befriend believers, offer your food to believers who fear Allah.” (Ibn Hibban)

“A man is with whom he loves (or will be caused to be with him on the Day of Final Judgment).” (Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim)

“In kindness and affection, the Muslims are like a single

body. If any part of it is stricken with disease, the whole body develops fever and feels restless.” (Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim)

Allah (swt) reveals the importance of the believers’ devotion to one another as follows:

Your friend is only Allah and His Messenger and those who believe: those who perform prayer and give the alms, and bow. As for those who make Allah their friend, and His Messenger and those who believe: it is the party of Allah who are victorious! (Surat al-Ma’ida, 56)

Not to Harm Another, to Hinder Those who Cause Harm

Believers act against those who cause harm, just like they do not inflict harm upon their surroundings either. For this reason, they set an example of goodness for other people; displaying this not just in their words but in their deeds and good manners also. In the Qur’an, Allah (swt) charges believers as follows:

Let there be a community among you who call to the good, and enjoin the right, and forbid the wrong. They are the ones who have success. (Surah Al ‘Imran, 104)

There are numerous examples regarding this point to be found in the Prophet’s (saas) life. Some of his relevant sayings are:

“Allah will harm the one inflicting harm upon a believer, Allah will also give troubles to the one who causes troubles.” (al-Tirmidhi)

“It is beyond doubt that Allah will torment those who afflict the people in this world.” (Abu Dawud)

“He who amongst you sees something abominable should modify it with the help of his hand; and if he has not

strength enough to do it, then he should do it with his tongue, and if he has not strength enough to do it, (even) then he should (abhor it) from his heart, and that is the least of faith.” (Sahih Muslim, Book 001, Number 0079)

Damages Caused by Polytheism (*shirk*) and Insincerity (*riya'*)

Insincerity means to seek people's approval rather than Allah's (swt) good pleasure in acts of worship and beneficence. This seriously compromises the purity of the deeds performed. Only when worship and pious deeds are performed solely for the approval of Allah (swt), they will be acceptable as a true worship and beneficence. If one engages in apparently religious acts for reasons other than the desire to please Allah (swt), then these deeds may not be acceptable; they may even be a hidden form of polytheism (*shirk*). In the Qur'an, it is stated that insincerity is a portent for hypocrisy:

The hypocrites think they deceive Allah, but He is deceiving them. When they get up to pray, they get up lazily, showing off to people, and only remembering Allah a very little. (Surat an-Nisa', 142)

The Messenger of Allah (saas) said:

“I warn you against the lesser polytheism.” The companions asked: “What is lesser polytheism, Messenger of Allah?” He replied: “Showing off. On the day when Allah will reward people for their deeds, He will tell them, ‘Go to those people for whose attention and praise you did these deeds and see whether they will reward you.’” (Sahih Muslim and Ahmad)

“The most dreadful thing which I fear about my ummah is that they will commit the crime of ascribing partners to

Allah. I'm not saying that they worship the Sun, the stars, or the Moon. But they will perform some of their acts of worship for somebody other than Allah and will desire a secret yearning.” (Ibn Majah)

“He who commits insincerity in his acts of worship, Allah will punish him for his insincerity. He who makes his acts of worship public for reasons of ostentation, Allah will make his intent public.” (Ibn Majah)

The Temporality of Worldly Life

Among the biggest deceptions of satan is to deceive people into thinking that the life of this world and its blessings will never come to an end, that the *dunya* is eternal. Believers need to be very careful in the face of this deception. Indeed, Allah (swt) states the following in the Qur'an:

The life of this world is nothing but a game and a diversion. The Hereafter is better for those who have taqwa. So will you not use your intellect? (Surat al-An'am, 32)

Some of the Prophet's (saas) hadiths on the subject are:

Ali (ra) related: “O servants of Allah, you are no different from those who have passed away from this world. They lived longer than you, were stronger, and possessed more prosperous lands and immortal works. But, after a few generations, their voices became less strong and eventually became completely silenced. Their corpses decayed, their lands became empty and their works disappeared. They exchanged their glorious palaces, their comfort and satin mattresses with embroidered pillows for tombs made of ruins covered with earth. Their dwellings are tight and the occupants abandoned. There they are in the

midst of those who are lonely, who have no one to confide in and who are not close to one another.”

“You are close to reaching the realm of the dead and to staying there as hostages for what you have done. A grave will cover you as well . . . Do not become one of those who hope for the Hereafter without working for it, who chase after lengthy ambitions while postponing repentance, who speak like the ones who do not love this world, yet who act and work like those who do love this world, who are not satisfied with what has been given to them and who complain when they are not given any.”

The Messenger of Allah (saas) explained in no uncertain terms:

“Renunciation of the worldly things does not lie in making lawful things unlawful and in squandering the property, but the lowness of the world is this that (the property) you have in your possession is not more reliable for you than that which is in Allah’s Hands and that you should be more pleased with the reward of the calamity, when it befalls you, than that it does not befall and is left for you.” (Sunan Ibn Majah, 4100)

“He who is concerned with the world, Allah will disorganize his affair for him and will make his poverty between two eyes (i.e. every one will hold him mean and destitute), and whose intention is focused at the Hereafter Allah will settle the state of his affairs for him and will ingrain richness in his heart.” (Sunan Ibn Majah, 4105; at-Tabarani, al-Bayhaqi)

“A person whose chief aim and ambition will be the seeking of the Hereafter, through his effort and exertion, Allah will grant him contentment to his heart and remove

his distress and the world will come to him humbled by itself. But a person whose chief aim and ambition will be the seeking of this world, through his effort and exertion, Allah will produce the marks of want in the middle of his forehead and on his face and make his condition miserable...” (al-Tirmidhi, Musnad Ahmad, al-Darami)

“The one who wakes up in the morning thinking only of worldly matters, and thus neglects his acts of worship, will receive no help from Allah.” (at-Tabarani)

“If the son of Adam were to possess two valleys of riches, he would long for the third one. And the stomach of the son of Adam is not filled but with dust. And Allah returns to him who repents.” (Sahih Muslim, Book 005, Number 2282)

“O humanity, fear Allah and sum up (your efforts) in acquiring (worldly riches) for no one dies till he gets full measure of his provision even if he is slow-paced in it. So fear [and respect] Allah and act decently in acquiring (the world).” (Sunan Ibn Majah, Book of Business Transactions)

“Whenever anyone of you sees a person who is better than him in wealth and in face and figure, he should look at someone who is inferior to him in these respects.” (Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim)

Envy

Envy is defined as not being happy with somebody else’s blessing and to hope that this blessing will eventually end. People engage in envy regardless of whether or not they have actively striven to remove that blessing. Envy among believers negates solidarity among Muslims and is forbidden in the Qur’an. In order to be saved from this, one has to pray to

Allah (swt). Believers should only covet each other's piety. The outcome of envy and unnecessary dispute among believers is explained in the Qur'an:

Obey Allah and His Messenger and do not quarrel among yourselves, lest you lose heart and your momentum disappears. And be steadfast. Allah is with the steadfast. (Surat al-Anfal, 46)

The Messenger of Allah (saas) said:

“Do not be suspicious, for suspicion is the height of falsehood. Do not bear a grudge or enmity against each other, be jealous of each other, indulge in back-biting, pry into each other's secrets, try unreasonably to excel one another, or turn your faces against each other, but, O servants of Allah, live like brothers, as Allah has commanded.”
(Sahih Muslim)

“There is no envy except in two people: a person to whom Allah has given wealth and he spends it in the right way, and a person to whom Allah has given wisdom (i.e., religious knowledge) and he gives his decisions accordingly and teaches it to the others.” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 2, Book 24, Number 490)

Certainly, the concept of envy here is not hoping that something bad will happen to the one who has been blessed, but to desire that such blessings come to oneself.

“Guard yourselves against envy for envy eats up good deeds as fire eats up wood.” (Abu Dawud)

“Do not hate one another, be jealous of one another, or desert each other. And, O Allah's worshippers, be brothers.” (Sahih al-Bukhari)

Suppressing One's Anger

A most important manifestation of a believer's reliance on and closeness to Allah (swt), as well as of one's faith in destiny, is suppressing one's anger when enraged. One who knows that all good and evil comes from Allah (swt) will always trust Him, no matter what, and will not become enraged. In the Qur'an, Allah (swt) reveals that:

Those who give in times of both ease and hardship, those who control their rage and pardon other people – Allah loves the good-doers. (Surah Al 'Imran, 134)

The Messenger of Allah (saas) has left us many hadiths:

“No one drank a draft superior, in Allah's sight, to the draft of anger that was drunk with the intention of earning His good pleasure.” (Ahmad)

“He is not a wrestler who overpowers his rival, but he who keeps himself under control when roused to anger.” (Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim)

“Whoever swallows his anger when he is in a position to quench it solely for Allah's sake, although he can give vent to his feelings, and refrains from visiting his wrath upon the person who incurs it, Allah will call him to Himself, in the presence of everyone, on the Day of Resurrection and tell him to choose whichever bride he likes from among the brides of Paradise.” (Abu Dawud)

“There is a gate of Hell through which only those who have overcome hatred and violent temper in order not to rebel against Allah will pass.” (Ibn Abi al-Dunya)

“One who flies into tempers will find himself dragged into Hell.” (al-Bazzar)

“When any of you are roused to anger, sit down if you are

standing. If the anger subsides, well and good; if it does not, lie down.” (al-Tirmidhi)

The Messenger of Allah (saas) gave the following advice to those who, not being able to control their temper, flare up in anger: ***“Anger is roused under satan’s influence. Satan has been created from fire, and fire is put out with water. So when any of you are seized with anger, perform wudu’.”*** (Abu Dawud)

The Virtues of Marriage

Muslim scholars are unanimous on the virtue of marriage. Umar (ra) said that ***“only weakness and poverty hinder men from getting married.”***

Allah (swt) reveals:

[Believers are] those who say: “Our Lord, give us joy in our wives and children and make us a good example for those who have taqwa.” (Surat al-Furqan, 74)

Abd Allah ibn Abbas has said that ***“a person’s worship can only come to perfection with marriage.”***

The Messenger of Allah (saas) said:

“One who marries has preserved half of religion. Let him guard against disobeying Allah for the other half.” (al-Bayhaqi)

The following prophetic hadiths encourage marriage:

“Marriage is a sunnah of mine. So, whosoever does not act upon my Sunnah has no relation with me. And marry women, for I shall outnumber the ummahs on account of your large number.” (Sunan Ibn Majah, 1846)

“O young people, whoever among you can marry should marry, because it helps him lower his gaze and guard his modesty. Whoever is not able to marry should fast, as

fasting diminishes his lust.” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 7, Book 62, Number 4)

The Messenger of Allah (saas) explains what believing men should look for when choosing a wife:

“Do not marry women for the sake of their beauty, for their beauty may lead them to ruin. Do not marry them for the sake of their riches, for their riches may cause them transgress. Rather, marry them for their (devotion to) religion.” (Sunan Ibn Majah, 1859)

“A woman is married for four things, namely, her wealth, family status, beauty, and religion. So you should marry the religious woman, (otherwise) you will be a loser.” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 7, Book 62, Number 27)

“Verily the world is a property, and nothing of the property of the world is better than a righteous woman.” (Sunan Ibn Majah, 1855)

“Among Muslims, his faith is more perfect whose behavior toward (everyone) is good, and (particularly) toward his wife is [a manifestation] of love and kindness.” (al-Tirmidhi)

“No believing man hates his believing wife. If there is a bad quality in her, there will also be a good quality.” (Sahih Muslim)

“The man who can bear his wife’s bad tempers will be rewarded by Allah in the same way as Ayyub (as), who endured sickness, was rewarded. The wife who can bear her husband’s bad tempers will be rewarded by Allah in the same as Asiya, the wife of Pharaoh, was rewarded.” (Ihya)

“Among Muslims, those are more perfect in faith who are perfect in morals, and the best of you are those who are best to their wives.” (al-Tirmidhi)

“Have fear of Allah in how you treat women, for He has entrusted them to you.” (Abu Dawud)

The Mutual Responsibilities of Children and Parents

One of the most important responsibilities of married believers is to raise their children properly. The Messenger of Allah (saas) stated that he will be proud of his large community in the Hereafter. In addition, the children’s supplications will be most helpful in the next world to the parents who raised them. The best gift that a child can receive is being taught Islamic morality in the most accurate and finest way possible.

The Prophet (saas) said:

“There are four types of people whom Allah will not bring into Paradise and who will not benefit from its blessings: the one who drinks continuously, the one who benefits from usury, the one who unrightfully appropriates an orphan’s goods, and children who rebel against their parents.” (al-Tirmidhi)

Once a person asked the Prophet (saas): “Who has the greatest claim on me with regard to service and kindly treatment?” The Prophet (saas) replied: “Your mother; and again, your mother; and once again, your mother. After her, your father, and after him your near kinsmen, and then the kinsmen who are next to them.” (Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim)

“Small children are the fowls of Paradise. If one of them meets his father (or his parents), he would take hold of his cloth. And he (the child) would not take off (his hand) from it until Allah causes his father to enter Paradise.” (Sahih Muslim, Book 032, Number 6370)

“He who has three daughters and is patient with them, feeds them and gives them water to drink, and clothes them out of his (labor and) riches, there will be a curtain against the fire (of Hell) for him on the Day of Resurrection.” (Sunan Ibn Majah, 3669)

“He who brought up two girls properly will be (together) with me on the Day of Resurrection (and he interlaced his fingers to indicate the degree of nearness between him and that person).” (Sahih Muslim, Book 032, Number 6364)

Sins that will be hardest to forgive on the Day of Resurrection will be, among others, rebellion against one's believing parents.

“Allah will postpone punishment for certain sins until the Day of Resurrection, but the punishment for rebelling against one's parents will also be given in this world before one dies.” (al-Hakim)

“One's father is the middle door of the doors of Paradise. So, lose this gate or guard it.” (Sunan Ibn Majah, 3663)

Protecting Family Ties

The Prophet (saas) recommends that one start with family members when giving financial or other help and spreading Islamic morality. According to the Sunnah, one should not break ties with Muslim family members. However, those relatives who oppose the believers on points of religion are not considered “family members,” as that term is defined by the Messenger of Allah (saas).

