

**A TRANSLATION,
WITH CRITICAL INTRODUCTION,
OF *SHAYKH AL-'ALAWI'S*
AL-RISĀLAH AL-QAWL AL-MA'RŪF FĪ AL-RADD `ALĀ
MAN ANKARA AL-TASAWWUF
(*A KIND WORD IN RESPONSE TO THOSE WHO*
REJECT SUFISM)**



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the Department of Foreign Languages, University of the Western Cape

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14th of November 2005

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KEYWORDS

A TRANSLATION OF *SHAYKH AL-'ALAWI'S AL-RISĀLAH AL-QAWL AL-MA'RŪF FĪ AL-RADD 'ALĀ MAN ANKARA AL-TASAWWUF*

M. M. HENDRICKS

'ārif

bid'ah

dhikr

ḥadrah

ḥaqīqah

'ibādah

ijtihād

Islām

imān

iḥsān

ma'rifah

Murshid

Muqaddam

nafs

Shaykh al-'Alawī

Sufism

Sufi practices

Sufi thought

revealed Law

ṭarīqah al-'Alawiyah

Zāwiyah



ABSTRACT

A TRANSLATION, WITH CRITICAL INTRODUCTION, OF *SHAYKH AL-`ALAWI'S AL-RISĀLAH AL-QAWL AL-MA`RŪF FĪ AL-RADD `ALĀ MAN ANKARA AL-TASAWWUF*

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The main focus of the thesis is the translation of an original defence of Sufi practice titled the *al-Risālah al-Qawl al-Ma`rūf fī al-Radd `alā man Ankara al-Tasawwuf* (A Kind Word in Response to those who Reject Sufism) by the *Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Muṣṭafā al-`Alāwī*. This book was written in defence of Sufis and Sufism. I will endeavour to provide some notes on the life, spiritual heritage and writings of the *Shaykh al-`Alāwī* in conjunction with a critical introduction to complement the translated text. In addition, I review the *Shaykh's* methodology applied in his *ijtihād* to validate and defend the Sufis and their practices. This sheds a new perspective on the *Shaykh's* life and works. The translation of the *al-Risālah* and other texts of the *Shaykh* will provide a clearer picture of this. The translation will additionally have a critical introduction to place the *Shaykh* and his works in its historical context. Finally, the thesis is a tribute to the great Sufi, independent legal expert *Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Muṣṭafā al-`Alāwī*.

14th of November 2005

DECLARATION

I declare that this translation of *Shaykh al-`Alāwī's al-Risālah al-Qawl al-Ma`Rūf fī al-Radd `alā man Ankara al-Tasawwuf (A Kind Word in Response to those who Reject Sufism)* is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

Mogamat Mahgadien Hendricks

14th of November 2005



Signed:

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First, my heartfelt thanks to the *murīds* of the *ʿAlāwiyah Ṭarīqah* in Cape Town and abroad, who all continue to be the inspiring source of enlightenment in my life. Their presence in my life, sharing all that is placed in my path, often make the up-hills on life’s journey seem easy. Their wisdom inspires me ... their love fills me ... their acceptance of me serve as the force that drives me everyday ... every moment.

These *murīds* have so selflessly sacrificed their time, resources and expertise to assist with this momentous task of translating the writings of the *Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Mustaphā al-ʿAlāwi* (may Allāh sanctify his secret) - writings that signify with every word deep and hidden meanings.

Then, I thank my wife, children and immediate family who had to endure so much in this process. And who also have to continue enduring me in who and what I am, or in who and what I am not ... please forgive me ... accept me ... and know that my heart is full with the love for you.

My deep gratitude goes to my supervisor, Professor Yasien Mohamed, who has guided me so ably and professionally throughout this whole process. I have grown with this and taken much from you ... thank you very much.

My whole heart goes to *Sidi Aḥmad Badr al-Din al-ʿAlāwi ibn Murād* (may Allāh sanctify his secret and illumine his tomb) for having been mentor, spiritual guide and *Shaykh* to me and all of us. It is through his inspiration and concern that we have benefited enormously and continues to benefit through his successor, *Sidi Rāshid al-Mansouri* (may Allāh sanctify his secret).

Lastly, I feel myself being blessed by the sheer opportunity to receive from the ancient wisdoms and knowledge that the writings of the *Shaykh al-ʿAlāwi* (may Allāh sanctify his secret) has presented in this work of *al-Risālah al-Qawl al-Ma`rūf*. May every breath be breathed, every moment be lived as a never-ending prayer of gratitude in service of Truth, *Amin*.

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

The objective of this thesis is the translation of an original defence of Sufi practice titled *al-Risālah al-Qawl al-Ma`rūf fī al-Radd `alā man Ankara al-Tasawwuf* (A Kind Word in Response to those who Reject Sufism) by the *Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Muṣṭafā al-`Alāwī*. By translating this text it is hoped to affirm the principle that Sufism is the result of *ijtihād* (legal reasoning) rather than *bid`ah* (innovation) and that it therefore forms part of Sunnah.

This chapter provides our introduction to the translated text. Section One reviews classical works in defence of the Sufis, as well as secondary sources relied upon by the translator. Section Two provides a description of the life and works of *Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Muṣṭafā al-`Alāwī*. Section three discusses the legacy of the *Shaykh*, including the contemporary state of the *`Alawiyah Tariqah*. Section Four provides a short analysis of some of the written works of the *Shaykh*. Section Five evaluates the methodology of the *Shaykh* as a method of *ijtihād*. Section Six introduces the translated text that follows this chapter. Section Seven outlines the translation strategy that is followed. It also highlights unique problems encountered during translation, such as words with unique meanings and words with nuances and meanings different to that implied by the author.

Section One: Literary works in defence of the Sufis

Classical works

Sufism has been defined by *Junayd (may Allāh be pleased with him)*, ‘that God makes thee die to thyself and resurrected in Him’ (Eaton, 1985:218). Sufism is equated with sincerity. Sufism has been described as *dhawqī*¹ (tasting and experiencing). Gai Eaton says that ‘Sufism is not so much to keep the truth in mind as to experience it existentially, in other words to taste it.’ (1985: 218). According to him the idea of personal tasting in Sufism is what has great appeal to the modern man. Thus, contemporary Muslims and non-Muslims are drawn to Sufism for this tasting. Yet, there remain fierce opponents to Sufism. One of

¹ This is an experience that is tasted on a deeply spiritual plane.

the most contentious issues surrounding those who oppose Sufism are the criticisms from critics like the *salafis*² who say that Islam is but only the Book of God and the Sunnah of God's Messenger (blessings and peace be upon him).

The *Shaykh al-'Alāwī's* thoughts reflects those of the early Ṣūfī writers like *Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj al-Ṭūsī* (died 988 c.e.)³, *Abū Talīb al-Makki* (died 996 c.e) in his *Food for the Hearts (Qūt al-Qulūb)* and *al-Sulamī* (died 1021 c.e) which was followed by the work of *al-Qushayri* (died 1074 c.e). The latter's work is considered the culmination of early Sufism literature (*The Muslim Almanac*, 1996). *Al-Sarrāj* considers the Gabriel narration as the fountainhead for explaining the exoteric and esoteric dimensions of the Islam. He also portrays the Sufīs as being those scholars who apply the injunctions of the Qur'ān and Sunnah both exoterically in the form of the law and esoterically in the form of the purification of the self. Although the practicing of the law contributes to the purification of the self through acts of worship like fasting, *ṣalāh* (prayer), *ḥajj* (annual pilgrimage to Makkah), etc. it is the sincerity of this worship that is the domain of Sufism. He even defends the statements of the Sufīs and their practices and tries to give positive interpretations to their statements and practices. Similarly, the *Shaykh al-'Alāwī's* defence of the Sufīs is aimed at explaining the meanings of certain Sufī statements and practices for the uninitiated. This indicates that Sufism has its own technical terms and conceptual landscape and that many criticisms are levelled against it, because people are not familiar with this terminology or cannot understand it since they cannot fathom these concepts. This is similar to the lay person, who tries to understand the intricate details of a medical condition that specialist doctors have spent years trying to understand and treat, or it is like trying to explain to the blind person the colour red. Can the understanding of the two groups be the same?

Another great scholar who defended Sufism as the spiritual path of Islam is the famous scholar *al-Ghazālī* (died 1111). *Al-Ghazālī's* major contribution lies in religion, philosophy and Sufism. *Al-Ghazālī* also encountered in his time a number of Muslim philosophers who had been following and developing several viewpoints of Greek philosophy which had lead to conflict with several Islamic teachings. He also found that the movement of Sufism was

² This applies to the first generation of Followers (Ṭābi'īn) who came immediate after the Companions / contemporaries of the holy Prophet Muḥammad (blessing and peace be upon him).

³ I will only be giving the Christian era dates from this point onwards without using c.e.

being tainted by charlatans. Based on his unquestionable scholarship and personal mystical experience, *al-Ghazāli* sought to rectify these trends, both in philosophy and Sufism. In mysticism, he clarified Sufism and re-established the authority of the orthodox Sunni perspective. He stressed the importance of genuine Sufism, which he maintained was the path to attain to the Absolute Truth. His acceptance of Sufism, as a scholar whose research was profoundly extensive and demonstrated in his books, stands as a testament to the validity of the Sufi path as a means of the realization of *Iḥsān* (excellence of worship). *Al-Ghazāli's* acceptance of Sufism came after his extensive study and research of the doctrines of theology and philosophy and these were not able to satisfy his desire for the ultimate Truth. As he says about himself,

‘When I had finished my examination of these doctrines I applied myself to the study of Sufism. I saw that in order to understand it thoroughly one must combine theory with practice. The aim which the Sufis set before them is as follows: To free the soul from the tyrannical yoke of the passions, to deliver it from its wrong inclinations and evil instincts, in order that in the purified heart there should only remain room for Allāh and for the invocation of His Holy Name. I saw that Sufism consists in experiences rather than in definitions, and that what I was lacking belonged to the domain, not of instruction, but of ecstasy and initiation.’ (al-Ghazāli, 2004)⁴.

According to *Abū Nasr al-Sarrāj al-Tūsī*, it is because of the spiritual and metaphysical nature of this knowledge that there is sure to be misconceptions and criticism. The *Shaykh al-`Alāwī* also says in *al-Risālah*, (1986: 9),

One cannot deny the existence of critics and adversaries among the *Ahl al-Sunnah*⁵ of every age who would oppose certain individual Sufis. As for rejecting the doctrine of Sufism in essence, the *Ahl al-Sunnah* have never displayed such a view. Sufism is considered within the framework of orthodox religion, it has received the approval of *ijmā`* (consensus of the community).⁷

⁴ *Al-munqid min al-Dalāl*, Deliverance from Error

⁵ This is a term used to refer to the Sunni Muslims in general and are the followers of the perfect example of the Prophet Muḥammad (blessings and peace be upon him)

Imām al-Qushayrī in his book *al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah* writes in defence of Sufism. He explains the principles of Sufism and its origin within the Qur’ān and Sunnah. His main purpose was to clarify Sufism for those who blindly oppose it without knowing the reality of its principles. He makes clear the errors which have appeared from the pseudo Sufis and addresses the *Shaṭaḥāt* [ecstatic expressions in a state of spiritual drunkenness]. *Al-Qushayrī* reminds us that the blind opposition to the doctrine is a problem that exists with every school of thought and doctrine (*al-Qushayrī*, 1990).

Al-Qushayrī also intended to make people understand that the Sufis are following one and the same Truth and that the true people of this path follow the method of the Qur’ān and Sunnah of the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him). They have not deviated from it, not even one iota. They are upon the path of the pious ancestors in their faith, belief and conduct. He also addresses the people of Sufism explaining to them the true path and the deviation and falsehood that has entered it. He shows them the right path so that they do not go astray, nor be led astray. The editors of the *al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah* in their introduction to the *al-Risālah* says,

Sufism is not something new added to the Qur’ān and Sunnah of the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him). Nay, it incorporates a very intrinsic aspect of the religion, which was neglected as a result of the *fuqahā’s* (jurists) pre-occupation with *fiqh* (Islamic Law) after the era of the *al-Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ* (the pious ancestors). Through their pre-occupation with all branches of *fiqh* they neglected the moral and spiritual aspect, which was practiced by the Prophet’s (blessings and peace be upon him) companions and the pious successors (may Allāh be pleased with them all) who came after them. If those people who met the *salaf* in the first centuries, had followed their guidance in the way of education, conduct and understanding, the matter would never have reverted to the Muslims finding a school of Sufism, separated from the schools of the *fuqahā’* and *mutakallimūn* (jurists and theologians). The first generation among the *salaf* followed Islam holistically, with one education in all its branches. They had as much *fiqh* as purification of the soul and God consciousness. They created a balance between the exoteric and the esoteric sciences (*al-Qushayrī*, 1990: 20).

Secondary sources

Martin Lings writes (1991: 88), ‘in Islam the existence of a large number of very limited individuals who imagine that the whole religion is within their grasp and that what lies outside the scope of their own meagre understanding is necessarily outside the Islam itself. The author of *‘The Mirror’* is a striking example of the extreme exoterism that any Muslim mystic is liable to be confronted with. One of his tirades ends off with the words, ‘Islam is nothing other than the Book of Allāh and the Sunnah of His Messenger’. To this *Shaykh al-`Alāwī* replied,

‘Who told you that the Sufīs say that Islam is based on any principles other than those? They say, however, that in the Book of Allāh there is a doctrine which is beyond most men’s attainment’ (*al-`Alāwī*, 1986:52)

Elsewhere the *Shaykh al-`Alāwī* also alludes to this when he says, ‘In knowing the outside of the Book only, he is as one who knows only the shell of the kernel.’ This is similar to *al-Ghazālī*’s comments of the adversaries of Sufism,

‘But behind those who believe comes a crowd of ignorant people who deny the reality of Sufism, hear discourses on it with incredulous irony and treat as charlatans those who profess it. To this ignorant crowd the following verse applies, ‘There are those among them who come to listen to thee and when they leave thee ask of those who have received knowledge. What has he just said?’ [*Sūrah Muḥammad*:16] These are they whose hearts Allāh has sealed up with blindness and who only follow their passions. Among the number of convictions which I owe to the practice of the Sufi rule is the knowledge of the true nature of inspiration (*ilhām*).’ (*al-Ghazālī*, *Deliverance from Error*, 2004: 9).

Shaykh `Addah bin Tūnis, successor and closest companion of *Shaykh al-`Alāwī* writes in (*Tanbīh al-Qurrā*)⁶ on Sufism, its origin and relation to Islam clarifying certain

⁶ Stimulation for the Readers

misconceptions around it, ‘Among the gnostics (*Arifun*⁷) are those who have reached their goal (of gnosis) in their journey, they have the highest degree of human perfection after Prophethood’ (*Bin Tunis*, 1983:12).

In my review of the main journals such as *Muslim World* and others I have found that there is not much written about the *al-Risālah* of the *Shaykh al-`Alāwī* and his methodology in defence of Sufism. My aim is to translate *al-Risālah* in order to highlight the methodology of the *Shaykh al-`Alāwī* as well as adding to the literature on the defence of Sufism.

Section Two: The Life of Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Muṣṭafā al-`Alāwī

Aḥmad ibn Mustafā bin `Alīwah Abū al-`Abbās al-`Alāwī, was born in *Mustaghānim*, Algeria, in 1291 a.h./1874 c.e. He had two sisters. Before his birth his mother dreamed that the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) handed her a flower. The *Shaykh*’s father saw this as a sign that they would have a pious son. The *Shaykh* never went to school and learnt the Qur’an from his father, memorising most of it. The *Shaykh* took up cobbling as a profession and later turned to managing a shop. His father died when he was sixteen.

The *Shaykh al-`Alāwī* was a Sufi, *Mālikī* scholar, *faqīh* (jurist), Quranic exegete and poet. He was also the *Shaykh* and renewer of the *Shādhilī-Darqāwī Ṭarīqah*, from which he founded the *Alawiyah* order that bears his name. The French orientalist Emile Dermenghem characterised the *Shaykh al-`Alāwī* as ‘one of the most celebrated mystic *Shaykhs* of our time’ (Esposito, 1995:71). He was born during a time of concerted French colonisation. Within that context Sufism was being attacked by the *Salafīyyah* Movement, which makes his spiritual renewal even more remarkable. His first encounter with Sufis was the *Īsāwī Ṭarīqah*, but he went on to take attachment to the celebrated *Shaykh Muḥammad al-Būzīdī* (died 1909).

Within the lifetime of his *Shaykh* he was appointed *muqaddam* (representative of the *Shaykh*) by the age of twenty five with authority to initiate others into the order. The *Shaykh* was actively involved in the affairs of the day, reproving those Algerians who had become

⁷ those Sufis who have attained to the Knowledge of Allāh.

naturalised French citizens, and expressed his strong disapproval of westernisation, secularisation and modernisation. He was also critical of the *Salafiyyah* movement and in his weekly newspaper, called *al-Balāgh*; he defended Sufism against its critics. This provided the social context that motivated the *Shaykh* to defend Sufism. *Al-Balāgh* was also a platform to reach out to the Muslim masses and to give general advice to the heads of the *zāwiyahs*⁸ to practice what they preach.

His teaching stressed the threefold nature of the religion (*dīn*) as mentioned in the Gabriel *ḥadīth*⁹, Islam, represented by one's inward and outward submission to the rules of Sacred Law; true faith (*imān*); and the perfection of faith (*iḥsān*), in the knowledge of Allāh. He authored works in each of these spheres, though his most important legacy is the spiritual way he founded, which emphasised knowledge of God (*ma`rifah*) and the invocation (*dhikr*) of the Supreme Name (of Allāh). The true measure of a spiritual way, however, does not lie in books produced by writers, in the wrong or in the right, but in the hearts it opens to knowledge of divine realities conveyed by prophetic revelation. In the *Shaykh Aḥmad al-`Alāwī*, whose order became widespread in the Muslim world, we find a true spiritual master.

His *ṭarīqah* spread to Syria, Yemen, England, France, South Africa and many other Muslim lands and continues to flourish (Godlas, 2004; Weismann, 2004). The *Shaykh* is certainly stands as one of the greatest Sūfī masters of Islamic history. The *Shaykh* wrote more than fifteen works and some of his letters and notes have been compiled into a sizable book. His *diwān* (Book of Sufi Poems) has also been published several times and remains widely read with the gatherings of *dhikr* of the *`Alāwīyah Ṭarīqah*. He died in *Mustaghānim* in 1353 / 1934 (Encyclopaedia of Islam, 1971:700-701; Esposito, 1995:71; Lings, 1991)

The *Shaykh al-`Alāwī* was humble and self-effacing and has deeply affected those around him. The *Shaykh's* successor described him as being very wise, compassionate and dynamic. Family bonds were very important to the *Shaykh*. Caring for the poor and orphans played an important part of his personal life, with the *Shaykh's zāwiyah* in *Mustaghānim* always keeping its doors open to newcomers. When the *Shaykh* became

⁸ Meeting places of the Sufi gatherings

⁹ This is the famous authentic ḥadīth reported in al-Bukhāri and Muslim.

ill, he gave all that he owned as a religious bequest (*wasiyyah*) in the Path of Allāh, his family, those who have devoted themselves to learning, and the poor and the needy. These acts were with the intention that his reward remains eternally with Allāh alone and as gratitude to Allāh. This is based upon the prophetic narrations from *Muslim* and *al-Bukhāri* in which the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him) said, ‘...when a person dies, all his deeds are severed except three, a perpetual charity, beneficial knowledge and a pious child praying for him.’

Section Three: The Legacy of Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Muṣṭafā al-`Alāwī.

After the *Shaykh al-`Alāwī* died he was succeeded by *Shaykh Sidi `Addah Bin Tunis*, who had been close to the *Shaykh* in his lifetime. He continued the legacy of his master until he died in 1952. During the lifetime of *Shaykh al-`Alāwī* the *ṭariqah* had spread across the Muslim lands and continued to flourish under his successor. The *Shaykh Sidi `Addah* kept alive the spiritual legacy of his master. He republished his books, revived the newspaper the *Shaykh* had run during his lifetime and continued to serve the initiates of the *tariqah*. Many of the muqaddams of the *Shaykh al-`Alawī* renewed their allegiance with *Shaykh Sidi `Addah*, like *Shaykh Muḥammad al-Hāshimī*¹⁰ in Syria, *Shaykh Muḥammad al-Fayturi* in Lybia and others. After *Shaykh `Addah*'s demise, his son *Sidi Muḥammad Mahdi bin Tunis*, even though he was not *`arif*¹¹ succeeded him as the official head of the *zāwiyah* until his death in 1975. He maintained and followed the teachings of his father and the *Shaykh al-`Alawī* and did not deviate from their path. He suffered a lot of persecution at the hands of the authorities and eventually went into exile in France.

However, it was the *`Arif Sidi Aḥmad Badr al-Din al-`Alāwī bin Murād* and one time *murid* of *Shaykh al-`Alāwī* who was the true successor of the *Shaykh Sidi `Addah*. It was under the guidance of the *Shaykh* that he attained to the *ma`rifah* of Allāh at an early age. He then received the spiritual training under the guidance of the *Murshid Shaykh Sidi `Addah*. He remained in obscurity for many years. It was only after 1975 that *Sidi Aḥmad Badr al-Din*

¹⁰ In the appendix of the edition of one of *Shaykh al-`Alawī*'s books, which we had reprinted, he acknowledges the *Shaykh Sidi `Addah* as the successor of the *Shaykh al-`Alawī*.

¹¹ One who lives within the Divine Presence and attained to the Divine Knowledge of Allāh.

bin Murād openly initiated adherents into the path until his return to Allah on the 13th of April 2005. During his time as *Shaykh* the ṭarīqah became even more global and many initiates from countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Turkey, USA, Switzerland, France, Germany, Kashmir, Algeria, Egypt, South Africa, Lybia and Yemen and other countries joined the path. Currently, *Sidi Rāshid al-Mansouri*, based in Oran, Algeria is the head of the `Alāwiyah Ṭarīqah. Since the time of the demise of the *Shaykh al-`Alāwi* many offshoots have flourished throughout the world all claiming to represent the *Shaykh al-`Alāwi*.¹²

Section Four: Some of the Written Works of the Shaykh al-`Alāwi

In order to further elucidate the thought of the *Shaykh al-`Alawī* it is important to give a brief overview of some of his books pertaining to Sufism.

Al-Minaḥ al-Qudusiyyah¹³

In the first introduction of the book (*al-Minaḥ al-Qudusiyyah*), *Shaykh al-`Alāwī* speaks about the distinction of the Sufi's knowledge compared to the other sciences. He discusses the source of esoteric knowledge (*al-`ilm al-bātin*) compared to the exoteric knowledge (*al-`ilm al-dhāhir*). *Shaykh al-`Alāwī* says in (*al-Minaḥ*, 1935: 9),¹⁴

‘...every science falls into dispute, conflict and differences amongst its masters except for this knowledge which is free from conflict and distortion because there is no application of independent reason in the knowledge of the Sufis. Unlike discursive knowledge which is obtained through *dalīl* (proof), *burhān* (evidence) and transmission, the knowledge of the Sufis is obtained through *kashf* (observation) and *ayān* (witnessing), nothing else. This is why conflict and differences do not fall into it, since information is not like direct observation.’

¹² See the following websites [http://www.al.alawi.1934.free.fr/Shaykh_Ahmad_al-Alawi.htm and <http://www.uga.edu/islam/sufimorders.html#Shadhili>] for more information on the various offshoots of the Ṭarīqah `Alāwiyah.

¹³ The Divine Gifts

¹⁴ Date of publication is given as 1355 a.h. which we have converted to 1935 c.e.

Al-Mawād al-Ghaythiyyah

The other major work of the *Shaykh al-'Alāwī* is the *al-Mawād al-Ghaythiyyah*. This work is a commentary on the aphorisms of the *Shaykh Abū Madyan* (died 1177) who was a great Sufi master of his time, who was also known as the pole (*qutub*) of the West. The *Shaykh's* commentary is arranged into topics concerning the path towards the purification of the self (*nafs*).¹⁵

Al-Baḥr al-Masjūr fi Tafsīr al-Qur'ān bi Mahd al-Nur

The thought of *Shaykh al-'Alāwī* is clearly expressed in his partial exegesis of the Holy Qur'ān. The method in which *Shaykh al-'Alāwī* has approached the *tafsīr* of the Qur'ān is unique and phenomenal. *Shaykh al-'Alāwī* interprets the Qur'ān from four different perspectives. First, (*tafsīr*) the general and literal meaning of the verse and then the laws (*aḥkām*) derived from it (*istinbāt*). Then *Shaykh al-'Alāwī* mentions the esoteric and more specific meaning of the verse which he refers to as allegory (*al-ishāra*). And finally the most specific and esoteric interpretation comprehended only by the most elite few amongst the scholars, which he calls the Tongue of the Spirit (*lisān al-rūḥ*). He compares his approach to *tafsīr* as four rivers flowing into one ocean. Each group of people know their drinking place.

For the *Shaykh*, the Qur'ān has many different perspectives and is inexhaustible as attested to by the Prophetic narration, which says, 'The Qur'ān will never cease to manifest its marvels.' In the Prophetic narration reported by *Abū Dardā* that the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) said, 'Never will your understanding be complete until you see the Qur'ān as having many interpretations'.

¹⁵ On his forbidding of keeping company with the worst of people, on his forbidding accompanying people who make claims, introducing the *Shaykh* of instruction, on useful knowledge, on *dhikr* and sitting with the people of *dhikr*, on fear and watchfulness (*murāqabah*), on surrender and committing one's affairs to God, on dependence on God, on need and its virtues, on surrender and contentment, on sincerity, on love and longing, on the appearance of *tawḥīd* and the annihilation of the slaves, on the states of the people after their annihilation, on their sayings after their annihilation, on their actions and their constancy, on obscurity and its virtues. This shows that the *Shaykh* had a great depth of understanding concerning the spiritual path.

However, what the *Shaykh al' Alāwī* considers most important about the Book of Allāh is that we should see it as if it is fresh, coming to us now from the Divine Presence. The Qur'ān has a specific message and education for every age. One should not confine the Qur'ān only to the purpose of revelation or the person about whom the verse was revealed. The lesson to be taken from the Qur'ān is the generality of the phrase, not the specificity of cause.

In terms of understanding the Qur'ān, *Shaykh al-'Alāwī* is extremely critical about the phrase, which says, 'The first generation has not left anything for the latter generation' (*al-Baḥr al-Masjūr*, vol., 1:14), as if they are saying that the first generations have explained everything regarding the *tafsīr* of the Qur'ān and nothing new can be added. He continues, '...this is the most harmful and destructive statement. If such is the case then where is our share of contemplating the meaning of the Qur'ān when Allāh asks, 'Do they not contemplate the Qur'ān?' [*Surāh Muḥammad*: 24].

Shaykh al-'Alāwī further argues (*al-'Alāwī*, 1989, vol., 1: 14),

'Why would Allāh ask us to ponder over the Qur'ān except that it contains treasures that are hidden? In every age there will be those who will hold steadfast to the truth and never would Allāh abandon the beloved followers of His Prophet's community. The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) said, 'Verily Allāh will continue to cultivate this religion [with men] whom He will put into His service with obedience [who will serve Him obediently]'.

In his *tafsīr* *Shaykh al-'Alāwī* clearly demonstrates his profound understanding of the principles of *tafsīr* and the sciences of Qur'ān.

Al-Ism al-Mufrad (Concerning the Permissibility of Using the Unique Name of Allāh in Dhikr)

The *al-Ism al-Mufrad* is one of many defences that the *Shaykh* has made of the practices of the Sufis. In *al-Ism al-Mufrad* the *Shaykh* defends the Sufi practice of invoking the name of Allāh without the invocative particle. He argues that the grammarians fail to understand

the esoteric dimensions of the Qur'ānic verses and at the level of *iḥsān* the Sufis have made *ijtihād* and found it permissible to express the name of Allāh without the invocative particle since God is nearer to you than your jugular vein.

Section Five: Methodology of the Shaykh al-`Alāwī

A review of the literature written by the *Shaykh al-`Alāwī* and those who wrote about him, shows that the *Shaykh* uses *ijtihād* as his method of defending the Sufis and their practices. A profile of the *Shaykh* will illustrate his orientation, style, thinking and worldview, which is characterised by its disconcerting unexpectedness and his readiness to meet his critics on their own ground.

Whenever the *Shaykh* answered a critic he would draw his answers from within the worldview of the recipient of the answer. Thus, when he spoke to the scholars he would draw their attention to the Prophetic traditions and Islamic jurisprudence. He was not afraid to make an analogy with a concept within any other science that the recipient may have had knowledge about. So if the recipient knew grammar he would use the laws of grammar in his answer making an analogy with grammatical observations. He would even make analogies to everyday occurrences like the fact that butter is produced by churning the milk referring to the *ḥaqīqah* (hidden Truth) within the *Sharī`ah* (Law). Some times he would quote authorities who were acceptable to his critics such as *al-Ghazālī*, *Muḥammad ibn `Umar al-Rāzi* (died 1209) , *Ibn `Abd al-Barr* (died 1070) and other scholars. The *Shaykh* would counter an argument by saying that the contention of the critic goes against the statements and the opinions of the great scholars who are recognised authorities. He also sought the repose within the law to answer his critics for example in reply to the critic who was against the repetition of the name of Allāh he said,

‘There is proof in the noble law of the permissibility of repetition of the name of Allāh, and there is nothing to justify the prohibition of repeating it.’ (*al-Isma al-Mufrad*)

In ending his answers, the *Shaykh* always noted that the view espoused was meant for him – [meaning his *ijtihād*] – within the matter and he would not force the critic to follow his view, so the critic should not force him to follow his. This is in accordance to the *usulī* principle that a *mujtahid* is not bound to the *ijtihād* of another but only to his own *ijtihād*.