The Messenger of Allah (saas) has left a number of hadiths on this topic:

“Whoever violates the rights of kinship shall not go to

Paradise.” (Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim)

“Give greetings when you go to your family. It will be a source of blessing to you as well as to them.” (al-Tirmidhi)

“Truly, people’s deeds are offered up to Allah on Friday evening. However, the deeds of the one who has broken off family ties will not be accepted.” (Ahmad)

“Whoever wants an increase in his sustenance and that his footprints remain for a long time in the world (i.e., he has a long life) should be kind and helpful to his relatives.” (Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim)

The Orphans’ Rights and Caring for the Poor and the Elderly

Allah (swt) has revealed the following regarding the orphans’ rights:

People who consume the property of orphans wrongfully consume nothing in their bellies except fire. They will roast in a Searing Blaze. (Surat an-Nisa’, 10)

The Messenger of Allah (saas) has reiterated many times that the orphans’ rights should be safeguarded and that those who abuse their rights will be punished severely in both worlds:

“(As for) the person who took an orphan from among the Muslims and shared his food and drink with him, Allah will allow him to enter Paradise provided that he is not guilty of an unpardonable sin.” (al-Tirmidhi)

“The best Muslim home is one in which an orphan lives and is treated in a loving and affectionate manner. The worst Muslim home is one in which an orphan lives and is treated badly or cruelly.” (Ibn Majah)

“O Allah, I forbid the (waste of) right of two weak persons: an orphan and a woman.” (Ibn Majah)

In our society, the indigent and the elderly also need our interest and help. The Sunnah states that every Muslim should care for any person in such a position:

“Whoever strives to relieve the widow, the distressed, and the needy is as one who, in Divine reward, struggles in the path of Allah and who fasts permanently during the day and spends the night in prayers.” (Sahih Muslim)

“For the young man who honors an old man because of his years, Allah will appoint men who will honor him in his old age.” (al-Tirmidhi)

“To show respect to elderly people is due to the respect to Allah.” (Abu Dawud)

The Neighbors’ Rights

In the Qur’an, neighbors are singled out as people deserving to be treated well by Muslims:

Worship Allah and do not associate anything with Him. Be good to your parents and relatives and to orphans and the very poor, and to neighbors who are related to you and neighbors who are not related to you, and to companions and travelers and your slaves. Allah does not love anyone vain or boastful. (Surat an-Nisa’, 36)

The Messenger of Allah (saas) always helped his neighbors and treated them well so that they might lead a good life. He was very friendly with them and frequently asked about their well-being. He was always the first to help anyone in need of material or spiritual help in his circle:

“Jibril (as) counseled me so persistently about the rights of the neighbor that I felt he was going to declare him an heir.” (Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim)

The Messenger of Allah (saas) advised Muslims to behave properly toward their neighbors, to watch and protect them, and to help them as much as they could. Probably nobody else has ever given so much attention to the rights of neighbors. This can be easily comprehended by looking at his hadiths. The believers' obligations toward their neighbors are put on the same footing as those held toward parents and spouses.

“Whoever believes in Allah and in the Day of Judgment must be kind and gentle to his neighbors, and must entertain his guest with kindness and generosity.” (Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim)

Aisha (ra) related: “One day I said: ‘O Messenger of Allah, I have two neighbors. Which one shall I favor with a gift first?’ The Messenger of Allah replied: ‘The one whose door is closer to you.’”

Visiting the Sick

Among the times when Muslims most need each other is when they are sick. Visiting sick people is important, for this increases feelings of unity and gives hope to the sick person.

“One who visits the sick is, in fact, like one who is in the fruit garden of Paradise until he returns.” (Sahih Muslim, Book 032, Number 6227)

The Prophet (saas) used to visit sick people and strengthen them with his words. He told his community that all of them must do this. In the first years of the Islamic era, it became a tradition to inform the Prophet (saas) of who was about to die so that he could ask for forgiveness for him or her. He would visit the deceased person's house, pray for him or her, and then perform the ritual funerary prayer.

Whenever the Messenger of Allah (saas) visited a patient or

a patient was brought to him, he would call upon Allah (swt), saying: ***“Take away the disease, O the Lord of the people. Cure him, for You are the One Who cures. There is no cure but Yours, a cure that leaves no disease.”*** (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 7, Book 70, Number 579)

He used to tell sick people: ***“Don’t worry. If Allah wills, it will be expiation (for your sins)”*** (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 7, Book 70, Number 560). But he would not be pleased if they would talk bad or complain about their disease.

“One who visits his Muslim brother when he is sick, hoping for a blessing, will be removed from the fire the same distance that it would take him seventy years to walk.”
(Abu Dawud)

Social Customs of Meeting and Hospitality

Whenever the Prophet (saas) joined a gathering, he would sit with dignity and grace. All of his people would observe his exemplary behavior with great attention, and listen attentively and full of respect whenever he spoke.

The Prophet (saas) never interrupted anyone. Some poor bedouins would come to talk about their troubles, disregarding the rules and proprieties of meeting. The Prophet (saas) would listen to them without interrupting and admonish them politely after they had finished.

He took part in his Companions’ conversations; whatever they were talking about, he would talk about. He joined in their jokes, but warned those who would say jokes in the manner of Days of Ignorance (*jahiliyyah*). Conversational gatherings were generally concerned with religion, morality, and information that could help people in their daily lives.

Greetings

In the Qur'an the importance of greetings is stated in the following way:

When you are greeted with a greeting, return the greeting or improve upon it. Allah takes account of everything. (Surat an-Nisa', 86)

In other words, a believer should respond to a greeting with a more beautiful or at least equal to the one given:

A man asked the Prophet: "What Islamic traits are the best?" He replied: "Feed the people, and greet those whom you know and those whom you do not know." (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 8, Book 74, Number 253k)

"One who brings these things together in his person will have gathered his faith together: not to abandon justice, even if it were against his own self; to greet everyone; and to give charity, even though he is poor." (Sahih al-Bukhari)

Greeting everyone is a manifestation of humility, for the person who greets shows the one being greeted that he is not proud. The person greeted is, as indicated in the Qur'an, to display an example of humility by responding with a more beautiful greeting.

When the Prophet (saas) approached a door of a house, he would not turn his face directly toward the door, but would draw to one side and say twice: "*As-salaamu alaykum*" (Abu Dawud). In this way, he would give those inside enough time to get themselves and their house ready to receive him. After giving his greeting, he would wait to be invited inside.

He accepted those greetings that were sent to him and responded by saying "*wa alaikum al-salaam.*" For those who were not present, he would send his greetings to them

through their relatives (Sahih Muslim). Another of his habits was to say “*wa barakatuh*” at the end of his greeting. Moreover, he would repeat his greetings three times, thereby ensuring that everyone heard it and could respond in kind. Upon meeting someone, he would greet them and respond loud enough for the other person to hear.

The Messenger of Allah (saas) has also said:

“O people, worship Allah, the Beneficent; feed His servants and spread greetings far a wide; and you will reach Paradise in safety.” (al-Tirmidhi)

“When anyone arrives at a gathering, greet those who are present and then sit down if you want to. Afterwards, salute again upon leaving. The first salutation is not superior to the second salutation.” (al-Tirmidhi)

“The rider should first greet the pedestrian, the pedestrian [should greet] the one who is seated, and a small group should greet a larger group.” (Sahih Muslim, Book 026, Number 5374)

Praying on the Prophet (saas)

Allah and His angels call down blessings upon the Prophet. O you who believe, call down blessings upon him and ask for complete peace and safety for him. (Surat al-Ahzab, 56)

Scholars are divided over how much one should call down blessings and peace on the Prophet (saas) when he is mentioned. But the Ahl al-Sunnah’s scholars believe that doing so is virtuous and will result in his intercession for believers in the Hereafter. Praying upon the Prophet (saas) is a very rewarding and valuable deed. Those who perform it a great deal will be

elevated by Allah (swt) in the Hereafter; those who do not do so will be deprived of many bounties in the next world. Some of the Prophet's (saas) sayings on this subject are:

“The people nearest to me on the Day of Resurrection will be those who have said the most prayers on me.” (al-Tirmidhi)

“If anyone conveys blessings on me once, Allah will bless him ten times.” (Sahih Muslim)

“Call down a lot of prayers on me on Friday. Your prayer is shown to me. There is no Muslim who blesses me but that an angel conveys it to me.” (Abu Dawud)

“Bless me wherever you are. Your prayer will reach me.” (at-Tabarani)

The recommended times to call down prayers on the Messenger of Allah (saas) are as follows:

1) When the call to prayer is heard:

The Prophet (saas) said: ***“When you hear the call to prayer, repeat the words of the muezzin and afterwards call down blessings on me. Allah will reward you tenfold for every invocation of blessings and peace.”*** (Ahmad)

2) Upon entering and leaving the mosque:

The Messenger of Allah (saas) would call down blessings whenever he entered or left a mosque. Ali (ra) said: ***“When you enter the mosque, call down blessings on the Messenger of Allah.”*** (Ahmad)

3) At funeral:

According to the Sunnah, a prayer (*Allahumma salli* and *Allahumma barik*) is said on the Prophet (saas) at the end of the funeral service.

4) At the end of a supplication:

Umar (ra) said: ***“Supplication and prayer are suspended between heaven and Earth, and none of it rises to Allah until you pray on the Prophet.”***

5) On Fridays:

The Prophet (saas) said: ***“The most excellent day is Friday. So, call down blessings on me abundantly on that (day), for your blessings are presented to me.”*** (Sunan Ibn Majah, Hadith no. 1085)

Table Manners

Some hadiths discuss table manners, proving that the Prophet (saas) was very sensitive on these proprieties. The limited resources of his community did not prevent him from stressing this matter. Some examples of his table manners are:

1) Washing one’s hands is *sunnah*:

Washing hands before and after a meal is very important for our health. The Prophet (saas) encouraged all believers to acquire this habit:

“Washing hands before a meal will eradicate poverty; washing them after a meal will eradicate sins.” (at-Tabarani)

“Whoever retires for the night with food on his hands and some harm comes to him because of it has only himself to blame.” (Abu Dawud)

“To wash one’s hands and mouth before and after a meal is a source of blessings.” (Abu Dawud)

2) It is a *sunnah* to open a meal by saying *Bismillah* and to end it by saying *Alhamdulillah*.

“When anyone of you intends to eat, he should say, Bismillah. In case he forgets, he should say Bismillah

Awwaluhu wa Akhirahu at the end.” (Abu Dawud and al-Tirmidhi)

Aisha (ra) relates that while the Messenger of Allah (saas) and six of the Companions were eating, a bedouin entered and ate all of the food in two bites. The Messenger of Allah (saas) said: ***“If he had said Bismillah, it should have been sufficient for all.”*** (al-Tirmidhi)

3) The Prophet (saas) advised people to begin a meal with dates, salt, or water.

The Messenger of Allah (saas) never found fault with a meal brought to the table. If food he did not like was served, he would remain silent and simply not eat it.

4) It is a *sunnah* of the Messenger of Allah (saas) to eat with right hand and to eat from the sides of the dish.

Umar ibn Salmah narrated that “during my childhood, the Prophet (saas) advised me to say Bismillah, eat with the right hand, and from (the part of the dish that was) in front of me.” (Sahih Muslim)

“Eat from the sides of it and do not put your hand in the middle, for barakah descends on the middle.” (al-Tirmidhi and Abu Dawud)

5) Muslims should sit together during the meal, for eating together is more blissful:

“Sit down to eat together and recite the name of Allah. There will, then, be greater barakah for you in the meal.” (Abu Dawud)

6) Food should not be taken too hot:

“There is no barakah in a hot meal, for Allah does not feed us fire. Eat your food after allowing it to cool down.” (al-Bayhaqi)

7) Some points need to be considered when drinking:

Holding the glass in the right hand, one should breathe three times in the course of a drink without breathing into the glass. As Prophet Muhammad (saas) said: ***“The best drink in this world and the Hereafter is water. When you are thirsty, drink it by sips and not gulps, for gulping produces a sickness of the liver.”*** (al-Daylami)

Abdullah ibn Abbas (ra) related that the Messenger of Allah (saas) forbade breathing or blowing air from the mouth into the drinking vessel (Abu Dawud and Ibn Majah).

The Messenger of Allah (saas) breathed three times (outside the vessel) in the course of a drink and said: ***“It is more thirst-quenching, healthier, and more wholesome”*** (Sahih Muslim, Book 023, Number 5030).

When distributing something to drink in a crowd, it should be moved to the right and held with the right hand. The Prophet (saas) would always share his drink with those nearby, whenever he was drinking milk or sweet juice. The glass would always be moved to the right.

Anas ibn Malik (ra) reported that to the Messenger of Allah (saas) was given a cup of milk mixed with water. On his right was a desert Arab, and on his left was Abu Bakr (ra). He (the Prophet) drank, then gave it to the desert Arab and said: “(Give it to the one) who is on the right, then again (to one) who is on the right.” (Sahih Muslim, Book 023, Number 5032)

The Prophet (saas) loved to eat in the company of many people. As the food was served, he would say: ***“O Allah, make this food among the provisions, thanks for which is already paid and has become a means to attain the blessings***

of Paradise.” He did not like food that was too hot; he would wait for it to cool down of its own accord and then eat it.

The Prophet (saas) recommended that believers should invite each other to eat together. Islamic scholars have decreed that Muslims, unless they have a valid reason or excuse, must accept an invitation from a fellow believer:

“When any one of you is invited to a feast, he should accept.” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, and al-Tirmidhi)

Abu Hurayrah (ra) used to say: “One who does not come to the feast disobeys Allah and His Messenger (saas).” (Sahih al-Bukhari)

“When two people come together to issue an invitation, accept the one belonging to the door that is nearer. But if one of them comes before the other, accept the invitation of the one who comes first.” (Sunan Abu Dawud, Book 27, Number 3747)

“He who presents himself for a meal without being invited is a fasiq, and it is unlawful for him to partake of the food.” (al-Bayhaqi)

“Verily, there are lofty rooms in Paradise in which their outside can be seen from inside and their inside from the outside. They are for those who use soft speech, feed food [to others], and spend the night in voluntary prayer while people are asleep.” (al-Tirmidhi)

“Whoever feeds his brother in Islam the food he desires, his sins will be forgiven. Whoever pleases his brother in Islam pleases Allah.” (at-Tabarani)

It is an important aspect of a believer’s good manners to treat the person who accepts an invitation with respect.

Food the Prophet (saas) Liked

The Messenger of Allah (saas) did not discriminate against any food. He did not find fault with the food he did not want to eat at that time; he would simply leave it. Gourds were the Prophet's (saas) favorite vegetable dish. He also praised meat dishes.

“O, A’isha, when you cook a stew put in plenty of gourds, for verily it strengthens the heart of the grieved.” (Ihya’ `Ulum al-Din)

“Meat is the most superior food in both worlds. It enhances the hearing ability of one’s ears. If I would have beseeched my Lord to grant me to eat meat everyday, it would have been granted.”