Thus, the first part of this section presents a brief introduction and explanation of the concept of *ijtihād*, focussing on the definition history and the issues surrounding its application. The second part focuses on illustrating from the *Shaykh's* books and articles how he uses the *ijtihād* to defend the Sufis and their practices. In his criticisms of the opponents of Sufism, he also blames them for not exercising *ijtihād* appropriately.

Ijtihād: a methodology for dealing with the revealed texts

The Arabic word for *ijtihād* literally means ‘an effort or an exercise to arrive at one’s own judgement’ and in its widest sense, it means ‘the use of human reason in the elaboration and explanation of the shariah law. *Ijtihād*, therefore, is an exercise of one’s reason to arrive at a logical conclusion on a legal issue done by the jurists to indicate the effectiveness of a legal precept in Islam (Doi, 1984: 78).

According to Kamali (1991), *ijtihād* is the most important source of Islamic law next to the Qur’ān and Sunnah. The main difference between *ijtihād* and the revealed sources of the law, lies in the fact that *ijtihād* is a continuous process of development, whereas the divine revelation and Prophetic legislation discontinued upon the demise of the Prophet. In this sense *ijtihād* continues to be ‘the main instrument of interpreting the divine message and relating it to the changing conditions of the Muslim community in its aspirations to attain justice, salvation and truth’ (Kamali, 1991: 366).

Kamali (1991: 378-379) speaks on the scope of *ijtihād* and says, ‘the majority of ‘*ulamā*’ have held the view that once a person has fulfilled the necessary conditions of *ijtihād* he is qualified to practice it in all areas of the *Sharī‘ah*’. In modern times, in view of the sheer bulk of information and the more rapid pace of its growth, specialisation in any major area of knowledge would seem to hold the key to originality and creative *ijtihād*. The broad scope and divisibility of *ijtihād* would thus seem to be in greater harmony with the

conditions of research in modern times. The classification of *mujtahidūn* (legal experts) into various categories such as *mujtahidūn* specialising in a particular school of thought or on particular issues, takes for granted the idea that *ijtihād* is divisible and not restricted to a scholar (Kamali, 1991).

Ijtihād is validated by the Qur'ān, Sunnah and the dictates of reason (*ʿaql*). Of the first two, the Sunnah is more specific in validating *ijtihād*. The Prophetic narration reported by *Mu'ādh bin Jabal* as *al-Ghazālī* points out, provides a clear authority for *ijtihād*. It is reported that the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) asked *Mu'ādh* upon the latter's departure as judge to Yemen, questions in answer to which *Mu'ādh* told the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) that he would resort to his own *ijtihād* in the event that he failed to find guidance in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah and the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) was pleased with this reply (*Abū Dawūd* cited by *Hasan*, 1994).

Ibn Taymiyyah is regarded as one of the scholars who emphasized the importance of *ijtihād* and went to great pains to defend the *mujtahidun* and their *ijtihād* (2004). *Ibn Taymiyyah* (vol. 19) says about *ijtihād*,

‘The analytic *mujtahid* whether he is an Imām, ruler, scholar, investigator or *muftī* [the one with the authority to pass legal verdicts in the religion of Islam] if he makes *ijtihād* and seeks the proofs while being Allāh fearing to the best of his ability then this is what Allāh has made him responsible to fulfil towards Him. He is then considered obedient to Allāh, deserving reward, if he fears Him to the best of His ability, and Allāh will certainly not punish him.’

This text confirms that *ijtihād* is not confined to the *fuqahā'* (Muslim jurists), but is open to all who attempt to understand and apply the revealed law in all spheres of life.

Shaykh al-`Alawī's comments on *Bid'ah* (innovation)

Shaykh al-Alāwī's definition of *bid'ah* is objective and impartial. Many Muslim scholars see *bid'ah* as contradicting the tradition (Sunnah) of the Prophet (blessings and peace be

upon him) and confined to a blameworthy act. In the *al-Risālah*, the *Shaykh al-`Alāwi* makes it clear that innovations can be classified under the five principles in Islamic Jurisprudence. These are the following: *wujūb* (obligatory), *nadab* (desired), *ibāḥah* (permissibility), *karāḥah* (offensive) and *ḥarām* (unlawful). It is therefore unfair to pass judgement on a particular action as *bid`ah*, without first having the complete knowledge of *bid`ah*. *Shaykh al-`Alāwi* says,

‘One ought to first conceive the meaning of a thing and then pass judgement and not to speak about Allāh religion with one’s opinion , for you might end up commanding with the wrong and forbidding from the right’ (*al-Risālah*, 1986:44).

Shaykh al-`Alāwi argues that the author of the ‘*The Mirror*’ does not distinguish between what is *bid`ah mustaḥsanah* (recommended innovation) and a *bid`ah* that is unlawful, especially if it relates to recommended actions. Thereafter, *Shaykh al-`Alāwi* (p.43) asks, ‘... so do you see in all this anything contradictory to the religion? Is it not a main support of the religion?’ *Shaykh al-`Alāwi* hereby indicates that the concept of *bid`ah* should not be applied on every action that was not specifically done in the time of the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him), but rather that the intention behind the action should be considered. This is so, especially if the innovation is beneficial, like the compilation of the Qur`ān and the circles of *dhikr*.

In his *al-Risālah* the *Shaykh al-`Alāwi* also argues that even if some people consider Sufism as *bid`ah*, is it not correct to say it is a *bid`ah mustaḥsanah* (good innovation)’ which is also called Sunnah, taken from the saying of the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him). ‘Whoever institutes a good practice (Sunnah) will receive its reward and the reward of the one who implements it until the day of judgement.’ The *Shaykh al-`Alāwi* commenting on the above prophetic narration says (*al-Risālah*, 1986: 44),

‘Let us consider carefully how *bid`ah* is called Sunnah. It is also known that the assembling for the *Ramaḍān* night prayers in the mosques has been innovated by the second *Khalīfah `Umar*’s remark about it was, “What a good

innovation!” and such an example does not need any explanation considering that it falls under worship (*ibādah*)’.

Thus, the *Shaykh* shows us that Sufism is a Sunnah since it is the product of *ijtihād* and therefore not a *bid’ah*.

Shaykh al-`Alawi and *ijtihād*

In terms of classification of the *mujtahidun* within Usul al-Fiqh (principles of jurisprudence) the least we can say is that the *Shaykh al-`Alawi* was a *mujtahid fi al-masā-il* (an expert in legal matters of religion), even though he has fulfilled the necessary conditions of *ijtihād* he was qualified to practice it in all areas of the Law and *ibādāt* (devotional matters). The *Shaykh* was a *faqīh* in the *Malikī Madhhāb* and also a *mujtahid* on particular issues. An example of the *Shaykh*’s *ijtihād* is the application of *istinbāṭ* (inference) in his method of *tafsīr* since an important aspect of *ijtihād* is the interpretation of quranic texts and applying it to new challenges. By making *istinbāt* on almost every verse, the *Shaykh* demonstrates his application of *ijtihād*.

Another example of the *Shaykh*’s *ijtihād* is his *ijtihād* into the modes of *dhikr*, proving it to be part of the Sunnah and not an innovation. The *Shaykh al-`Alāwī* responded to one of the opponents of the Sufīs, who condemned the Sufīs specification of *dhikr* to certain times and confining *dhikr* to a specific number. The *Shaykh*’s opponent argues that it is a forbidden innovation, saying that he cannot find any proof or any source in the law to prove the permissibility of such types of *dhikr*. The *Shaykh* invites his opponent to re-examine these objections that he had within the framework of *ijtihād*. The *Shaykh al-`Alāwī* reminds him that he has contravened one of the main conditions for exercising *ijtihād* and that is not making a thorough research of the matter in the Qur’ān and Sunnah texts. The *Shaykh* then brings his attention to the clear, authentic and unambiguous textual evidence from the Qur’ān and Sunnah. In response to his first objection – the specification of times for *dhikr* - the *Shaykh al-`Alāwī* mentions the verse in which Allāh says to His Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him), ‘... and celebrate the name of thy Lord in the morning and evening and prostrate thyself for part of the

night and glorify Him a long night through.' [76: 25-26]. Thereafter the *Shaykh al-'Alāwi* says,

'If you just had the one verse at your disposal it would have sufficed since He (Allāh) has specified these two times for *dhikr* and the Sunnah is most certainly replete with what is similar to that.' (*A`thab al-Manāhil*, 1993: 123-124)

In his *tafsīr* the *Shaykh al-'Alāwi* also uses *ijtihād* to extrapolate insights and derive laws from the verses of the Qur'ān. First, the *Shaykh* gives the *tafsīr* and then he gives the *instinbāḥ* which is more specific. I will furnish an example, which is pertinent to the practices of the Sufis. The *Shaykh* notes, from the verse 'Remember Me and I shall remember you' [2: 153] we know that the slave is commanded by Allāh to make the *dhikr* and the request of making it in a group (*jamā`ah*) is preferred because of the plural pronoun in the commanding verb (*udhkurū*). From this verse we know that in all our worshipping there is nothing more nobler than *dhikr*, because the result of it is, that Allāh remembers His slave, and this special characteristic is not found in any of the other pious deeds.

To illustrate the *Shaykh's* profound use of *ijtihād*, I quote an abridged version of the response of the *Shaykh al-'Alāwi* to another Sufi antagonist who asked him about the meaning of the verse '... today I have perfected your religion ...' [*Sūrah al-Mā-idah*: 3] The *Shaykh* answered after a brief introduction saying, (*A`thab al-Manāhil*, 1993: 23-28)

'I see myself under obligation dear brother, with the mentioning of a matter which you always refer to in your correspondence, like some of the modern writers and you have also brought this up with the intention of using it as evidence against the innovations of the Sufis which has no connection to the religion at all. And your greatest support in this is the verse in which Allāh says, '...today I have perfected your religion and completed My favour upon you, and I am pleased with Islam as your religion' (*Sūrah al-Mā-idah*: 3). Your implication with this is that whatever was not considered religion at that time cannot be considered as part of religion afterwards. This is something beautiful, if it's ruling eradicates the Sufis innovations of appointed *adhkār* (invocations) and other things ...but it is farfetched for it to be correct, except if you eradicate all the *ijtihādāt* (judgments) of the

mujtahidūn (jurists) and the sayings of the true scholars and that would undoubtedly be a decisive decision [cancelling out] the rest of the laws of *Sharī'ah* established through *ijtihād*. The ruling of it would be that it is not of the religion, the cause being that it only came after the perfection of the religion and the completion of His favour upon the Muslims according to the explicit understanding of the verse. There is no doubt that this article of yours has brought about a belief which not even a deviant sect of Islam would profess, let alone the people who follow the Sunnah practice to which you belong.' (*A`thab al-Manāhil*, 1993: 23-28)

The *Shaykh* is arguing that the meaning of this verse cannot limit the scope of *ijtihād* for otherwise we would not know how to correctly interpret quranic verses and Prophetic traditions without knowing the circumstances surrounding its revelation. It shows his profound understanding of the methodology of *ijtihād* since he illustrates in his arguments that the writer erred in his interpretation of the verse, by not following the principles of *ijtihād* in his interpretation of the verse.

Section Six: A Kind Word to Those Who Reject Sufism

This work of the *Shaykh* is the focus of my thesis. It is one of the *Shaykh*'s earlier works, which he wrote in 1920. The book is one of the many responses that the *Shaykh* wrote in defence of Sufism, but stands out as the most comprehensive. It is written in prose with almost 120 - A5 size pages. This work was published during the lifetime of the *Shaykh al-`Alāwi* in 1920 (Encyclopaedia of Islam, 1971) since the *Shaykh* wrote it in the form of a letter to *Shaykh Sidi `Uthmān ibn al-Makkī* who criticized the Sufis. The manuscripts of the *Shaykh*'s works are stored in *Mustaghānim* in the *zāwiyah* built by the *Shaykh*. The descendents of the *Shaykh Sidi `Adda* have published the work three times and this translation will be based on the third edition printed in 1986.

Extracts of the *al-Risālah al-Qawl al-Ma`rūf fī al-Radd `alā man Ankara al-Tasawwuf* have been translated. Martin Lings (1991) mentions some extracts from the book of *al-Risālah* in his publication *A Sufi Saint of the Twentieth Century*. He translates these extracts to provide evidence of the *Shaykh*'s depth of the understanding of Sufism and as a general and well-

grounded response to the critics of Sufism. The *al-Risālah al-Qawl al-Ma'rūf* has been translated and published in French. Many of the other works of the *Shaykh* has been translated into English, French and Spanish.

This work of *Shaykh al-'Alawi* has a unique approach to the topic of Sufism in Islam and innovation. *Shaykh al-'Alawi* uses the primary sources of Qur'ān and Sunnah with clear texts as proof to justify his arguments together with an approach of sound logic and an excellent style. The book is written as a response to criticisms levelled at Sufism and specific Sufi practices in particular. The book is written in response to a leaflet that was published by a Tunisian scholar, *Shaykh Sidi 'Uthmān ibn al-Makkī*, who derided the Sufis and their practices. Martin Lings (1973: 88) argued that, although the the pamphlet was 'petty and childish' and required no response, the *Shaykh al-'Alāwī's* response was not only at the leaflet, but was directed at the 'general hostility' toward Sufism 'which could not be ignored.'

In the introduction of *al-Risālah* the *Shaykh* chastises the author of the '*The Mirror*' for the lack of ethics of disagreement in his book and for his sweeping comments and criticisms against the Sufis. The style or the intent of the *al-Risālah* is one of an on-going discourse with the author of the '*The Mirror*'. The book is intended for all critics of Sufism especially the *Salafiyyah* movement. Furthermore, the *Shaykh* writes in a didactic manner in order to make the comments more effective.

The book does not attempt to give detailed explanations of the way of the Sufi path, but rather it is a vindication of Sufism and establishes Sufism and its practices as an integral part of the religion of Islam. Therefore, *Shaykh al-'Alāwi* in the beginning of the *al-Risālah* addresses the criticisms against Sufism as a whole and in the body of the book addresses criticisms on single aspects, specifically showing that all of the practices are firmly rooted in the practices within the Qur'ān, Sunnah and legal reasoning (*ijtihād*). *Shaykh al-'Alāwi* goes to great pains to defend even the smallest aspect of Sufism. Thus, *Shaykh al-'Alawi* defends taking allegiance with a *Shaykh*, the meeting for the purpose of *dhikr* and the different modes of *dhikr*, the gathering of the initiates for *mudhākarah* (spiritual education), their performing of *dhikr* aloud in a group, their swaying in *dhikr* and ecstasy when performing *dhikr*. In the entire book the *Shaykh al-'Alāwi* uses verses from the Qur'ān and traditions from the Sunnah to justify these practices. The *Shaykh* notes the modes of *dhikr* that the

Sufis practice are justified, via legal reasoning, using the principles of *usūl al-fiqh* (principles of Islamic jurisprudence) from the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. Even though the specific practice was not practiced during the time of the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him), the principle had been established in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah and some modes of *dhikr* such as doing a specific *wird* (litany) is clearly found in the Sunnah.

The *Shaykh* uses *ijtihād* as an important instrument for interpreting the divine message and relating it to the changing conditions of the Muslim community and in the Sufic aspirations to attaining inner peace and enlightenment. Thus, the *Shaykh* justifies the innovation of the Sufis as being the product of *ijtihād* and therefore a legitimate part of the Law for those who choose to follow the outcome of a particular *ijtihād*.

One of the profound arguments in *al-Risālah* that illustrates applied *ijtihād* methodology is provided in the following example, '*ijtihād* is one of the characteristics of the Community and one should acknowledge the right of scholars to do *ijtihād*.' (*al-Risālah*, 1986: 44) That is why the *Shaykh al-'Alāwi* asks, 'how is it that you accept the *ijtihād* of the four Imāms and their like in the case of 'Islam, and you accept the *ijtihād* of *al-'Ash`arī* and *al-Mā`turīdī* in belief which is the station of '*imān*, but you do not accept the *ijtihād* of *Junayd* and his group with regard to the station of *ihsān*.'" (*al-Risālah* 1986: 44-45). *Shaykh al-'Alāwi* is saying that the author of '*The Mirror*' wants the reader to believe that the Sufi path is an innovation in the religion as if he considers the outcome of *ijtihād* as adding to religion. The Sunnah sanctions the *ijtihād* of the scholars, because '... the scholars are the vicegerents on earth ...'¹⁶. There is certainly general *ijmā`* (consensus) among the scholars about earlier scholars' trustworthiness. The *Shaykh al-'Alāwi* building further on this idea responds to the author of the '*The Mirror*' (*al-Risālah*: 44-45),

'the least you could have done was to consider the founder of the doctrine of Sufism to be one of the *mujtahidun* of religion for his *ijtihād* in bringing out the station of *ihsān*. He is like *al-'Ash`ari* in relation to the station of *imān* (faith) and like *Imām Mālik* and those who resemble him in bringing out the station of Islam and the total of religion is made up of three levels (*Islam-*

¹⁶ Narrated by *Abū Dāwud*, *Tirmidhī*, *Ibn Mājah*, *Aḥmad*, *al-Hākim* and *Ibn Hibbān* in his *Ṣaḥīh* on the authority of *Abū Dardā*'

imān-iḥsān) as related in the most famous Prophetic narration. (*al-Risālah*, 1986: 44-45).’

In addition, in a letter to *al-ʿArabī ibn Balqāsim* the *Shaykh* defends the Sufis in the following practices, specification of times for *dhikr*; confining *dhikr* to [specified] numbers and the taking of oath (bayʿah) with the disciples. In many other letters and responses written by the *Shaykh al-ʿAlawī* gathered in *Aḏhab al-Manāhil fī al-ʿAjwibah wa al-Rasāʾil* defends many practices of the Sufis as well as other matters pertaining to Islam. Nevertheless, in *al-Risālah*, the *Shaykh* avoids philosophical arguments and discussions of mystical doctrine.

Section Seven: Methodology employed in the Thesis

The translation will be done to render the work in modern English that is easily understandable to the general reader. This is the first translation of this work, according to my knowledge, into English. The thesis is an exploratory research into the thoughts and methodology of the *Shaykh al-ʿAlawī* in his writings on the defence of Sufism. *Ijtihād* is the major instrument used by the *Shaykh* and the translation of the *al-Risālah* will attempt to demonstrate this. Furthermore, there might be other insights into the methodology of the *Shaykh* that it could come to the fore through this translation. Although other defences have been written on Sufism, the *Shaykh al-ʿAlawī* approach is somewhat unique. This is what I hope to show and the reason why I have chosen to translate his work *al-Risālah*.

Translation strategy

All Quranic translations are taken from Yusuf Ali (1934) Islamic Propagation Centre International.

Dolet (1509-1546) was one of the earliest European writers to write on the methodology of translation. (Bassnett, 1980:58-59) His five principles have been generally accepted as essential guidelines for the translator. I will use these principles to discuss my translation strategy. These principles are as follows;

1. The translator must fully understand the sense and meaning of the original author, although he is at liberty to clarify obscurities.

This concurs with what Baker (1992) says about the importance of acknowledging the fact that cultures differ in their conceptual construction of reality. This leads us to acknowledge non-equivalence at word level and above word level between languages. Thus people from different cultures view the universe from different perspectives and thus their vocabulary differs. For example at word level, in English, we use the word date for the date fruit, but in Arabic the words *tamr* [رمت] and *ruṭb* [بطر] are two words for dates but denote the different stage of ripeness of the date fruit. *Tamr* is when the date is dried and *ruṭb* is when the date is still juicy. In English the word house has a number of hyponyms which have no equivalent in Arabic, for example bungalow, cottage, croft, chalet, and hut. In *al-Risālah* the *Shaykh al-`Alawi* quotes verses from the Qur`ān which contain the names of Allāh that are in the superlative form in Arabic, for which there is also no English equivalent. Thus I have translated the name *`alīm* as the one who ‘has full knowledge’ rather than the ‘knowledgeable’ since there is no word equivalence for most superlatives used in the names and qualities of Allāh. The text is as follows (*al-Risālah*: 47), ‘And Allāh has full knowledge of the wrongdoers...’ as opposed to ‘And Allāh is very knowledgeable of the wrongdoers...’

2. The translator should have a perfect knowledge of both the source language (SL) and the target language (TL).

I grew up in an English-speaking environment and attended a school where the medium of instruction was English. I lived 5 five years in an Arabic environment during which time I studied the Arabic language as my major. I have been teaching Arabic to English speaking students for the last 20 years. Furthermore I have access to some of the best dictionaries including Arabic-to-Arabic, Arabic-to-English as well as English-to-Arabic. These include the comprehensive work of Edward Lane, an English-to-Arabic dictionary, *Lisān al-`Arab*, an Arabic-to-Arabic dictionary which is considered as one of the most extensive Arabic-to-Arabic dictionaries. My interest in Sufism was from a young age, particularly the *Shaykh al-`Alāwi* and his works which I have been reading and re-reading for many years.

3. The translator should avoid word for word renderings.

Translation should not be just seen as a transfer of texts from one language to another since every language exists within a cultural context. One of the key reasons for avoiding word for word translation is the concept of collocation. Collocation refers to the idea that certain words appear and are used in conjunction with each other, for example, ‘shrug one’s shoulder.’ Although the word move or shake could also be used but since shrug collocates with shoulder it is considered correct. In the *al-Risālah* (1986: 47) the *Shaykh al-`Alāwi* uses *j`ala* which can be translated as ‘make’ or ‘create’, but in English the appropriate word to use would be ‘regard’. The text is as follows, ‘if you regard the school of the people of Sufism as one of those sects’, as opposed to translating it as ‘if you make/create the school of the people of Sufism as one of those sects’.

4. The translator should use forms of speech in common use.

The main aim of the translator is to avoid ambiguity. The translator should stick to a simple, harmonious, creative translation and avoid excessive jargon. In keeping with this principle I will change idioms if they do not make sense in the target language. For example, the *Shaykh al-`Alāwi* says in the *al-Risālah* (1986: 48) *inna likulli sāqiṭ lāqīṭ* which can be literally translated as, ‘for every fallen object there is a gatherer’. However, I have translated it as, ‘whatever is rejected by one person might be accepted by another’.

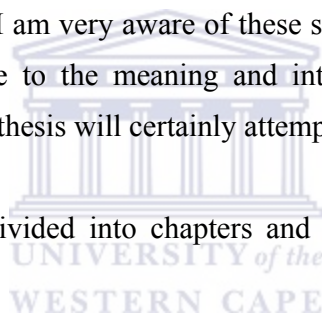
The expressions *aqūlu*, I say or *fa aqūlu*, then I say, are very common in Arabic. These expressions are often repeated in the *al-Risālah* (1986: 18, 20 and 23), which I have chosen to omit sometimes since it is unnecessary and sounds inappropriate in English. I have chosen to omit the above expressions even though I am aware that this might affect the meaning of the original but I have chosen to appease the reader rather than bore him with tedious repetitions as discussed by Hatim and Mason (1990: 8-9). They have said that sticking to the SL conventions might obscure the ‘meaning’ of the text in the TL. They problematise this issue by asking, ‘to what extent is the translator justified in departing from the style or manner?’ (Hatim and Mason, 1990: 8) In my translation I constantly grapple with this issue because there are those (e.g. Meschonnic, 1973 cited in Hatim and Mason 1990: 9) who say that meaning and form cannot be separated. As translator I do not want to reduce the dynamic role of the reader by altering the style or form of text by making drastic changes that will detract from the spirit of the text. I do make certain adaptations, but the translation must not lose the feel of the original text.

5. The translator should choose and order words appropriately to produce the correct tone.

‘The translator stands at the centre of the dynamic process of communication as a mediator between the producer of a source text and whoever are its TL receivers’ (Hatim and Mason, 1990: 66). They further say that (Hatim and Mason, 1990: 223) ‘(t)he translator is first and foremost a mediator between two parties for whom mutual communication might otherwise be problematic.’ The basic word order in a sentence, however, simple it might appear must be consistent with the text producer’s intention. The translator generally aims to facilitate the meaning of the text for the readers. However, the translator should be careful not to violate the given information for fear of adding something new to the text.

I acknowledge the limitations and deficiencies of translating this classical Arabic text into modern English. However, I am very aware of these shortcomings and I have, to the best of my ability, tried to be true to the meaning and intent of the original Arabic text. The intended publication of this thesis will certainly attempt to refine these shortcomings.

The translation has been divided into chapters and headings in order to facilitate easier reading.



PUBLISHER'S NOTE

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

A Kind Word to Those Who Reject Sufism

It is with the help of Allāh, that we begin the new edition of this valuable treatise, which continues to be a shining star, guiding through the darkness of land and sea. This illuminated treatise appeared when people were in urgent need of a conclusive answer and a comprehensive explanation for the basis of Sufism and a clear indication of its sources from the Qur'ān and Sunnah.

The appearance of this all-encompassing work satisfied the need of its adherents, as an answer to the attacks from its detractors, and hence its fame and benefits became widespread. It has since, become the best defence for those who remember and show gratitude to Allāh, thereby silencing the envious and bringing contentment to its devotees.

The merits of this work continued to increase in esteem, and it became increasingly popular, until the first edition went out of print. The rightly guided started asking about it again, like the sick person would ask about his cure, and the friend would ask for his intimate companion and they hence encouraged us to print a new edition because of its universal benefit. It is the only book making clear to people that which they have been seeking, offering a true explanation and providing sound texts, which no person would reject nor any modernist disapprove of, except the ones who are arrogant. They are 'Those who breaks

God's Covenant after it is ratified, and who rend absunder what God has ordered to be joined, and do mischief on earth:' [2:27]

We write these words in tribute to the author, the honourable *Shaykh Sidi Ahmad ibn Muṣṭafā al-'Alāwī*, may Allāh sanctify his secret, in support of his splendid works, which continues to benefit his religion and guide his disciples, until he, may Allāh be pleased with him, became an important pillar of support for referring contentious matters. Indeed, he excelled among his contemporaries through the brilliance of his wisdom until his death, when his sun set from this world to shine in the other world. 'It is He Who creates from the very beginning, and He can restore (life). And He is the Oft-Forgiving, full of loving-kindness, Lord of the Throne of Glory,' [85:13-15].



[7] In the name of Allāh, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

All praise is due to Allāh, who has protected us from the trials that He has placed on many of His creation and may the blessings and peace be upon the Prophet and his family. What follows is from this writer, full of sins, the humble servant of his Lord, *Aḥmad ibn Muṣṭafā al-`Alāwī*, may Allāh confer upon him success and may Allāh inspire him and the believers to the perfect path.

To the jurist *Shaykh Sidi `Uthmān ibn al-Makkī*, a lecturer at the main university in Tunis, may Allāh increase the university in prosperity and purify it from every rebellious fiend and may Allāh's peace be upon you, as long as you respect the people who are attached to Allāh,¹⁷ ‘Whoever honours the sacred rites of God, for him it is good in the sight of his Lord.’ [22:30].

Reasons for writing this book

I came across a treatise which you so elegantly titled ‘*The Mirror Revealing All Errors*’, which I respectfully took, hoping we could benefit from its knowledge and thanking Allāh for those who still remained strong in the religion and who, for the sake of Allāh, did not fear censor from anyone. However, I found the title very overpowering, as it contained the word 'errors', little knowing that its content was even more overwhelming.

¹⁷ This refers to those attached to a Sufi order.

As soon as I became familiar with some of its content I was, at the very least, overcome by a deep sense of disappointment and despondency, and my initial elation was replaced by extreme sadness. This state of affliction almost led me to say that it was not permissible to look into any mirror at all, be it to reveal errors or images, because of the evil contained in your '*Mirror*', and its desecration of honour ' Almost bursting with fury' [67:8] and 'indeed it throws about sparks (huge) as Forts,' [77:32] at those who invoke Allāh, openly shattering the majority of the believers. Whenever I try to absolve the author from [8] what has been written, the tongue of reality would say that the pen can only express the imagery of the writer and likewise the vessel will only pour forth what it contains.

Your '*Mirror*' was replete with untruths and you committed the vile act of dishonouring the people of Allāh with false accusations and slander. Hence, it was my Godly duty as a Muslim, concerned for the honour of those aspirants you demeaned, that motivated this written response. Thereby acting on his saying (blessings and peace be upon him) 'whoever witnesses a believer degraded and does not come to his aid whilst he is able to, Allāh will degrade him publicly on the day of resurrection'¹⁸. He also said, (blessings and peace be upon him) as transmitted by *Abū 'Umāmah* in *Saḥīḥ [al-Bukhārī]*, that 'the person who defends the honour of his brother, Allāh will protect his face from the hellfire on the Day of Judgement'¹⁹. It is further related from *Abū Dardā'* that 'the person who defends the honour of his brother, it will be a protection for him from the hellfire'²⁰.

¹⁸ Narrated in *Musnad al-Imām Aḥmad* and by *al-ḥabrānī* on the authority of *Abū 'Umāmah* from his father *Saḥīl ibn Ḥunayf* (the companion)

¹⁹ Narrated in *al-Tirmīdhī* and *Musnad al-Imām Aḥmad* on the authority of *Abū al-Dardā'*

²⁰ Narrated by *al-Tirmīdhī* and *al-Bayhaqī* in his *Sunan*.

These narrations relate to those upholding the honour of believers in general, but as for those who invoke, Allāh²¹ has taken it upon Himself to protect them. The most Truthful of speakers says, ‘And He will choose and befriend the righteous’ [7:196], so whoever contends with them, contends with Allāh and whoever aids them aids Allāh.

People of excellence will, at all times defend those attached to Allāh because the Sufis, may Allāh be pleased with them, always find themselves either being criticised or supported, ‘(Such was) the practice (approved) of God among those who lived aforetime: No change wilt thou find in the practice (approved) of God’ [33:62].

It is typical that the devotee will praise and the envious disapprove. Both defamation and criticism appear in those lacking in religion and those who are overzealous. What he openly proclaims as false could possibly be the opposite of what he actually believes. Your general criticism, O *Shaykh*, against the respected people of Allāh and your open rejection of their doctrine, judging it to be false, ignorant and misleading, is something which none of the other learned scholars of religion have done, except those marginal groups who deny the existence of the distinguished²², as they are not found in their midst.

People who follow the established way²³, however, would never criticise, except for those individuals whose credentials are questionable. Their view and perception of the doctrine of Sufism is such that they respect and deem high its status and their speeches offer the most

²¹ The Arabic word is *dhākirūn*. It can either be translated as invoker or rememberer of God. I have chosen the former

²² These are people who have arrived to the Knowledge of Allāh (Sufis).

²³ The *Sunnah*

balanced evidence, which have filled many books. In general, the hearts of the people of the *Sunnah* are naturally disposed to love Sufism and its people.

You will find that those who attempt to denigrate their path will drop in the estimation of the distinguished and general people, and that is nothing but a sign of their drop in Allāh's estimation, may Allāh preserve us. Hence, it is said that whoever opposes the *dhākirūn* unjustly and wilfully, Allāh will cause him to be loathed amongst His servants.



CHAPTER TWO: THE DEFENSE OF THE SCHOLARS

I shall proceed with this advice as a respect for the Divine essence, hoping perhaps that it might restrain you, ‘But God cautions you (to remember) Himself ’ [3:30]. He says in a Divine narration, ‘whoever harms My friends I declare war on him’²⁴. I say, undoubtedly, that whoever is at war with Allāh, his safety diminishes. He (blessings and peace be upon him) said, there are ‘two poisoned forests, whoever tries to penetrate them will never be safe, the people of my household and the saints of my community.’

The sayings of the scholars in this regard are innumerable. Among them is *Abū al-Mawāhib al-Tunisī* who mentioned that his *Shaykh Abū `Uthmān* (may Allāh be satisfied with them both), used to say in his public lectures, ‘may the curse of Allāh be upon the one who rejects the people of this group, and whoever believes in Allāh [10] and the last day, let him say Allāh's curse upon him’. *Al-Laqqānī*²⁵ (may Allāh be pleased with him) used to say, ‘it is feared that whoever speaks evil of the Sufis will have a bad ending and his retribution will be a severe discipline and a long incarceration’. ‘God doth admonish you, that ye may never repeat such (conduct), if ye are (true) Believers’ [24:17]. This is the wont of every god-fearing religious leader; fearful of speaking about Muslims in general, let alone the Sufis.

Had you been oblivious to the affairs of the Sufis, yet accepting them as being Muslim, then it would have been imperative for you to respect them and unlawful for you to dishonour

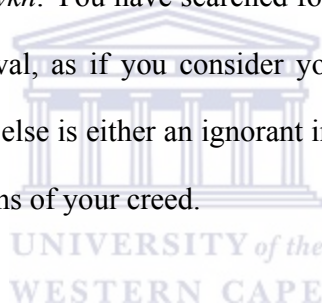
²⁴ Narrated in *al-Bukharī* and *Musnad al-Imām Aḥmad* with slight differences in wording

²⁵ His name is Ibrahim ibn Al-Laqqānī

them. Hence, refrain from pursuing their faults and be wary of a severe admonition from the Lawgiver.

Do not look at your brothers faults

Ibn `Umar (may Allāh be satisfied with him) narrated from the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him), ‘Whoever searches for the faults of a Muslim, disgracing him by it unjustly, Allāh will disgrace him with it in the hell-fire on the day of resurrection’²⁶. If this is in relation to the one who exposes a fault of one Muslim, what then is the ruling for the one who searches for the faults of the Muslims in general and their elect, so as to disgrace them amongst themselves, or among non-Muslims should they come across it, as you have done, O *Shaykh*. You have searched for the smallest fault and you have been excessive in your disapproval, as if you consider yourself to be the only *Sunni* in all of existence and that everyone else is either an ignorant innovator or a feeble adversary. This is your judgement upon the sons of your creed.



We do not know what Allāh’s judgement is on you, if you had but searched for the faults in yourself, you would have realised the error of searching for the faults of others. It is similar to his saying (blessings and peace upon him) that, ‘one of you is able to notice a small speck in his brother's eye, whilst oblivious of a tree-trunk in his own eye.’²⁷ You, however, have forgotten about many tree-trunks, the news of which will soon be disclosed to you. Perhaps, when it is made evident, you may wish to remove it as best you can. It’s removal, however, is not possible except through a clear confession, and confession is only possible by being

²⁶ Narrated by *al-Bayhaqī* in *Shu`ab al-`Imān* on the authority of *Abū Dharr*

²⁷ Narrated in *Musnad al-`Imām Aḥmad*, *al-Quāī* and *al-ḥilyah* by *Abū Nu`aym* on the authority of *Abū Hurayrah*.

just. So if you are a man of justice, then this book is a proof for you and if not, then it is a proof against you.

But in any case, however you accept it; have a clear vision and an open mind and a heart that is far from prejudice. Indeed my correspondence with you is only that I wish that through it, Allāh saves you from the situation that you are in and that He saves those like you and whoever else received your message by looking into your murky mirror, or by sitting in your pathetic gatherings. I shall mention to you some of the forgotten tree-trunks in your eyes, unless Allāh perhaps reveals it through your own '*Mirror*'.

In the introduction of your compilation wherein you dishonour Muslims, you say 'Praise be to God who hath guided us to this (felicity): never could we have found guidance if it had not been for the guidance of God.' [7:43] I was most certainly unaware of your intention for mentioning this noble verse; was it merely to obtain blessings or were you indicating that Allāh had guided you to dishonour the *dhākirūn* and those like them, believing this to be guidance? If your intention was the former, then it is good. However, if you intended the latter, then the purpose of this guidance of dishonouring and slandering the people of Allāh is not apparent to us, unless it is guidance belonging to the kind which Allāh mentions when He says, 'And Lead them to the Way to the Fire!' [37:23]; but it does not belong to this kind.

Then you proceed to title your compilation '*The Mirror Revealing All The Errors*', to which I say that surely you have been correct in its title and you are correct in its content, because your '*Mirror*' has reflected that which is hidden [12] in yourself. If it was not for your '*Mirror*', who would have known about your errors? A man's book is a sign of his intellect; whatever is in him will appear on his tongue.

On Commanding Of Good And Forbidding Evil And Forbearance With It

Shortly after that you had cited some *Qur'ānic* text wherein you say in its heading, 'the introduction to commanding that which is good and forbidding that which is evil'. In this you then mention the reason for dishonouring the believers under the guise of commanding the good and forbidding the evil. However, that will not avail you against Allāh in anything. Slander by any means remains slander.

Should we even suppose that you had no intention other than that of rectifying, then that is proof of your inability to distinguish between right and wrong. It is an excuse, but not acceptable for those who undertake to command and forbid. On both issues therefore, the charge cannot be dropped from you. If you did not know, then that is a calamity and if you did know then the calamity is even greater.

If you are unable to differentiate between good and evil, then how is it possible for you to command this and forbid that? You ought to understand the meaning of something before passing judgement, because judgement is dependent on comprehension. If you do pass judgement, then do not do so except by Allāh's judgement, and do not command except by Allāh's command and do not prohibit except by Allāh's prohibition. Be careful when speaking about Allāh 's religion using your own opinion and do not reject things as you wish. Allāh most high says, 'And if any fail to judge by (the light of) what God hath revealed, they are (no better than) wrong-doers.'[5:48].

What is your standpoint in relation to all this, such that you can forbid this and reject that? One party you consider misguided and the other you accuse of innovation, without fearing Allāh with regard to His creation nor respecting Muḥammad (blessings and peace be upon

him) with respect to his community. You see yourself commanding the good and forbidding the evil, without [13] asking yourself whether you have the competence for it or not.

He (blessings and peace be upon him) said ‘none should command with good and forbid from evil except the one who is gentle in that which he commands, gentle in that which he forbids, forbearing in that which he commands, forbearing in that which he forbids, and possessing knowledge of that which he commands and of that which he forbids.’²⁸ The gentleness with which he commands (blessings and peace be upon him) is because of his desire, and Allāh knows best, not to command except with gentleness and not to forbid except with gentleness. This is in contrast to the method, which you adopted in your ‘*Mirror*’, O *Shaykh*. The least obligation upon you was not to present something, until you knew Allāh's judgement with regard to it. You should do things in their proper manner.

Are you not aware that a youth once came to the Prophet (blessings and peace and be upon him) and said in a loud voice, ‘Are you giving me permission to commit fornication, O Messenger of Allāh?’ The people shouted at him vehemently and the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him) said, ‘Let him settle down! Let him settle down!’ The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) instructed him to come closer and then said to him with gentleness, ‘Would you like this to be done to your family?’ He (blessings and peace be upon him) then mentioned to him the womenfolk in his family like his mother, his sister and his wife to which the man replied, ‘No, I would not like that.’ He (blessings and peace be upon him) answered, ‘This is the case with other people who would not like that to be done to their family.’ The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) then placed his

²⁸ A similar ḥadīth is narrate by *al-Bayhaqī* in his book *Shu`ab al-`Imān* (Branches of Faith)

noble hand on the young man's chest and prayed, ‘O Allāh, purify his heart, forgive his sin and protect his private part.’ Thereafter, nothing was more hateful to him than fornication²⁹.

Many such happenings occurred during his life (blessings and peace be upon him) and those of his followers. Amongst them is the famous story of the Bedouin who urinated in an area of the mosque for which the companions began to rebuke him sternly. He (blessings and peace be upon him) threw his cloak over him and commanded him not to hurry, this after he had prevented his companions from using their hands on him. Once the Bedouin had relieved himself, he said, ‘O Allāh, have mercy on me and have mercy on Muḥammad and do not show mercy to anyone else.’ [14] The Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace and be upon him) then answered, ‘You have restricted that which is vast, O desert Arab.’³⁰

Where are we in relation to such conduct? Gentleness, no matter what the situation, always makes that thing beautiful and harshness no matter what the situation, makes that thing ugly. These are but some aspects, which relate to gentleness in commanding and forbidding.

As for him being forbearing in that which he commands and forbearing in that which he forbids, it is a quality no matter how much of it is found in the one who commands, will in most cases benefit the one commanded, because it necessitates concern for the guidance of the one commanded. Reference is made to this in the revelation, ‘ardently anxious is he over you; to the Believers is he most kind and merciful.’ [9:128]. One of the signs of forbearance, no matter how much of it is found in the person who has it, is that he would not want to defend his ego, if his speech is rejected or if he is harmed, due to the act of commanding and

²⁹ *Musnad al-Imām Aḥmad* and *al-Tabrānī*

³⁰ Narrated by *al-Bukhārī* and *Muslim* and others

forbidding. Are you not aware that when his premolar tooth (blessings and peace be upon him) was broken, he prayed, saying, ‘O Allāh forgive my people for they know not’.³¹

Even if we were to say that you do not possess the least degree of forbearance, it is your obligation to strive towards it in adherence to his saying, blessings and peace be upon him that ‘knowledge is only achieved through learning and forbearance comes through striving’.³²

Did the revelation which speaks about `Isā (may Allāh be pleased with him), concerning his people who will come after his passing, not reach you, wherein he said ‘If Thou dost punish them, they are Thy servants: If Thou dost forgive them, Thou art the Exalted in Power, the Wise.’[5:121] See what an excellent speech and what gentleness has come from the heart of the speaker, despite the *shirk*³³ committed by his people, after his passing. He most certainly did not say what you said about the community of *Aḥmad*, as mentioned in your discussion, that they are the worst of creation because they respected the Sufis, which you considered a sin. This is all due to the hardness of your heart and your lack of compassion towards the believers.

It is narrated by *Jābir ibn `Abdullah* from the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him) that he said ‘the one who does not [15] show mercy towards people, Allāh will

³¹ Narrated by *al-Bukhārī* and *Muslim*

³² Narrated by *al-Dāraqutnī* in *al-Afrād*, by *al-Tabrānī* in *al-Kabīr* and by *al-Khatīb* in *al-Tārīkh* on the authority of both *Abū Hurayrah* and *Abū al-Dardā*

³³ Ascribing partners with Allāh

not show mercy towards him³⁴. These are some examples that relate to commanding with good and forbidding from evil, and in his being forbearing in that which he commands with, and forbearing in that from which he forbids.

Only with knowledge should one command good and forbid evil

Being knowledgeable in that which he commands, and in that which he forbids from, is the basis of the issue and its central support, and it is around this essential factor that the issue of commanding with good and forbidding from evil revolves. A lack of understanding of Allāh’s religion could in most cases cause him to completely distort the issue and it might be that he then commands with evil and forbids from good. This, O *Shaykh* is the bad and disgusting behaviour contained in your ‘*Mirror*’ toward the religion of Allāh , with the pretext of commanding with good and forbidding from evil.

You have negated the best of that which is good; hence there is no affliction greater and more harmful than your affliction upon the Muslims. If, at the very least, the reader is not harmed when he looks into your ‘*Mirror*’, he becomes confused with his religion, and doubt ensues in his affairs. He may find that which he thought to be a good deed, by which Allāh is approached, is now in fact a sin deserving punishment. What damage could be more serious for the devout worshipper than such damage? ‘To God we belong, and to him is our return’[2:156].

³⁴ Narrated by *al-Tabrānī* on the authority of *Ibn `Abbās* and in *Musnad al-Imām Aḥmad* on the authority of *Jarīr ibn `Abdullah ibn Jābir*, *al-Bukhāri*, *Muslim*, *Tirmidhi* and *Abū Dāwūd* narrate it with a slight difference in wording.

Has it not, unanimously been confirmed amongst the general opinion that a sitting in an assembly of *dhikr* obliterates several assemblies of evil? The generality and the elect of the community concur on this tenet. Yet you have now come O *Shaykh*, furnishing proofs in your '*Mirror*', that assemblies of *dhikr* in its various forms amongst the *dhakirūn* are a misguided innovation, and that it is contrary to the way of the pious predecessors; without mentioning the recommended way of the assemblies of *dhikr*, in accordance with Divine Law.

It is obvious that whoever concerns himself with your speech, will only become confused. The affliction you find yourself in is perhaps due to your lack of understanding of Allāh's religion! It is for this reason that the Prophet (blessings and peace and be upon him) prescribed conditions for the person commanding good and forbidding evil. He must have a sound understanding of that which he commands and a sound understanding of that which he forbids from, so that he does not command with evil and forbid from good as mentioned already.

Differences between legal experts on good and evil

Once again I say, it is necessary for the one who wishes to carry out the duty of commanding with good and forbidding from evil, that he is first able to comprehend the meaning of good and evil and to be exact in his definition and to be exact about the Divine Law, so that he does not stumble into the pitfall of doing the opposite. It is for this reason that the great scholars refrained from talking about Allāh's *dīn* (religion), without a clear text or that which is similar in clarity.

Yes, the *mujtahid* (legal expert) will express his personal opinion where there is no clear text for him, without imposing his adopted view upon anyone beside himself. He merely expresses his view and nothing else. It is for this reason that legal opinions are numerous in the systematic elaboration of Islamic law and all praise be to Allāh that there is unanimity in the fundamentals (*'uṣūl*). All this is due to the ease facilitated in Allāh's religion, as mentioned in his saying (blessings and peace be upon him) that 'the best of religion is that which is the easiest³⁵ and the best of worship is sound understanding'.³⁶ Thus, the one who has no sound understanding should refrain from commenting on Allāh's religion. *Ibn 'Abdul Barr* related that *'Aṭā* (may Allāh be pleased with them) said, 'It is not right for anyone to give a legal judgement unless he has knowledge of the different opinions of the scholars. If he does not know this then he might reject knowledge that is more reliable than his opinion.'

Thereafter, all that we have cited of being cautious [in giving an opinion], relates to where the issue appears to be doubtful. As for the prohibitions and the obligatory of the religion that are known by necessity, this is *fiqh* (jurisprudence). With regard to it, the commanding with good and prohibiting of that which is evil, is obligatory upon every Muslim who is knowledgeable of the permissibility [17] of that matter or its prohibition, even though he does not abstain or abides by it himself. However, one should be cautious of such an approach like yours, O *Shaykh*, of declaring [matters] unlawful and permissible with your opinion and your envy, speaking with your instincts and your desires, thinking that good is

³⁵ *Imām Aḥmad* narrated this first part in his *Musnad* with a sound chain

³⁶ Narrated by *Ibn Abdul Barr* on the authority of *Anas* with a weak chain. The second part is narrated by *Al-Tabrānī* also with a weak chain of narrators. The above verdicts are taken from *al-'Ajlūni* in his encyclopedia on popular narrations titled *Kashf al-Iltibās*.

that which you know as good and the prohibited is that which you prohibit from. This is far from you and those like you, as the matter is but only entrusted to Allāh and His Messenger (blessings and peace be upon him) and those who are thoroughly versed in knowledge.

That which you may rightfully reject, is that which by necessity, is obviously known as unlawful in the religion and you may only command with the good that which is undoubtedly known as lawful in the religion. Therefore be resolute with yourself in the rest of the matters and entrust unto Allāh whatever is beyond that. Also have a good opinion of the views derived through legal reasoning, which have emanated from the legal scholars amongst the religious leaders, Sufis and others. Are you not aware that sometimes in an ambiguous matter, one legal school confirms prohibition while its permissibility is confirmed in another, or in one it is recommended while in another it is disliked?

These examples and their like do not need much clarification, so what is it that the author sees? Does he have the power to force any of the *mujtahidūn* to follow the interpretation of another, unless he is of those who have reached the heights of blind fanaticism as you have done? You have approached the *madhhab* of the majority of the masses in a trivial way, by forcing them to comply with your tedious sentiments, thinking that the detailed, prescriptive methods of commanding to good and prohibiting evil has its support on a weak foundation. Nay, by Allāh, in all of this you have not done justice to the Sufis, O *Shaykh*. What must be said to people like you and those like you is that the most insignificant Sufi is more cautious about his religion than you are.

As for your seeking justification with the verse, ‘You are the best of Peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong,’ [3:110]. [18] I say, there is no dispute in that which you have cited from the text, pertaining to the practice of commanding

with good and forbidding from evil, it is obligatory upon everyone who believes in Allāh , His Messenger (blessings and peace be upon him) and the Last Day. The dispute only concerns the ‘evil’ which you have misinterpreted, as demonstrated by your action of including the circles of *dhikr* and all Sufi practices under the domain of evil, which you necessarily want changed. In my opinion the evil that most requires change, is that which is contained in your *Mirror*’.

Furthermore, I say, the address in His saying, ‘You are the best nation’ could either refer to the believers in general, or it could refer to the distinguished amongst them. If the reference is to the believers in general, then it is an indication of them being preferred over the other nations with regard to the duty of commanding to good and forbidding from evil. For indeed this is the task of the *siddīqūn*³⁷, the Prophets and the Messengers and then their commanding and forbidding would be directed toward the other nations, and the *munkar* (*evil*) would be *shirk* and the like thereof and the good would be *Tawhīd* (Divine Oneness) and the like thereof. However, if the address refers to the elite group amongst them, then the commanding and forbidding would be for those amongst them. Then *munkar* (*evil*) would be every blameworthy character and its opposite would be every praiseworthy character.

However, if we employ the pronoun for the latter, we are then obliged to direct it to those guides³⁸ who invite to the Truth, as that is the reality. They are those concerning whom the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) said, ‘The earth will never be devoid of forty men like ‘the friend of the Most Gracious’ by them will you be given to drink and by them

³⁷ The literal translation is 'the truthful ones'. However here it refers to the *ʿarifūn* according to *Ibn ʿAjibah* in his *tafsir* of *surah* 4: 69 . This is taken from *Ibn Ajibah* book *al-Bahr al-madid fi tafsir al-majid*.

³⁸ This refers to the spiritual guides in Sufism (*Murshid*)

will you be given sustenance. Anyone of them who passes away will only be substituted by another.’

Thus, in this way the community of Muḥammad (blessings and peace be upon him) always had a group whose hearts were like those of the earlier Prophets. [19] No age is ever devoid of these groups. It is to them that the address most precisely relates, as they are most qualified for it through an innate disposition, with which they have been endowed. The distinguishing characteristic of ‘commanding with good and forbidding from evil’ exists naturally in them; and it might be found in others beside them except that then it is an acquired and transitory trait, not naturally found in them.

In my opinion the category of people referred to in the verse are in most cases not to be found except amongst the *dhākirūn* who are deeply devoted to the remembrance of Allāh, in accordance with the forthcoming Prophetic narration that will be mentioned. The people deeply devoted (*al-mustahtarīn*) to the remembrance of Allāh, as mentioned in some narrations, or those who are completely immersed (*al-muwall’*) in the remembrance of Allāh, as mentioned in other narrations, are not found except amongst the Sufis, those whom you have accused of innovation. As for those other than them, they cannot reach their level of *dhikr*, whomsoever it may be, except when they love them or are of their predecessors or are attached to their spiritual chain. This excludes those of the first three generations who have been testified for³⁹. However, this is very clear to the one who understands the meaning of Sufism and knows who the Sufīs are.

³⁹ Referring to the Prophetic narration, ‘the best of you are those who are from my time, then those who follow them, then those who follow them’. Narrated by *al-Bukhārī*, *Muslim*, *Abū Dāwūd*, *al-Timidhi* and *Al-Nasā-i* on the authority of *’Imrān ibn Husayn*.

As for the one who thinks that it refers to a noisy riffraff group who are amongst the most despicable of people, he will not be guided by what we have mentioned. He makes an analogy based on what he knows about them, for that which he has no knowledge of, using the name [Sufism] as a justification, and thinking that it is one and the same. What a big difference between that which you know and that which you do not know. By Allāh! My dear brother, should Allāh reveal to you the meaning of Sufism and its foundations and aim, you would have been contented if Allāh had placed you amongst the Sufis, so that you could take even a morsel from them.

Discord amongst Muslims and breaking down of the Brotherhood

As for your using as proof His saying, the Elevated, 'The Believers, men and women, are protectors, one of another: they enjoin what is just, and what is evil.' [9:71] [20] You have taken the latter part of the verse and omitted the former, even though the former is the basis for the latter, which makes it obligatory for the believers to protect each other, and to do whatever else to ensure the sanctity of their wealth, honour and their safety. Prior to this even, it is necessary that we understand the meaning of *imān* (faith), which makes incumbent upon us brotherhood, guardianship (*wilāyah*), and mutual assistance among ourselves. I say, it is easy, and Allāh knows best, according to what the lawmaker has stipulated for us. It is that we believe in Allāh , His Angels, His Books, His Apostles and the Last Day. Hence, whoever truly possesses these qualities, then guardianship (*wilāyah*) becomes compulsory for him and enmity towards such a person becomes unlawful (*harām*).

This is found, and Allāh knows best, in every individual of the community, despite the variety of their schools of thought (*madhāhib*) and their difference in their methods of

extrapolating Islamic laws, which is not harmful as long as the principles are sound. For this reason, it is necessary for the one whom Allāh has given the ability to speak [with authority], that he should not unfold his tongue except for that which complies with the safeguarding of the Islamic bond and the religious brotherhood, and that he should not harm the beliefs of the people of the *Qiblah*.⁴⁰ Further, he should not denounce their beliefs as disgraceful nor pass judgement on them as being false innovators, so that it becomes a means for separation, conflict and disharmony amongst the Muslims.

Did it not come to your ears, O *Shaykh*, as to why the community had previously come into disarray? The cause of all this was the extravagance of the overzealous followers of *madhāhib*. They defamed one another and would judge each other on their own beliefs, while in actual fact they are all believers. However, the sectarian (*madhhabi*) fanaticism between them led to the breaking up of the religious bonds of brotherhood which were united by the testimony of faith (*shahādatayn*), the establishment of prayer, the giving of *Zakāh* (alms), the performance of the *Hajj*, the fasting of *Ramadan*, the recitation of the Qur'ān and other Islamic characteristics [21] which are very important.

To be preoccupied with that which was mentioned [of *madhhabi* fanaticism] is of no benefit. By Allāh, O *Shaykh* how could you embark upon destroying the greatest pillar in Islam [brotherhood] and the firm support upon which Muslims depend, by inciting *fitna* (discord) and by taking their hearts away from loving the Sufis, for whom their hearts have been nurtured to respect. Consequently they naturally have a high regard for them, venerating them, and having a good opinion of Sufism and its people. Yet you said, ‘Sufism is idleness, ignorance, and misguidance’ and whatever else you construe it to be. By Allāh, you have

⁴⁰ This refers to Muslims in general.

broken many hearts, which would be difficult for you to restore except through sincere repentance and apology.

It behoves you not to denigrate a *madhhab* until you know who had established it and what its ten fundamentals are, the knowledge of which you as a scholar have made conditional for every science. Thereafter you may say whatever you want to say. In my opinion, either the knowledge you possess is very limited, or your ability to comprehend is weak or it might be both. If such is the case then it is obvious that you cannot find someone who can guide you to the science of Sufism in the introductory texts, which are at your disposal, like *al-Zanjāni*⁴¹ and *Ibn Ājarrūm*⁴². On this premise which we mentioned of your very limited exposure to the concise introductory texts then there should be some you could not have missed like *al-Murshid al-Mu`īn* on *ibādah* (worship) and *Al-Jawāhir Al-Maknūn* on rhetoric (*al-balāghah*). They were of those concerned with the science of Sufism. The former mentioned it independently and the latter spoke highly of it, making reference to it in order to draw the attention of the students to it, may Allāh reward them well. However, I am not sure, have you rejected the two of them because of your rejection of Sufism essentially or have you no regard for them?

You have most certainly exaggerated in your repudiation for otherwise the reputation of Sufism has no need for presenting testimony in its defence. But nevertheless, [22] should you have a long life and should you desire to compile something on matters of knowledge or on religious instruction, then my advice to you is not to come forward except with the

⁴¹ He wrote an introductory text on Arabic morphology or word construction. His name is *ʿIzzudīn Ibrahīm ibn ʿAbdul Wahāb*. He died after the year 655 *hijri* (notes from *Kashf al-Thunūn* under the topic of *sarf*).

⁴² Introductory text on Arabic grammar.

purpose of fostering unity amongst the community of Muḥammad (blessings and peace be upon him) meaning that which will confirm the religious bond and the Islamic brotherhood, disregarding the different minor aspects. ‘Say, ‘O People of the Book! come to common terms as between us and you: that we worship none but God; that we associate no partners with Him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, lords and patrons other than God.’ [3:64].

By Allāh, if you had examined closely to whom this verse was revealed, and the purpose of its revelation; lo what a beautiful composition! Where are we in relation to what Allāh most high says? You will most probably say that it was revealed about the people of the Book, as is explicit in the verse. At the very least it was your duty then to have accorded to the Sufis the rank of the people of the Book, neither believing them, nor repudiating them⁴³. This is the least degree of fairness, but where are the men of fairness? Your seeking justification with that which *al-Ghazāli* (may Allāh be pleased with him) has said, is not appropriate because of what your rules demand, since he is a Sufi and you do not support Sufism.

Degrees of Faith

As for your seeking of proof with that which *Ibn `Abbās* (may Allāh be pleased with him) narrated, ‘Verily the one who renounces the duty of commanding good and forbidding evil is not a believer in the Qur’ān ⁴⁴...’; do you think that he (blessings and peace be upon him) meant by it the complete negation of faith? Definitely not! For then the entire nation would have been damned. He merely implied the perfect faith of the rank of the truthful

⁴³ This text is an injunction of the Prophet Muḥammad (blessings and peace be upon him) as related by *al-Bukhārī* on the authority of *Abū Hurayrah*.

⁴⁴ Narrated by *al-Khatib* in his *Tarikh* on the authority of *Zayd Ibn Arqam* (*Kanz al-Ummaal*).

ones (*siddiqun*), as borne witness to by many Prophetic traditions. Amongst them is the Prophetic tradition, ‘The believer will not be a believer until he loves for his brother that which he loves for himself’⁴⁵.