Anas (ra) relates: “(Once) a tailor invited the Prophet (saas) to dine with him. I also went with him. The tailor offered barely bread and broth containing pieces of gourd and dried meat. I noticed that the Prophet (saas) was picking pieces of gourd from the bowl and eating them. From that day, I also began to eat gourds with relish.” (Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim)

Abu Ayyub al-Ansari reported: “When food was brought to the Messenger of Allah (saas), he would eat from it and then send the remaining part to me. One day he sent to me the leftovers; (I found that he) had not taken from it at all, for it included garlic. I asked him whether that was forbidden, whereupon he said: ‘No, but I do not like it because of its odor.’ I said: ‘Then I also do not like what you do not like.’” (Sahih Muslim, Book 023, Number 5097)

Health and the Importance of Cleanliness

The Messenger of Allah (saas) placed great importance upon

his people's health and cleanliness. He said that a healthy person is above a person who does not take care of himself and impairs his health: **“A strong believer is better and more lovable to Allah than a weak believer.”** (Sahih Muslim, Book 033, Number 6441)

In the Qur'an, the following is stated regarding Yahya (as):

And [We gave Yahya] tenderness and purity from Us – he had taqwa. (Surah Maryam, 13)

The Prophet's (saas) advice to wash one's hands before and after a meal, his fastidiousness regarding ablution, and his traditions on bodily cleanliness show just how much importance he attached to one's personal health and cleanliness. In the Qur'an, importance is given to the cleanliness of the place where one is to pray as well as to the one praying. Believers need to be meticulous about cleanliness, for one cannot pray with a dirty body or while wearing dirty clothes. The Prophet (saas) said: **“Cleanliness is a part of faith”** (Sahih Muslim). For this reason, cleanliness is just as important as other matters of faith and creed.

Prophet Muhammad (saas) made several recommendations regarding wudu':

1) Using a *miswak*:

As related by Abu Hurayrah (ra), our beloved Prophet (saas) said: **“If I did not fear that my followers would be put to much hardship, I would have made it compulsory for them to use the miswak at every prayer-time.”** (Sahih Muslim)

Certain benefits from using *miswak*:

It makes the teeth shiny, strengthens the gums, secures the mouth's health, removes bad breath, strengthens the teeth, combats plaque, strengthens the stomach, and thus helps pre-

vent stomach disorders. It also secures an easy digestion. By its use, one follows the Sunnah of the Prophet (saas) and pleases Allah (swt).

2) Washing one's hands:

“Whoever wakes up from his sleep should wash his hands before putting them in the water for ablution.” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 1, Book 4, Number 163)

“When one of you wakes up from sleep, he should wash his hands three times.” (Sahih Muslim, Book 002, Number 0544)

3) Cleaning the nose:

“When one of you performs ablution, he must snuff water into his nose and then clean it.” (Sahih Muslim, Book 002, Number 0458)

4) Washing the beard and between the fingers and toes:

“Perform ablution in full, make the fingers go through the beard...” (Sunan Abu Dawud, Book 1, Number 0142)

Al-Mustawrid ibn Shaddad narrated: “I saw the Messenger of Allah (saas) rub his toes with his little finger when he performed ablution.” (Sunan Abu Dawud, Book 1, Number 0148)

5) Rubbing the ears:

“Al-Rubaiyi’ ibn Muawwiz (ra) said that she saw the Prophet (saas) insert two fingers into his ear-holes while performing ablution.” (Abu Dawud)

6) Not wasting water:

Once Sa’d ibn Abi Waqas (ra) was performing wudu’. The Messenger of Allah (saas) happened to pass by him and asked: “What extravagance is this?” “O Messenger of Allah,” replied Sa’d, “can there be a waste of water even in wudu?” “Yes,” said the Prophet (saas). “It is wastefulness even if you are performing the ablution on the bank

of a running stream.” (Ahmad and Ibn Majah)

7) Wiping the face dry:

It is related on the authority of Mu‘az ibn Jabal (ra) that: “I saw that when the Messenger of Allah (saas) performed wudu’, he wiped his face with a corner of his robe.” (al-Tirmidhi)

When a person was sick, the Messenger of Allah (saas) gave precedence to doctors. He said that, even though he was knowledgeable about the matter, it was always advisable to see a doctor first.

A man was wounded in the time of the Messenger of Allah (saas). The blood clotted in the wound, and the man called two men from the Banu Ammar tribe. They looked at it and claimed that the Messenger of Allah (saas) asked them: “Which of you is the better doctor?” They asked: “Is there any good in medicine, O Messenger of Allah?” Zayd claimed that the Messenger of Allah (saas) said: “The One Who sent down the disease sent down the remedy.” (Malik, al-Muwatta’, Book 50, Number 50.5.12)

The Prophet (saas) said that there is a cure for each disease and therefore advised Muslims to seek adequate treatment:

“Allah has sent down both the disease and the cure, and He has appointed a cure for every disease. So treat yourselves medically, but do not use anything that has been prohibited.” (Sunan Abu Dawud, Book 28, Number 3865)

“Allah has not made a disease without appointing a remedy for it, with the exception of one disease, namely, old age.” (Sunan Abu Dawud, Book 28, Number 3846)

“There is no disease that Allah has created, except that He also has created its treatment.” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 7, Book 71, Number 582)

Our Prophet (saas) said: ***“There are two blessings which many people lose: health and free time for doing good”*** (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 8, Book 76, Number 421). Muslims should never forget that being healthy is a great blessing. Like the Messenger of Allah (saas) said, free time that is ill-spent leads to disappointment, and one can understand what a great blessing good health is only after it has been lost.

According to a tradition related by Abu Hurayrah, the Messenger of Allah (saas) said: ***“If one were to eat honey every morning for a month, then he will not suffer any heavy affliction.”***

“Whosoever begins the day secure in his home, healthy in his body, and possessing provision for his day is as though he possessed the whole world.” (al-Tirmidhi)

“Ask Allah for certainty and health, for after being granted certainty, one is given nothing better than health.” (Ibn Majah)

The Prophet (saas) saw an advantage in eating certain foods. First among them, which is mentioned in the Qur’an, is honey. He recommended that the following items should be eaten:

“If somebody eats seven ‘Ajwa dates in the morning, neither magic nor poison will hurt him that day.” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 7, Book 71, Number 664)

“Truffles are like manna (i.e., they grow naturally without one’s care), and their water heals diseases.” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 7, Book 71, Number 609)

Jabir ibn ‘Abdullah reported that Allah’s Messenger (saas) asked his family for some condiments. They replied: “We have nothing but vinegar.” He asked for it, began to eat it, and then said: “Vinegar is a good condiment, vinegar is

a good condiment.” (Sahih Muslim, Book 023, Number 5093)

A man came to the Prophet and said: “My brother has some abdominal trouble.” The Prophet said: “Let him drink honey.” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 7, Book 71, Number 588)

Clothing

Our Prophet (saas) wore light and thin clothes most of the time. His favorite item of clothing was a *kurta* (shirt). His turban was generally medium in length and not so long that it would cause a headache. His favorite color was white.

He told Muslims not to boast among themselves about their clothes and admonished those who became haughty on account of their clothes:

“On the Day of Resurrection, Allah will not look at the person who drags his garment (behind him) out of conceit.” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 7, Book 72, Number 675)

Other than the company of believers, the Prophet (saas) would take great care of his outfit and preferred to wear particularly magnificent clothes when he was with foreign envoys. He would not reject expensive and ostentatious clothes sent by other tribal leaders and kings; rather, he would wear them. He advised Muslims always to wear clean clothes.

Abdullah ibn Abbas narrated: “When the Haruriyyah revolted, I came to Ali (ra). He said: ‘Go to these people.’ I put on the best suit of Yemeni clothing and went to them. They said: ‘Welcome, Ibn Abbas. What is this suit of clothing?’ I said: ‘Why are you objecting to it? I saw the Messenger of Allah (saas) wearing the best suit of

clothes.” (Sunan Abu Dawud, Book 32, Number 4026)

Our Prophet (saas) would make the following supplication when putting on new clothes:

“Praise and gratitude be to the Lord Who gave me this to wear. O Allah, I beg from You the good of it and the good of the purpose for which it is intended. And I beg from You refuge from its mischief and from the mischief of the purpose for which it is intended.” (al-Tirmidhi)

The Messenger of Allah (saas) prohibited all that was produced from silk and gold for Muslim men:

“No one wears silk in this world except those who will not wear it in the Hereafter.” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 7, Book 72, Number 720)

“Gold and silken clothes are allowed to Muslim women and forbidden to Muslim men.” (al-Tirmidhi)

It is in his practice to enter a mosque or a gathering in the most beautiful and clean manner possible. The Messenger of Allah (saas) said: **“Allah loves anybody who dresses up to appear before a congregation or in front of his friends.”**

“The Messenger of Allah (saas) wore a silver ring and placed its stone toward the palm of his hand.” (Sahih al-Bukhari)

‘Aisha narrated: “I used to perfume the Messenger of Allah with the best scent available until I saw the shine of the scent on his head and his beard.” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 7, Book 72, Number 806)

The Importance of *Tawakkul* (Trusting Allah [swt])

It is not compatible with the belief of the Ahl al-Sunnah to think that coincidence, as well as Allah’s (swt) decreed destiny,

rules people's lives. Believers trust Allah (swt) because they know that everything comes from Him and that nothing occurs by chance. For those who fear and respect Him, there is only goodness in anything that happens.

Great Islamic scholars have said that heart is the place of *tawakkul*. As long as people believe that Allah (swt) provides everything, what they do in this world do not contradict the *tawakkul* they nourish in their hearts. Allah (swt) creates everything, provides whomever He wills with whatever He wills, and takes whatever He wills from whomever He wills. There is no other power than Him.

The Messenger of Allah (saas) said:

“Seventy thousand of my followers will be admitted to Paradise without reckoning. They will be those who do not take recourse to sorcery or augury, but place reliance on their Lord and Creator.” (Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim)

“The heart of the son of Adam has a piece in every wadi: anyone who trusts in Allah He will supply enough for all the pieces.” (Ibn Majah)

“Do not despair of your provision when you get older, because the mother gives birth to a baby with no clothes on it, and then Allah provides for the baby.” (Ibn Majah)

Fear of poverty and belief in ill-fortune are examples of how satan misleads people. Everyone has probably received unexpected help at times of difficulty that enabled him or her to overcome them. One thing that should definitely not be forgotten is that help comes solely from Allah (swt), the Almighty.

The Prophet (saas) is a model of courage, for he trusted

Allah (swt) and felt endless *tawakkul*. When he was healthy, he participated in all battles on the front line and his reliance on Allah (swt) has been a model for all believers.

When the Makkans' oppression became unbearable, the Prophet's (saas) uncle Abu Talib told him: ***“Can't you just stop preaching these ideas? Have faith on your own, but do not get up to [spread it to] other people. If you continue preaching, you will make the prominent people angry and put both yourself and us in danger.”*** The Prophet Muhammad (saas) replied: ***“O uncle, if they were to put the Sun in my right hand and the Moon in my left hand to stop me from preaching Islam, I would never stop.”***

There are countless examples of such trust in the Prophet's (saas) life. Some are as follows:

“I would not lag behind any expedition undertaken to fight in the way of Allah, the Exalted ... By the Being in Whose Hand is my life, I would love to be killed in His way and then be brought back to life and be killed again in His way.” (Sahih Muslim, Book 20, Hadith No. 4631)

“To guard Muslims from unbelievers in Allah's cause for one day is better than the world and whatever is on its surface...” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 4, Book 52, Hadith No. 142)

In traditions, it is related that Muslims dispersed at first at the Hunayn battlefield when confronted with a barrage of the enemy's arrows. The Messenger of Allah (saas) called them to return to the front. Those who did so attacked the enemy and were victorious. Al-Bara' ibn Azib, who witnessed the event, said: ***“The Messenger of Allah (saas) did not retreat. ... When the battle grew fierce, we, by Allah, would seek pro-***

tection by his side, and the bravest among us was he who confronted the onslaught: the Prophet (saas)” (Sahih Muslim, Book 19, Hadith No. 4389).

The Importance of Patience

The Prophet’s (saas) whole life is a model of patience and steadfastness. Not only were the twenty-three years of his prophethood full of difficulties, but so were the earlier forty years of his life. Being orphaned at a young age and growing up in tough conditions did not prevent him from being known as a respectable and reliable person among his people.

The importance of steadfastness is highlighted in many Qur’anic verses:

O you who believe, be steadfast, be supreme in steadfastness, and be firm on the battlefield. Fear and respect Allah, so that, hopefully, you will be successful. (Surah Al ‘Imran, 200)

After Allah (swt) bestowed prophethood upon him, the Messenger of Allah (saas) confronted the attacks of the polytheists and hypocrites and never acted hastily. In fact, Allah (swt) advised him to be steadfast:

So be steadfast as the Messengers, with firm resolve, were also steadfast. Do not seek to hasten it for them... (Surat al-Ahqaf, 35)

Indeed, the Messenger of Allah (saas) said:

“Allah will bestow patience upon those who want to be patient. Nobody is given anything better and more immense than patience.” (Sahih Muslim)

“Strange are the ways of the believers, for there is good in

all of their affairs. This is not the case with anyone else. If the believers feel delight, they thank (Allah). Thus there is some good for them in it. If they get into trouble and resign themselves (by enduring it patiently), there is some good for them in it.” (Sahih Muslim, Book 42, Hadith No. 7138)

“If any servant (of Allah) who suffers a calamity says: ‘We belong to Allah and to Him shall we return. O Allah, reward me for my affliction and give me something better than it in exchange for it,’ Allah will reward him for the affliction and give him something better than it in exchange.” (Sahih Muslim, Book 4, Hadith No. 2000)

Anas ibn Malik reported that the Messenger (saas) came to a woman who had been weeping for her (dead) child and told her: “Fear and respect Allah, and show endurance.” She (not recognizing him) replied: “You have not been afflicted as I have been.” After he had departed, someone told her that he was the Messenger of Allah (saas). Deeply shocked, she went to his door and did not find any guards. She said: “O Messenger of Allah, I did not recognize you.” He said: “Endurance is to be shown at first blow.” (Sahih Muslim, Book 4, Hadith No. 2013)

“No fatigue, disease, sorrow, sadness, hurt, or distress befalls a Muslim, even if it were the prick one receives from a thorn, but that Allah expiates some of that person’s sins for that.” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 7, Book 70, Hadith No. 545)

Anas ibn Malik reported that the Messenger of Allah (saas) said: **“Endurance is to be shown at the first blow.”** If believers trust Allah (swt) fully, they may see every event as good

from the beginning.

Avoiding Extremism in Religion

All throughout history, there have been some who went to the extremes among some of the peoples who received Allah's (swt) revelation. Allah (swt) created Muslims to be a moderate people so that they would be a model to others. Muslims should comply with this and avoid all kinds of extremism:

Say: "O People of the Book, do not go to extremes in your religion, asserting other than the truth. And do not follow the whims and desires of people who were misguided previously, have misguided many others, and are far from the right way." (Surat al-Ma'ida, 77)

In the later years of the Prophet's (saas) life as well as during the period of the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs, the Kharijite sect emerged. Although committed to their prayers, its members became extremists and thus strayed from the Prophet's (saas) Sunnah. The Prophet (saas) told the Muslims to contend with the false ideas of such people.