As for the more general *Imān*, it has already been mentioned that it is very simple. [23] The famous Prophetic tradition of the black woman slave adds to that simplicity. It is confirmed that one of the companions (may Allāh be satisfied with them) had imposed upon himself to set free a believing slave woman, so he brought a black slave girl to the Prophet to test her *Imān* (faith). He (blessings and peace be upon him) asked her, ‘Where is your Lord? And she pointed towards the sky, so the Prophet then said she is a believer’. Then the companion set her free⁴⁶.

That which testifies to the above, that the intention of this is not the negation of general *Imān*, is that which you have transmitted from *Ibn `Arafah*⁴⁷ as a *farḍ kifāyah*⁴⁸. Thus, with the Prophetic traditions you have built a castle, but that which you mentioned from *Ibn `Arafah*, you then destroyed a city. You will be asked what the purpose of your mentioning the Prophetic traditions were, which imply generalisation, if commanding with good and forbidding from evil is for a specific group. If such is the case, then what is the reason for it being obligatory on you and not on others?

⁴⁵ Narrated by *al-Bukhārī* and *Muslim*

⁴⁶ Narrated by *Muslim*, *Tirmidhi*, *Abū Dāwūd*, *al-Nasā-i* and others

⁴⁷ He is *Muḥammad ibn `Arafah al-Dussuqi al-Māliki* (d 1230 *hijri* /1815 c.e). One of the great *Maliki* scholars of his time. He wrote a *ḥashiyah* supercommentary on the commentary of *Aḥmad Dirdir al-`Adawi* on the *Mukhtar al-Khalil*.

⁴⁸ This is an obligation, which is binding on all members of the Muslim community, but if some do it then the rest are absolved from it.

I say to you, the matter is not about gathering texts if you wish to write. The truth of the matter is that you place them in their proper context. It is the kind of wisdom, which He the Exalted says, 'He granteth wisdom to whom He pleaseth; And he to whom wisdom is granted receiveth indeed a benefit overflowing;' [2:269].

With regard to your seeking of proof from his saying (blessing and peace be upon him), 'He is not of us, the one who does not show mercy to our young ones and does not respect our elders...', is intended here as was mentioned earlier about [the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) negating perfect faith of those who neglect] commanding to good and forbidding from evil. However, what does relate to this Prophetic narration you mentioned, 'He who does not show mercy to our young ones', is that it includes the general community because they are immature, even though they might be old in years. Also, those who are included amongst the elders are the elect of the community, even though they might be young in years because a human is considered a human being by spirit and not by body.


Courtesy towards the believers

Based on this you therefore have no substantiation in the Prophetic narration, because you have not shown mercy [24] to the young ones, who are the generality of the Muslims, since you should have addressed them with gentleness and kindness like the compassion of the grown up father towards the young son. Instead, you have addressed them with harshness and you have attacked them with everything at your disposal.

You have also not respected the elders who are the springs of wisdom, and the pillars of this community's religion. They have been adjudged to be idle and ignorant, and you have

considered them as enemies, based on the Prophetic narration you transmitted from *Ibn `Abbās*, (may Allāh be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him) said, ‘Come nearer to Allāh through your hatred for sinners...’ You applied it to them. By Allāh! How astonishing. How is it ever possible that you could apply these traditions to those who assemble for the remembrance of Allāh and the like!

On the whole, all the proofs, which you have mentioned in relation to the obligation of commanding good and forbidding evil, are not being disputed. The only dispute is in the meaning of *munkar* (evil); in order that we do not reject the truth, or that which is closer to truth than untruth. It is better that you err in correcting your brothers in faith, than being accurate in pointing out their faults. Are you not aware that the honour of Muslims, their wealth and blood is protected by their mere utterance of the *shahādatayn*⁴⁹?



Levels of commanding good and forbidding evil

You then continued, quoting *Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī* (may Allāh be pleased with him) from his treatise (*al-Risālah*),

‘The commanding with good and forbidding from evil is obligatory upon the one who has authority and upon the one who is able to change it. If he is unable to do that then he uses his tongue, and if unable, then in his heart.’

⁴⁹ An Arabic expression for the two articles of faith; *La ilaha illa Allāh* and *Muḥammad Rasul Allāh* .

I say that this is the meaning of a Prophetic tradition; the text thereof perhaps has not reached you. 'If one of you sees an evil, let him change it with his hand, if he is unable to do so, then with his tongue and if still unable, let him resent it in his heart and that is the weakest form of faith'⁵⁰. This is one of the beautiful methods of commanding good and forbidding evil. [25]

As for your conveyance of the saying of *Ibn `Arafah* that 'commanding good and forbidding evil' is a *farḍ kifāyah*, there is nothing in this statement that supports your resolution for compiling this treatise. How unfortunate that you did not, in what has preceded, restrict yourself to only mentioning the previous Prophetic traditions.

Certainly, the commanding of good and forbidding of evil is *farḍ ayn* (obligatory upon every individual) who is able to distinguish right from wrong, [since] the lawful is evident and the unlawful is evident? In the case of doubt, suspension [of judgement] is imposed; except that the circumstances for effecting the change [of evil] varies amongst people and places as well as capability and incapability.

The one who has the power to change the evil, like the rulers, for them it is really obligatory. They have no excuse to abandon it if they have the capability, as mentioned previously. It is necessary for those among the Muslim scholars who do not reach this rank to change it with their tongues. The one, who is unable to do so, because of some hindrance, should change it with his heart and that is the weakest form of faith as already mentioned in the Prophetic tradition.

⁵⁰ Narrated by *Muslim*, *Abū Dāwūd* and others.

Thereafter you proceeded in poor wording saying,

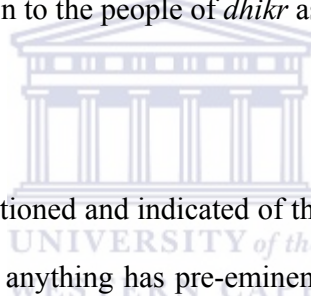
‘amongst that which is also obligatory, is to follow the truth, the Prophetic *Sunnah* of Muḥammad and follow in the footsteps of the pious *salaf*, may Allāh be pleased with them. Verily their common practice was to love, trust and venerate the one who adhered to the *Sunnah*, but they would abandon, disregard and resent whoever was unlike that, until he who desires to be elevated amongst them, those in whom there is no good, would appear to them as if he is following them until they would trust him.’

As for your saying, ‘amongst that which is also obligatory is to follow the truth’, it is the obligation of obligations for those who understand the truth and to whom it [the truth] is clear. However, the one who is in a state of confusion, struck with madness by the devil, how will he know the truth? Even if he knows it he only knows it through the scholars. This does not place him in a position to follow the truth [by himself], except [26] when Allāh opens his inner vision and cleans his heart from the evil opinion he has of the pious people. *Imām `Ali* (may Allāh bless his face) said, ‘Do not be of those who know the truth through men, but know the truth in itself and you will know its people’.

You then mentioned that the qualities of the pious predecessors were such that they loved those who followed the *Sunnah*. However, which believer in Allāh and His Messenger (blessings and peace be upon him) does not love the *Ahl al-Sunnah*? Did the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him) not say, ‘Behold! There is no faith for the one who has no love’. Are you not aware that the Sufis whom you have accused with idleness,

ignorance and misguidance, made love the foundation of their path? But perhaps the *Ahl al-Sunnah* you are referring to, are those who are like you and not the generality of Muslims, and Allāh knows best.

Thereafter you mentioned some of the practices of the pious predecessors [namely] that they rejected, disregarded and resented those who were not on the *Sunnah*, to the end of your poorly constructed words. Until now it was not clear who you intended by those contradicting the *Sunnah*, had you not presented a profound allegory as to who the aforementioned and adjacent text referred to when you said 'like the Sufis of our time'. I can only say that 'now the foetus of the *Shaykh* has started to cry'.⁵¹ We then knew what the abomination was which you alluded to, and what your reason for compiling this article was. Thus, you regarded ascription to the people of *dhikr* as the worst abomination.



What you subsequently mentioned and indicated of the grave offences was only a digression since the most important in anything has pre-eminence, except if we say that the writer of the article gave precedence to the mentioning of the Sufis for the purpose of receiving their blessings, which I do not think [is the case]. The essence of the matter is that the abominations, to which you have referred and the innovations to which you have alluded, are contained in the mentioning of your simile, 'like the Sufis of our time'. Thus, now there is not an abomination outside of what the Sufis do that we might be able to avert. All of this never [27] filled us with any agitation until you restricted it to the Sufis of our time, if only

⁵¹ Meaning his [*Makki*'s] real intent has been exposed.

you had not proceeded to what *al-Ṭarṭūshī*⁵² mentioned, that the doctrine of Sufism in totality is idleness, ignorance, and misguidance.

How we only wish that the writings of *al-Ṭarṭūshī* had never reached you, then your heart would have remained clean from slandering those people of guidance who have passed on. However, Allāh will pass judgement between you and those who were your contemporaries amongst His servants.

Then you went on to say,

‘In most cases the situation of the people of this time, those who have immersed themselves in the melting pot of the people of innovation, is that they have an aversion to those who forbid them from their innovation and their blameworthy festivals. These [activities] do not coincide with any statement of approval even from outside the schools of thought of their scholars whom they follow’.

Perhaps the meaning of your statement, ‘those who become immersed in the melting pot of the people of innovations,’ are the groups of the *fuqarā’*.⁵³ If such is the case, then what a bold jurist and excellent attentive person you are! The thoughtless person thinks that part of boldness is a lack of shyness. He does not know that shyness is a part of faith.

⁵² An author who wrote a treatise on *Bidāh* (innovation)

⁵³ The adherents to the Sufi paths.

What is even more grievous and bitter is your statement about their innovation 'that it does not coincide with any statement of approval even from outside the schools of thought of their scholars whom they follow'. You have indeed examined and been brief, may Allāh bless you! So tell me, with Allāh as your witness, what is the innovation for which you can find no saying of approval? Is it perhaps the gathering of the *fuqarā'* for their invocation and instruction and education (*al-mudhākarah*) or is it their performing of the invocation aloud in a group or their swaying in the invocation and their [expressions of] ecstasy? In all of the schools of thought have you not been able to find any saying of approval in your research of these three matters?

In my opinion you have not found a saying, even that of dislike (*al-karāhah*⁵⁴), because the rule is well known. The existence of something disliked (*al-karāhah*) does not negate permissibility. What stops the wheel and makes a woman laugh who has lost her child (i.e. because of extreme grief) is your reason proposed for their innovation by your statement, because they either think that the effective jurist, perhaps a reference here to yourself, has restrained them or what the instigator of their innovations say is the truth. Thus this is how you have explained their innovation [28] for which you cannot find any saying of permissibility. What an amazing construction and what an unusual style!

Thereafter you said, 'Perhaps they have reviled and mocked him' i.e. the one who forbids them from their innovation. To this I say, perhaps that is what happened to you, or something similar to it. It is known that you will meet that which you dislike, since

⁵⁴ *Al-Karāhah* (disapproval) refers to the jurists definition of a deed which is considered disliked by the lawgiver even though it is permissible.

recompense is of the same type as the act? And that did not happen to you except due to your lack of understanding the method of commanding good and forbidding evil and inviting to Allāh. [This is] because you did not follow what Allāh, The Elevated has prescribed to His Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) in the way of inviting His creation according to His saying, ‘Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and a beautiful preaching; And argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious:’ [16:125].

Those commissioned with inviting to good and forbidding from evil

Allāh, the Exalted has taught the people whom He has commissioned for inviting the creation, the method of reminding and as a result the old, young, as well as the honourable and the despicable submitted to them. Their speech is acceptable to the ears, because their admonishment emanates from the heart and not from the books. Speech, if it emanates from the heart, touches the heart. It is for this reason that their admonition produced an effect on the hearts and their counselling pervaded the hearts of the disciples.

They understood from the glorious verse [of the Qur’ān] that people are in three categories and the Messenger (blessings and peace be upon him) says, ‘Deal with people according to their level (i.e. their intellectual and spiritual capacity)’. The first group amongst these groups are those who do not yield to the one who reminds except through the wisdom and they are the people of excellence amongst the servants of Allāh. The second group are those who benefit from good admonition, accompanied by kindness and gentleness, which is

exercised between [inciting desire (to do good) and (instilling) fear so that they abandon evil]. The third group are the people of dispute who tire the people of guidance amongst the Messenger s (blessings and peace be upon them) and saints (may Allāh be pleased with them). So Allāh, The Elevated, made it permissible for the Messenger (blessings and peace be upon him) to deliberate with such people, except that Allāh restricted it (deliberation) to that which is best. Thus excellence (for every degree of people). It is for this reason that the sword was considered to be the last step of propagation. Whosoever fails to follow this laid-out plan for conveying the reminder, his endeavour in most cases will be rejected? All this is deduced from his saying (may blessings and peace [29] be upon him) that ‘The one who commands with good, then let his commanding also be with good’, meaning with friendliness and gentleness, so that it might be more conducive for acceptance, and Allāh knows best.



CHAPTER THREE: PROOF OF SUFISM

Sufism in the first communities

When you concluded your introduction to commanding good and forbidding evil, you then turned towards that which you believed to be evil, in order to change what the Sufis do in assembling for *dhikr*, salutations on the Prophet (blessing and peace be upon him) and the recitation of the *Qur'ān*.

You said,

(Chapter) *Hasan al-Basri* was asked concerning the gathering of a group of people of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*⁵⁵ reading the *Qur'ān shahādatayn* in someone's house, sending praises to the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) and praying for themselves and the Muslims. He prohibited it in the strongest terms because it was not the practice of the pious predecessors nor was it part of religion, for they were indeed more fervent in desire towards good than these people were. Therefore, if there were any good in it, they would have practised it themselves.'

If the activities of the Sufis, of gathering in their houses reading the *Qur'ān*, praising the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) and praying for themselves and the Muslims,

⁵⁵ Those who followed the pure doctrine of what Islam as brought by the Prophet and also carried on by the pious predecessors

angered you to the extent that you could not find any saying of approval for it and if it appeared to you as a sin and inconsistent with the practice of the predecessors, then I say, 'O Allāh make our sins and the sins of our friends, nay the sins of the generality of Muslims of this kind, if the manner of the gathering is what you had mentioned. However, if it is an error, which has not become clear (to us), then we pray that Allāh protect you and us from errors.

Verily if this transmission is an authentic statement from *Hasan* (may Allāh be pleased with him) then it still does not indicate to us a general prohibition from gathering in the manner described. Moreover, if *Hasan* was exercising his independent [legal] opinion, then it is likely that another *mujtahid* in his era also [exercised his legal opinion]. We might even say [30] from that same group [of scholars] because the era was the time of the Successors⁵⁶ (*Tābi`ūn*).

Secondly, this event is appropriate as a proof in favour of the Sufis, not against them, due to the fact that you have confirmed the gatherings [of *dhikr*] to have occurred in that manner during the time of the *Tābi`ūn*, and the obligation upon us then is to follow their guidance. So do you think that this blessed group would have laid their pillars upon a foundation that was not sound?

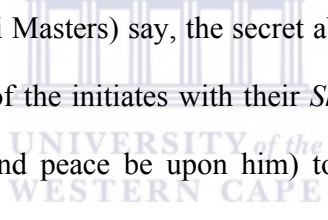
Do you not know that *Hasan al-Basri*, the one from whom you transmitted, was the teacher of this group; as is so well known in the [spiritual] chain of the Sufis? He was initiated by *Imām `Alī* (may Allāh bless his face) and he [*Hasan al-Basri*] instructed *Dāwūd at-Tā`ī*, *Yusuf al-A`jamī* and others besides them until it reached *Junayd*. Through another chain

⁵⁶ People who have met the companions of the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him)

Imām `Alī, instructed his son *Hasan*, (may Allāh be pleased with both of them) and he instructed *Abū Muḥammad Jābir*, and he instructed *As-Sayid Sa`īd al-Qazwīnī*, until it reached us and all praise is due to Allāh.

Perhaps you are ignorant about the origin of *talqīn* (initiation and spiritual instruction) in the Divine Law, based on [your] evidence; otherwise you would not have rejected Sufism and its people. It is for this reason that I am compelled to digress in my speech for your sake, either as a need that I fulfil for you or a proof against you.

Imām as-Sha`rānī mentions in his book *An-Nafaḥāt al-Qudsiyyah fī Bayān al-Qawā`id as-Sūfiyyah* as follows,



‘The *Shaykhs* (Sufi Masters) say, the secret about the initiation (*talqīn*) is to link the hearts of the initiates with their *Shaykhs*, to the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him) to Gabriel (*Jibrīl*) (peace be upon him) and to Allāh Most High for love and obedience. And it is for this reason that if a person does not say ‘There is no deity save Allāh ’ in compliance with the saying of the Messenger of Allāh, ‘Say! There is no god save Allāh ’, then he is not considered a Muslim. This is supported by his saying (blessings and peace be upon him) ‘None of you truly believes until his opinion is in compliance with that which I came with’.

Then he [*al-Sha`rānī*] says,

‘The first thing that happens to the *murīd*, when he enters the chain of the folk [31] through initiation is that whenever a matter unexpectedly overcomes him, or his heart is confused and troubled, the souls of the saints respond to him from [the soul of] his closest *Shaykh* right up to the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him) [and] to the Divine presence of Allāh Most Exalted, and then his grief and worry will disappear. And the one who does not enter the path of the people through initiation, then no soul of any of the people of the path will respond to him because he is not tied to them. Its principle is like that of an iron chain. When one link moves, then all the other links respond to it.’

And when you have come to know that, I say all success is by Allāh.

It is reported by *al-Tabrānī*, *Imām Aḥmad* and *al-Bazzār* and others beside them through a chain that is sound (*Hasan*) that one day the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him) was in a gathering of some of the companions and said, ‘Is there any stranger amongst you?’ - meaning those amongst the People of the Book. They answered, ‘No, O Messenger of Allāh,’ whereupon he ordered that the door be locked, and said, ‘Raise your hands and say *La Ilāha Ill Allāh*⁵⁷’. *Shaddād Ibn Aws* said, ‘And we raised our hands for an hour and we said ‘*La Ilāha Illa Allāh*. So the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him) said, ‘O Allāh! Verily You have sent me with this [*kalimah*] word, and You have commanded me with it, and You have promised me Paradise

⁵⁷ There is no deity save Allāh

through it. And verily You do not break Your promises.’ And then he said, ‘Behold! I bring you the glad tidings that Allāh has indeed forgiven you.’ In this Prophetic narration is a proof for the *Shaykhs* in their practice of initiating and teaching the *dhikr* to their initiates in a group.

The individual instruction (*talqīn*)⁵⁸ has been reported by *al-Bukhārī*, *Muslim*, and *al-ḥāfiẓ Jalāludīn al-Suyūṭī* through many sound (*ḥasan*) narrations. ‘*Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib*, (may Allāh be pleased with him and honour his face) said,

‘I asked the Messenger of Allāh, (blessings and peace be upon him), ‘O Messenger of Allāh! Show me the quickest way leading to Allāh , Elevated and Mighty is He, and which is easiest for the slaves and the best in the sight of Allāh.’ The Messenger of Allāh, (blessings and peace be upon him), responded, ‘O ‘*Alī!* [Practice and] firmly hold on to the remembrance of Allāh softly and loudly.’ Then he, (may Allāh be pleased with him) said ‘All the people are *dhakirūn* [32], but I want you to endow me with something special.’ Then the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him) replied, ‘Careful! O ‘*Alī*, the best that all the Prophets before me and I ever said was *Lā Ilā ha Illallāh*. If the seven heavens and the seven earths were to be placed on one side of the scale and *La Ilāha Ill Allāh* on the other side of the scale, then *Lā ilā ha illallāh* would outweigh it.’ Then he said ‘O ‘*Alī!* The last hour will not appear while there remains on the earth one who says ALLAH! ALLAH!’ So ‘*Alī* said, ‘How do I make the *dhikr*?’ The Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace

⁵⁸ Refers to a method of learning by repetition; rote-learning.

be upon him) said, ‘Close your eyes, listen to me say *La Ilāha Ill Allāh* three times, then you say it three times while I listen to you.’

This sense is narrated by some [of the chains of transmitters]. Moreover, it is the basis of the Sufis. As mentioned above, the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) ordered that the door be locked before he instructed his companions in a group and asked them, ‘Are there any strangers amongst you?’ This was to indicate that the path of the Sufis is founded on secrecy and [founded on] a suitable occasion when there is no one else, who do not believe in the path, present beside them. Perhaps they might look upon the path with disapproval due to the lack of their understanding.

Yūsuf al-Kawrānī (may Allāh be pleased with him) says that ‘*Alī* (may Allāh honour his face) instructed *Ḥasan al-Baṣrī* [with the *dhikr*] and he instructed *Dāwūd al-Tā’ī* and from him to *Imām Junayd* who is the *Shaykh* of the Sufis, and from him it branched out and thus Sufism spread amongst its people and so forth and it will not cease until the end of religion. (This is an extract from *al-Nusrah Nabawiyyah*).

In *Rūḥ al-Bayān* [commenting] on His saying, ‘Those who plight their fealty to thee do no less than plight their fealty to God:’ [48:10] the author says,

‘It is from this that the Prophetic practice of [pledging] allegiance and giving instruction to the initiates by the *Shaykhs* is taken. An expression like this needs no explanation for its masters since the one who pauses at such at his verse is not well read!’

So tell me, with Allāh as your witness, do you have a special chain which links you to *Lā ilāha illallāh* in accordance to what the aforementioned Prophetic narration refers to? I do not think so!

[33] So let us return to the discussion of assembling [for *dhikr*], if it is in accordance to what has been mentioned above. I ask you, with Allāh as your witness, what harm does it bring to the religion when a small group of Muslims gather in any of the houses of Allāh , or in any of the houses of the believers, for the purpose of reciting the Qur’ān and the like thereof? If your doubt is based only on what you have transmitted about the man who went to *Ḥasan al-Baṣrī* and informed him about a gathering, whereupon he prohibited it severely, then this evidence furnishes no argument, if it is authentic, because it contradicts the authentic traditions and the clear Prophetic narrations. Even if we should say that there is no text for the legitimacy of gathering for the purpose of the invocation of Allāh (*dhikrullāh*) and whatever is attached to it, it is still not permissible to oppose it. This is especially since it is correct, according to you, that it did occur in the time of the *Tābi’ūn* and this act was practiced by the religious leaders (*Imāms*), those whose trustworthiness and rank in religion has been agreed upon by almost all of the Muslim community.

In my opinion, no one besides you amongst the scholars of Islam ever risked to say that there is no good in the *dhikrullah* in assembly, even if there was not the least evidence indicating its permissibility. How can that be when so many traditions [of the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) and the pious predecessors] encourage it and when there is consensus in the community of it being recommended [as Prophetic practice]? By Allāh, how amazing! How is it that that which was related from *Ḥasan Al-Baṣrī* (may Allāh be pleased with him) could reach you concerning the gathering for the purpose of *dhikr* and his

strong rejection of it, yet nothing reached you concerning what the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him), related? As narrated by Muslim and *Al-Ḥākim*, *Abū Hurayrah* reported Allāh's Messenger (blessings and peace be upon him) said,

‘Allāh has [groups of] angels roaming [through the earth] who are free from work, seeking the circles of *dhikr* on the earth. So when they find [such an] assembly [in which there is *dhikr*, they sit in it and] some of them surround these gatherings with their wings till the space between them and the sky of the world is fully covered. [And when they disperse they go upward to the heaven and] Allāh, the Exalted and Glorious asks them, although He is best informed about them, ‘Where have you come from?’ They say, ‘We come from Your slaves [upon the earth] who are glorifying You (reciting *Subḥān Allāh*) [34] exalting You (saying *Allāh Akbar*), praising You (saying *al-ḥamd lillāh*) and affirming Your Oneness (saying *La Ilāha Illa Allāh*), begging you and seeking your protection.’ Then He says, ‘What do they beg of Me?’ although He is best informed about them. They say, ‘They beg You for paradise.’ He (Allāh) says, ‘Have they seen it?’ They say, ‘No, O Lord.’ He says [what would it be then] if they were to see it (i.e. paradise)?’ He then asks, ‘And what do they seek my protection from?’ while he knows better their state. They (the angels) say, ‘From the Hellfire.’ He (Allāh) asks, ‘Have they seen it (the fire)?’ They say, ‘No.’ He says, ‘Then how would it be if they saw it’. [They say, ‘They beg for Your forgiveness.’] Thereafter He says, ‘Be witness that I grant pardon to them, and confer upon them what they ask for and grant them protection against which they seek protection.’ They (the angels) say, ‘Our Lord, one amongst them is a slave with many sins

[who happened to pass by] and sat with them. He (Allāh) says, ‘I forgive him too, for he [sat with] a people, whoever sits with them is never unfortunate.’⁵⁹

May Allāh bless you! Observe this group about whom the angels have reported to Allāh, Lord of the worlds. Is this group not similar to the group about whom *Ḥasan al-Baṣrī* was informed, or if not, we could almost say the group itself, and you said that his negation was most vehement. What about the generosity of Allāh (Most Glorious and Elevated is He) towards the *dhākirūn*, promising them that which no eye has ever seen, no ear ever heard and what the heart of a human being has ever desired. However, you requited them with resentment, whereas Allāh requited them with mercy.

Why have you abandoned that which Allāh has legalised regarding the people of the assemblies of *dhikr*, on the tongue of His Messenger (blessings and peace be upon him) but [instead] needed to go beyond that, so you took to comparing the matter with its opposite? Is this not corruption on your part of the Divine Law of Allāh? Far be it that you succeeded in fulfilling your intentions of what you had attempted. The authentic Prophetic narrations have come forth in praise of the assemblies of *dhikr* in groups, and the ocean of Prophetic tradition has burst forth, with wave upon wave.

We will present to you a fragment of it, which might if God so wills become a cure for your illness. Did it not come to your ears that he (blessings and peace be upon him) used to desire to sit in the assembly of *dhikr* and [desired it to such an extent that he would] exchange it [35] for the world and whatever it contained?

⁵⁹ *Imām Aḥmad* in his *Musnad* has also narrated this Prophetic narration.

Al-Bayhaqī narrates from *Anas* that the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) said,

‘To invoke Allāh Most High with people after the dawn prayer until sunrise is more beloved to me than this world and all it contains. And to invoke Allāh Most High with people after the mid-afternoon prayer until sunset is more beloved to me than this world and all it contains.’

A similar narration is that which *Abū Dāwūd* related from *Anas* that the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) said,

‘That I should sit with a people invoking Allāh from the morning-prayer until sunrise, is more beloved to me than the freeing of four slaves from the progeny of *Ismā‘īl*. And that I should sit with a people invoking Allāh after the mid-afternoon prayer until sunset, is more beloved to me than the setting free of four slaves from the progeny of *Isma‘il*.’

He (blessings and peace be upon him) also said,

‘Allāh has angels who travel about in the roads searching for the people of *dhikr*. When they find a group invoking Allāh they announce [to the angels], ‘Come forward toward [the fulfilment of] your needs!’ Then they surround them with their wings till the space between them and the sky of the world is fully covered. Whereupon *Al-Ḥaq*, The Glorious, Most High says, ‘I call you as witnesses that I have most certainly forgiven them.’ One of the angels says, ‘O Lord! amongst them is such and such a person

who has many sins. He happened to pass by [that assembly] and sat there along with them.’ He (blessings and peace be upon him) then said that Allāh the Glorious and Exalted then replies, ‘They are a people; those who sit with them are not unfortunate.’⁶⁰ ⁶¹

Mu’āwiyah (may Allāh be pleased with him), said that the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him), once came upon a gathering of his companions and said,

‘What has brought you to this gathering?’ They answered, ‘We have gathered for the purpose of invocation (*dhikrullāh*) and praising Him for having guided us towards Islam, and having favoured us with it.’ The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) asked, ‘Is it only for Allāh that you have gathered and nothing else?’ They replied, ‘It is only for Allāh that we have gathered and nothing else!’ He said, ‘I most certainly did not ask you to swear [an oath] because of any suspicion I had about you. However, Gabriel came to inform me that Allāh Most High boasts about you to the Angels.’

He (blessings and peace be upon him) also said,

‘Allāh Most Exalted [36] will say on the day of resurrection, ‘The people of the gathering (resurrection) will know who the people of honour, are.’ and it was asked, ‘Who are the people of honour O Messenger of Allāh?’

⁶⁰ Unfortunately ‘*shaqiyyī*’ also means the one who is lost, i.e. they will gain the Divine satisfaction (*ridā*)

⁶¹ Narrated by *Imām al-Bukharī* and others

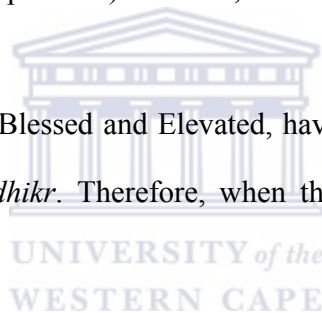
He (blessing and peace be upon him) answered, ‘The people of the assemblies of *dhikr*.’

And he (blessings and peace be upon him) also said,

‘There is not any group of people who come together for remembering Allāh, desiring through it nothing but His Face, except that a caller will announce unto them from Heaven saying, ‘You may depart with His forgiveness. Your sins have been changed into good deeds.’

He (blessings and peace be upon him) also said,

‘Verily Allāh, the Blessed and Elevated, have angels travelling in search of the circles of *dhikr*. Therefore, when they find them, they (angels) surround them.’