The Messenger of Allah (saas) did not tolerate those who tried to portray some of their deeds, which were not part of Islam, as part of it under the guise of fearing and respecting Allah (*taqwa*). His sayings contain warnings against excess in religion. For example:

"There is enthusiasm in every deed, and there comes a time when that enthusiasm ends. If people feel that enthusiasm in their deeds, they act in a moderate way. If they carry on in this moderate manner, hope that they succeed. If one has gone to the extremes and attracted attention in this manner, do not consider them as one of

the righteous.” (al-Tirmidhi)

Aisha (ra) narrated: “A woman from the Bani Asad Tribe was sitting with me. Allah’s Messenger (saas) came to my house and asked: ‘Who is this?’ I replied: ‘(She is) so and so. She does not sleep at night because she is engaged in prayer.’ The Prophet said disapprovingly: ‘Do the (good) deeds that are within your capacity.” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 2, Book 21, Hadith No. 251)

“People will continue to question one another until it is asked: ‘Allah created all things, but who created Allah?’ Those who find themselves confronted with such a situation should say: ‘I affirm my faith in Allah.” (Sahih Muslim, Book 1, Hadith No. 242)

The Qur’an’s Grace and the Honor of Reciting It

Reciting the Qur’an is an important act of worship. The Messenger of Allah (saas) used to say: **“I seek refuge in Allah from the accursed satan, from his puffing up (nafkh), his spitting (nafth), and his evil suggestion (hamz)”** before he would start reciting the Qur’an. (Abu Dawud)

Our Prophet (saas) stressed reciting the Qur’an and the honor of teaching others how to do so. He considered this to be the initial step of practicing it:

“Recite the Qur’an, for on the Day of Resurrection it will come as an intercessor for those who recite it.” (Sahih Muslim)

“On the Day of Resurrection, the Qur’an will be brought with the people who used to act by it in this world, preceded by Surat al-Baqara and Al ‘Imran, arguing on behalf of those who knew them.” (Sahih Muslim)

“The best among you are those who learn the Qur’an and

teach it.” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 6, Book 61, Number 545)

“Not to wish to be the like except of two men. A man whom Allah has given the knowledge of the Book and he recites it during the hours of the night, and a man whom Allah has given wealth, and he spends it in charity during the night and the hours of the day.” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 6, Book 61, Number 543)

“Recite and ascend [through the levels of the Paradise]. Recite slowly as you did in the world. Your station will be at the last verse you recite.” (Abu Dawud and al-Tirmidhi)

“... those persons who assemble in the house among the houses of Allah (mosques) and recite the Book of Allah and they learn and teach the Qur’an (among themselves) there would descend upon them the tranquility and mercy would cover them and the angels would surround them and Allah makes a mention of them in the presence of those near Him...” (Sahih Muslim, Book 035, Number 6518)

“On the Day of Judgment, before Allah, no other intercessor will have a greater status than the Qur’an, neither a Prophet nor an angel.” (at-Tabarani)

“Whoever does not recite Qur’an in a nice voice is not from us.” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 9, Book 93, Number 618)

The etiquette when reciting the Qur’an:

1) Perform the ablution (*wudu*), face the *qiblah* and sit humbly and modestly as in *salat*.

2) Our Prophet (saas) said that those who finish the recitation of the Qur’an in less than three days cannot understand its commandments. Therefore, when reciting the Qur’an, the meaning should be considered fully and reflected upon deeply

by the reader.

3) Each verse should be read duly. Our Prophet (saas) always took refuge in Allah (swt) when he was reading the verses that involved pangs of Hell and asked for His mercy when he was reading verses that involved mercy.

4) The Qur'an should not be recited in a way that could be interpreted as showing off or distract people while they are praying. Our Prophet (saas) said that reciting the Qur'an quietly is superior to reciting it aloud as a charity given secretly is superior to the one that is given publicly. (Sahih al-Bukhari)

5) One should try to recite the Qur'an in a pleasant tone. The Prophet (saas) said: ***“Beautify the Qur'an with your (good) voices.”*** (Mishkat) The more pleasant the reciter's voice the more impression it creates in the listeners.

6) The reciter should feel in his heart the Qur'an's greatness. He should keep this in mind, keep his heart prepared for it and not be heedless of its true meaning.

To Learn and Teach Knowledge (*'Ilm*)

Prophet Muhammad (saas) said, ***“The ulama [people of knowledge] are the heirs of the prophets.”*** It does not make sense to say: “I am following the path of Allah's Messenger (saas)” while persisting in ignorance.

He also said, ***“Seek knowledge even [as far as] China” (at-Tabarani), and “Seeking after knowledge is an ordinance obligatory upon every Muslim – man and woman”*** (Ibn Majah). Therefore every Muslim is obliged to expand his knowledge; first of all, he must establish knowledge on the fundamental rules of Islam, to such an extent as to be able to represent the religion.

Our Prophet (saas) said:

“The prophets do not endow gold coins, nor silver coins. They only endow knowledge, so whoever takes hold of it has taken an ample share.” (Abu Dawud)

“Belief is naked and its garb is piety. Its adornment is modesty; and its fruit, knowledge.” (al-Hakim)

“Should the day come wherein I increase not in knowledge wherewith to draw nearer to Allah, let the dawn of that day be accursed.” (at-Tabarani)

“Whoever learns knowledge by which the Countenance of Allah should be sought, yet learns it only to attain some worldly provision, will not find the fragrance of Paradise on the Day of Resurrection.” (Abu Dawud)

Our Prophet (saas) said, ***“those who learn knowledge will be provided for by Allah from where they don’t expect.”***

Satan may try to prevent people from the path of knowledge by making them worry over earthly future and become absorbed in the life of this world. The truth is, however, that Almighty Allah (swt) protects those who strive to learn knowledge for His cause both in this world and the next.

“... he who treads the path in search of knowledge, Allah would make that path easy, leading to Paradise for him...” (Sahih Muslim, Book 035, Number 6518)

“Whoever is overtaken by death while seeking knowledge wherewith to strengthen Islam; between him and the prophets in Paradise is but one grade.” (ad-Darimi)

“They will, on the Day of Resurrection, intercede [before Allah]: the prophets, then the learned, then the martyrs.” (Ibn Majah)

“... whom Allah wants to do a favor, He grants him an understanding of religion.” (Sahih Muslim, Book 020,

Number 4720)

Our Prophet (saas) has divided the people of learning into two groups; those who learn for the life of this world and those who learn for the Hereafter. The former have the intention of having assets, high positions and good reputations. Those who do not act in line with the knowledge they attained are ultimately hypocrites because they have failed to put into their hearts what they affirm in words, and tried to deceive Allah (swt). The Messenger of Allah (saas) has informed that these people will be punished in the most severe way in the Hereafter. Our Prophet (saas) said that ***“The person who shall have the most severe punishment on the Day of Resurrection shall be the scholar who did not benefit from his knowledge.”***

The Prophet (saas) also said:

“Whoever increases in knowledge yet fails to improve his morality gains nothing but distance from Allah.” (al-Daylami)

There is a big responsibility on people of knowledge. A believer who has piety should share this blessing granted on him with other believers. This way, the beauty of knowledge can be shared with the *ummah*.

“Whoever has any knowledge but conceals it, will, on the Day of Resurrection, be bridled with a bit of fire.” (Ibn Majah)

“When a man dies, his acts come to an end, but three, ... [one of them being] knowledge (by which people) benefit...” (Sahih Muslim, Book 013, Number 4005)

The Grace of Supplication (*Du`ah*)

The Prophet Muhammad (saas) was the most predominant among all creation in remembering Allah (swt). He never refrained from the remembrance of Allah (swt) and supplication at any time during the day, whatever he was engaged in. Through his beautiful character, he always remained entirely focused on religion and the Hereafter, the intended target of all sincere Muslims. In the Qur'an, it is revealed: **“Say: ‘What has my Lord to do with you if you do not call on Him?..’”** (Surat al-Furqan, 77). The Messenger of Allah (saas) never stopped praying and remembering Allah (swt), no matter what.

We can better comprehend the importance he attached to supplication in his own sayings:

“In the sight of Allah, nothing is more honorable than supplication.” (al-Tirmidhi)

“The servant of Allah receives at least one of the three in his supplication: either his sin is forgiven or he receives a reward in this world or achieves the reward in the Hereafter.” (al-Daylami)

“Ask Allah to grant from His bounties for Allah loves to be asked.” (al-Tirmidhi)

“Man is closest to Allah when he is prostrating. Call upon Allah much in prostration.” (Sahih Muslim)

“Your Lord, may He be blessed and exalted, is Kind and Most Generous, and He is too kind to let His servant, if he raises his hands to Him, bring them back empty.” (al-Tirmidhi and Abu Dawud)

“Call upon Allah with firm conviction that He will answer. Know that Allah does not answer a supplication that

**comes from a negligent and heedless heart.” (al-Tirmidhi)
 “The supplication of one of you is granted if he does not
 grow impatient and say ‘I supplicated my Lord but it was
 not granted.’” (Sahih Muslim, Book 035, Number 6594)**

During the day, the Prophet Muhammad (saas) often used to supplicate as follows: **“I have set my face towards the Originator of the heavens and the earth sincerely [in Islam] and I am not among the polytheists. Indeed my prayer, my sacrifice, my living and my dying are for Allah, the Lord of the Worlds: no partner has He. With this I have been commanded, and I am the first of the Muslims (those who submit to Him). O Allah! You are the King, none has the right to be worshipped but You, You are the Most Perfect and all Praise is for You. You are my Lord and I am Your servant. Forgive all my sins, for no one forgives sins except You. Guide me to the best of characters, to which no one can guide except You, and save me from the worst of characters, from which no one can save except You. I am here and happy to serve You. You are blessed and exalted. I seek Your forgiveness and repent to You. O Allah, Creator of the heavens and Earth, Knower of all that is hidden and open! It is You Who will judge between Your servants in those matters about which they used to differ. Guide me by Your Grace to the Truth concerning that about which they differed, for indeed You guide whomsoever You wish to a path that is straight.”** (al-Tirmidhi and Sahih Muslim)

The supplication of the Prophet (saas) when he woke up:
“All praise is due to Allah Who gave us life after He took it away from us, and unto Him is the Resurrection. There is no deity but Allah. He has no partner. The Kingdom is

His. Praise be to Him. He is the All-Mighty. Glory be to Allah. There is no deity but Allah. He is the most Sublime.” (Sahih al-Bukhari and al-Tirmidhi)

Supplication of the Prophet (saas) on leaving his house:

“In the Name of Allah, I have relied upon Allah. O Allah, I take refuge with You lest I should stray or be led astray, or slip or be tripped, or oppress or be oppressed, or behave foolishly or be treated foolishly.” (al-Tirmidhi)

The supplication the Prophet (saas) made when he entered the mosque:

“O Allah! Open for me the doors of Your mercy.” (Sahih Muslim)

The Prophet’s (saas) supplication on entering his house:

“Praise be to Allah Who protects and shelters me. Praise be to Allah Who feeds me and gives me drink. Praise be to Allah Who is good to me and increases favor. O my Lord, I ask You to save me from Hell.” (Abu Dawud)

Another supplication of the Prophet (saas):

“O Allah, I take refuge in You from all sorts of uncleanness, seen and unseen, material and spiritual. I seek refuge in You from the accursed satan.” (at-Tabarani)

The supplication the Prophet (saas) made when he heard the call to prayer (adhan):

“O Allah, Lord of this perfect call and the established prayer, and the word of piety. Make me die on this faith, make me live in adherence to it, and make me among those who have this faith on the Day of Resurrection.” (al-Bayhaqi)

The Prophet’s (saas) supplication after eating:

“Praise be to Allah, Who fed us and gave us drink, Who have not made us in need but pleased us. You guided us

and brought us to life from dead. Praise be to You in return for the blessings You have bestowed on us!”
(Ahmad)

The necessary *adab* when supplicating is explained in the hadiths of Prophet Muhammad (saas) as follows:

1) Seeking precious times:

The following are the period of time in which the Prophet (saas) engaged in much supplication to Allah (swt): eves, the month of Ramadan, Thursday nights and the time of dawn.

2) Supplicating at times that are important in Allah’s sight:

Our Prophet (saas) said: ***“Supplication is granted on four occasions particularly: when fighting for the sake of Allah; when it is raining (mercifully); when it is time for prayer; when the Ka`bah is before the eyes.”*** (at-Tabarani)

In another hadith, it is related: ***“A fasting person, upon breaking his fast, has a supplication that will not be rejected.”*** (Ibn Majah) Paying attention to supplicating at such times is important in terms of both the acceptance of the supplication and compliance with the Sunnah.

3) Turning to the *qiblah* when calling on Allah (swt), raising hands, turning the palms toward the face is *sunnah*.

When our Prophet (saas) called upon Allah (swt), he raised his hands until his armpits were seen and did not point with his fingers during the supplication. (Sahih Muslim)

4) Supplicating in secret, in a low voice:

Abu Musa reported: “We were along with Allah’s Apostle (saas) on a journey when the people began to say ‘Allahu Akbar’ in a loud voice. Thereupon, Allah’s Messenger (saas) said: ‘O people, show mercy to yourselves ... Verily, you are calling One Who is All-Hearing (and) Near to you

and is with you. He Whom you are supplicating is nearer to every one of you than the neck of his camel.” (Sahih Muslim, Book 035, Number 6531)

5) Avoiding affected words when supplicating:

The one who calls upon Allah (swt) should ask in modesty and reverence, and avoid false pretences. In one of his hadiths, our Prophet (saas) said: **“There will appear some people among you whose prayer will make you look down upon yours...”** (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 6, Book 61, Number 578) Those who supplicate must express that they are in need of Allah (swt), avoid meaningless wishes.

6) Supplicating with fear of Allah (swt), hoping it to be answered and with insistence:

“Call upon Allah with firm conviction that He will answer. Know that Allah does not answer a supplication that comes from a negligent and heedless heart.” (al-Tirmidhi)
“The supplication of one of you is granted if he does not grow impatient and say ‘I supplicated my Lord but it was not granted.’” (Sahih Muslim, Book 035, Number 6594)

Repentance (Tawba)

But if anyone repents after his wrongdoing and puts things right, Allah will turn towards him. Allah is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (Surat al-Ma’ida, 39)

Repentance is an important opportunity to get clear of the former sins and blemishes. Believers should practice this opportunity at any moment of the day. Ali (ra) said, **“I feel surprise when those perish although they had such remedies of salvation as repentance (tawba) and seeking forgiveness (istighfar).”** The people who are defeated by satan’s cunning

and are not able to retrieve their errors, these people do not, in reality, have any other means of salvation than repentance and praying. It is only in this way, the way of sincere repentance, that an individual may achieve happiness both in the life of this world and the life to come.