And he (blessings and peace be upon him) also said,

‘The booty of the assemblies of *dhikr* is Paradise.’

And he (blessings and peace be upon him) said,

‘Allāh has mobile squads of angels who descend and attend the assemblies of *dhikr* on earth, so graze in the gardens of Paradise!’ And they asked, ‘Where are the gardens of paradise?’ He (blessings and peace

be upon him) answered, ‘The assemblies of *dhikr*. Therefore go, and relax in the remembrance (*dhikr*) of Allāh, and remind yourselves about him.’

And he (blessings and peace be upon him) also said,

‘There is not a people who remember Allāh (*dhikr*), except that they are surrounded by angels, covered with divine mercy and the divine eminence descends upon them and Allāh making mention of them to those in His divine company.’

Al-Aṣḥānī mentions in *at-Targhīb* that it is reported from *Abū Razīn* that the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him) said to him,

‘Should I not show you the foundation upon which every matter rests that which will give you the best of this world and the life to come (hereafter)?’ He answered, ‘Yes.’ and the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) said, ‘You must partake in the assemblies of *dhikr*, and when you are alone then occupy your tongue with the remembrance *dhikr* of Allāh, Most High.’

He (blessings and peace be upon him) is also reported to have said,

‘Any people who depart from an assembly without having remembered Allāh, would be like departing from the corpse of a donkey and on the day of resurrection there will be grief upon them.’

He (blessings and peace be upon him) also said,

‘Tranquillity descends upon those who are in the assemblies of *dhikr* and the angels surround them and the Divine Mercy enfolds them and Allāh remembers them.’

Perhaps you were unaware of all this, so Allāh says to you, ‘... now We removed thy veil, and sharp is thy sight this Day’ [50:22]. So consider carefully [37] what has come to you from the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him) if you claim to be of his community. One Prophetic narration should suffice you to act upon it, with regard to the establishment of the legality of the assemblies of *dhikr*. What should increase you in certainty is that the assemblies of *dhikr* occurred in the time of the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him).

Imām Aḥmad narrates in (*al-Zuhd*)' from *Thābit* who said that *Salmān* was in a group who were making *dhikr* of Allāh, the Elevated, when the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him), passed by them, so they stopped. The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) said, ‘Verily, I have seen the [Divine] mercy descending upon you and I wanted to share in it with you.’ Then he said, ‘All Praise be to Allāh, the One who has provided me from

amongst my *ummah*, those with whom I have been commanded to content myself (*nafs*) with.’

Similar to this is the aforementioned narration of *Mu'āwiyah* (may Allāh be pleased with him) when the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) came upon a circle of his companions and asked, ‘What has brought you to this gathering?’ They answered, ‘We have gathered to remember Allāh and to praise Him for having guided us towards Islam and having favoured us with it.’ The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) asked, ‘Is it only for Allāh that you have gathered and nothing else?’ They replied, ‘It is only for Allāh that we have gathered and nothing else!’ He (blessings and peace be upon him) said, ‘ I did not ask you to swear [an oath] because of any suspicion I had about you, except that the [angel] Gabriel has come to inform me that Allāh Most High boasts about you to the angels.’

So is this not sufficient for you with regard to the legality of the assembly of *dhikr*, during the time of the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him)?

Similar to this is the Prophetic narration transmitted by '*Umar bin Khattab* (may Allāh be pleased with him) that he (blessings and peace be upon him) used to gather the companions for *dhikr* until they became tired then he (blessings and peace be upon him) would instruct them to do something else. This is transmitted in (*Al-Nusrah al-Nabawiyah*).

I do not know what it is that has caused you pain in the matter of Sufism. Is it only the gatherings, or is it only the *dhikr* or is it both? Perhaps it is the raising of their voices in *dhikr*? For this reason it is supposed that, that which has been narrated by *al-Bukhāri* from

Ibn `Abbās (may Allāh be pleased with them both), has never reached you. He said that the raising of the voice in *dhikr* at the time when people would leave the *fard* (compulsory) prayer used to happen in the time of the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him). Thus do I say that it also existed in the time of the Rightly Guided [*Khalīfs*].

It is reported that some people were [38] making *dhikr* of Allāh towards sunset with raised voices and whenever their voices would lower, 'Umar Ibn Al-Khattab sent someone with the order that they emphasise the *dhikr*, meaning, 'Raise your voices!' It is further narrated on the authority of *Jābir ibn `Abdilāh al-Ansārī* (may Allāh be pleased with him), that a man once raised his voice in *dhikr* and someone else said, 'If only this person could lower his voice!' Whereupon the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) replied, 'Leave him, because he is lamenting in earnest supplication.'⁶²

Similarly *al-Bayhaqī* narrates on the authority of *Zayd Ibn Aslam* that *Ibn al-Awr* said,

'I went out with the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) one night and we passed by a man who had raised his voice in *dhikr*, so I said, 'O Messenger of Allāh perhaps this person is making a show.' The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) replied, 'No, he is lamenting in earnest supplication!'

What is more forthright in its clarity, while all are authentic, is what *Abū Shujā` Ad-Daylamī* has narrated in (*Musnad al-Firdaws*) on the authority of *Ibn 'Umar* who said that the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) said,

⁶² Narated by *Ibn Mājah*

‘Whoever says *La Ilāha Illā Allāh* and does it with slow measured tones, Allāh will lodge him in the abode of eminence and endow him with the vision of His face.’

Does this not offer the most profound proof with regard to the legitimacy of [making] *dhikr* aloud? Even if we should say that you have found no text for making *dhikr* together in one voice, then it would still be incumbent on you to say what the *fuqahā* (experts of Islamic law) say about the *mu’adhdhinūn* (callers to prayer) when they make the call together in one voice. They (*fuqahā*) say, ‘It certainly travels more rapid through the body of air and its effect is stronger on the hearts of those who hear it.’

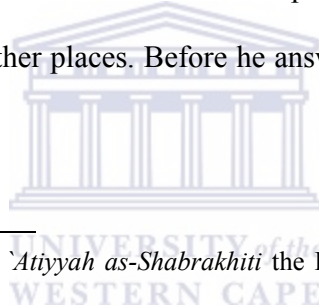
In general, even if there were not the least evidence to support the assemblies of *dhikr* and the raising of the voices in it, it would still not be correct to reject it, because the great *mujtahidūn* have sanctioned it. Also, the *ijtihād* (independent judgement in a legal or theological matter) of every *mujtahid* is acknowledged [and accepted]. Therefore, what still in the case when the Prophetic traditions are filled with [evidence], explicitly, and by allusion, in clear and sometimes symbolic expression as mentioned earlier?

Fuqahā (jurists) on the Sufis and their practices

[39] In summary, that which Sufis practice of *dhikr* in assembly, affection and love and other requisites of the path became widely known to such extent that there is almost complete consensus of the nation of its authenticity. If your desire is to obtain information about this and to follow the formal legal opinions of the skilled *fuqahā* and practicing scholars, then look at the commentary of *Rā’iyah ash-sharīshī*. He has combined all the

fatāwā (formal legal opinions) of the classic and contemporary *fuqahā*, which is not easy to accumulate. Also, do not suppose that the ones referred to are marginalised *fuqahā* or those who are well-known Sufis, so that you view them with suspicion, because their doctrine is suspect to you. Indeed, they are the experts of *Imām Mālik's Madhhab* like *al-Shabrakhītī*⁶³ and those like him, and amongst the experts of *Imām Shāfi'i's Madhhab* like *Jalāludīn As-Suyūti*⁶⁴ and his companions and amongst the experts of *Imām Abū Hanīfah's Madhhab* like *Fayrūz Abādī*⁶⁵ author of ('*al-Qāmus*') and his like. In this category there are many more scholars but I would presume that some [of their] quotes would suffice you.

The author of *al-Futūhāt wal-Adhwāq*⁶⁶ has transmitted from *Shaykh `Abdul Ghanī An-Nāblusī al-Ḥanafī*, who was asked about the Sufi practices of *dhikr* circles and making it aloud in the mosques and other places. Before he answered he criticized those opposing the *dhākirūn* and he said,



⁶³ He is *Ibrahim ibn Mar`i ibn `Atiyyah as-Shabrakhīti* the Egyptian and *Maliki* scholar. He died 1106 *hijri*. One of the foremost scholars of Egypt in his time. He studied under *Shaykh Al-Ajhūri*. He wrote a momentous commentary on the *mukhtasr al-khalil* [the standard *Maliki* text on *fiqh*] and a commentary on the forty Prophetic narrations of *al-Nawawi* as well as other works. *al-Dussūqi* included excerpts of *al-Shabrakhīti's* comments in his super-commentary of *mukhtasr al-khalil*.

⁶⁴ *Abdurrahman ibn Abū Bakr al-Suyuti al-Shāfi* was the foremost scholar of his time and a prolific writer. His is the author of over 500 books in almost all sciences. He spent the last two decades of his life in seclusion busing himself with studying and writing. He died 911 *hijri*.

⁶⁵ *Muḥammad ibn Ya`qub ibn Muḥammad Al-Fayruzābādi, Abū al-Tahir*. Born in 729 ah in *Kāzrun*. He studied the Arabic language intensely until he became the best of his contemporaries. He went to Sham after 750 ah and many students came to study under him. He traveled to various Muslim cities. He was appointed the chief judge in Yemen.

⁶⁶ The full name of the book is *Tuhfah Ahl Al-Futūhāt wal-Adhwāq* whose author is *al-Bunāni*.

‘I will quote to you what the *‘Ulamā* have recorded in their books which are reliable, acceptable and well known amongst Muslims. I convey to you the legal opinions from the four *Madhāhib*. And Allāh is the Guardian of success and favours. As for the raising of the voice (in *dhikr*), the great *muḥaddith* (transmitter of Prophetic traditions) *al-Hāfiẓ Jalāludīn as-Suyūṭī*, one of the distinguished *Shafi’i Imāms* (may Allāh be pleased with them) has written a thesis on it called *‘Natījah al-Fikr fi ‘l-Jahri Bidhikr’*. It is the answer to a question [40] posed to him of whether the practices of some Sufis who perform *dhikr* in circles, aloud in the mosques and raising their voices when reciting the *Tahlīl (La Ilāha Ill Allāh)* is disliked or not? He answered (may Allāh be pleased with him), that it is not offensive in any way whatsoever, and that there are Prophetic sayings, which strongly recommend *dhikr* aloud, and Prophetic sayings, which strongly recommend *dhikr* softly, or a combination the two, which varies in relation to the differing circumstances of people.’

Thereafter he proceeded to cite the opinions of the scholars of the rest of the *Madhāhib*.

In my mind I have no doubt that you acknowledge *al-Suyūṭī’s* knowledge of the fundamentals and subordinate aspects [of religion] as being much greater than yours, in as much as you also acknowledge *al-Shabrakhīṭī*, one of the *Maliki* masters. I now transmit to you his text and his *fatwā* (formal legal opinion),

‘After praising Allāh and pronouncing blessing and peace upon the Messenger of Allāh, he stated that verily these gentlemen; their [assemblies of] *dhikr* is attended and well known. The scholars and *Fuqahā* have attended it, century after century from times of old until now. Therefore, they are in a praiseworthy state and their path of goodness is well known. So whoever harms them will be deserving of punishment as mentioned in the Holy tradition ‘Whoever harms a friend of Mine, I declare war on him.’ And whoever amongst them is not a saint is still considered to be in the protection of the saints, due to his love for them and his following their path’. These are some of quotes that the author of (*Al-Nusrah al-Nabwiyyah*) transmitted from him (*al-Shabrakhiti*)-.’



As for that which he has been transmitted from *Fayrūzabādī*, the aforementioned, he said,

‘It is not permissible for anyone to criticize the people [of Sufism] as being of lowly intellect, because they have a high degree of understanding and inner vision. And it has never reached us that anyone of them ever commanded something that would destroy the religion and neither did they forbid anyone from taking ablution or performing the prayers or from anything else amongst the obligations of Islam and its recommended acts. They only speak words that are beyond the intellect’. He (*Fayrūzabādī*) used to say, The Sufis have reached the stations and degrees of knowledge, and sometimes to [41] the realms of unknown stations and degrees of science which have not been explained by the Book nor the Sunnah.’

However, the senior eminent scholars have traced that back to the Book and the Sunnah in a meticulous way because of their excellent interpretations and their good opinion of the righteous. But it is not everyone who exercises restraint when he hears a speech that he does not understand. Nay, most rush forth without delay to spurn its author, ‘Man is a creature of haste’ [21:37]. Take the knowledgeable and brilliant *Abū al-Abbas ibn Shurayj* who once denied Sufism and then attended the assembly of *Abū 'l-Qasim al-Junayd* to hear what is generally attributed to the Sufis. After he departed he was asked what he had found. He answered, that he did not understand what he had said, but found his speech has a powerful effect upon the heart that was very evident. This pointed to sincerity on the inside and indicated sincerity on the heart and that his speech was not futile.’ (*al-Nusrah al-Nabawiyyah*).

Now then, my dear brother, this is not what we have encountered from your predecessors in Tunis? Their point of view, which they are renowned for, is their respect for Sufism. In the time of *Shaykh al-Islām Muḥammad Buyrum* a request for a legal opinion reached them concerning the Sufis and their practices.

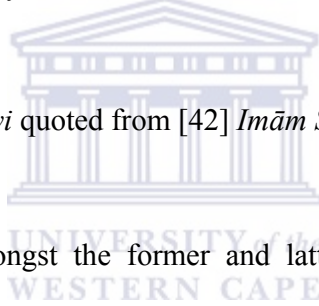
He responded with a lengthy answer, some of what was said,

‘Verily, this path most certainly has a chain, which ties up with the bringer of Law, (blessings and peace be upon him) undoubtedly it (chain) is of the basis and principles of our strong religion. The scholars have

specified in the books of the science of *Ḥadīth*, and the principles of Islamic Jurisprudence, that the chain of narrators is one of the special characteristics of this noble and blessed community. The basis of this is what we have presented; to the point where he said, ‘Verily in this path they raise their voices when making *dhikr* and this is generally acceptable.’

It has been quoted in '*al-Durr al-Mukhtar*' as a quote from *al-Fatwa l-Khayriyyah*, in the [following] text, which comes forth in a Prophetic narration, that demands making *dhikr* aloud like, ‘And if he remembers Me in a company, I will remember him in a company more excellent than his’ narrated by *al-Bukhari* and *Muslim*'.

Then he said that *al-Hamawi* quoted from [42] *Imām Sha`rani* the [following] text,



‘The scholars amongst the former and latter generations have agreed unanimously upon group (congregational) *dhikr* in the mosques and other places, except if their doing it aloud disturbs one sleeping, praying or reciting (the Qur’ān).’

The author of (*al-Nusrah*) has mentioned this in depth.

This and the like thereof is widespread amongst the `scholars of Tunis in their respect for the Sufis, except what had happened between the judge *Ibn ul-Barra* and *Imām al-Shadhili* (may Allāh be pleased with him), and their story is well known. However, *Ibn ul-Barra* never opposed the doctrine in principle; he only opposed a specific individual. Due to this,

much hatred had befallen him to which history bears testimony. May Allāh protect us and all the Muslims from any fault-finding towards Islam and the Muslims.

You then mentioned what *Imām Malik* said concerning the following verse in Qur’ān , ‘This day I have perfected your religion’ [5:4] ‘Whatever was not considered religion at that time cannot be considered as religion today. Allāh is only to be worshipped by those laws which He prescribed (Law).’ You then added your speech (to *Malik's* statement) saying, ‘This type of assembly [of *dhikr*] was never ever legalised and it is therefore incorrect to worship Allāh with it.’ It appears that if a person like yourself is unable to differentiate between a quote and his own speech, that such a person's knowledge cannot be trusted.

Imām Aḥmad, may Allāh be pleased with him, was once asked about *Ibn Ishaq*, if he narrates without corroborating the narration, do you accept it? He answered, ‘By Allāh ! I do not accept it, for verily I have seen him narrating from a group, not distinguishing the narration of this one from another.’ It appears to me that you want the reader to believe that the entire speech is *Malik's* and that which the Sufis follow in their doctrine is part of a new religion. This is the most extreme slander coming from you. Through your accusation of the Sufis you desecrate all the other schools of thought because you consider *Ijtihād* as an additional religion. And Allāh forbid! That the community of Muḥammad (blessings and peace be upon him) should come together to substitute the religion of Islam for something else.

If you had at least paid attention to one of your proofs, his saying, (blessings and peace be upon him), ‘Follow my way (Sunnah) and the way (Sunnah) [43] of the rightly guided successors after me’, then you would have known that the *ijtihad* of the *Mujtahidun* is of

the Sunnah, because they are the vicegerents on earth. Indeed there is *Ijma`* (general consensus) amongst the scholars about their honesty and faithfulness and the least you ought to have done was to consider the founder of the doctrine of Sufism to be one of the *Mujtahidin* of religion, for his *Ijtihad* is bringing out the station of *al-Ihsan*.

He is like *al-Ash'ari* in relation to the station of *Imān* (Faith), and like *Imām Malik* and those who resemble him in bringing out the station of Islam. The totality of religion is made up of three levels (*Islam-Imān-Ihsān*) as related in the most famous Prophetic narration⁶⁷. By this it should become clear to you that the Sufis and their assemblies of *dhikr*, are taken purely from the Law. This is in accordance to the Prophetic narrations, which encourages desire for the assemblies of *dhikr*.



Sufism and innovation (bid`ah)

If we were to say that which the Sufis are following is an innovation, then it is eligible to be called a good innovation. This is also called a *Sunnah* taken from the saying of the Prophet (blessings and peace upon him), ‘Whoever institutes a good practice will receive its reward and the reward of the one who practices it till the day of Judgement’. So consider carefully how an innovation is called a Sunnah.

Has it not come to you that assembling for the *Ramadan* night prayers in the mosques had been innovated by 'Umar, which became an observed *Sunnah*. 'Umar's remark about it was, ‘What a good innovation’. Such an example does not need any explanation, not withstanding that it falls under *Ibadah* (worship).

⁶⁷ Prophetic narration from *al-Bukhāri* and *Muslim*.

However, Sufism, falls under *`Ibadah* from the perspective of being an integral aspect not from the perspective of being additional or not additional, since most of it relates to the purification of the inner, the improvement of morals, the occupation with *dhikr*, closeness with the One remembered, and the rest that is stipulated. . So do you see in that anything contradictory to the religion, or is it [instead] a main pillar of the religion?

Then you began to vilify innovation. My opinion is that you do not distinguish between a recommended innovation which is known in the *Sunnah* as aforementioned in his narration, 'whoever instituted a good practice...' [44] and that which is contrary to it. For this reason is it feared that you would inadvertently vilify your activities [of teaching] by which you serve your Lord.



The Principles of innovation (bid`ah)

Do you not know that innovation (*bid`ah*) falls under the five principles of *al-wujūb* (obligatory), and *al-nadab* (desired), *al-lbaha* (permissible), *al-karaha* (offensive), and *al-haram* (unlawful)? *Izzudin bin Abd Salaam* has gone to great length to confirm this when he gave an example of an obligatory innovation as that with which one is able to fulfill the obligatory, like the science of Arabic grammar. Did you not know that this is an innovation? Similar to this are the sciences, which you have with you, like rhetoric, logic, prosody, the science of the criticism of the reliability and non-reliability of the narrators of Prophetic reports, and *Ḥadīth* methodology. I would almost include lecture and lecturing. Nay, the documentation of knowledge itself is an innovation. So if that is the case, then what do you say about these innovations? Are these amongst the misleading innovations leading towards

the Hell? Or are they amongst the recommended innovations for which there are rewarded? If you say that they are amongst the latter then why can you not consider the assemblies of *dhikr* to be of a similar nature? This is apart from what the evidence and clear texts refer to, all which requires no interpretation. However, if fairness silences the tongue of acknowledgment then lack of knowledge in someone prevents him from understanding. The scholars (may Allāh be pleased with them) most certainly understood the meaning of innovation that should be avoided.

Imām Shafi'i said, 'Innovation is that which contradicts Qur'an, *Sunnah* or *Ijma* (consensus) or any narration and whatever does not contradict that is praiseworthy'. The contradiction either explicitly or by implication, results in that which necessitates prohibition and sometimes *karahah* (offensiveness). This .what *Ibn Hajar al-Haythami* has narrated.

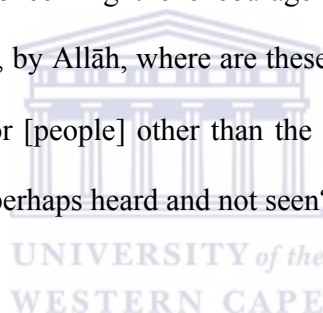


Applying Ijtihad (legal reasoning) to Sufism

I am certain that you accept *ijtihad* to be one of the characteristics of this community, and you do know that the principles of religion are three; *Islam, Imān and Ihsan*. So why is it that you accept the *Ijtihad* of the four *Imāms* and their like in the case of Islam, and you accept the *Ijtihad* of *Ash'ari* and *Maturidi* [45] in belief (*I'tiqad*) which is the station of *Imān*, but you do not accept the *Ijtihad* of *Junayd* and his group with regard to the station of *Ihsan*. Do you not consider *Ihsan* to be a principle? No, by Allāh! This is not my opinion about you, that you should be unmindful of that which is most important. Our discussion about the meaning of innovation is required when there is no text until one is able to look into it to see whether it is amongst the misleading innovations or amongst the recommended innovations.

As for that which the Sufis practice of assembly, it is very clearly part of the Law, except to those who did not follow the [Prophetic] narrations; or are blinded by fanaticism. His eyes should fall on that which is in the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* that will lead him to that. Some of the Prophetic narrations have already been mentioned which encourages the circles and assemblies of *dhikr*. I am most certain that you are fully acquainted with all this, but I have only mentioned it in accordance with what eloquent men practice, when they occasionally address the one who knows as someone who does not know, like the saying of *al-Akhdari*, 'Like our saying to the scholar who is unmindful: *dhikr* is the key to the door of the Presence'.

If that which proceeded concerning the encouragement of the assemblies of *dhikr* has convinced you, then tell me, by Allāh, where are these desirable assemblies found? Is it in a place other than the earth or [people] other than the community of Muḥammad (blessings and peace be upon him) or perhaps heard and not seen?



Status of the Dhākirun

In my opinion you despise the Sufis and their assemblies of *dhikr*, or else you would have been envious of what they do. Are you not aware the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) has described them for you as being a mix of different tribes that came together for the purpose of *dhikr* of Allāh and nothing else.

The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) said,

‘On the right hand side of the Most Gracious and both His hands are right, there are men who are neither Prophets nor martyrs, the whiteness of their

faces overwhelms the sight of those who look at them. The Prophets and the martyrs envy them for their seats and nearness to Allāh [46] Most High. It was asked, O Messenger of Allāh, who are they?' He answered; they are a combination of tribes with different inclinations who assemble for the purpose of *dhikr* of Allāh. They utter the best of words just like an eater of dates would select the best of it.'

Is this not, may Allāh have mercy upon you, one of the most distinct description of the Sufis? Do you not know that they are from different tribes assembling not because of any kinship that joins them, nor because of any wealth that wish to acquire. Are they not the lovers about whom Allāh will say on the day of Resurrection, calling out to them 'Where are those who loved each other for Me'? So what is this calamity, which has befallen you, which lead you to sever the link, which Allāh has commanded you to join and respect? Do you not know that the love of Allāh is an expression of love for *dhikr* and the *dhākirūn* ? Do you not know that Allāh jealously guards the people who are attached to Him, even if they are liars?' I implore you, by Allāh and by the holiness of His Messenger (blessings and peace be upon him) if you do not refrain from [harming] some of the people of *La Ilāha Illā Allāh*, leaving them and their affairs so that Allāh judge them on the day of resurrection, I certainly fear for you that *La Ilāha Illā Allāh* will become your adversary on the day of resurrection. 'God cautions you (to remember) Himself;' [3:28]. *Ibn Arabi Al-Hatimi* (may Allāh be pleased with him) says in his admonition,

'Beware, beware of any hostility towards the people of *La Ilāha Illā Allāh* because [these people] have a great sovereignty from Allāh. They are the friends of Allāh. If they should err and come with sins as much as the earth and they do not ascribe any partners to Allāh. He will requite them with the like of it in forgiveness.'

What bears testimony to this is that *Hudhayfah* narrated that the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) said,

‘There will come a time upon the people, when they will not know the prayer (*Salah*) nor fasting, nor *Hajj* (pilgrimage), nor *Zakah* (alms) except that they will say: we have noticed our forefathers saying *La Ilāha Illā Allāh*. *Hudhayfah* was asked, ‘Of what use will *La Ilāha Illā Allāh* be to them? He (blessings and peace be upon him) answered, It will save them from the Fire, it will save them from the Fire, it will save them from the fire.’

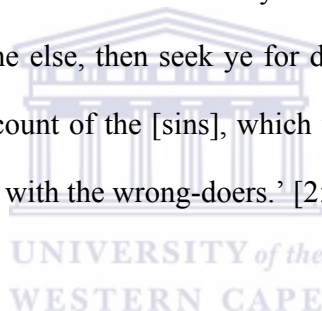
If such is the case, then what will be the status of the one who prays, [47] fasts, performs *Hajj* and gives *Zakah*? Is it permissible to show hostility to such a person? It is their right over you, that you should refrain from your hatred for the people of Allāh and instead show your love towards them. Submitting with all your heart and tongue saying, may Allāh pardon the past.

Sufis are not misguided

Which sin could be more [abominable] than applying what has been narrated about the misguided people to the Sufis? That did not suffice you until you went further to consider them to be among the people of the Hellfire, using the Prophet's (blessings and peace be upon him) saying as an evidence: ‘My community will be divided into seventy and odd groups, all of them are condemned to the Hellfire, except for one group, and it is the one upon which I and my companions are.’ It is obvious that you regard the party of the Sufis to

be one of these groups. However, I make Allāh, His Prophet and the pious believers to judge between you and the Sufis. If you had made the Sufis one of those groups, it would be difficult for you to find the entire seventy odd groups, except if you have completed it by including yourself and those of your kind, because you have restricted the groups to the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-jama'a*. Why did you not relate the Prophetic narration, which *Ghazali* relates in his book known as (*Faizal At-Tafriqa*) in which the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) said, ‘My community will be divided into seventy odd groups, all of which of them will be in paradise, except for the heretics.’

However, your eye did not fall upon that; it only fell upon that which helps you in your judgement against the rest of the Muslims with the Fire, until paradise will be vacant just for you and those of your kind and no one else. ‘Say: ‘If the last Home, with God, be for you specially, and not for anyone else, then seek ye for death, if ye are sincere.’ But they will never seek for death, on account of the [sins], which their hands have sent on before them. And God is well-acquainted with the wrong-doers.’ [2:94-95].



In general one seeks to reconcile two seemingly [contradictory] [48] Prophetic narrations. In these matters you will not find anyone who will relieve you from this difficulty except a Sufi. It is inconceivable that you would submit yourself to him, because envy prevents fairness and acknowledgment. In any case, we will still mention what Allāh has endowed [us] with, even if you have no need for it. For every saying that is rejected by one, will be accepted by another.

To reconcile the two Prophetic narrations is easy when you understand the word ‘community’ in the first Prophetic narration as referring to all people while in the second Prophetic narration the reference is to Muslims. The meaning will become apparent when using and quoting the Prophetic narration in full. He (blessings and peace be upon him) said

in a well-known narration, ‘The Jews were split up into seventy one sects and the Christians were split up into seventy two sects, and my community will be split up into seventy three sects, all of them will be condemned to the Hellfire, except for the one group which I and my companions follow.’

It is clear from the intent of the sequence that there were seventy creeds. The creed with which Prophet *Mūsā* (on him be peace) came with was the seventy first sect. All of them were condemned to the Fire, except for that which *Mūsā* and his companions followed. All these sects are referred to as his community because he was the Messenger of his time. When *’Isa* (on him be peace) was sent with a creed it was the seventy second. All of them were condemned to the Fire except for that which *’Isā* and his followers practiced. When *Aḥmad* (blessings and peace be upon him) was sent with his pristine creed, it then became the seventy third sect. All of them are condemned to the Fire except for that which he (blessings and peace be upon him) and his companions practiced. The word 'community' in the above narration, refers to all people because the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) used to say, ‘I am the Messenger of those whom I met in my lifetime and of those who will be born after me’.

According to the second Prophetic narration, the creed of Muḥammad (blessings and peace be upon him) has split into seventy odd [49] sects. This is attributed to the many schools of thought and the different movements. All of them will be in Paradise except for the heretics. This conforms to the compassion of Muḥammad (blessings and peace be upon him) and the Divine Mercy, or else the entire community would be destroyed. If the saved [sect] is one of the seventy odd parts, then every sect will believe that they will be saved, since the saved

sect is unspecified. I assert that Allāh Most High is in accordance to the opinion⁶⁸ of every believer in Allāh and His Messenger (blessings and peace be upon him) and the Last Day.