Our Prophet (saas) said:

“Allah gives relief from every trouble to those who continue repenting and He provides for him from where he least expects.” (Abu Dawud)

“O people! Turn in repentance towards Allah and ask His forgiveness, for I turn in repentance to Him a hundred times a day.” (Sahih Muslim)

The Messenger of Allah (saas) continuously said: ***“O Allah, glory be to You, free from all imperfection, and praise be to You. Forgive me, You are the One Who accepts repentance and the Merciful.” (al-Hakim)***

“O Allah, glory be to You, free from all imperfection. I wronged myself, did evil. There exists no Might except You to forgive my sins. Allah forgives anyone who asks for forgiveness even if he has sins as many as raiding ants.” (al-Bayhaqi)

“O Allah, place me among those who, when they do good, are glad, and when they do evil ask for forgiveness.” (Ibn Majah)

The repentance recommended by the Prophet (saas):

“O Allah, You alone are my Lord. There is no deity save You. You have created me, and I am Your servant. I will abide by Your covenant and promise as best as I can. I seek refuge in You from the evil of what I have done. I acknowledge to You Your favor which You have bestowed

on me and I confess my sins and disobedience to You. So, forgive me, my Lord. Pardon my sins. For, none forgives sins but You.” (Sahih al-Bukhari)

The Great Danger of the Tongue: Worthless Talk

[Believers are] those who turn away from worthless talk. (Surat al-Mu’minun, 3)

Our Prophet (saas) used to choose the best of words for his *ummah*. He immediately warned those whose way of speaking he did not approve of and never allowed believers to verbally hurt each other.

The Messenger of Allah (saas) said that one’s silence is more useful than talking without any real purpose. In another hadith, he said, **“*The silent one is saved.*”** (al-Tirmidhi) There are many hadiths on this topic.

“Whoever is protected from the evils of his stomach, his lusts and his tongue is safeguarded from all evils.” (al-Daylami)

“The good news is upon that person who has kept the excess of his words and gave away the surplus of his possessions.” (al-Bazzar)

“Withdraw your tongue from what is not good; only that way you can overcome satan.” (at-Tabarani)

“Allah is near everyone’s tongue; He knows every word spoken. So, may one fear Allah in the words he utters.” (Hatib)

‘Uqba ibn ‘Amir said: “I asked: ‘Messenger of Allah, what ensures safety?’ He replied: ‘Holding your tongue, keeping to your house...’” (al-Tirmidhi)

Thinking before uttering a word is what is becoming to a Muslim. A word spoken without thinking may sometimes be interpreted in undesirable ways and it may hurt the people you value. If your speech contains an Islamic topic, then you need to be even more careful. Our Prophet (saas) said:

“A believer’s language is beyond his heart. Before he says something, he first contemplates and then talks. Contrary to this, a hypocrite’s heart is beyond his tongue. When he says something, he says without thinking.” (Haraiti)

One should not drag something out while speaking. The subject should be described briefly and concisely. Thereby, the listener’s time is not wasted and also the Sunnah is followed.

“Beware! Those who speak in a long-winded manner unnecessarily will be subject to destruction.” (Sahih Muslim)

“A time will come when human beings will babble the words as if cows chew grass.” (Ahmad)

Wicked, slang and obscene language must be avoided. Such speech may lead to the hardening of the hearts and the spread of speech to actual deeds. Indeed the Messenger of Allah (said) said:

“Beware not to speak any ugly and filthy words; indeed, Allah does not love ugly words and filthy language.” (al-Hakim)

“A believer does not make anybody feel ill at ease, execrate, say ugly words or disparage.” (al-Tirmidhi)

Believers should be careful in the accusations they make towards one another. If an accusation is incorrect, one may face it in the Hereafter as a violation of a fellow man’s rights.

“If somebody accuses another of fusuq (by calling him a

fasiq [a wicked person]) or accuses him of kufr (i.e., unbelief), such an accusation will revert to him (i.e. the accuser) if his companion (the accused) is innocent.” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 8, Book 73, Number 71)

“O people, think about me while thinking about my people, my brothers and those close to me and do not talk against them. O people, when someone dies, remember him not with his evil acts but his good acts.” (Musnad)

“Whoever shames his brother [in religion] for a sin [from which he repented] will not die until he does it too.” (al-Tirmidhi)

“A most serious form of betrayal of faith is that you tell a lie to a brother while he believes that you are truthful in what you say.” (Sahih al-Bukhari)

“Fie upon him who tells lies to make people laugh.” (Abu Dawud and al-Tirmidhi)

In our religion, lying is defined as something definitely forbidden. The Messenger of Allah (saas) told that there could be no distinctions as little or big lies, and that he condemned every kind of lying. His pray on this matter is as follows:

“O Allah, cleanse my heart of strife, my private parts of fornication and my tongue of lies.” (Hatib)

“If somebody tells a lie, due to its bad smell, the angels run several miles away from him.” (al-Tirmidhi)

In the Qur’an, backbiting (*ghibah*) is considered equal to eating one’s dead brother’s flesh. In some hadiths of the Prophet (saas) it is said that backbiting kills the brotherhood among believers and causes one to incur the payment for violating the rights of fellow men. Besides that, prying into a believer’s affairs whilst seeking to identify flaws is another great sin akin to backbiting itself. Indeed, the Prophet Muhammad (saas)

related a telling event that he has faced during ascension:

“When I was taken up to heaven I passed by people who had nails of copper and were scratching their faces and their breasts. I said: ‘Who are these people, Jibril?’ He replied: ‘They are those who were given to backbiting and who aspersed people’s honor.’” (Sunan Abu Dawud, Book 41, Number 4860)

“O community of people, who believed with their tongues, but into whose hearts faith has not yet reached! Do not backbite the Muslims, nor seek out their secrets! For, whoever seeks out the faults of his brother, Allah will seek out his secrets. And, if Allah seeks out the fault of anyone, He disgraces him even [if he hides] in his house.” (Sunan Abu Dawud, Book 41, Number 4862)

Allah’s Messenger (saas) said: “Do you know what is backbiting?” They (the Companions) said: “Allah and His Messenger know best.” Thereupon he said: “Backbiting implies your talking about your brother in a manner which he does not like.” It was said to him: “What is your opinion about this that if I actually find (that failing) in my brother which I made a mention of?” He said: “If (that failing) is actually found (in him) what you assert, you were back-biting him, and if that is not in him it is a slander.” (Sahih Muslim, Book 032, Number 6265)

“Whoever averts [an attack] from the honor of his brother, Allah will avert the fire from his face on the Day of Resurrection.” (al-Tirmidhi)

The Prophet’s (saas) Farewell Sermon (*Khutbat al-Wada`*)

The Prophet (saas) delivered the *Khutbat al-Wada`* to more

than a hundred thousand pilgrims (*hajjis*) during his first and last pilgrimage to Makkah. The fact that so many people listened to it helps to show that the ensuing hadiths, known as *mutawatir* (consecutive, denoting the number of trustworthy sources), are correct. Rationally speaking, such hadiths cannot be incorrect. No point that our beloved Prophet (saas) made in this sermon can be doubted. Its contents constitute a concise summary of Islam, for it communicates all things that need to be done in both worlds.

The Prophet (saas) intimated here that he would never make another hajj, meaning that his death was imminent. Later, when the true nature of his words was proven, this pilgrimage became known as the *Hajj al-Wada`* (the Farewell Pilgrimage) and this sermon as the *Khutbat al-Wada`* (the Farewell Sermon).

However much this sermon is seen as a single sermon, it was delivered in parts: on Mount Arafat, at Mina, a day later at Mina on the day preceding the *Eid al-Fitr*, and on the first and second days of *Eid*. As a result, it has been reported differently by those who heard it. Some people or groups did not hear each part. Thus, in order to gather the complete sermon together, the various hadiths were gradually collected and put into the form of a single *khutbah*. In *Surat at-Tawba*, which was revealed to the Prophet (saas) a year before this event, it is stated:

O you who believe, the idolaters are unclean, so after this year they should not come near the Masjid al-Haram. If you fear impoverishment, Allah will enrich you from His bounty, if He wills. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. (Surat at-Tawba, 28)

Since idolaters had been declared unclean and thus were

forbidden to approach the Masjid al-Haram, only Muslims were present and listened to the Farewell Sermon. This also ensured that idolaters could not make any additions to the relevant hadiths. In fact, following the conquest of Makkah so many polytheists converted to Islam that only a handful remained, and they left the city. The Prophet (saas) and approximately 100,000 Companions left Madinah to make hajj. The Prophet (saas) proceeded to teach Muslims the necessary principles and rituals by personally performing them, and thus completed all of the acts related to *hajj*. Verses indicating that Islam had now been fully established were therefore also revealed during the *Hajj al-Wada`*.

During the Age of Ignorance (*Ayyam al-Jahiliyyah*), pilgrims who had come from afar used to stand at Mount Arafat, while the Qurayshi leaders stood on the open area of Muzdalifah to indicate that they regarded themselves better than other people. The Prophet (saas) abolished this custom and stood on Mount Arafat for the *waqfah* (the ritual of standing before Allah at Mount Arafat), like all other pilgrims did. To indicate Islam's completion, this verse was revealed:

... Today those who disbelieve have despaired of overcoming your religion. So do not be afraid of them, but be afraid of Me. Today I have perfected your religion for you, completed My blessing upon you, and am pleased with Islam as a religion for you... (Surat al-Ma'ida, 3)

While all Muslims rejoiced at Islam's perfection, only Abu Bakr (ra) understood that this was a sign of our Prophet's (saas) imminent passing, and thus he cried. The Prophet (saas) only lived for eighty-two days after this event.

The Prophet's (saas) Sermon:

While sitting on the back of his camel Qaswa, he delivered this sermon on Mount Arafat:

After praising, and thanking Allah (swt), he said:

“O People,

Listen well to my words, for I do not know whether, after this year, I shall ever be amongst you again. Therefore listen to what I am saying to you very carefully and take these words to those who could not be present today.

O People,

Just as you regard this month, this day, this city as Sacred, so regard the life and property of every Muslim as a sacred trust. Return the goods entrusted to you to their rightful owners. Treat others justly so that no one would be unjust to you. Remember that you will indeed meet your Lord, and that He will indeed reckon your deeds. Allah has forbidden you to take usury (riba), therefore all riba obligation shall henceforth be waived. Your capital, however, is yours to keep. You will neither inflict nor suffer inequity. Allah has judged that there shall be no riba and that all the riba due to `Abbas ibn `Abd al Muttalib [the Prophet's uncle] shall henceforth be waived.

Every right arising out of homicide in pre-Islamic days is henceforth waived and the first such right that I waive is that arising from the murder of Rabi`ah ibn al Harith ibn `Abd al Muttalib.

O People,

The unbelievers indulge in tampering with the calendar in order to make permissible that which Allah forbade, and to forbid that which Allah has made permissible. With Allah the months are twelve in number. Four of them are

sacred, three of these are successive and one occurs singly between the months of Jumada and Sha`ban. Beware of satan, for the safety of your religion. He has lost all hope that he will ever be able to lead you astray in big things, so beware of following him in small things.

O People,

It is true that you have certain rights over your women, but they also have rights over you. Remember that you have taken them as your wives only under Allah's trust and with His permission. If they abide by your right then to them belongs the right to be fed and clothed in kindness. Treat your women well and be kind to them, for they are your partners and committed helpers. It is your right and they do not make friends with anyone of whom you do not approve, as well as never to be unchaste...

O People,

Listen to me in earnest, worship Allah, perform your five daily prayers, fast during the month of Ramadan, and give your financial obligation (zakah) of your wealth. Perform hajj if you can afford to.

All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over a black nor a black has any superiority over white except by piety and good action. Learn that every Muslim is a brother to every Muslim and that the Muslims constitute one brotherhood. Nothing shall be legitimate to a Muslim which belongs to a fellow Muslim unless it was given freely and willingly. Do not, therefore, do injustice to yourselves.

Remember, one day you will appear before Allah and you will answer for your deeds. So beware, take heed and do

not turn apostate after me, striking at the necks of one another.

O People,

No prophet or messenger will come after me and no new faith will be born. Reason well, therefore, O People, and understand words which I convey to you. I am leaving you with the Book of Allah and my Sunnah, if you follow them you will never go astray.

All those who listen to me shall pass on my words to others and those to others again; and may the last ones understand my words better than those who listen to me directly. Be my witness O Allah, that I have conveyed your message to your people.

Toward the end of his sermon, the Messenger of Allah (saas) asked his listeners:

“O people, have I faithfully delivered unto you my message?” A powerful murmur of assents **“O Allah! Yes!”** arose from thousands of pilgrims and the vibrant words **“Allahumma Na`m,”** rolled like thunder throughout the valley. The Prophet (saas) raised his forefinger and said: **“O Allah, bear witness that I have conveyed Your message to Your people.”**

The Messenger of Allah (saas) stood for *waqfah* until the sun set. Right when he was about to come down from the mount, the third *ayah* of Surat al-Ma`ida was revealed. Later, mounting his camel, set off for Muzdalifah. Here he joined the *maghrib* and *isha'* prayers with one *adhan* and two *iqamahs*. After praying, he rested. In the morning, he prayed *fajr* in congregation and, after the dawn had truly broken, went to the *jamrat al-`aqabah*. After stoning satan, he went to Mina and gave his sec-

ond sermon, which was similar to the previous one. Afterwards he went to the area set aside for sacrifice and sacrificed the sacrificial camels. After, his son-in-law Ali (ra) offered sacrifice. A piece of meat was taken from every camel that has been sacrificed, cooked and then eaten. The Messenger of Allah (saas), who shaved his head afterwards, took of the *ihram* and circumambulated the Ka`bah (performed *tawaf*). After praying *dhuhr*, he went to Zamzam and drank water that was offered to him. After that, he returned to Mina and spent three more days for the throwing of stones, where he also preached to the Muslims.

“When Allah’s help and victory have arrived and you have seen people entering Allah’s religion in droves, then glorify your Lord and ask His forgiveness. He is the Ever-Returning.” (Surat an-Nasr, 1-3)

He recited Surat an-Nasr, which was revealed at that time, and also advised them in his sermon. The Messenger of Allah (saas), who again mentioned the security of each person’s life, goods, and honor, reminded the Muslims again and again of these rights, which constitute the basis of all human rights.

The Importance of the Farewell Sermon

The Farewell Sermon is important for several reasons:

Before everything else, one has to recognize that the Prophet (saas) delivered this sermon in 10 AH, when he was enjoying the last months of his life. The third verse of Surat al-Ma`idah was also revealed during this *hajj*:

... Today I have perfected your religion for you and completed My blessing upon you and I am pleased with Islam as a religion for you... (Surat al-Ma`ida, 3)

Its contents are very important, for it touches upon impor-

tant issues and ends quite a few non-Islamic practices that had not been elaborated upon until then (e.g., blood feuds and usury), discloses the law governing marital relations, explains how to perform *hajj*, as well as many other issues. A number of writers nowadays see the *Khutbat al-Wada`* as the Islamic declaration of human rights and women's rights. It is true that the affirmation of the inviolability of people's property, life, and honor was proclaimed here for the first time in history. Although the declaration of human rights accepted by the United Nations contains many more fine distinctions, these have never been practiced in reality. In his Farewell Sermon, however, the Prophet (saas), who was sent to the worlds as a mercy, was able to graft his values to his people's consciences, souls, minds, and ideas. As a result, people have always lived in total freedom, secure in their lives, property, and honor in Islamic lands, even when Muslims were at their most powerful and splendid.

Even though human rights have developed slowly over time, they only achieved their full expression with Islam. The *Khutbat al-Wada`* carries a huge importance as the first declaration of human rights. As history shows, human rights only appeared in the West during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries of the Christian era.

The principles introduced to social life by the *Khutbat al-Wada`*

The Prophet (saas) primarily touched upon the following points in his sermon:

- In every undertaking, one should always praise and thank Allah (swt).
- One's lower self always commands evil. Thus, one has to

seek refuge in Allah (swt) from the evil of the self.

- Life, property, and honor are sacred. The right to life is a natural right. Honor, respect, dignity, and property are additional rights that are protected.

- Un-Islamic traditions have been abolished. Therefore, people should stop doing blindly what they have been accustomed to doing.

- Usury is prohibited.

- Pursuing a blood feud is prohibited.

- What is entrusted to others has to be returned to its proper owners. One should never betray this arrangement.

- One should not listen to satan in small or big, unimportant or important things.

- Men and women have mutual rights, duties, and responsibilities.

- Both men and women should avoid adultery.

- One should treat slaves and servants well.

- All Muslims are brothers and sisters. Every form of class difference or privilege has been abolished. One can only be superior to another through the practice of virtue.

- One needs to refrain from oppression, using the people's property in an unjustified manner, or using it without the owner's permission.

- Muslims should refrain from fighting each other.

- Those who obey the Qur'an and the Sunnah will never be corrupted.

- One should not stray from pure Islam or go to extremes.

- Muslims should worship Allah (swt), pray the five daily required prayers, observe the Ramadan fast, and follow the Messenger of Allah's (saas) recommendations. Those who conform to these regulations will insha'Allah go to Paradise.

THE UMMAH'S SOLE WAY TO SALVATION: *AL-FIRQAH AL-NAJIYYAH*

Our Prophet (saas) stated, ***“My ummah will divide into seventy-three sects. And all of them will belong to Hell except for one (which will belong to Paradise): the one that will follow the path on which I walk and my Companions walk”*** (al-Tirmidhi). This hadith carries a special importance today, as it guides the believers.

If we look at human history, we see that when the words of Allah's (swt) messengers were ignored, the result was always pain, privation, and failure. So long as Muslims do not fully adhere to the Qur'an and the Sunnah, which shows how to apply the Qur'an to one's life, the Islamic world will have failures and helplessness. In order not to be among those whose faces will turn black and bitter on the Day of Judgment, but among those whose faces will gaze full of light upon our Lord, Muslims have to follow the Qur'an and the path taken by the Messenger of Allah (saas).

Prophet Muhammad (saas) said that our time, called the “End Times,” will be a period when, at first, corruption will prevail. However, after that time will come the days of blessed

tidings. He described this period as one during which Islamic morality will be widespread and Islam's beauties will be dispersed throughout the world. The fact that the Islamic world is currently going through a difficult time is nothing but an indication that we are on the brink of those days of blessed tidings. The hadiths and accounts of the End Times, which is an important matter in the Ahl al-Sunnah's creed, and the events to take place at that time all point at today.

THE END TIMES AND GLAD TIDINGS FOR THE AHL AL-SUNNAH

Our Prophet (saas) told us that the time preceding the Day of Resurrection will be one of an ever-increasing number of wars, conflict, chaotic situations, injustice, oppressive measures, and discord; a time when the whole world will be swept into tremendous chaos. This hard period, in turn, will be the harbinger of the coming Golden Age when justice, peace, security, love, tolerance, and prosperity will be supreme.

He has also announced that this time will be one of glad tidings for the Ahl al-Sunnah. The End Times, when Islam will be restored after a period of its wrong practice, is clearly being lived right now in a plain and open manner. Every tidings made by the Prophet (saas) over 1,400 years ago has come true and continue to do so.

According to the Prophet (saas), the first stage will be when great strife will occur among humanity due to the evils of atheism and various philosophical systems that encourage the denial of faith. Humanity will be removed from the purpose of its creation and thus enter a period of spiritual emptiness and

moral degradation. Great disasters, wars, and pains will start happening, and everyone will look for an answer to the query of “How can we be saved?”

The signs of the End Times, which have been foretold in the hadiths, are all being realized rapidly in our own day. For example, the fact that wars, conflict, terror, violence, anarchy, and chaos are continuously on the increase is nothing but a manifestation that we are living through the first stage.

According to the hadiths, Allah (swt) will save humanity from this dark age and then usher in a great time of liberation. He will send a righteous servant of His, known as the Mahdi, who will guide humanity, now caught up in a state of degeneration and far removed from Allah’s (swt) beautiful morality, to the right path. The explanations of Islamic scholars indicate that he will shoulder three great responsibilities: ensure that all philosophical systems denying Allah’s (swt) existence and supporting atheism are intellectually defeated, turn Islam back to its essence as defined in the Qur’an and the Sunnah, and resolve the discord besetting humanity during this first stage of the end of times. In other words, he will be a means for ending all kinds of social difficulties and establishing peace, security, and a beautiful morality. Third, he will unify the fragmented Islamic world.

Another glad tidings of the End Times is the fact that Isa (as), a blessed prophet of Allah (swt), will return to Earth. His second coming is reported in verses from the Qur’an, the hadiths of the Prophet (saas), and in works by eminent Islamic scholars in such a way as to leave no room for doubt as to its veracity.

Isa (as) will call upon the Jews and Christians to abandon their superstitious beliefs and accept the life ordained by the

Qur'anic morality. When the Christians obey Isa (as), the Muslim and Christian worlds will unite in one single faith and, subsequently, a golden age of peace, security, happiness, and prosperity will envelop the world.

Many hadiths state that Isa (as), in conjunction with the Mahdi, will defeat the perfidious system of ideas propagated by the Dajjal (the anti-Christ) and will, with Allah's (swt) help, establish a happy era when the Qur'anic morality will be all-enveloping. This era will last longer than half a century and will be a time comparable to the Age of Happiness, when the Prophet (saas) was alive. The fact that the Prophet (saas) described this era in terms comparable to the delights of Paradise is the reason why it will be called the Golden Age. With Allah's (swt) permission, during this period humanity will live in complete security. Every kind of collapse, confusion, and affliction experienced in the first stage of the End Times will disappear, and consecutive disasters, wars, and catastrophes will end. Philosophical systems that deny Allah's (swt) existence and thereby cause degeneration, moral emptiness, and spiritual decay will be replaced by a happy time during which the Qur'anic morality will rule supreme. All believing people have hoped for this era for centuries. Our Lord will save humanity from the great chaos of the End Times and bestow prosperity, affluence, and justice upon all people.

Glad tidings of the Prophet (saas) regarding the End Times

The Prophet's (saas) hadiths speak of the blessings that will arise in these years. For example, this will be a time of great affluence, prosperity, and wealth. All that one needs to survive

will be available in such great numbers that it will be impossible to count them. Even the smallest problems will disappear, as well as any kind of want or poverty.

The abundance of products:

All of the planet's riches will appear, and the fields will yield a great surplus. Some of the hadiths that announce the abundance of blessings in this era are as follows:

“Allah will raise a man from my descendants. As a result of his untiring efforts, Allah’s Earth, just as it was replete with cruelty and oppression, will be full of justice. Those in the heavens will be happy with it and those on Earth too. In fact, it will grow whatever crop it should grow. Similarly, the heaven will not retain rain drops as treasures, but will shower them down. And the brave man will live among the men for seven years, or eight years, or nine years.”
(Mustadrak Hakim, Kanz al-`Ummal [Kitab al-Qiyamat])

“During this (period), my ummah will lead a kind of comfortable and carefree life that they have never known before. (The land) will bring forth its yield and will not hold anything back.” *(Ibn Majah)*

“The land will emit the treasures within.” *(Ibn Hajar al-Haythami, Al-Qawl al-Mukhtasar fi `Alamat al-Mahdi al-Muntazar, p. 45)*

“The land will turn like the silver tray growing vegetation...” *(Ibn Majah)*

“Someone sowing a measure of wheat will find 700 in return ... A person will scatter a few handfuls of seeds, but will reap 700 handfuls ... Despite an abundance of rain, not a drop will go to waste.” *(Ibn Hajar al-Haythami, Al-Qawl al-Mukhtasar, p. 24)*

The end of moral degeneration and the formation of an environment of peace and safety:

The prevailing moral decay and injustice will disappear. Such injustices as robbery, lying, cheating, not taking care of those who are in need, and having only a few people living in surplus will come to an end. Equality will prevail among every class of people, for the Qur'anic morality will hold sway. An environment of trust and security will be established, and so no one will be inclined to lie and engage in evil and prohibited actions. The hadiths describe these years in the following terms:

“The dwellers of heaven and Earth, even the birds in the sky, will be pleased with his Caliphate.” (Ibn Hajar al-Haythami, Al-Qawl al-Mukhtasar fi `Alamat al-Mahdi al-Muntazar, p. 29)

“In this time, one is not awoken from sleep and not a drop of blood is shed.” (Al-Muttaqi al-Hindi, Al-Burhan, p. 11)

“In this time, neither a man will be awoken from sleep, nor will a person’s nose bleed.” (Ibn Hajar al-Haythami, Al-Qawl al-Mukhtasar, p. 44)

“There would be a caliph in the last (period) of my Ummah who would freely give handfuls of wealth to the people without counting it.” (Sahih Muslim, Book 041, Number 6961)

“If only one day of this time (world) remained, Allah would raise up a man from my family who would fill this earth with justice as it has been filled with oppression.” (Sunan Abu Dawud, Book 36, Number 4270)

“... There will be no injustice or oppression under his [the Mahdi’s] rule.” (al-Dani)

“The earth fills with justice.” (Imam Rabbani, Maktubat al-Rabbani, Vol. 1, Hadith No. 251)

“During the time of Mahdi, justice will prevail to such an extent that every possession taken by force will be returned to his owner; some other person’s thing, even if it rests within one’s teeth, will be given back to its owner... Security will permeate all over Earth and even a few ladies will be able to fulfil their hajj without the company of men.” (Ibn Hajar al-Haythami, Al-Qawl al-Mukhtasar, p. 23)

The end of wars:

According to the hadiths, the most distinctive characteristics of this era will be the lack of anybody who needs any kind of product; the existence of complete security, safety, justice, peace, and bliss; and the use of every type of material and spiritual means to ensure people’s ease, comfort, joyfulness, and security. All of these will be given to everyone in copious amounts, without counting. In the Prophet’s (saas) hadiths, there is a mention that in this period “the weapons will rest.” In other words, humanity will be at peace with itself. The Golden Age will experience a great sense of brotherhood among those who had previously hated each other, and in place of conflict there will be peace, friendship, and love.

Prevalence of the Qur’anic morality:

All people will live in an environment of great well-being, security, and comfort due to the prevalence of the Qur’an’s beautiful morality. In fact, this age’s most important characteristic is that all people who are living at that time will live by the Qur’an and will apply its morality to their lives. They will refrain from egotism, hatred, anger, envy, and other negative characteristics, as well as from such evils as corruption, unjustified earnings, lying, wishing evil upon other people, and

accepting bribes. All of this will happen because all people will understand that Allah (swt) sees them and will ask them about what they did on the Day of Judgment. As a result, honesty, helpfulness, love, respect, mercy, self-sacrifice, being mindful of other people's well-being, health, ease, and security will rule supreme. The hadiths describe this moral beauty as follows:

“Just like Allah began Islam with us, it will reach its conclusion in him [the Mahdi]. Just like with us people were saved from idolatry and enmity and friendship and love replaced them in their hearts, [with his coming] it will be the same.” (Al-Muttaqi al-Hindi, Al-Burhan fi `Alamat al-Mahdi Akhir az-Zaman, p. 20)

“The good become even more good, and the wicked ones are treated well.” (Al-Muttaqi al-Hindi, Al-Burhan fi `Alamat al-Mahdi Akhir az-Zaman, p. 17)

Developments in technology and arts:

In conjunction with these developments, technology will reach its peak during this time. All people will benefit from the ensuing great developments in medicine, agriculture, industry, and communication. (See *The End of Times and the Mahdi* by Harun Yahya.)

The abundance, wealth, beauty, and progress that will have enveloped every field of life during the Golden Age will also affect the arts. Works more beautiful than what has gone before will spring up in music, painting, and all other branches. The wide perspective and deep thoughts that faith in Allah (swt) bequeaths to humanity means that Muslims will lead the world in all artistic fields. People will always encounter beauty, like their morals, in their places of residence, gardens, clothes, and workplaces, as well as in all forms of music and entertain-

ment, theaters and paintings, as well as conversations. All of these will become even more beautiful.

People will be so pleased with their lives that, according to one hadith, they will not realize how the time passes and will pray to Allah (swt) to prolong their lives in order to receive more benefits from these graces. Another hadith states that all people will want to live during the Mahdi's time:

“The younger ones wish they were grown-ups, while the adults wish they were younger...” (Al-Muttaqi al-Hindi, Al-Burhan fi `Alamat al-Mahdi Akhir az-Zaman, p. 17)

Nu`aym ibn Hammad heard from Tawuj:

“I wish I would not die until the Mahdi were to appear.” (Ibid., p. 17)

Nu`aym ibn Hammad heard from Ibn Abbas:

“The Mahdi is a young man from the Ahl al-Bayt. Our old members will not live to see him, while our young people hope for him.” (Ibid., p. 23)

As a matter of fact, the Prophet (saas) pointed to all of these blessings, saying that the blessed Mahdi, who will be a means for humanity's salvation in both worlds, should be adhered to even if one needs to crawl on the snow to reach him:

“A man from my family appears to fill Earth with justice, just as it has been filled with corruption. So whoever reaches that [time] ought to come to them, even if crawling on the ice/snow, since among them is the caliph of Allah al-Mahdi.” (Ibn Majah)

All of the beauties that Allah (swt) mentions in the Qur'an will be experienced during this era. Allah (swt) has told Muslims that He will let them live a beautiful life in this world:

What is with you runs out, but what is with Allah goes

on forever. Those who were steadfast will be recompensed according to the best of what they did. Anyone who acts rightly, whether a male or a female, being a believer, We will give them a good life and recompense them according to the best of what they did. (Surat an-Nahl, 96-97)

In the Qur'an attention has been drawn to the fact that those surrounding people who live according to Allah's (swt) commands will turn into a kind of "home of peace" and that people with such an understanding of morality will encounter even more beauty and be rewarded with an endless life in the next world:

Allah calls to the Abode of Peace and guides whom He wills to a straight path. Those who do good will have the best and more! Neither dust nor debasement will darken their faces. They are the Companions of the Garden, remaining in it timelessly, forever. (Surah Yunus, 25-26)

APPENDIX: THE DECEPTION OF EVOLUTION

Darwinism, in other words the theory of evolution, was put forward with the aim of denying the fact of creation, but is in truth nothing but failed, unscientific nonsense. This theory, which claims that life emerged by chance from inanimate matter, was invalidated by the scientific evidence of miraculous order in the universe and in living things. In this way, science confirmed the fact that Allah created the universe and the living things in it. The propaganda carried out today in order to keep the theory of evolution alive is based solely on the distortion of the scientific facts, biased interpretation, and lies and falsehoods disguised as science.