However, much he strived for himself toward that which brings him closer to Allāh, if he is correct he will be rewarded twice, but if he has erred [in his *ijtihad*] he will be rewarded once. So in both cases he is still rewarded whether you like it or not, because the creation is not tasked with obtaining the correct answer but they are tasked with what they perceive to be correct. All this is what the tolerance of Muḥammad's (blessings and peace be upon him) Law expects, which is referred to in His, the Almighty's saying, 'He has chosen you, and has imposed no difficulties on you in religion;' [22: 78]. What bears testimony to that which was mentioned is what *al-Tabrani* narrated from the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him) who said, 'Verily my Law has come in three hundred ways, whoever but follows one of the ways will succeed.'

What is more profound in confirmation and this is the absolute truth, God willing, is what *Suyuti* mentioned in his book (*al-Jami As-Saghir*) concerning the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him) who said,

'There is not a community except that some will enter the fire, and some will enter Paradise, except for my community who will all enter Paradise.'

Why did you not come across these Prophetic narrations, which are more inclusive, decreeing success upon the community of Muḥammad (blessings and peace be upon him)? Instead you looked with the eye of fault and provided textual evidence which is to decree the

⁶⁸ The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) said, I am in accordance to the opinion that my slave has of me.

dhākirūn with destruction. You have not found any evidence that speaks of destruction, except that you linked it to the *dhākirūn* placing them outside the abundant Mercy of Allāh, which encompasses everything. Do you not see that after you proved them to be innovators, you said that the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him) said,

‘Allāh refuses to accept the deed of the follower of innovation until he renounces his innovation.’

Your intention with this is that none of [50] the *dhākirūn* 's deeds will be accepted until they renounce that which they practice of *dhikr* and gatherings, because according to your claim it is an innovation. Would I knew (what would happen), when the groups of *dhākirūn* amongst the majority of Muslims leave that which they had practiced. Where will they go to, and which assembly have you chosen for them? Will they disperse into the streets or will they aspire towards amusement? Are you not aware that people are naturally fond of assemblies? If so and this is necessary, then what is it that you choose for the Muslims in general, if they cannot come together for Allāh [in *dhikr*] and raise their voices in *dhikr*? 'then in what exposition will they believe after [rejecting] God and His Signs?' [45:6] After all this you besieged them with two Prophetic narrations saying that *Abū Na`aym* narrated,

‘The people of innovation are the worst of creation,’

And narrated by others (scholars),

‘The perpetrators of innovation are the dogs of the Hellfire’

When you feared that the reader might not understand who the people of innovation were since people differ in their understanding, you made it clear by quoting *al-Ustadh Abū Bakr al-Tartushi* who said, ‘Sufism is idleness, ignorance and misguidance. Islam is only the Book of Allāh and the *Sunnah* of the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him).’ How daring you are towards the people of Allāh and how sharp is your tongue in

eating the flesh of the Sufis. By Allāh, it is more preferable that you should destroy the *Ka'bah* instead of crying out this statement. You have defined Sufism as being idleness, ignorance and misguidance. By Allāh the scholars of religion and the sages have a definition of Sufism opposite to yours.

They say that Sufism is an expression of educating the 'self' in slavehood (*ubudiyyah*) and submitting it to the commands of the Lordship (*Rububiyyah*). Sufism is to free oneself from all base qualities and the acquisition of all sublime qualities. *Abū al-Qasim al-Junayd* (may Allāh be pleased with him) said, 'Sufism is that the Truth (*al-Haqq*) should cause you to die within yourself and resurrect you in Him'. These are some of the definitions, which they have given of Sufism [51].

As for your saying that 'Sufism is idleness' this is refuted because they (the Sufis) have stipulated that the Sufi takes account of himself [with every breath] applying his saying (blessings and peace be upon him).

‘Take account of yourselves before you will be taken account of’.

So do you see this as idleness?

As for your saying 'Sufism is ignorance' is also refuted because of the sciences, which they (the Sufis) have brought forth, which the great masters amongst men are unable to do. What still about those who are of your kind! The writings of the Sufis are the most fair evidence.

Are you not aware that Sufism has been mentioned by some of the great masters in Islamic law like *Imām al-Ghazali* and *Shaykh al-Sanusi*, the writer of *al-Aqa'id* (beliefs) who said, ‘it is compulsory (necessary) to strive towards (finding) someone who is well known by it (Sufism) even if it is without the acceptance of the parents’. *Junayd* (may Allāh be pleased

with him) said, 'If there should be a science beneath the surface of the earth more noble than that which we speak of with our friends then we would most certainly have striven towards it.' *Shaykh al-Saqli* says in his book (*Nur al-Qulub*),

'Every person who attests to this science is considered amongst the elect.

The one who understands it is considered amongst the elect of the elect.

Whoever speaks about it, and discusses it, is an unreachable star and an unavoidable ocean.'

By Allāh as your witness! Do you understand anything about their hidden and well-kept knowledge, and their secret pearls? Indeed not! You are merely like someone who is behind a veil of iron. It is because of this [veil] that you have become ignorant. As for your saying that Sufism is misguidance, 'Verily thy Lord knoweth best those who stray from His Path, and He knoweth best those who receive guidance'. [53:30]. I do not deny the existence of critics amongst the *Ahl al-Sunnah* in every age who criticize some individual Sufis because of shortcomings in the critic or the one who is being criticized. However, as for rejecting Sufism in its entirety, the *Ahl al-Sunnah* has never displayed such an attitude. Those who expressed this view were only some group who had no [52] importance with regard to the majority, and it was for this reason that their views never spread. So what is it that you have chosen from those forgotten doctrines, to have come to the point of aiding their doctrines and trying to revive their gone and forgotten beliefs? For you have instilled in the hearts of the sons of the land a bad opinion about *dhikr* and the *dhākirūn*. In my opinion, your assemblies are not devoid of what you have written about Sufism. If such is the case, we pray that Allāh protect those who are present in your assemblies, so that they do not share with you except that which brings benefit to them and that they leave off everything else.

With regard to your statement, 'Islam is only the Book of Allāh and the *Sunnah* of the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him)', who has informed you that the Sufis claim that Islam is other than these two sources? Yes, they do say that in the Book of Allāh there are sciences, which the masses are unable to access. The Sultan of the lovers⁶⁹ said,

‘Beyond the written word of there is knowledge too subtle for the most advanced intellects to perceive.’

Perhaps the one who is striving to understand the outer and literal meanings of things, will not find it in the book of Allāh, except what he perceives through his limited knowledge and abilities. Hence he denies that which is beyond that. He is unaware that his understanding about the literal meaning of the Book is like someone who is only acquainted with the shell of a nut. Whatever lies beyond that, is what the eye has never seen, the ear has never heard nor has it ever occurred to the mind of a human being.

Does he think that the understanding, which he has arrived at, is equivalent to the inner perceptions, which the companions of the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him) had of the Book? Nay! Let him thoroughly examine himself. Then, if what is hidden in his heart is greater than what he articulates, then he is on a clear proof from his Lord! If not, then what he does not have is much more than what he has acquired. He (blessings and peace be upon him) is reported to have said, ‘There is most certainly a kind of knowledge that appears to be in a hidden form. None has knowledge thereof except for the Knowers of Allāh (Gnostics) and when they reveal this knowledge the people who are mistaken about Allāh, reject it.’

⁶⁹ Ûmar ibn-Farid

And he also said, [53]

"The hidden (spiritual) knowledge is one the secrets of Allāh and of His wisdom. He places it in the hearts of whomever He willeth amongst His servants'.

He also said 'Knowledge is of two kinds, knowledge in the heart and this knowledge is beneficial and a knowledge which is on the tongue, and this knowledge is Allāh's proof against the children of Adam.' This certainly proves that the hidden knowledge is not the same as the acquired knowledge.

Of the well-known sayings of *Abū Hurayrah* (may Allāh be pleased with him) is that he said,

'I have preserved two vessels of knowledge from the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him), the one I have disclosed, as for the other if I were to disclose it, you would slit my throat'.

Transmitted from *Abū 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-Barr*. It is narrated that *Ibn 'Abbas* said,

'If I should tell you what I know about the commentary of His, the Almighty's saying 'Through the midst of them (all) descends His Command' [65:12] you would either stone me or accuse me of disbelief. (*Sha`rānī* mentions this in his book '*Al-Yawakūt Wa l-Jawāhir*').

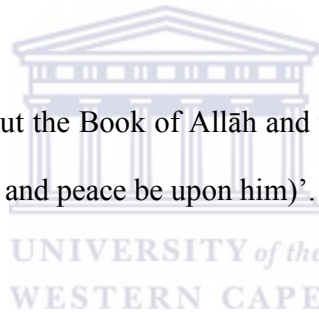
The following is attributed to *Zayn ul-`Ābidīn* (may Allāh be pleased with him) who relates,

‘O my Lord there is a jewel of a knowledge,
Should I disclose it, they would accuse me of idolatry
And the Muslims would regard the shedding of my blood as permissible.
And they see the worst of their deeds as good.’

Salmān al-Farisi (may Allāh be pleased with him) said, ‘If I should inform you of everything that I know you would say, may Allāh have mercy on the killer of *Salmān*’.
Imām `Ali (may Allāh honour his face) said, ‘I have a knowledge, should I mention it you would remove this from this (pointing towards his head and body).’ All this is a proof that in the hearts are hidden sciences.

As for your saying,

‘Islam is nothing but the Book of Allāh and the *Sunnah* of the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him)’.



It is as if you are alluding that this is what you understand of the Book of Allāh. Are you not aware that the Qur'an has an outer meaning, inner meaning, [a meaning to] the restricted boundaries (*ḥadd*) and [a meaning to] the opening to the boundless horizons (*maṭla`*)' as transmitted in the famous Prophetic narration of the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him) as transmitted in '*Tāj al-Tafāsīr*' (The Crown of Exegesis). Even if we should say that you have knowledge of its outer meanings, do you know anything about its inner meanings? Moreover where are you with regard to [54] its restricted meanings (*ḥadd*) and its boundless horizons (*maṭla`*) meanings? That is the share of the Knowers of Allāh and the knowers of the *Sunnah* of the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him). It is related that *Abū Darda* (may Allāh be pleased with him) said, 'You will never

comprehend all its meanings until you see that the Qur'ān has many different meanings.' It is said that this is a narration of *Shaddād bin Aws* transmitted by *Ibn `Abdul Barr*. However, you see Islam only in the light of what you and those like you follow. If such is the case, then you have equated your secrets to those of the companions of Allāh's Messenger (blessings and peace be upon him). Nay! To the secrets of the Prophets (peace be upon them). This is the highest form of ignorance.

Do you not know that the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him) said?

‘The earth will never be devoid of forty men (whose hearts) in accordance with the heart of the intimate friend of the Most Gracious⁷⁰.’

Do you belong to this group mentioned in this narration? If you do belong, then it is likely that you will have a most ample share of knowledge of the secrets of the religion. If you do not belong, then surrender the knowledge to its masters, because the signs are clear to those who pursue it, since there are an elect amongst the community to whom Allāh has revealed the Secrets of the Book and the *Sunnah*. In as much as this is true, would the group referred to, be found amongst any other than the *dhākirūn* with the distinguishing trait of complete devotion to Allāh Most High? ‘... men whom neither traffic nor merchandise can divert from the Remembrance of God,’ [24:37].

Dhun-Nūn al-Misri (may Allāh be pleased with him) gives an example of such people when he said ‘I met a woman in one of the travels and asked her, 'Where do you come from?', she answered 'From a people who ‘forsake their beds of sleep’ [32:16].’ Then I asked her 'where do you intend to go to?' and she answered 'to men whom neither traffic nor merchandise can

⁷⁰ In reference to Prophet *Ibrahim*

divert from the remembrance of Allāh'. But, you thought that Sufism referred to a group of people who gathered for the purpose of dancing and singing poetry and nothing else. Your example is like the person who went to the shepherd at night requesting him to donate a sheep. The shepherd granted him permission [55], whereupon he went to fetch the sheep. Then in the dark his hand fell upon the watchdog who is usually among the sheep. In the morning he discovered a dog in his hand. He then accused the shepherd of the sheep, of being the shepherd of the dogs.

This is the implication of what you have said since you have confined Sufism to dancing and the like thereof. Therefore you said, 'Among the despicable and prohibited innovations is to dance with *dhikr*.' Thereafter you quoted of *al-Tartūshi* who judged the elect of the community of Muḥammad (blessings and peace be upon him), as being idle, ignorant and misguided. However, this did not suffice you until you coined an eloquent similitude removing them from the fold of Islam and being Muslims. This statement you transmitted from one like yourself who either does not fear Allāh, or intended a specific group (in his statement). 'As for dancing and ecstasy, the first ones to innovate this practice were the people of *Sāmiri*. They worshipped the calf and danced around it in ecstasy. Thirst is the religion of the unbelievers and the calf worshippers'.

In my opinion you have transgressed the bounds in that which you have done, for there is not a path leading to [defaming] the honour of Allāh's people except that you have traversed it. If this is your comparison between the *fuqara* and the calf worshippers, then there is a similarity to the form that exists between the two groups in which you have discovered. But have you discovered the point of similarity between the ecstasies for two objects of worship? Or in other words have you found the point of similarity between the

calf of the Israelites and the Lord of the *dhākirūn*? High and Exalted is Allāh from that which the wrongdoers say! In truth we should not occupy ourselves speaking about such trivial expressions, because it has been declared false and refuted from many angles. Others have discussed this in great length. They mentioned that this has been falsely attributed to *Abū Hanīfah*. Far be it that he would say something like that! [56].

I shall speak to you about the ecstasy, which you mentioned as unlawful (ḥaram), (1) even though that is not really the aim of the path of the Sufis. The ecstasy is as a result of fear (*wajl*⁷¹), which you are lacking. Allāh says, ‘For, Believers are those who, when God is mentioned, feel a tremor in their hearts, and when they hear His Signs rehearsed, find their faith strengthened,’ [8:2]. So behold! Allāh Himself informs you of the fear and tremor that overcomes the *dhakir*. He has made it one of the most distinguishing characteristics of the believers. Have you not seen how Allāh praised the people of the Book (*Ahl al-Kitab*) for their states of ecstasy? He mentioned one of the aspects associated with it as praiseworthy when He said: ‘And when they listen to the revelation received by the apostle, thou wilt see their eyes overflowing with tears, for they recognise the truth.’ [5:86]. Is there not in all this proof of a stirring that takes place on the inside of the believer because of the remembrance of Allāh and listening to His words? Does Allāh not say, ‘Had We sent down this Qur’an on a mountain, verily thou wouldst have seen it humble itself and cleave asunder for fear of God.’ [59:21]. He explained the meaning of the Qur’an for which the mountains would shake and break asunder and said, ‘God is He, than Whom there is no other god;-’ [59:22] to the end of the Most Beautiful Names which He has mentioned.

⁷¹ A more complete meaning of the term (*wajl*) would be to describe it as a state resulting from extreme consciousness of God, where the subject is fearfully wery of the Divine Presence.

Why would you not excuse the hearts when they shake and the bodies when they sway, from something for which the mountains would break asunder? Your situation is such because you have never found inside of you what [57] others have found, because Allāh reminds us that there are hearts which are like rocks or even harder. Alternately it might be that you have invoked the Divine Names of Allāh and read the Book of Allāh literally, Are you not aware that *Sayyidina 'Umar* once passed by a man who recited the verse ‘Verily, the doom of your Lord will indeed come to pass’ [52:7]. He [*'Umar*] uttered a loud cry that was heard in the outskirts of *Madīnah*, and then he fainted. He was carried home and remained speechless for two days. *Imām Shāfi'i* once heard someone reciting the verse ‘That will be a day when they shall not be able to speak, nor will it be open to them to put forth pleas’ [77:35-36]. Then he fainted and was carried to his home.

This does not require much explanation, for fear and the state of ecstasy has resulted in the 'death'⁷² of many of the pious predecessors. Are you not aware of what came to us via the *Sunnah* with regard to the assembly of *Sayyidina Dawūd* (upon him be peace) when he would start reciting the *Zabūr* (the Psalms). Or do you think that the children of Israel were gentler in heart than the community of Muḥammad (blessings and peace be upon him)? However, I am sure that you do not deny the occurrence of fear (*wajl*), which causes the effects of passion and ecstasy. Nay! You approve this state for some undistinguished individuals, which is an approval of knowledge but not of taste (*dhawq*⁷³). For if such was the case whilst knowing that it is one of the most essential requirements of feeling and emotions, you would not have assigned it to the religion of the unbelievers, whom Allāh has described in the ‘They are only like cattle;-’ [25:44]. You have indeed made them more

⁷² This term probably refers to a state of physical death. This might also refer to swooning.

⁷³ *Dhawq* is normally referred to by the Sufis as a spiritual experience.

gentle in heart than the believers who place their trust in their Lord. Have you made the love of the Israelites for the calf, stronger than the love of Allāh's people for Allāh? Allāh says 'But those of faith are overflowing in their love for God.' [2:165].

‘A people whose hearts are filled with pride for their masters

And the slaves boast of the master according to his status.’

The Israelites were moved by the love that filled their hearts for the calf, whereas the Sufīs are moved by the love of Allāh that fill their hearts and it is this that led to their states of ecstasy which you [58] criticized.

The one who is ignorant of something opposes it. Did the words of the Most High not reach you, ‘For, Believers are those who, when God is mentioned, feel a tremor in their hearts’ [8:2]. Are you not aware that the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him) mentioned, ‘amongst his community there are people who will enter Paradise. Their hearts are like those of birds’. This was transmitted in (*Jāmi al-Saghīr*). So in the light of this where are those referred to in [the narration] to be found, if not amongst the *dhākirūn*? And in most cases it appears as if you consider yourself to be one of them.

But by Allāh, I ask you to inform me, are you of those who remember Allāh with much remembrance? Or of those ‘whom neither traffic nor merchandise can divert them from the Remembrance of God? [24:37] ‘Or of those who remember Allāh standing, sitting, and lying on their sides? Or those who ‘when Allāh is mentioned their hearts tremble with fear?’ Or of those who, ‘when they listen to the revelation received by the Messenger (blessings and peace be upon him), you will see their eyes overflowing with tears, because they recognise the truth’? Or of those about whom the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) says, ‘The deeply devoted and those completely immersed in the remembrance of Allāh have superseded’? Or are you of those who are called mad because they follow the saying of the

Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) ‘Remember Allāh with much remembrance until they will say you are crazy’? Or are you considered to be of those who want to be seen by men following the saying of the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) ‘Intensify the remembrance of Allāh until the hypocrites will say, ‘You only want to be seen by men’? By Allāh, tell me to which group do you belong? Are you amongst those who only speak about the above or are you amongst those who are being spoken of?

But in general the occurrence of ecstasy cannot be set aside, save in the case of someone with a harsh nature and rude manners, just as it would be farfetched for the impotent to experience the pleasure of copulation. If you did not receive this favour, then do not deny it in others.

Shaykh Shu'ayb Abū Madyan (may Allāh be pleased with him) said,

[59] Say to the one who prevents the people of ecstasy from experiencing ecstasy.

If you have never tasted the drink of love in its essence, then leave us.

When we are happy and our souls are joyful

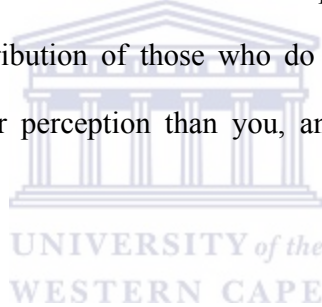
And the wine of love consumes us then you would want to dishonour us.... to the end of what he relates of ecstasy.

By this I am not saying that swaying and ecstasy are of the necessities of Sufism. They are but outward signs, which arise from an absorption in *dhikr*. So let him who has doubt test it himself, for information is not the same as direct observation. This is what relates to ecstasy in *dhikr* and the discussion on swaying will still follow.

Thereafter I observed that after you had judged the great majority of the community of Muḥammad (blessings and peace be upon him) as being misguided you began to incite the [Muslim] rulers to carry out, in your opinion the good deeds. However, your desire was that they share with you your calamity, when you said,

‘It is necessary for the ruler or his deputy to prevent them from attending the mosques and other public places.’

You and those who follow your advice do not benefit from it, except that you fall under His saying, ‘And who is more unjust than he who forbids that in places for the worship of Allāh, His name should be celebrated? - whose zeal is (in fact) to ruin them?’ [2:114] .So you are striving to ruin the houses of Allāh. You have thus exposed the Muslim leaders to the wrath of Allāh, which is His retribution of those who do such deeds. However, the people of government have a broader perception than you, and a stronger love for *dhikr* and the *dhākirūn* than you have.



The rulers in all the Muslim countries, of former times and the present, continue to honour the people of *dhikr* and give high regard to their nobility in all their different ranks. This is so for no other reason save that the scholars of religion were persistently in their company. May Allāh reward both parties with good. As for those other irresponsible scholars who oppose them, they are insignificant and their [normal legal opinions] are not considered, because they know that what emanates from their breasts is the result of a narrow perspective. Alternately because of their lack of knowledge.

You do not [60] even know that those whom you have ordered to be removed from their mosques are the same people referred to in the narration of the Prophet (blessings and peace

be upon him) when he was asked as to who are those about whom it will be said on the day of resurrection 'The people of gathering (on Resurrection day) shall know who the people of honour are.' And he said, 'They are the people of *dhikr* in the mosques' (narrated by *Imām Aḥmad*).

I ask, if you have instructed the rulers to prevent them from the mosques why did you not restrict yourself to that point. Instead you instructed them to prevent the people of *dhikr* from also assembling in their homes, whereas the case is that they do not prevent the people of the Book (*Ahl al-Kitab*) from assembling in their churches. This conforms to the stipulation of the Law to respect the *Ahl al-Kitab* (people of the Book) (who are free non-Muslim subjects living in a Muslim country enjoying their protection and safety). In the least you should have considered the people who assemble for *dhikr* like them. However you see the assembling (of people) for the purpose of *dhikr* of Allāh, or recitation of the Qur'an, of the worst abominations, which you have confirmed in more than one instance. It is for this reason that you wanted to instruct the government to change this 'disgraceful abomination', until no one should return to the assembly of *dhikr* of Allāh, recitation of the Qur'an and the sending of blessings to the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him), or what is of this kind. 'But God will complete (the Revelation of) His Light even though the Unbelievers detest (it).' [61:8].

After having judged the assemblies of *dhikr* and the like as misguided, you then said,

'It is not permissible for anyone believing in Allāh and the last day to participate with them, and neither should they support them in their falsehood.'

My God, how amazing! When did this religion come with a revelation which forbids the participation with the *dhākirūn* and merely when in their presence it becomes forbidden. Yet, as for the case of the one who moves his lips with the *dhākirūn* , when saying, *La ilaha ill Allāh* (There is no God but Allāh), we do not know (what you consider) Allāh's judgement on this. You probably consider him to be a heretic or the like. By Allāh, you know that I absolve myself, Islam and Muslims from such beliefs and the like; from your false accusations and your [61] lying when you said,

'This is also the view held by *Mālik*, *Shāfi'i*, *Abū Hanifah* and *Aḥmad* and others besides them'

You have associated the leaders in religion with what you have perpetrated. You claimed that the *Imāms* concurred with your opinion. God forbid! However, in addition to some of the legal verdicts of the scholars of the four juristic schools that I have mentioned, let me cite where these important matters are found. For us to relate everything unto you is impossible because they are numerous. However, we will mention to you some of it, taken from those whose rank in religion you are very much aware of like, *Jalāl al-Din al-Suyuti*, *Shabragheti* and *Fairuz Abādi*.

The four imams on Sufism

I shall indeed mention to you now what has been related from the scholars of the four juristic schools with regard to their respect for the Sufis. This is in addition to what we have already stipulated and absolving the *Imāms* from what you have ascribed to them, that they

reject Sufism. What is well known of the life of *Imām Shafi'i* is that he used to frequent, accompany, and respect the Sufis. When he was asked about this, he answered.

'I have learned from the Sufi *Shaykhs* what I have never heard from anyone else. They said, 'Time is like a sword, if you do not cut with it, it will cut you'⁷⁴. In another saying, 'Occupy yourself with good, for if you do not you will be occupied with the opposite'.

He used to accompany *Shayban Ar-Ra'i* a distinguished Sufi. One day *Imām Aḥmad* was with *Imām Shafi'i*, when *Imām Aḥmad* asked *Shayban Ar-Ra'i* (may Allāh be pleased with them) about a man who has forgotten one of the five daily prayers and did not exactly know which one it was. *Shayban* answered, 'This man has been unmindful of Allāh ; he deserves to be disciplined'. Then he asked him about *Zakah*, so he answered him with a very detailed answer. From that time onward (*Imām*) *Aḥmad* greatly respected the Sufis. Whenever a sensitive and delicate issue occurred he would send for *Abū Hamza al-Baghdadi –As Sufi* and ask, 'what do you say about this O Sufi?' [62] *Abū Hamza* would answer with his spiritual intuition. *Shaykh Qutbu Dīn bin Ayman* also mentioned that *Imām Aḥmad* used to encourage his son to participate in Sufi assemblies. He would say they have reached degrees in sincerity, which we have not reached (quoted by the author of *al-Nusrah*).

As for the well-known saying of (*Imām*) *Malik*, 'Whoever practices Sufism without Islamic Jurisprudence is a heretic and whoever practices Islamic Jurisprudence without Sufism has deviated, but he who has combined the two has attained to the Reality⁷⁵(truth).'⁷⁶

⁷⁴ This means if you do not use it constructively it passes you by and you lose the opportunities it afforded. Perhaps a similar English idiom refers 'Procrastination is the thief of time

⁷⁵ The reality here refers to the Knowledge of God.

It is related that *Abū Hanīfa Nu'man* (may Allāh be pleased with him) was asked about what the Sufis do during their '*Hadrah*'⁷⁷, and what they practices therein and whether they are truthful or whether they are liars? He answered, 'Verily Allāh has men who will enter Paradise with their tambourines and their pipes.' Then the transmitter said, 'There was a certain group in our town who used to sway during *dhikr* until they would fall to the ground. The *Imām* never disapproved of it and used to visit them and respected them. They would ask him (questions) and he would answer them. Among the questions the *Shaykh* (of the Sufis) asked the *Imām*, 'What do you say, O *Sidi* (may Allāh be pleased with you), about the matter where some people of the community of Muḥammad (some Muslims) entered a church and gathered in a circle, alternating between themselves the remembrance of the devil from the morning to the evening. Give us the legal opinion about them, are they considered to be unbelievers or not?' And he (may Allāh be pleased with him) answered, 'No one among the people of Allāh is considered a disbeliever through a sin and this is not a sin.' This has been transmitted in '*Tuhfat Ahl l-Futuhāt Wa l-Athwaq*'. In this answer the *Imām* guards against speaking about the [63] religion of Allāh by his opinion or that he should accuse the people of the *Qiblah* with unbelief (*kufīr*) and the like. May Allāh grant them the best reward; what a vast knowledge and great understanding they had!

If such is the case, how could this absurd statement be attributed to the *Imām* that they claim he said, 'It is necessary that the place where they have gathered for their peculiar *dhikr* should have the soil dug up and filled with stones.' This is quoted while it is known that the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him) said, about this, 'Whenever people gather in an assembly for the purpose of remembering Allāh, they are surrounded by angels,

⁷⁶ This is the text quoted by *Ibn Ajiba* in his commentary on '*al-Mabahith Asliyyah*'.

⁷⁷ This is what is referred to as the sacred dance of the Sufis.

encompassed by the Divine Mercy and tranquility descends up on them. And Allāh remembers them among those present in His company.’ Such a statement should not emanate from an unmindful person let alone that it should be attributed to any of the great *Imāms*. These (*Imāms*) do not hold the view that a church should be dug up when it is converted to a mosque in Islam. They also regard the sweat of a living being, its saliva and mucus to be clean, even in the case of a pig. Has it not come to the mind of these ignorant people that when the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) wanted to build his mosque there were graves of the idolaters at the site of the mosque and only the bones were removed. Then the Prophet built his mosque on the blessed site.

Do you see the Prophet having ordered that the ground be dug up and its soil removed? Absolutely not! The like of such information has never reached us and neither have we heard of it and if such is the case how could the *Imām* possibly have said that which has been attributed to him in spite of his understanding and inspection. Far be it that such a statement should have emanated from him and the writer of '*Tuhfatul Fatawa*' has specified that such a disgusting statement has been schemed upon *Imām Abū Hanifa* and then he added, ‘How could he have said that, when an aspirant of Sufism came to him during his time and asked him concerning a group of Jews who stayed with their wives and children in a *masjid* for three days, should it be washed or destroyed or what is the situation? So the *Imām* replied, ‘If there has been no specific impurity (*Najasah*) established beyond doubt then it is clean.’ Isn't there in this the proof in what has been falsely attributed to him that he says the ground upon which the Fuqara make *dhikr* should be dug up? And *Shaykh Abdul Hasan Ibn Mansur al-Junayd al-Hanafî* said, ‘This disgusting statement is not from us, nor from the *Imām* of our branch. It has only emanated from the renegades (*Rafîdites*) because they have rejected the existence of the pious.’