Yet this propaganda cannot conceal the truth. The fact that the theory of evolution is the greatest deception in the history of science has been expressed more and more in the scientific world over the last 20-30 years. Research carried out after the 1980s in particular has revealed that the claims of Darwinism are totally unfounded, something that has been stated by a large number of scientists. In the United States in particular, many scientists from such different fields as biology, biochemistry and paleontology recognize the invalidity of Darwinism and employ the fact of creation to account for the origin of life.

We have examined the collapse of the theory of evolution and the proofs of creation in great scientific detail in many of our works, and are still continuing to do so. Given the enormous importance of this subject, it will be of great benefit to summarize it here.

The Scientific Collapse of Darwinism

Although this doctrine goes back as far as ancient Greece, the theory of evolution was advanced extensively in the nineteenth century. The most important development that made it the top topic of the world of science was Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, published in 1859. In this book, he denied that Allah created different living species on Earth separately, for he claimed that all living beings had a common ancestor and had diversified over time through small changes. Darwin's theory was not based on any concrete scientific finding; as he also accepted, it was just an "assumption." Moreover, as Darwin confessed in the long chapter of his book titled "Difficulties on Theory," the theory failed in the face of many critical questions.

Darwin invested all of his hopes in new scientific discoveries, which he expected to solve these difficulties. However, contrary to his expectations, scientific findings expanded the dimensions of these difficulties. The defeat of Darwinism in the face of science can be reviewed under three basic topics:

- 1) The theory cannot explain how life originated on Earth.
- 2) No scientific finding shows that the "evolutionary mechanisms" proposed by the theory have any evolutionary power at all.
- 3) The fossil record proves the exact opposite of what the theory suggests.

In this section, we will examine these three basic points in general outlines:

The First Insurmountable Step: The Origin of Life

The theory of evolution posits that all living species evolved from a single living cell that emerged on the primitive Earth 3.8 billion years ago. How a single cell could generate millions of complex living species and, if such an evolution really occurred, why traces of it cannot be observed in the fossil record are some of the questions that the theory cannot answer. However, first and foremost, we need to ask: How did this "first cell" originate?

Since the theory of evolution denies creation and any kind of supernatural intervention, it maintains that the "first cell" originated coincidentally within the laws of nature, without any design, plan or arrangement. According to the theory, inanimate matter must have produced a living cell as a result of coincidences. Such a claim, however, is inconsistent with the most unassailable rules of biology.

"Life Comes From Life"

In his book, Darwin never referred to the origin of life. The primitive understanding of science in his time rested on the assumption that living beings had a very simple structure. Since medieval times, spontaneous generation, which asserts that non-living materials came together to form living organisms, had been widely accepted. It was commonly believed that insects came into being from food leftovers, and mice from wheat. Interesting experiments were conducted to prove this theory. Some wheat was placed on a dirty piece of cloth, and it

was believed that mice would originate from it after a while.

Similarly, maggots developing in rotting meat was assumed to be evidence of spontaneous generation. However, it was later understood that worms did not appear on meat spontaneously, but were carried there by flies in the form of larvae, invisible to the naked eye.

Even when Darwin wrote *The Origin of Species*, the belief that bacteria could come into existence from non-living matter was widely accepted in the world of science.

However, five years after the publication of Darwin's book, Louis Pasteur announced his results after long studies and experiments, that disproved spontaneous generation, a cornerstone of Darwin's theory. In his triumphal lecture at the Sorbonne in 1864, Pasteur said: ***"Never will the doctrine of spontaneous generation recover from the mortal blow struck by this simple experiment."***

For a long time, advocates of the theory of evolution resisted these findings. However, as the development of science unraveled the complex structure of the cell of a living being, the idea that life could come into being coincidentally faced an even greater impasse.

Inconclusive Efforts of the Twentieth Century

The first evolutionist who took up the subject of the origin of life in the twentieth century was the renowned Russian biologist Alexander Oparin. With various theses he advanced in the 1930s, he tried to prove that a living cell could originate by coincidence. These studies, however, were doomed to failure, and Oparin had to make the following confession:

Unfortunately, however, the problem of the origin of the

cell is perhaps the most obscure point in the whole study of the evolution of organisms.²

Evolutionist followers of Oparin tried to carry out experiments to solve this problem. The best known experiment was carried out by the American chemist Stanley Miller in 1953. Combining the gases he alleged to have existed in the primordial Earth's atmosphere in an experiment set-up, and adding energy to the mixture, Miller synthesized several organic molecules (amino acids) present in the structure of proteins.

Barely a few years had passed before it was revealed that this experiment, which was then presented as an important step in the name of evolution, was invalid, for the atmosphere used in the experiment was very different from the real Earth conditions.³

After a long silence, Miller confessed that the atmosphere medium he used was unrealistic.⁴

All the evolutionists' efforts throughout the twentieth century to explain the origin of life ended in failure. The geochemist Jeffrey Bada, from the San Diego Scripps Institute accepts this fact in an article published in Earth magazine in 1998:

Today as we leave the twentieth century, we still face the biggest unsolved problem that we had when we entered the twentieth century: How did life originate on Earth?⁵

The Complex Structure of Life

The primary reason why the theory of evolution ended up in such a great impasse regarding the origin of life is that even those living organisms deemed to be the simplest have incredibly complex structures. The cell of a living thing is more complex than all of our man-made technological products. Today, even in the most developed laboratories of the world, a living

cell cannot be produced by bringing organic chemicals together.

The conditions required for the formation of a cell are too great in quantity to be explained away by coincidences. The probability of proteins, the building blocks of a cell, being synthesized coincidentally, is 1 in 10950 for an average protein made up of 500 amino acids. In mathematics, a probability smaller than 1 over 1050 is considered to be impossible in practical terms.

The DNA molecule, which is located in the nucleus of a cell and which stores genetic information, is an incredible databank. If the information coded in DNA were written down, it would make a giant library consisting of an estimated 900 volumes of encyclopedias consisting of 500 pages each.

A very interesting dilemma emerges at this point: DNA can replicate itself only with the help of some specialized proteins (enzymes). However, the synthesis of these enzymes can be realized only by the information coded in DNA. As they both depend on each other, they have to exist at the same time for replication. This brings the scenario that life originated by itself to a deadlock. Prof. Leslie Orgel, an evolutionist of repute from the University of San Diego, California, confesses this fact in the September 1994 issue of the *Scientific American* magazine:

It is extremely improbable that proteins and nucleic acids, both of which are structurally complex, arose spontaneously in the same place at the same time. Yet it also seems impossible to have one without the other. And so, at first glance, one might have to conclude that life could never, in fact, have originated by chemical means.⁶

No doubt, if it is impossible for life to have originated from natural causes, then it has to be accepted that life was "created" in a supernatural way. This fact explicitly invalidates the theory

of evolution, whose main purpose is to deny creation.

Imaginary Mechanism of Evolution

The second important point that negates Darwin's theory is that both concepts put forward by the theory as "evolutionary mechanisms" were understood to have, in reality, no evolutionary power.

Darwin based his evolution allegation entirely on the mechanism of "natural selection." The importance he placed on this mechanism was evident in the name of his book: *The Origin of Species, By Means of Natural Selection...*

Natural selection holds that those living things that are stronger and more suited to the natural conditions of their habitats will survive in the struggle for life. For example, in a deer herd under the threat of attack by wild animals, those that can run faster will survive. Therefore, the deer herd will be comprised of faster and stronger individuals. However, unquestionably, this mechanism will not cause deer to evolve and transform themselves into another living species, for instance, horses.

Therefore, the mechanism of natural selection has no evolutionary power. Darwin was also aware of this fact and had to state this in his book *The Origin of Species*:

Natural selection can do nothing until favourable individual differences or variations occur.⁷

Lamarck's Impact

So, how could these "favorable variations" occur? Darwin tried to answer this question from the standpoint of the primitive understanding of science at that time. According to the French biologist Chevalier de Lamarck (1744-1829), who lived before Darwin, living creatures passed on the traits they

acquired during their lifetime to the next generation. He asserted that these traits, which accumulated from one generation to another, caused new species to be formed. For instance, he claimed that giraffes evolved from antelopes; as they struggled to eat the leaves of high trees, their necks were extended from generation to generation.

Darwin also gave similar examples. In his book *The Origin of Species*, for instance, he said that some bears going into water to find food transformed themselves into whales over time.⁸

However, the laws of inheritance discovered by Gregor Mendel (1822-84) and verified by the science of genetics, which flourished in the twentieth century, utterly demolished the legend that acquired traits were passed on to subsequent generations. Thus, natural selection fell out of favor as an evolutionary mechanism.

Neo-Darwinism and Mutations

In order to find a solution, Darwinists advanced the "Modern Synthetic Theory," or as it is more commonly known, Neo-Darwinism, at the end of the 1930s. Neo-Darwinism added mutations, which are distortions formed in the genes of living beings due to such external factors as radiation or replication errors, as the "cause of favorable variations" in addition to natural mutation.

Today, the model that stands for evolution in the world is Neo-Darwinism. The theory maintains that millions of living beings formed as a result of a process whereby numerous complex organs of these organisms (e.g., ears, eyes, lungs, and wings) underwent "mutations," that is, genetic disorders. Yet, there is an outright scientific fact that totally undermines this theory: Mutations do not cause living beings to develop; on the

contrary, they are always harmful.

The reason for this is very simple: DNA has a very complex structure, and random effects can only harm it. The American geneticist B. G. Ranganathan explains this as follows:

First, genuine mutations are very rare in nature. Secondly, most mutations are harmful since they are random, rather than orderly changes in the structure of genes; any random change in a highly ordered system will be for the worse, not for the better. For example, if an earthquake were to shake a highly ordered structure such as a building, there would be a random change in the framework of the building which, in all probability, would not be an improvement.⁹

Not surprisingly, no mutation example, which is useful, that is, which is observed to develop the genetic code, has been observed so far. All mutations have proved to be harmful. It was understood that mutation, which is presented as an "evolutionary mechanism," is actually a genetic occurrence that harms living things, and leaves them disabled. (The most common effect of mutation on human beings is cancer.) Of course, a destructive mechanism cannot be an "evolutionary mechanism." Natural selection, on the other hand, "can do nothing by itself," as Darwin also accepted. This fact shows us that there is no "evolutionary mechanism" in nature. Since no evolutionary mechanism exists, no such any imaginary process called "evolution" could have taken place.

The Fossil Record: No Sign of Intermediate Forms

The clearest evidence that the scenario suggested by the theory of evolution did not take place is the fossil record.

According to this theory, every living species has sprung from a predecessor. A previously existing species turned into something else over time and all species have come into being in this way. In other words, this transformation proceeds gradually over millions of years.

Had this been the case, numerous intermediary species should have existed and lived within this long transformation period.

For instance, some half-fish/half-reptiles should have lived in the past which had acquired some reptilian traits in addition to the fish traits they already had. Or there should have existed some reptile-birds, which acquired some bird traits in addition to the reptilian traits they already had. Since these would be in a transitional phase, they should be disabled, defective, crippled living beings. Evolutionists refer to these imaginary creatures, which they believe to have lived in the past, as "transitional forms."

If such animals ever really existed, there should be millions and even billions of them in number and variety. More importantly, the remains of these strange creatures should be present in the fossil record. In *The Origin of Species*, Darwin explained:

If my theory be true, numberless intermediate varieties, linking most closely all of the species of the same group together must assuredly have existed... Consequently, evidence of their former existence could be found only amongst fossil remains.¹⁰

Darwin's Hopes Shattered

However, although evolutionists have been making strenuous efforts to find fossils since the middle of the nineteenth century all over the world, no transitional forms have yet been uncovered. All of the fossils, contrary to the evolutionists'

expectations, show that life appeared on Earth all of a sudden and fully-formed.

One famous British paleontologist, Derek V. Ager, admits this fact, even though he is an evolutionist:

The point emerges that if we examine the fossil record in detail, whether at the level of orders or of species, we find—over and over again—not gradual evolution, but the sudden explosion of one group at the expense of another.¹¹

This means that in the fossil record, all living species suddenly emerge as fully formed, without any intermediate forms in between. This is just the opposite of Darwin's assumptions. Also, this is very strong evidence that all living things are created. The only explanation of a living species emerging suddenly and complete in every detail without any evolutionary ancestor is that it was created. This fact is admitted also by the widely known evolutionist biologist Douglas Futuyma:

Creation and evolution, between them, exhaust the possible explanations for the origin of living things. Organisms either appeared on the earth fully developed or they did not. If they did not, they must have developed from pre-existing species by some process of modification. If they did appear in a fully developed state, they must indeed have been created by some omnipotent intelligence.¹²

Fossils show that living beings emerged fully developed and in a perfect state on the Earth. That means that "the origin of species," contrary to Darwin's supposition, is not evolution, but creation.

The Tale of Human Evolution

The subject most often brought up by advocates of the the-

ory of evolution is the subject of the origin of man. The Darwinist claim holds that modern man evolved from ape-like creatures. During this alleged evolutionary process, which is supposed to have started 4-5 million years ago, some "transitional forms" between modern man and his ancestors are supposed to have existed. According to this completely imaginary scenario, four basic "categories" are listed:

1. *Australopithecus*
2. *Homo habilis*
3. *Homo erectus*
4. *Homo sapiens*

Evolutionists call man's so-called first ape-like ancestors *Australopithecus*, which means "South African ape." These living beings are actually nothing but an old ape species that has become extinct. Extensive research done on various *Australopithecus* specimens by two world famous anatomists from England and the USA, namely, Lord Solly Zuckerman and Prof. Charles Oxnard, shows that these apes belonged to an ordinary ape species that became extinct and bore no resemblance to humans.¹³

Evolutionists classify the next stage of human evolution as "homo," that is "man." According to their claim, the living beings in the *Homo* series are more developed than *Australopithecus*. Evolutionists devise a fanciful evolution scheme by arranging different fossils of these creatures in a particular order. This scheme is imaginary because it has never been proved that there is an evolutionary relation between these different classes. Ernst Mayr, one of the twentieth century's most important evolutionists, contends in his book *One Long Argument* that "particularly historical [puzzles] such as the

origin of life or of *Homo sapiens*, are extremely difficult and may even resist a final, satisfying explanation."¹⁴

By outlining the link chain as *Australopithecus* > *Homo habilis* > *Homo erectus* > *Homo sapiens*, evolutionists imply that each of these species is one another's ancestor. However, recent findings of paleoanthropologists have revealed that *Australopithecus*, *Homo habilis*, and *Homo erectus* lived at different parts of the world at the same time.¹⁵

Moreover, a certain segment of humans classified as *Homo erectus* have lived up until very modern times. *Homo sapiens neanderthalensis* and *Homo sapiens sapiens* (modern man) co-existed in the same region.¹⁶

This situation apparently indicates the invalidity of the claim that they are ancestors of one another. Stephen Jay Gould explained this deadlock of the theory of evolution, although he was himself one of the leading advocates of evolution in the twentieth century:

What has become of our ladder if there are three coexisting lineages of hominids (A. africanus, the robust australopithecines, and H. habilis), none clearly derived from another? Moreover, none of the three display any evolutionary trends during their tenure on earth.¹⁷

Put briefly, the scenario of human evolution, which is "upheld" with the help of various drawings of some "half ape, half human" creatures appearing in the media and course books, that is, frankly, by means of propaganda, is nothing but a tale with no scientific foundation.

Lord Solly Zuckerman, one of the most famous and respected scientists in the U.K., who carried out research on this subject for years and studied *Australopithecus* fossils for 15 years, finally concluded, despite being an evolutionist himself, that

there is, in fact, no such family tree branching out from ape-like creatures to man.

Zuckerman also made an interesting "spectrum of science" ranging from those he considered scientific to those he considered unscientific. According to Zuckerman's spectrum, the most "scientific"—that is, depending on concrete data—fields of science are chemistry and physics. After them come the biological sciences and then the social sciences. At the far end of the spectrum, which is the part considered to be most "unscientific," are "extra-sensory perception"—concepts such as telepathy and sixth sense—and finally "human evolution." Zuckerman explains his reasoning:

We then move right off the register of objective truth into those fields of presumed biological science, like extrasensory perception or the interpretation of man's fossil history, where to the faithful [evolutionist] anything is possible—and where the ardent believer [in evolution] is sometimes able to believe several contradictory things at the same time.¹⁸

The tale of human evolution boils down to nothing but the prejudiced interpretations of some fossils unearthed by certain people, who blindly adhere to their theory.

Darwinian Formula!

Besides all the technical evidence we have dealt with so far, let us now for once, examine what kind of a superstition the evolutionists have with an example so simple as to be understood even by children:

The theory of evolution asserts that life is formed by chance. According to this claim, lifeless and unconscious atoms came together to form the cell and then they somehow formed other

living things, including man. Let us think about that. When we bring together the elements that are the building-blocks of life such as carbon, phosphorus, nitrogen and potassium, only a heap is formed. No matter what treatments it undergoes, this atomic heap cannot form even a single living being. If you like, let us formulate an "experiment" on this subject and let us examine on the behalf of evolutionists what they really claim without pronouncing loudly under the name "Darwinian formula":

Let evolutionists put plenty of materials present in the composition of living things such as phosphorus, nitrogen, carbon, oxygen, iron, and magnesium into big barrels. Moreover, let them add in these barrels any material that does not exist under normal conditions, but they think as necessary. Let them add in this mixture as many amino acids and as many proteins—a single one of which has a formation probability of 10^{-950} —as they like. Let them expose these mixtures to as much heat and moisture as they like. Let them stir these with whatever technologically developed device they like. Let them put the foremost scientists beside these barrels. Let these experts wait in turn beside these barrels for billions, and even trillions of years. Let them be free to use all kinds of conditions they believe to be necessary for a human's formation. No matter what they do, they cannot produce from these barrels a human, say a professor that examines his cell structure under the electron microscope. They cannot produce giraffes, lions, bees, canaries, horses, dolphins, roses, orchids, lilies, carnations, bananas, oranges, apples, dates, tomatoes, melons, watermelons, figs, olives, grapes, peaches, peafowls, pheasants, multicoloured butterflies, or millions of other living beings such as these. Indeed, they could not obtain even a single cell of any one of them.

Briefly, unconscious atoms cannot form the cell by coming

together. They cannot take a new decision and divide this cell into two, then take other decisions and create the professors who first invent the electron microscope and then examine their own cell structure under that microscope. Matter is an unconscious, lifeless heap, and it comes to life with Allah's superior creation.

The theory of evolution, which claims the opposite, is a total fallacy completely contrary to reason. Thinking even a little bit on the claims of tevolutionists discloses this reality, just as in the above example.

Technology in the Eye and the Ear

Another subject that remains unanswered by evolutionary theory is the excellent quality of perception in the eye and the ear.

Before passing on to the subject of the eye, let us briefly answer the question of how we see. Light rays coming from an object fall oppositely on the eye's retina. Here, these light rays are transmitted into electric signals by cells and reach a tiny spot at the back of the brain, the "center of vision." These electric signals are perceived in this center as an image after a series of processes. With this technical background, let us do some thinking.

The brain is insulated from light. That means that its inside is completely dark, and that no light reaches the place where it is located. Thus, the "center of vision" is never touched by light and may even be the darkest place you have ever known. However, you observe a luminous, bright world in this pitch darkness.

The image formed in the eye is so sharp and distinct that even the technology of the twentieth century has not been able to attain it. For instance, look at the book you are reading, your hands with which you are holding it, and then lift your head and look around you. Have you ever seen such a sharp and distinct image as this one at any other place? Even the most developed

television screen produced by the greatest television producer in the world cannot provide such a sharp image for you. This is a three-dimensional, colored, and extremely sharp image. For more than 100 years, thousands of engineers have been trying to achieve this sharpness. Factories, huge premises were established, much research has been done, plans and designs have been made for this purpose. Again, look at a TV screen and the book you hold in your hands. You will see that there is a big difference in sharpness and distinction. Moreover, the TV screen shows you a two-dimensional image, whereas with your eyes, you watch a three-dimensional perspective with depth.

For many years, tens of thousands of engineers have tried to make a three-dimensional TV and achieve the vision quality of the eye. Yes, they have made a three-dimensional television system, but it is not possible to watch it without putting on special 3-D glasses; moreover, it is only an artificial three-dimension. The background is more blurred, the foreground appears like a paper setting. Never has it been possible to produce a sharp and distinct vision like that of the eye. In both the camera and the television, there is a loss of image quality.

Evolutionists claim that the mechanism producing this sharp and distinct image has been formed by chance. Now, if somebody told you that the television in your room was formed as a result of chance, that all of its atoms just happened to come together and make up this device that produces an image, what would you think? How can atoms do what thousands of people cannot?

If a device producing a more primitive image than the eye could not have been formed by chance, then it is very evident that the eye and the image seen by the eye could not have been formed by chance. The same situation applies to the ear. The outer ear picks up the available sounds by the auricle and

directs them to the middle ear, the middle ear transmits the sound vibrations by intensifying them, and the inner ear sends these vibrations to the brain by translating them into electric signals. Just as with the eye, the act of hearing finalizes in the center of hearing in the brain.

The situation in the eye is also true for the ear. That is, the brain is insulated from sound just as it is from light. It does not let any sound in. Therefore, no matter how noisy is the outside, the inside of the brain is completely silent. Nevertheless, the sharpest sounds are perceived in the brain. In your completely silent brain, you listen to symphonies, and hear all of the noises in a crowded place. However, were the sound level in your brain measured by a precise device at that moment, complete silence would be found to be prevailing there.

As is the case with imagery, decades of effort have been spent in trying to generate and reproduce sound that is faithful to the original. The results of these efforts are sound recorders, high-fidelity systems, and systems for sensing sound. Despite all of this technology and the thousands of engineers and experts who have been working on this endeavor, no sound has yet been obtained that has the same sharpness and clarity as the sound perceived by the ear. Think of the highest-quality hi-fi systems produced by the largest company in the music industry. Even in these devices, when sound is recorded some of it is lost; or when you turn on a hi-fi you always hear a hissing sound before the music starts. However, the sounds that are the products of the human body's technology are extremely sharp and clear. A human ear never perceives a sound accompanied by a hissing sound or with atmospherics as does a hi-fi; rather, it perceives sound exactly as it is, sharp and clear. This is the way it

has been since the creation of man.

So far, no man-made visual or recording apparatus has been as sensitive and successful in perceiving sensory data as are the eye and the ear. However, as far as seeing and hearing are concerned, a far greater truth lies beyond all this.

To Whom Does the Consciousness That Sees and Hears Within the Brain Belong?

Who watches an alluring world in the brain, listens to symphonies and the twittering of birds, and smells the rose?

The stimulations coming from a person's eyes, ears, and nose travel to the brain as electro-chemical nerve impulses. In biology, physiology, and biochemistry books, you can find many details about how this image forms in the brain. However, you will never come across the most important fact: Who perceives these electro-chemical nerve impulses as images, sounds, odors, and sensory events in the brain? There is a consciousness in the brain that perceives all this without feeling any need for an eye, an ear, and a nose. To whom does this consciousness belong? Of course it does not belong to the nerves, the fat layer, and neurons comprising the brain. This is why Darwinist-materialists, who believe that everything is comprised of matter, cannot answer these questions.

For this consciousness is the spirit created by Allah, which needs neither the eye to watch the images nor the ear to hear the sounds. Furthermore, it does not need the brain to think.

Everyone who reads this explicit and scientific fact should ponder on Almighty Allah, and fear and seek refuge in Him, for He squeezes the entire universe in a pitch-dark place of a few cubic centimeters in a three-dimensional, colored, shadowy, and luminous form.

A Materialist Faith

The information we have presented so far shows us that the theory of evolution is incompatible with scientific findings. The theory's claim regarding the origin of life is inconsistent with science, the evolutionary mechanisms it proposes have no evolutionary power, and fossils demonstrate that the required intermediate forms have never existed. So, it certainly follows that the theory of evolution should be pushed aside as an unscientific idea. This is how many ideas, such as the Earth-centered universe model, have been taken out of the agenda of science throughout history.

However, the theory of evolution is kept on the agenda of science. Some people even try to represent criticisms directed against it as an "attack on science." Why?

The reason is that this theory is an indispensable dogmatic belief for some circles. These circles are blindly devoted to materialist philosophy and adopt Darwinism because it is the only materialist explanation that can be put forward to explain the workings of nature.

Interestingly enough, they also confess this fact from time to time. A well-known geneticist and an outspoken evolutionist, Richard C. Lewontin from Harvard University, confesses that he is "first and foremost a materialist and then a scientist":

It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our a priori adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counter-intuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is absolute, so we cannot allow

a Divine [intervention]...¹⁹

These are explicit statements that Darwinism is a dogma kept alive just for the sake of adherence to materialism. This dogma maintains that there is no being save matter. Therefore, it argues that inanimate, unconscious matter created life. It insists that millions of different living species (e.g., birds, fish, giraffes, tigers, insects, trees, flowers, whales, and human beings) originated as a result of the interactions between matter such as pouring rain, lightning flashes, and so on, out of inanimate matter. This is a precept contrary both to reason and science. Yet Darwinists continue to defend it just so as "not to allow a Divine intervention."

Anyone who does not look at the origin of living beings with a materialist prejudice will see this evident truth: All living beings are works of a Creator, Who is All-Powerful, All-Wise, and All-Knowing. This Creator is Allah, Who created the whole universe from non-existence, designed it in the most perfect form, and fashioned all living beings.

**The Theory of Evolution:
The Most Potent Spell in the World**

Anyone free of prejudice and the influence of any particular ideology, who uses only his or her reason and logic, will clearly understand that belief in the theory of evolution, which brings to mind the superstitions of societies with no knowledge of science or civilization, is quite impossible.

As explained above, those who believe in the theory of evolution think that a few atoms and molecules thrown into a huge vat could produce thinking, reasoning professors and university students; such scientists as Einstein and Galileo; such artists as Humphrey Bogart, Frank Sinatra and Luciano

Pavarotti; as well as antelopes, lemon trees, and carnations. Moreover, as the scientists and professors who believe in this nonsense are educated people, it is quite justifiable to speak of this theory as "the most potent spell in history." Never before has any other belief or idea so taken away peoples' powers of reason, refused to allow them to think intelligently and logically, and hidden the truth from them as if they had been blindfolded. This is an even worse and unbelievable blindness than the totem worship in some parts of Africa, the people of Saba worshipping the Sun, the tribe of Prophet Ibrahim (as) worshipping idols they had made with their own hands, or the people of Prophet Musa (as) worshipping the Golden Calf.

In fact, Allah has pointed to this lack of reason in the Qur'an. In many verses, He reveals that some peoples' minds will be closed and that they will be powerless to see the truth. Some of these verses are as follows:

As for those who do not believe, it makes no difference to them whether you warn them or do not warn them, they will not believe. Allah has sealed up their hearts and hearing and over their eyes is a blindfold. They will have a terrible punishment. (Surat al-Baqara, 6-7)

... They have hearts with which they do not understand. They have eyes with which they do not see. They have ears with which they do not hear. Such people are like cattle. No, they are even further astray! They are the unaware. (Surat al-A`raf: 179)

Even if We opened up to them a door into heaven, and they spent the day ascending through it, they would only say: "Our eyesight is befuddled! Or rather we have been put under a spell!" (Surat al-Hijr, 14-15)

Words cannot express just how astonishing it is that this spell should hold such a wide community in thrall, keep people from the truth, and not be broken for 150 years. It is understandable that one or a few people might believe in impossible scenarios and claims full of stupidity and illogicality. However, "magic" is the only possible explanation for people from all over the world believing that unconscious and lifeless atoms suddenly decided to come together and form a universe that functions with a flawless system of organization, discipline, reason, and consciousness; a planet named Earth with all of its features so perfectly suited to life; and living things full of countless complex systems.

In fact, the Qur'an relates the incident of Prophet Musa (as) and Pharaoh to show that some people who support atheistic philosophies actually influence others by magic. When Pharaoh was told about the true religion, he told Prophet Musa (as) to meet with his own magicians. When Musa (as) did so, he told them to demonstrate their abilities first. The verses continue:

He said: "You throw." And when they threw, they cast a spell on the people's eyes and caused them to feel great fear of them. They produced an extremely powerful magic. (Surat al-A`raf, 116)

As we have seen, Pharaoh's magicians were able to deceive everyone, apart from Musa (as) and those who believed in him. However, his evidence broke the spell, or "swallowed up what they had forged," as the verse puts it:

We revealed to Musa, "Throw down your staff." And it immediately swallowed up what they had forged. So the Truth took place and what they did was shown to be false. (Surat al-A`raf, 117-118)

As we can see, when people realized that a spell had been cast upon them and that what they saw was just an illusion, Pharaoh's magicians lost all credibility. In the present day too, unless those who, under the influence of a similar spell, believe in these ridiculous claims under their scientific disguise and spend their lives defending them, abandon their superstitious beliefs, they also will be humiliated when the full truth emerges and the spell is broken. In fact, world-renowned British writer and philosopher Malcolm Muggeridge, who was an atheist defending evolution for some 60 years, but who subsequently realized the truth, reveals the position in which the theory of evolution would find itself in the near future in these terms:

I myself am convinced that the theory of evolution, especially the extent to which it's been applied, will be one of the great jokes in the history books in the future. Posterity will marvel that so very flimsy and dubious an hypothesis could be accepted with the incredible credulity that it has.²⁰

That future is not far off: On the contrary, people will soon see that "chance" is not a deity, and will look back on the theory of evolution as the worst deceit and the most terrible spell in the world. That spell is already rapidly beginning to be lifted from the shoulders of people all over the world. Many people who see its true face are wondering with amazement how they could ever have been taken in by it.

***They said, "Glory be to You!
We have no knowledge except
what You have taught us. You are
the All-Knowing, the All-Wise."
(Surat al-Baqara, 32)***

Notes

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