In the same way has *Shaykh Abdul Hakim* opposed it repulsively when he said ‘Whoever passes judgement with it is among the people of segregation (*Itizaaal*)’ and he added, ‘The one who forged it on the *Imām* is *Ibn Shirhan al-Farazi* may Allāh bring him to ruin (destroy him).’ The *Imām* is far from all this because he used to love *dhikr*, the people of *dhikr* and he loved music, melodies and litanies with beautiful sounds. This is some of what was transmitted from '*An-Nusra*'. The astonishment is not about the one who attributes this statement to the *Imām*, instead the astonishment is about the one who portrays it in his mind and established it as a proof for him. ‘Truly it is not their eyes that are blind, but the hearts in their breasts.’ [22:46]. And he, (may Allāh’s blessings & peace be upon him) said, ‘How many a carrier of *Fiqh* is not *Faqih*.’ This is the conclusion of the discussion with regard to the *Imāms* on the issue of the *dhākirūn* .



CHAPTER FOUR: PERMISSIBILITY OF SPECIFIC PRACTICES OF THE SUFIS

The ruling on dancing

With regard to the dancing, in which you consider the one who makes it lawful to be a disbeliever, acting in accordance with evidence from *Ibn Wahban* when he says, ‘Whoever makes dancing lawful is considered a disbeliever especially with the playing of the tambourine (duff) and playing of the flute.’ Then you said in *al-Miyār* regarding the issue of a group of *Shaykhs*, ‘Whosoever maintains a *Zawiyah* or anything else for the *fuqara* of the time, then such a maintenance would be invalid because it is considered a sin.’ Such is your affair, no matter what hideous road or disgraceful situation you have found, you have only attributed it to the *dhākirūn* in an attempt to deceive the reader, until the reader’s mind cannot immediately understand the doctrine of Sufism except for your sheer mentioning of dancing, amusement and playing of instruments and so forth. May Allāh (Most High) reward you on behalf of Sufism for what you are worthy.

[65] I return to the ruling on dancing, even though it has no bearing on the (teachings) of Sufism. So all that which caused you to reach a prohibition which Allāh (Most High) has made lawful is either as a result of your lack of studying the principles (of religion) or your lack of piety. You never knew that the dancing which is considered unlawful is that which is confined to entertainment and pleasure, by way of dancing from side to side is characteristic of the foolish minded.

Prohibition of this and its like does not need proof, as inherent instinct has disapproved it by necessity because its motive is self centred frivolity and satanic desires. Behold! If you take this ruling and start to apply it on everyone you have seen or heard dancing or who has confessed to dancing, then the result of your judgement will be based on what your eyes have seen. Do you not see that, what is with you confirms that the one who makes dancing lawful is considered to be a disbeliever? So what would you say if it came to you that the Ethiopians (*Habasha*) entered the Prophet's *masjid* on the day of *Eid* in their well known state of dancing and its like. He (blessings and peace be upon him) watched them whilst *A'isha* (May Allāh be pleased be with her) looked closely at them from behind him, until they were finished with their actions and he did not reproach them. By Allāh! What do you understand by all this when you say dancing is absolutely prohibited? Or do you see the Prophet condoning what is unlawful? Or do you not see a difference between the dancing of the foolish people and the dancing of *Habasha*? If this report did not reach you, or indeed if it did reach you and you were unable to discover in it a judgment of permissibility due to you lack of perception, then what do you say about the dancing of *Sayyidina Jafar bin Abi Talib* (May Allāh be pleased with him) if it is true in accordance to what is found in some narration, that when the Prophet said to him, 'You resemble me in my appearance and in my qualities.' As a result he stood up and began to dance in the presence of the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him). The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) did not disapprove of it. Does this not convey to you that this is permissible in its ruling?

[66] Is it correct then to apply the dancing of *Sayyidina Jafar* to the dancing referred to in the *Qasida* of *Ibn Wahban*? Do you not know that specification imposes restrictions on that which is general? So, do you think that the Sufis say dancing is absolutely lawful, as you have said that it is absolutely unlawful? Indeed not! For they are certainly more open minded in their vision than yourself. They do not talk about Allāh's religion without

knowledge and nor do they obtain text without understanding it. It is the ignorant who thinks that the one who has gathered some evidence and shamelessly attaches to it a share is regarded as an expert.

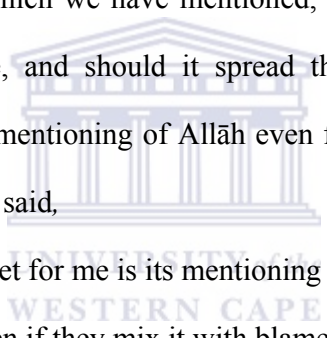
Oh you! Do you not know that the one who makes the lawful unlawful is the same as the one who makes the unlawful lawful, as in the narration of the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him). Allāh (Most High) has indeed exposed you for what you have gathered. Enough is it for you an abomination that you are unable to distinguish between the lawful and the unlawful. Do you think that knowledge is an expression of who carries it? Like ‘that of a donkey which carries a huge load of tomes’ [62:5]. Nay! Knowledge is only but an interpretation of light taking place in the senses, which enables him to see the comprehensive just as he is able to see the tangible with his eyes. Knowledge is a means of perception not an accumulation of papers. Allāh (Most High) says to His Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him), ‘Thou knewest not (before) what was revelation, nor what was faith; but We guide such of Our servants as we will’ [42:52]. It is for this reason that it is incumbent upon the expert not to pass any judgement on dancing before knowing the reason in order not to make unlawful that which Allāh has made lawful. It is for this reason that *Shaykh Mustafa bin Isma'il Habash* said, ‘Even though the external ruling of the *Wahabi* is that dancing is unlawful without restriction’ but the reliable view is what *Ibn Kamal Basha* has mentioned. The following text is what *Safwa* has conveyed,

It is no sin to be in ecstasy if you are true

And there is no objection in swaying if you are sincere

What we have confirmed in this occurrence is not merely a victory with regard to dancing. Nay, it is a declaration with regard to the legal judgement and it is a victory for the *Ummah* of Muḥammad[67] most of whom you have charged with disbelief. The majority believe in

the permissibility of swaying, as for the disciples (of Sufism) they believe that it should be desired because of the Prophet's saying, 'He who does not tremble at the mentioning of the Beloved is not generous' (transmitted by the author of '*An-Nusrah*'). In a similar narration the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) says, 'Travel! For indeed the devoted ones who tremble at the mentioning of Allāh are ahead' (This is mentioned in '*Jami as-Saghir*'). Do you not know that the swaying of the Sufis in *dhikr* could be the trembling as mentioned in the narration, because swaying is very distinct in the movement of the *dhakir*. Due to this reason some of the Sufis see that trembling at the mentioning of Allāh is as a result of their intense love for Allāh . 'But those of Faith are overflowing in their love for God.' [2:165]. Every lover trembles naturally at the mentioning of his beloved. And I am certainly convinced that the proof, which we have mentioned, does not exist with you because you have never tasted the love, and should it spread through your limbs you would most certainly desire to hear the mentioning of Allāh even from a disbeliever. You will then say what the *Sultan ul-Ashiqeen* said,



Sweet for me is its mentioning in every form
Even if they mix it with blame and dispute.

Perhaps then you will know the meaning of fear, then you will see whether or not you have gained control over your soul. Are you not aware of the story in the Qur'an about those women who cut their hands when *Yusuf* (may Allāh 's blessings be upon him) appeared before them, 'they said, 'god preserve us!no mortal is this!' [12:31]. When this happens, the vision of the creation's beauty appears, so why can't we be brought closer to Him by something that will make us witness the beauty of the creator in the power of His Grandeur. I have most certainly seen that you are not afraid in misguiding the believer or making him to be a sinner or an innovator. Nay, you are not afraid to make him a disbeliever. All this is easier for you than the drinking of water, and you have not known the sanctity of the believer in the sight of Allāh and His Messenger. Do you not know [68] that when you call

a believer a disbeliever, you have indeed made permissible his life, his wealth and his abiding in the Hellfire? Do you think that this will please Allāh (Most High) and His Messenger? Are you not aware that *Khidr* (May Allāh be pleased with him) considered the killing of a soul easier than charging a believer with unbelief. Allāh speaks about him in the Qur'ān when He says, 'As for the youth, his parents were people of Faith, and We feared that he would grieve them, by obstinate rebellion and ingratitude (to God and man).' [18:80]. Did you not know that the sanctity of the believer in the sight of Allāh is greater than the sanctity of the *Ka'bah*? Its destruction in the sight of Allāh is easier than passing judgement of unbelief upon the believer who testifies to the Unity of Allāh (*La ilaha ill Allāh*) with sincerity repeating it with all his breath. By Allāh! I warn you to fear Him with regard to the people of *La ilaha ill Allāh*. Do not speak about them with your opinion, for they are people whom Allāh created for His remembrance and chose them in His foremost knowledge. So you should in the least treat them well for fear of Allāh and respect them for the sake of Allāh and your attachment to them will suffice you. May Allāh inspire you and guide you. This is the conclusion of the discussion of dancing.

The ruling on poetry

As for the *Sama* and the singing of poetry which is practised amongst most of the Sufis, to speak about it without knowledge is far worse than that which preceded it because the companions (may Allāh be pleased with them) used to recite poetry in the presence of the Prophet . The story of *Ka'b bin Zubayr* is sufficient for the one who is able to reflect on it. The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) listened to his famous *Qasida (Bibanat Suad)* despite the fact that it contained words of romantic love and how the Prophet rewarded him with forgiveness and with his outer garment in addition to the acknowledgement of his

reciting poetry in the presence of the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him). In '*Al-Awarif*' it is reported that a man came upon the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) and found with him some people reading the Qur'an and some reciting poetry, so he said, 'O Messenger of Allāh Qur'an and poetry!' And the Prophet replied, 'Once from this and once from that.'

The writer of the *Ihya* was extensive in his response to those who say *Sama* is offensive, or those who say it is unlawful without restriction. He opposed them with textual proof [69], which does not bear (require) explanation. It is narrated by *Alkami* on the authority of *Ibn Maja*, who has related from the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) that when he returned to Madina after one of his battles, a slave woman came to him and said 'O Messenger of Allāh, I have made a pledge that, if Allāh returns you safely we will play the tambourine (*daff*) and sing in your presence.' The Prophet replied 'If you have made a pledge then you should fulfil your pledge.' In another saying of the Prophet, 'Sing! O Banu Arfada, so that the Jews and Christians may know that your religion is accomodating.'

In general I would say about poetry what the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) said 'These are words, what is good of it remains good, and what is bad of it remains bad.' But that which relates to obscenity and abomination is unlawful. It is on this view that rests all the testimonies declaring it unlawful, and if the intention is one then both the speaker and listener become accomplices. Whatever has been composed for the purpose of desire or fear and the inclination towards the Divine Knowledge, as indicated in the saying of the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him), 'The most truthful words uttered by the poet is 'Behold! Everything beside Allāh is futile,' in which case it falls under the saying of the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) that 'There is most certainly a share of wisdom in

poetry.’ It is obvious that listening to wisdom is recommended and we could almost say it is obligatory.

So if you have understood this, do not compare what the Sufis recall in their assemblies of singing poetry, as this poetry conforms to the highest of wisdom and contains the ultimate knowledge. It teaches the disciple how to search for the road towards his Lord with humility. (Do not compare it) with what the foolish people recall (in their poetry) praising the physique, the cheeks and the round breasts, enticing the listener to commit fornication and adultery. ‘God doth admonish you, that ye may never repeat such (conduct), if you are (true) Believers.’ [22:17]

Dhikr in acts of worship

I have once more drawn your attention to the discussion of *dhikr* in its origin, because it is the greatest principle in the religion. Yet, I see that you have been oblivious of this, since you have [70] condemned the places of gathering for this reason. By Allāh , I do ask you to inform me as to what is your opinion of *dhikr*, is it legislated or not? I am sure that you do acknowledge its legitimacy in accordance with the words of Allāh , ‘Then do ye remember Me; I will remember you.’ [2:152] and notwithstanding this (verse), there is so much more and to enumerate them would not be easy. I would like to add to your saying ‘legislated’, is that whatever has been legislated by the laws of Law (Islam) and whatever rituals have been established, is only for the purpose of upholding the remembrance of Allāh. The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) said with regards to the circumambulation (*tawaf*) of the *Ka'bah*, the running between *Safa* and *Marwa* and the pelting of the devils, it has been brought about exclusively for the purpose of *dhikrullah*. And Allāh says concerning the Hajj, ‘Celebrate the praises of God during the Appointed Days.’ [2:203] and about the

prayer He says, ‘And establish regular prayer for celebrating My praise.’ [20:14]. If you study the Qur'an, you will find other verses besides these mentioned.

In general, all acts of devotion are valued in accordance with the strength or weakness of Allāh's remembrance in it. And this is why when the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) was asked, ‘Which fighter in the path of Allāh will be greatest in reward?’ He answered, ‘Those who remember Allāh most,’ and then he mentioned the Prayer (*Salah*), Alms (*Zakah*), Pilgrimage (*Hajj*) and Charity towards the poor, and to all this, the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) answered ‘Those who remember Allāh the most.’ Then *Abū Bakr* (may Allāh be pleased with him) said to *'Umar* (may Allāh be pleased with him). ‘The *dhākirūn* have gone with all the good,’ and the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) replied ‘yes’ (related on the authority of *Imām Aḥmad* and transmitted by *Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziya*). So irrespective of how much its legislation has been confirmed and approved as already mentioned, has Allāh in any way restricted it in its legislation to be in secret or in public? So if you say that the religion strengthens the aspect of *dhikr* secretly, then I would say, in the same way does the religion consolidate the aspect of *dhikr* in public, so that man may remember Him in all states and conditions.

Amongst such practices is the [71] *Takbir* on the day of *Eid*, the *Adhan*, the *Iqamah* and the night prayers, which are read aloud. Amongst that which awakens this desire, is the narration which *Abū Shuja* brings out in his '*Musnad Al-Firdouz*' narrated from *Ibn 'Umar* that the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him), said, ‘Whoever says *La ilaha ill Allāh* raising his voice, Allāh will cause him to dwell in the abode of Majesty and He will grant him the vision of His Face.’ In a similar narration of *Bayhaqi*, it is narrated from *Ibn Abi Aslam* that *Ibn Al-Wara* said, ‘I went out with the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon

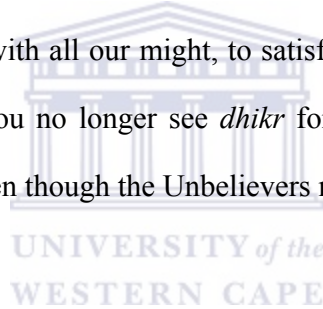
him), and we passed by a man in the mosque who raised his voice in *dhikr*, I said, ‘Oh Messenger of Allāh, it appears as if this man is a hypocrite.’ The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) replied, ‘No, it is wonderful.’ It is also recorded in ‘*Bustan ul-Qurra*’ that the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) used to make *dhikr* aloud with his companions after the prayers.

On the whole, there is no lesser evidence to make *dhikr* in public than making it in secret, and making *dhikr* aloud in addition is a benefit to the one who listens. What suffices us in the benefit of making *dhikr* in public is that *Jinn* became Muslim as a result of it. Allāh says with regard to what He revealed in the story of this *Jinn* and the reason for his becoming Muslim, ‘They said, ‘We have really heard a wondrous Recital! It gives guidance to the Right, and we have believed therein.’ [72:1-2]. That which confirms its excellence and adds more to our knowledge in detail, is the saying of the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him), ‘To do things inwardly is better than doing it publicly and doing it publicly is best for the one who wishes to be followed.’ But I am afraid for the one who takes an aversion, when listening to *dhikr* being made loudly, that he may fall under those whom Allāh describes in the verse, ‘When God, the One and Only is mentioned, the hearts of those who believe not in the Hereafter are filled with disgust and horror;’ [39:45].

It is obvious that the aversion referred to in the verse cannot be imagined except in the case of *dhikr* that is aloud. [72] If it is confirmed that *dhikr* in public is among the virtuous deeds then there should be no objection in permitting gatherings for such a purpose, which conforms with the command of Allāh, ‘Help ye one another in righteousness and piety, but help ye not one another in sin and rancour.’ [5:3]. This is apart from what has been mentioned in relation to awaken the desire to attend the assembly of *dhikr*, in accordance to the Prophetic narration as already mentioned. What has been stated makes it obligatory

upon you to acknowledge the permissibility of *dhikr* in public. Then nothing remains except for you to explain, how one comes together for *dhikr*, since you are now aware of the way in which the pious ancestors would gather in someone's house to recite the Qur'ān, to send praises to the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) and praying for themselves and the Muslims. This does not stand as a proof for you. Nay, you disapproved of them vehemently.

The truth is that you could have at least made it a good innovation. However, you seemed very upset at the way the Sufis introduced it. You used, with all your might, the most repulsive words on them. You raised your confused cries against them. That did not suffice you, so you attempted to compel the leaders to banish them from the mosques and other places. So the matter remains with you to explain how and where the gathering of *dhikr* should be. We exhort you with all our might, to satisfy us. Yet in my opinion you will not be satisfied except when you no longer see *dhikr* for Allāh. 'But God will complete (the revelation of) His Light, even though the Unbelievers may detest (it).' [61:8].



Associating Sufism with forbidden actions

Now that you have exerted yourself in the compiling your treatise, you then decided to appease your heart with that which is beyond the matters of what Sufis practice. Then you mentioned all the forbidden actions, which you have transmitted from '*Sahib Al-Miyār*'. You included amongst this, that is to say, the forbidden innovation, which are practiced in the streets and other places.

‘Women going about showing off their beauty, [73] their arrogant manner in which they walk, their using of perfume and their meeting at the graves, Zawiyas and cemeteries. And places of pleasure, where young

boys and men pass by these women. That which is even more disgusting and reprehensible than this, is the opening of wine shops and prostitute houses openly in the streets. Then the relaxed situation of the drunkards when they mix with the people.’

To the point where author said, ‘and that happens a lot during the blessed month of Ramadan in Tunisia.’ It appears to me as if your mentioning of these forbidden actions are merely for the sake of narration, due to the fact that you have not supported the author of ‘Al-Miyar’. You did not even mention a single narration, in preventing this violation of Divine sanctity. Also, you did nothing to draw the attention of the authorities to the actions of these foolish and shameless people, as you have drawn their attention towards the Sufis, urging them to oppose the Sufis and banish them from the mosques, etc.

You could at least have urged them to destroy the forbidden actions, which has spread like the open display of fornication and the drinking of wine, etc. You should have restricted your treatise to these aspects and exerted yourself as you exerted before then you would have received praise from Muslims in general, and the Tunisian nation specifically. Moreover, the hearts of your foes would have encompassed you, let alone the hearts of your allies. Instead you pursued that which is of no avail other than resulting in sheer hatred for the one harming Allāh through His saints which is in accordance to a holy narration, ‘Whoever harms any of my friends, I declare war on him.’

I see that you are not aware of what you say in that which you have compiled; you act haphazardly, you are like one, who gathers wood at random in the night, and the wood which he gathered has harmed him and there is no benefit for him in it. And among other things is your saying ‘and among which is considered innovation is the wearing of scanty clothes and they used to hate scanty clothes and they said scanty clothes is the dress of the

inquisitors (sinners). He whose clothes are scanty, his religion is scanty and among it i.e. innovation is that one should wear clothes of fame for it has been reported in a Prophetic narrated, 'Whoever wears a garment of fame, Allāh will clothe him on the day of resurrection with a garment of abasement and humiliation and then He will set him on fire.'

So I ask you with Allāh as witness, what benefit do you intend to receive by quoting these words, and what benefit does it bring to Islam and the Muslims should they exchange luxury with asceticism as long as they do not commit any crime, it can only be a case of bad business and obstruction to industry. What relevancy is there between what the hearts conceal and roughness or fineness of the clothes until his fineness is a sign of the fineness of his religion? If this is the case, then the Bedouin is most successful and whatever the case may be with the non-Bedouin (urban-dweller) you will find the Bedouins clothes to be rougher. And should you go to the extent of compelling (forcing) the people of Tunisia to wear rough clothes one of them will most certainly say: 'Say, who has forbidden the beautiful gifts of Allāh, which He has produced for His servants and the things clean and pure (which He has provided) for sustenance?'

Say then sincerely with Allāh as your witness, how will you answer him, and what will be your tone of expression? Whilst Allāh Himself answers: 'They are, in the life of this world, for those who believe, purely for them on the Day of Judgement.' [7:32] As for their having an aversion for fine clothes, or the probability that it was never really their custom, what has in actual fact reached us concerning them, is that they were the most eager (desirous) of people in confirming their hearts, more than your eagerness on your clothes. It has not come to our knowledge that the Prophet S.A.W. has imposed upon any tribe or people to wear fine or coarse clothes, on the contrary he said: 'Verily Allāh does not look at your form (shape) nor your deeds, but instead He looks at your hearts.' And this is performed with difficulty,

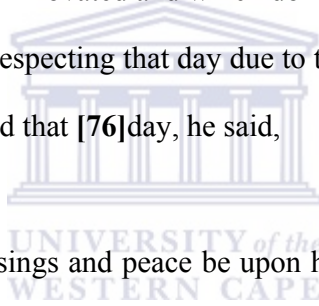
while Allāh says: ‘He... has imposed no difficulties on you in religion’ [22:78]. As for your mentioning of the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) saying: ‘Whoever wears a garment of fame, Allāh will clothe him on the day of resurrection with a garment of abasement and humiliation and then set him on fire.’

Do you perhaps regard ‘clothes of fame’ to be fine clothes as you have mentioned? Then I say to you that such is not the case, because A’isha (may Allāh be pleased with her) said that the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) has forbidden two types of cloth from wool and silk. And it is also narrated that he has forbidden two types of garments, extreme in its ugliness and extreme in its beauty. But on the whole, the best of matters is to take the middle path since it is Allāh who has forbidden the exceeding proper bound in religion when He says: ‘Oh people of the Book! Commit no excesses in your religion: nor say of God aught but the truth.’ [4:171] And then you went on to say, ‘Among the *Bid'a* is the taking of a particular food during the celebrations of the Prophet's (blessings and peace be upon him) birthday (*Milad un-Nabi*) and during some other Islamic feast days’.

So even we should say that it is a *Bid'a*, what harm will afflict us if we should make use of a particular food, though we have never considered it to be obligatory (*wājib*) and neither have been pressed with food prescribed as Sunnah by any authorisation of the Law, so that we would break the law if we substituted it with something else, and I suppose that the Law has never imposed upon us any particular food, except with slaughtering, without specifying how it should be cooked, so the matter remained entrusted with accordance to the custom and tradition depending on the places without any difficulty. So whoever wants to restrict himself with food, it is up to him and whoever wants to make additions may do so. And then you said, ‘The legitimate celebrations are *’Id al-Fitr*, *’Id al-Adḥa* and the day of *’Ashurā*,

yet it is so, but then you added that any celebrations beside these are celebrations of innovation (*bid'ah*). It is beyond doubt that you are referring by this to the *Maulud* celebration of the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) we do not know of which section did you make it. Does it belong to the section of forbidden *bid'ah*, which is usually your way of thinking?

I pray to Allāh that you should at least consider the *Iḥtifāl* (celebration of *Maulud*) to be a recommended innovation which I do not think you will do. So I say in reply: The author of '*al-Madkhal*' upon whom you depend a lot as a source of transmission generally did not disapprove of the *Iḥtifāl* (day of celebrating *Maulud*), he only disapproved of the abominable acts which were innovated and which do not conform with the Shari'ah. He even proved the requirement for respecting that day due to the fact that the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) respected that [76]day, he said,



‘The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) pointed out the function (position) of the month of *Maulud* when he said in reply to the one who asked him concerning the fast on a Monday, 'That is the day on which I was born', so to confer honour to this day implies the conferring of honour to this month in which he was born and it is therefore necessary that we give it the highest respect.’

And then you mentioned another forbidden innovation "the celebration of *Thabilah*, one of the villages in *Suf*". In reply I say, The like of such celebration is not considered to be lawful, and it is therefore the duty of the `Alim (scholar) to point this out and not to give it any concern at all so that the general people may follow this example, and this is the

situation with the people of Sufism. You will find that they give concern only to the fixed celebrations except for *Milād al-Nabawiy* because of the special place its companion has in their hearts and because it is widely accepted by the Islamic world and from this they know that the celebration of *Milād (Maulud)* will gain the pleasure of Allāh and His Messenger and that it is not straying from the right path, because of the Prophet's (blessings and peace be upon him) saying 'My community does not get together in rain' (My community does not get together in order to go astray). They have indeed come together for the greatness of that day.

Then you quoted the author of (*al-Mi`yār*) who said,

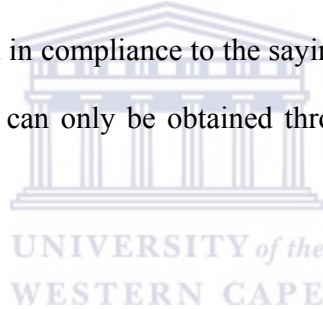
‘Amongst the innovations is that the ignorant people and the insignificant ones dislike marriage and copulation during the month of *Muharram*. However, it is necessary that one should see the good omen in marriage and copulation in this month, adhering to what Allāh and His Messenger regarded as sacred and bringing to an end the practices of the ignorant.’

My reply is this quote does not bother us because it concerns the ignorant and insignificant people. It is sufficient for this group that they marry according to the Law. How can it be expected from them to strive for excellent morals and to abandon all vice?

Then you went on to say that amongst the innovations is to consider special invitation to weddings for the rich above the poor. [77] This quality is natural among human beings. It is not appropriate to consider it an innovation, because the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) has stipulated this in his saying: ‘The worst of food is that of a banquet, when the

one who approaches it is deprived of it and the one who has been invited to it refuses it, and he who does not respond to an invitation has indeed disobeyed Allah and His Messenger.”

Then you said that amongst the innovations is that some people think nothing of harming animals and being harsh to them. Making them carry heavy loads which are not easy for them to bear, etc...’ In reply I say it is far-fetched that this statement be mentioned among the innovations, because animals are subject to mankind's mercy and his hard-heartedness. It may be that you would find a religious person with a hardened heart, burdening men, let alone animals. Perhaps you find someone other than him showing mercy towards the weak, and Allāh is merciful to those who show mercy, ‘...according to the pattern on which He has made mankind.’ [30:30]. Mercy can only be obtained from the possessors of mercy and knowledge from the learned in compliance to the saying of the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him), ‘Knowledge can only be obtained through learning and gentleness through practice.’



Thereafter you mentioned that among the innovations is (upholding) the seven days of the deceased when the Qur'ān is recited and the food which is prepared on the seventh day. (You) considered it is prohibited and not permissible to eat. It is necessary that we ask you to explain the reason why the food which is made on the seventh day is considered unlawful, even though you have not asked the author of (*Al-Miyar*) to explain the reason its prohibition. You consider the speech which judges the community as ignoble, as if it was revelation. Because you have considered the food as unlawful and prevented the poor from eating it, it will be inevitable that they will remind you of what Allāh says to His beloved Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him), ‘Say : I find not in the message received by me by inspiration any meat forbidden to be eaten by one who wishes to eat it, unless it be dead meat, or blood poured forth, or the flesh of swine,- for it is an abomination- or what is

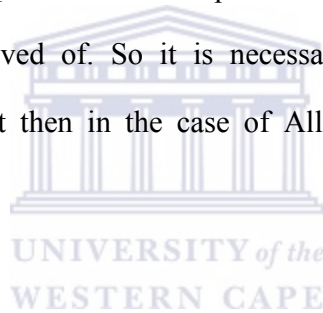
impious, (meat) over which a name has been invoked, other than God's' [6:145]. Then you said that an example of such forbidden food is food portions (prepared) on the completion [78] of the fortieth day, at the end of a complete year - which is the practice of the people of Tunisia and those who follow their reprehensible practices. Even if we should say that the people of Tunisia have followed your advice and they have all refrained from this virtue which you have called a reprehensible practice. You would prove nothing except for depriving the poor who will not find what would provide them with the food of the rich, some of whose food may never have been eaten (by them) if it were not for the event of death. Are you not aware that *zakāh* has been made lawful in order to take from the rich to give unto the poor? It is not the eyes that become blind. It could be that the reckless did something bad whilst desiring to do good. This is apart from what *Mu`ādh ibn Jabal* has narrated from the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him) who said,

‘There is no error upon the one whom, whenever he wishes to spend a voluntary charity for the sake of Allāh, that he should spend it on his parents if they are Muslims.’

Then you continued transmitting from the author of ‘*al-Miyār*’ that another innovation is to make *dhikr* together with one voice in front of the funeral since the required thing to do during the carrying of the funeral is silence, contemplation, reflection and substituting it with something in conformity with the Law. Your mentioning of the silence and reflection that is required is the best and most preferred thing to do and one could simply imagine that such practice would come only from the elect. As for the general public, *dhikr* would be best for them since, had they left it off they could be pre-occupied with what is repulsive, like insignificant conversation for example. It is for this reason that the Sufis have enjoined upon the general public to occupy themselves with the *dhikr* of *Lā ilāha illa Allāh* at the

funeral, following the saying of the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him), ‘Repeat constantly the *dhikr* of *Lā ilāha illa Allāh* at the funeral.’ He did not restrict it to be read secretly or aloud. A similar saying of the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him) is: ‘Supply your deceased with the provision *La ilāha illa Allāh*.’ So, it is obvious on the basis of these two Prophetic narrations that the actions are not reprehensible. As for your saying that to substitute the practice of silence with something else is lawful, the goal of this statement is that it should be opposite of the first. You then continue saying, [79]

‘...another innovation is to recite the Qur’ān melodiously, which is a reprehensible act, therefore the banning of it is necessary and it is important that the Qur’ān must be kept free from it, Nay! Even in poetry, melody is disapproved of. So it is necessary to stay away from and listening to it, what then in the case of Allāh's verses and His Divine speech.’



I am compelled to tell you about you mentioning of this statement; your talking on the religion of Allāh without knowledge is most disgraceful. You are in such a hurry to grab any text without understanding and should we decide to agree that Allāh has tested you with a restriction pertaining to the scholars; it would be your duty not to make him the judge over the Law. You may only make him a judge over yourself, or over the one who asks you for the legal opinion of your *madh-hab* (legal school of thought). You may even say that it implies disapproval, in accordance to the view of some, not that it is being disapproved by Law. Such should be your view in all matters of disagreement. Has it not been confirmed by the Scholars of religion, that one of the conditions of disapproval is to have knowledge of the opposing views, So that he may not disapprove of a known issue, which is confirmed by

someone else. You do know that the Law is much wider than for it to be contained only by the view held by one of the schools. I see what you are saying is as if you have encompassed the text of all transmissions and understanding. Your example is like someone who goes out into battlefield without weapons. Whenever a text occurs to you, it appears as if a thief has emerged from within you. Have you not considered your state, when you find in the Law of Allāh, the opposite to what you have confirmed in your disapproval of the Qur'ān being read with melodious tunes, etc? You have no option but to say, 'These are nothing but tales of the ancients' [6:25]. I mention to you some of what I have discovered, should you wish, you may either leave it or act upon it.

In his book *Jalāludīn al-Suyūṭī* mentions some of the traditions of the Messenger of Allāh's (blessings and peace be upon him) approval is reading the Qur'ān with a tune. Briefly this is an adequate sentence in this chapter. [80] Amongst it is what *Anas bin Mālik* narrated from the Messenger of Allāh, (blessings and peace be upon him) who said,

‘There is a decoration for everything and the decoration of the Qur'ān is a beautiful voice’. Another narration says, ‘There is a decoration for everything and the decoration of the Qur'ān is a voice that is beautiful.’ He (blessings and peace be upon him) also said: ‘Beautify the Qur'ān with your voices, for indeed a beautiful voice increases the Qur'ān in beauty.’ In another narration: ‘Decorate your voices with the Qur'an.’ and in another tradition: "Beautify your voices with the Qur'ān.’

You might want to say that the meaning of beautifying is to give the full value to the recitation, like slow recitation, etc. I confirm that whatever has been mentioned in this chapter is that it is very clear and unequivocal about reading the Qur'ān with a tune. If

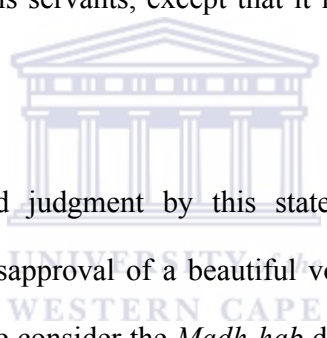
it is not clear to you, then here is what is even clearer when *al-Suyuti* transmitted from *Abdullah ibn Mas'ud* who said that the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him) said, 'He who does not recite the Qur'ān with a tune is not of us.' In another saying, 'Allāh has not given permission to anything like the permission He granted to a Prophet who could read the Qur'ān aloud with rhythm.'

Narrated from *Abū Hurairah*, 'Allāh has not given permission to a thing like the permission he gave to the Prophets with a good voice, reading the Qur'ān aloud with rhythm.'

Al-Alqami said, 'The meaning of this according to *Imām Shafi`i* and his followers and the majority of Scholars of religion is to beautify one's voice in the recitation of the Qur'ān.' And that which is more explicit than this, is the saying of the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him), 'Recite the Qur'ān with the tunes of the Arabs'. *Al-Alqami* said, 'the meaning of this is to beautify the recitation [of the Qur'ān]. The narration of *Abū Musa al-Ash'ari* who said that the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) heard his recitation and said, 'You were given one of the instruments of the family of *Dawud*' and *Abū Musa* replied, 'If I had known that you were listening then I would have embellished it.' The commentator said, the words 'I would have embellished it' means, I would have made the recitation more beautiful. (This is taken from the book *al-Jami` al-Saghir*).

Now that you know this, do you still disapprove unexceptionally that the Qur'ān should be recited with a beautiful voice, after you have found the astonishing clarity of the texts, which were just mentioned? What is more surprising than this is your disapproval of a beautiful voice, wherever it might appear, whether in poetry or otherwise. However this only stems from your impolite nature and it also proves that there are certain animals that have a more

refined nature than others. Is the camel not moved by a beautiful sound by which it is inspired? Do birds not draw near to it so that they may find rest in it? Did it not come to your attention that one of the distinct signs of *Dawud* was his beautiful voice with which he used to read the Psalms (*Zabūr*)? Is the beautiful voice not one of the gifts, which Allāh has bestowed upon His servants? Do you not know that with regard to the verse in the Qur'ān, 'He adds to Creation whatever He pleases:' [35:1], what is meant by it is a beautiful voice? What supports this view that this verse appears in another style of reading (*Qira'ah*) in which the word (*Khalq*) is read as *Halq*. So if intonation cannot be used in the recitation of the Qur'an and if listening to it is disapproved by the Law of Allāh, then what is the point of its specification. It would then be necessary to consider a misfortune from Allāh and not a gift coming from Him to His servants, except that it is used in what displeases Allāh and His Messenger .



In brief: You have passed judgment by this statement of yours contrary to Allāh's judgement, for you have disapproval of a beautiful voice and you have been vehement in your disapproval. Even if we consider the *Madh-hab* does not hold recitation of Qur'ān with intonation is permissible. I reply: Its proof is not stronger than the one who holds that recitation of the Qur'an with intonation is permissible. I might even say it is *Sunnah* in accordance to what the aforementioned have pointed out, nay, it is obviously the strongest. In addition Allāh had never disapproved beautiful sound which you yourself have disapproved of severely. He has only disapproved the ugly voice of asses, instead you have preferred misfortune over good luck and you have taken a lesser thing in exchange for what is better. Then you said,

‘Among the innovations are the lighting up of candles and kindling of lamps on the eve of the Prophet’s birthday (blessings and peace be upon him).’

In reply: Celebrations have requirements which must most certainly display within an atmosphere of joy, for example beautification, decorations, happiness and the kindling of lamps on the night of *Mawlud* and in other celebrations of its kind. That which proves to you that celebrations are permissible is what *Bukhari* has reported from `Aishah (may Allāh be pleased with her) that *Abū Bakr* (may Allāh be pleased with him) once entered her house when there were two slave girls during the days of *Muna* who were playing the tambourine and singing, whilst the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him), was covered in his cloak. *Abū Bakr* (may Allāh be pleased with him) rebuked them, whereupon the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) uncovered his noble face and said: ‘Leave them, Oh *Abū Bakr*, for it is the days of `Īd (celebrations) and these are the days of *Muna*’. Similar to this is the narration about *A'isha* from another narration in which she said:

‘*Abū Bakr* entered my house when there were two maids with me from the neighbourhood of the *Ansar* who were singing in favour of the favourable auspices gained by the *Ansar* on the day of *Buath*. *Abū Bakr* asked: 'Is *Shaytan* playing instruments in the house of the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him)?' He (blessings and peace be upon him) answered, 'Leave them! Oh Abu Bakr, because verily for every people there is a celebration and this is our celebration' (narrated from *Bukhari*).

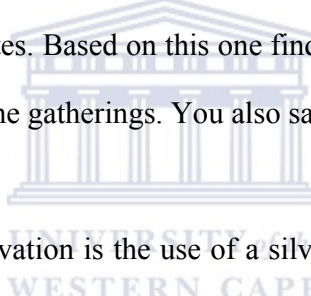
You said with regard to the lighting up of candles:

‘They light it during the day in order to attend the procession of innovation.’

In reply I say: To light it up during the day is definitely improper and should therefore by rights be called innovation. It shows no benefit during the day, unlike its appearance at night. It has never been before that any of the pious ancestors practiced it.

As for the procession being an innovation, I wish that Allāh rewards the one who innovated it, in which case it will comply with the narration of the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him), ‘Whoever introduces a good practice, he shall receive the reward thereof and the reward of the one who performs it’ What is in it is the attachment and love which the Muslims show towards their Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him).

Whichever way one considers the coming together of the Community is only a mercy and it is this that the *Sunnah* dictates. Based on this one finds the real innovated to be the one who strives to oppose (destroy) the gatherings. You also said,



‘Amongst the innovation is the use of a silver fumigator while the lesson of Prophetic narration is conducted, which is most certainly unlawful. To use it during a marriage contract is not permissible, so when that happens, it is not permissible to be present in such a gathering, so how does one dare to read the Prophetic narration in a gathering where there is something unlawful. Lo! We belong to Allāh and unto Him is our return.’

I really do not know what is particularly the point of your discussing the use of fumigation in silver during Hadith lessons and during a marriage contract, whereas the use of containers made from gold or silver is absolutely unlawful. You said: ‘How does one dare to read the narration of the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him), in a gathering where there is something unlawful?’ This meaning: it is not permissible to read *Hadith* in it,

but I say: Nay, it is necessary that in such a gathering be read the proof which forbids the use of one of these two metal containers in order for the user to be informed about these two metals, since it is your habit and your persistence to object and pursue arguments and to condemning at every option, the reference is then generally attributed to Sufis.

Validity of using a rosary

You wondered about, leaped and stood upright, deviated and then returned to your most important aim. Then you exerted your pen to it's utmost in something that has no connection with the religion and made it a proof against the Sufis and, because of it, they are amongst those who are ostentatious. You said,

‘Another disliked innovation is the use of the rosary which is of Roman origin, carrying it in the hand and the neck in order to show people that its user is a devoted worshipper who makes a lot of *dhikr*, as if he is not aware that he only belongs to those who displays ostentation. Allāh has promised a severe punishment for this, because doing things to be seen by men is considered to be one of the major sins.’

[84] I say: What is implied by this sentence of yours is that you have passed judgment on everyone who takes a rosary in his hand or places it around his neck to be among the people of major sin. Unto whom a severe punishment is promised at the least. In addition to this your statement also implies that it is a Roman i.e. Christian practice because he has imitated the Romans by putting the rosary around his neck. We ask Allāh for protection. In my opinion I think that if the most extreme sin should be committed, then such a judgment would not be deserved. Limitless is Allāh in His Glory! Should not the Scholars of religion

themselves be compassionate? How is it in your case that you could pass judgment on most of the Community of Muḥammad as being lost and misguided? What tells you that the user of a rosary wants to be seen and praised by men, whilst Allāh alone has knowledge of the unseen and He alone knows the secrets contained in it. Even if we should say that the category of people who use rosaries are not devoid from those who want to be seen, in the same way can we say that the pious are also not devoid of the same thing.

Based on this what would be our approach of judgment on all individuals in general. Have you included the pronouns in totality? What is the intention of every individual who uses the rosary? It might perhaps be that he has a sincere intention for making use of it. Do you not know that the intention is called the spiritual elixir and it can turn people of distinction upside down very swiftly, for it might be that when you ask the possessor of a rosary as to why he uses it around his neck, he will say to you: 'It keeps me away from mixing with the foolish minded and entering places of suspicion'. I made it a protection unto myself, because it appears by its expression as if it wants to say: Remain fearful of Allāh.

How do you compare this with the one who openly declares sin, if not anything but a righteous intention? Similarly if you should ask the person who holds it in his hand, he would perhaps say to you: I use it in order that it may remind me of Allāh whenever I become unmindful of remembering Him. Because it is reported in a Prophetic narration extracted from the '*Musnad al-Firdouz*' of *al-Daylami* that `Ali narrated that the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him) said, 'What an excellent reminder the rosary is!'

[85] *Jalaludin As-Suyooti* has also mentioned this in his book called '*Al-Mina Fittikhas Subha*' (The benefit of using the rosary). So, by Allāh as your witness! What would be your

response? Can it be anything other than a sincere intention and the proof of texts that is evident? In my opinion I find that the severe punishment, which you have promised its user, is totally undeserving. Yes, and then there are some people who have no knowledge of the real intention in using the rosary, they only keep it in their hands for the sake of agreement and this also in my opinion makes the punishment which you have determined for the user of a rosary undeserving. Similarly to this is the one who carries it in order to imitate the pious men with the intention of being attached to them and this is also a sincere intention. Then there are few individuals whom you have mentioned as falling under the description of hypocrites in that ‘They only want to be seen by men but little do they hold Allāh in remembrance. Thus I say that it is the likeness of this verse that has compelled the Sufis to become completely immersed in the *dhikr* by making it in public and they make a lot of *dhikr* in order that they go from the domain of littleness into the vastness of plenitude so that they are completely detached from the description of ‘little *dhikr*’ to which the hypocrites are ascribed. The extent of the limitation of a lot of *dhikr* would have been unknown had it not been for the saying of the holy the Messenger of Allāh blessings and peace be upon him ‘make the *dhikr* of Allāh until the hypocrites will say, You only want to be seen’. He also said ‘Invoke Allāh with a lot of *dhikr* until they will say that you are crazy’. These two Prophetic narrations have been quoted in *al-Jami As-Saghir*. So when they have reached this limit being spoken of as people who only want to be seen by men according to you and that they are mad according to what other individuals might say, then only will the souls be contented and happy knowing that they have gone from the domain of littleness to be described by the quality of ‘muchness’, in reality they are the true *dhākirūn*. By Allāh as your witness did you make such a lot of *dhikrullāh* until it could be said about you the same as what is said about them? Or are you still continuing to endure the doctrine of littleness? May Allāh inspire us and yourself to make a lot of *dhikr* for Him and to have a good opinion of His *Awliya*. [86]

I say, all that which you have mentioned concerning *Riya*, the Sufis are more cautious about what you have warned them off and they are more fearful of that which you have caused them to fear. Had it not been that Allāh acquainted them with the doing of good in order to be followed? Are you not aware of the saying of the Messenger of Allāh, blessings and peace be upon him ‘Secrecy is better than openness and publicity is better for the one who wish to be followed.’ (This is mentioned in the *al-Jami of Suyooti*).

Then after you have disapproved the use of the rosary with total condemnation making it an unlawful innovation you contradicted yourself with that which supports its permissibility or lawfulness. You mentioned that the Messenger of Allāh, blessings and peace be upon him, came to one of his wives and saw a light shining in the arch. He asked, ‘What light is this shining in the arch?’ She answered, ‘It is my rosary which I use for the purpose of *dhikr* and afterwards I leave it over there.’ The Prophet said, ‘Why do you not have that light on your fingers?’ From this we gather that the rosary has an origin in the Law and it has a light, which glows from it. If anyone attires himself with that light in order to put it around his neck can we blame him? Then you said,

‘This would mean that the rosary is a light just as it appears to be mentioned in the interpretation of some Prophetic narration. While it is a light that is hidden in an arch which is not visible to man and not the rosary which is made from pearls strung on a rope as some foolish people believe.’

I reply, ‘What foolishness could be worse than yours, you acknowledging the origin yet denying what branches from it? So what is the difference between the date pits and the pearls, which you have mentioned, and other pure things? It has been confirmed that some

of them used to count their *dhikr* with stones instead of date pits. Perhaps you deny it just because it is put together on a rope.

It is narrated that Abu Huraira had a knotted rope with a [87] thousand knots and he would not go to sleep until he had completely performed his *dhikr* with it. Is there not a close resemblance in this to the well-known and well-arranged rosary? Do you not see that if *Abū Huraira* had a well-known litany and that he would not sleep until he has taken it out according to what is mentioned? Do you think he will leave his rosary behind when he goes out on a journey for example? Do you think on seeing *Abū Hurayrah* carrying the rope in his hand or placing it around his neck, that the Prophet would deny him from it after he had already approved for him to make *dhikr* with it? I do not think so, but Allāh knows best.

Is it not that the first stage of the ring was the lawfulness to stamp with it and thereafter putting it on the finger became a *Sunnah*? So why can't the rosary be of this kind? Or perhaps the neck be a substitute for the finger? In my opinion this does not give a good impression of you because this matter is based on the following transmission where the writer of '*Al-Madarik*' mentions, 'One of the companions said, 'I met *Sahnun* while he had a rosary around his neck with which he was making *dhikr*' [i.e. an item used for the counting of] *dhikr*. It is clear that this report has reached you, so why did you not accept it?

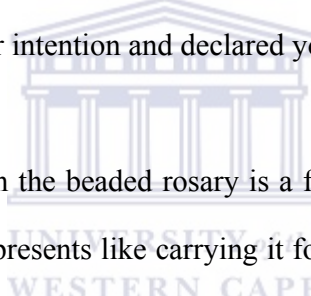
Is there not a general conviction that the requirement to accept a narration is that there be [at least] one single reliable [chain of] transmission. There is only a radical view held by the Rafidites [who is a rejected sect amongst the Shi'ites] that the prerequisite for accepting a narration of the Prophet is that there be a continuous transmission.

You have rejected this narration because of your dislike of it, but if this is not sufficient proof, then perhaps in your case *Jalal al-Din Suyuti* could take the place of someone whose narration would suffice you, since he has written a treatise called '*Al-Minha Fittihadi Subha*' (The benefits of using a rosary). In it he says, '*al-Dalami* narrates in the '*Musnad al-Firdouz*' a traceable Prophetic narration related from `Ali (may Allah be pleased with him), 'What an excellent reminder the rosary is!' And then he said, '*Abū Hurayrah* had a rope of a thousand knots and he would not go to sleep until he performed his *dhikr*. The same was in the case of *Abū Darda*, and such was the *dhikr* of some of the companions and similar to this is what *Imām Sanusi* mentions in his treatise named' (*Nusrah al-Faqir* [88] *Firrad* `ala *Abi al-Hasan al-Saghir*).

As for the leaders of Sufism, in my opinion I think that you do not rely on them with regard to this matter, otherwise the use of the rosary and so forth is of the moral practice of the people of Sufism. People displayed it already in the time of *Junayd* (may Allāh be pleased with him). *Aḥmad bin Ghilkan* mentions in '*Widayah al-A'yan*' that he saw *Junayd* with a rosary in his hand. When he was asked about it he answered, 'It is the means with which I have reached my Lord and I will not part with it.' And in my opinion I suppose that you do acknowledge the status of *Imām Sharani* with regards to the religion. He has mentioned in his '*Tibaqatu Sughra*', that *Sidi Aḥmad alKa'ka-i*, who was counted in the sight of the *Shaykh* among those whose blessings could be desired, had said, 'He had a rosary with a thousand seeds of which seven seeds were stolen. He then saw the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him) in a dream, and the Prophet said to him, 'O *Aḥmad*, so-and-so stole the seven seeds from your rosary and you will have such and such an amount less the day when you send blessings upon me.' So he went to this person and on relating his dream to him the person answered, 'The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him), has

spoken the truth'. He then took it out from his head and he put it back onto the rosary and said, 'I have never seen a rosary with such brightness, as if it was shining from the light because of all the litanies.' Thus the one who depends on proof, a little suffices him, and I have not requested from you to wear a rosary around your neck, Nay, neither have I asked you to touch it with your hand. I only wish that after all the transmissions I have given you, you should at least say it is accepted and that you not be hasty. Then you mentioned a Prophetic narration in order that you may, in your opinion, seek support with it. But I do not know is it for you or against you? You said, 'It is narrated that the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him) came upon a woman who had date pits and pebbles with which she used to make her *dhikr*. The Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him) said, 'I will inform you of a way which is easier and better than this. [89] Glory be to Allāh inasmuch as the number of what Allāh created in the Heavens, Glory be to Allāh inasmuch as the number of what Allāh created in the earth, Glory be to Allāh inasmuch as the number of what is between these, Glory be to Allāh inasmuch as Allāh remains countless the Creator, and inasmuch, Allāh is the Greatest and similarly all praise is due to Allāh.' In the light of that I reply, What you have just mentioned destroys what you have confirmed. Do you not oppose the evidence of making *tasbih* with the fingers? Where are you from this proof, which calls for the omission of counting altogether? You have relieved us from counting with the fingers - otherwise, may Allāh bless you on our behalf, but you still did not confirm anything in your statement until you said, 'It is reported that the Messenger of Allāh blessings and peace be upon him used to make his *tasbih* with his right hand, and therefore to make *tasbih* with date pits and that which is of the same kind has an origin in the Law, and it is contrary to the first, but the foremost and best way is to make *tasbih* with the fingers'. So I say, Now you have come with the shining truth which is quite evident, since you have confirmed that making *tasbih* with date pits and its like has its origin in the Law, so in this case there is no dispute.

I also hold your view that the foremost and best is *dhikr* with the fingers. But the one who has litanies, find it difficult to make it with precision on his fingers like the litany of *Abū Huraira* for example. Or the one who intends to carry out the saying of the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him) in a Prophetic narration, ‘Verily he who invokes (says) *La ilaha ill Allāh* seventy thousand times, Allāh will make forbidden to him the Fire’. So if this is correct by Allāh as your witness, then treat us justly because the question is, is it easy to enumerate such a litany with your hands? Therefore, in this case it is necessary that you use a rosary on which you could count a thousand, in order that by the grace of Allāh you might save yourself from the fire. So I say, What you have confirmed in the statement, is an appropriate saying befitting every righteous person, but you barely waited for a little while until you gave up your intention and declared your drink, you said,[90]



‘Making *dhikr* with the beaded rosary is a forbidden innovation, because of the obstacles it presents like carrying it for show and not making *dhikr* with it, and because it is the practice of the monks, and it is for this reason that it is triangular resembling the shape of a cross, because if the two equal sides are made long then it will appear very evidently. I do not think that any of the rightly guided scholars of religion would say it is permissible to use it in accordance to what we have just mentioned. Until now the monks are still using it, and some of the Sufi uses it in order to show the traces of worship in himself until people will venerate him, as already mentioned. In this way he attains to the aim, which is to get money by means of deceit and being an imposter...’ to the end of what you have mentioned.

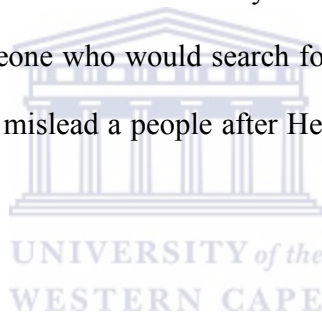
I reply, As for its being an innovation, we have already mentioned to you the Prophetic narration concerning it, which suffices for those with insight and you have yourself acknowledged that it has its origin in the Law. Therefore even if we should call it an innovation it has never reached the extent of your extreme description of prohibition because the pious scholars may Allāh be pleased with them say, ‘forbidden innovation is that which opposes a transmitted *Sunnah* or contradicts (*Ijma*’) consensus,’ and the rosary does not fall under any of this. As for your information of its prohibition, in which it is used for show and not *dhikr*, this depends on its possessor and his intention with it. There is no occurrence of text in this event and should we pass judgement on its users to say there is no *dhikr*, this would be mere conjecture, ‘Fancy can be of no avail against Truth’ [10:36] and also because of the Messenger of Allāh’s (blessings and peace be upon him) saying, ‘Do not confirm anything if you have doubt.’ So that which deals with the use of the rosary around the neck and holding it in the hand has already been mentioned.

As for your statement ‘It is a practice of the monks.’[91] It is more well known to the *Alim* that the rosary is a practice of the Sufis and even if we say it is a practice of the monks. Never did the Law compel us to leave off all the qualities of the monks except for renouncing the girdle. The community of Muḥammad have denounced it, freeing themselves completely from shirk, and all praise is due to Allāh. Are there not perhaps qualities found with the monks, which are not found with people like yourself? Allāh says in praise of them. ‘Amongst these are men devoted to learning and men who have renounced the world, and they are not arrogant. And when they listen to the revelation received by the Apostle, thou wilt see their eyes overflowing with tears, for they recognise the truth’ [5:85-86]. On this evidence, can we be compelled to denounce the description, which Allāh ascribes to them? Even if we say, it was something used by the monks, it is without doubt that the intentions

are different. As for its being in the shape of a cross, I can only say that you are unique in this aspect. By rights should it be counted as an introduction for your specialisation, because we have never heard of this from anyone with insight for most of the community of Muḥammad will he seen as people who carry crosses around their necks, may Allāh preserve us. But this is Allāh's way of unveiling and exposing the one responsible for such an opinion. Yet, how amazing! What relevance is there between the pattern of a rosary and the shape of a cross? (But the eye of resentment brings out a resemblance). Then it would be necessary for people to abstain from his food and drink, if it appears to resemble the shape of a cross, or any visible object resembling the cross, yet the shape of yourself as a human being is closer in resemblance to the cross than the rosary, because you said concerning the rosary, 'If the two equal sides are made long then it (the cross) will appear very evidently'. However, your shape is more apparent than that of the rosary, for if you stand upright and stretch out your two hands you would have no need to look for the cross in the rosary since you are able to see it in yourself. In such a case it becomes necessary for you to destroy your existence, or otherwise avert your eyes from seeing yourself, so that it does not appear to resemble the cross.

I say, even if Allāh has tested you with (juristic) reasoning by analogy regarding the question of the rosary, why did you compare it with the cross or with what the monks do? [92] You did not compare it with the necklace, which the Arabs used to hang around their necks. Nor the garlands that marked out the sacrificed animal, whenever they intended to set out for pilgrimage towards the Sacred House in order that the one who follows this application becomes immune from attack or interference. The necklace consists of a rope braided with rush. Allāh has praised them for that, and He mentioned their garlands in comparison to thankfulness notwithstanding it were a practice initiated by the pagans and

Islam has acknowledged it. Allāh says, ‘God made the *Ka'bah*, The Sacred House, an asylum of security for men, as also the Sacred Months, the animals for offerings, and the garlands that mark them’ [5:100]. *Ibn Atiyyah* in his commentary says about this verse, ‘The necklace is what people used to wear around their necks as a protection for themselves whenever they intended to perform the pilgrimage and Allāh praised them for it in return for their grateful obligation.’ *Qatāda* says, ‘In the pre-Islamic times, when the person would leave his home with the intention of making the pilgrimage, he would hang a necklace made of rush around his neck so that he became immune from attack or interference.’ And *Sa'id Ibn Jubayr* says, ‘Allāh created these matters like the wearing of a necklace and so on for people who lived during the pagan era and had no desire for paradise, nor the fear for the Hellfire.’ Do we not find in this that the rosary is more similar to the necklace than the cross? But you are not someone who would search for an excuse. Your only intention is to mislead, ‘And God will not mislead a people after He hath Guided them, [9:115]. And then you said,



‘I do not think any of the rightly guided Scholars of religion approved the use of the rosary as we have mentioned.’

My response to that is that this thought of yours which you entertained concerning your Lord, has brought you to destruction, and (now) have you become of those utterly lost! [41:23]. Have we not already mentioned to you what was transmitted from the famous Scholars of religion concerning its practice and how they approved of it as well as those who wrote about it, like *Junayd*, *Sahmun*, *Sha`rāni*, *Sanusi*, *Suyuti* and among many others whose number is innumerable [93] not to speak of the leaders of Sufism? Does this aforementioned group not suffice as being a proof for its permissibility, unless you want to say that they are

not of the rightly guided scholars or religion, but Allāh forbid that you should have a bad opinion of our worthy ancestors.

This group of people about whom you said, ‘Some Sufis use it in order to show the traces of worship in himself until he is venerated by people as already mentioned. In this way he attains to the aim which is to get money by means of deceit and being an impostor.’ In reply I say, In all probability that you did not spare any level of bad opinion about the followers of Muḥammad in this belief, which has exceeded all bounds of evil. May Allāh preserve us from it and from those who believe in it, because whoever believes in Muslims pretending to do good deeds in order to access peoples’ money, as you have mentioned it is then not unlikely that the person will advance gradually with this vile measure towards the rightly-guided Khalifahs if not, we could almost say the Prophets and the Messengers (may Allāh be pleased with them all). But all this irrational talk about worldly things is what you have found within yourself, and you compared others with it. You saw nothing but your own description, since the believer is the mirror to his brother.

By Allāh as our witness, we have most certainly recognised men who preferred the little wealth above a lot of wealth, and they sacrifice more than what they receive. Truly they are those about whom the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him) said, ‘And through them does Allāh send you rain and through them does He give sustenance’. Then you said, ‘And there are some of them who have taken a big rosary, the bead is measured according to the greatness of the person, when he dies it is placed on the tomb of his grave so that his inheritors could seek after the peoples money which is better for them than a lofty estate and an orchard (sawani) of olives and dates. When a visitor of great status come to them they receive him with veneration and exaltation and they would open the decorated

dome for him, and after completing his prayer they present him with food, which is an expression of a [94] flat loaf of bread, the measure of the palm or piece of it. It is the practice of monks, as stated in '*Tuhfat ul-Arib Firrad Ala Ahli Salib*' or they could be given water to drink for the *Barakah* and this is all with an intention to deceive the people so that they must give them money for their visit. If they are of the poor, then this track is not opened unto him' to the end of what you have mentioned of judgement and of your abominable concepts and your poor style of writing. In reply I say, Allāh will most certainly hold you responsible for disgracing His friends (*Awliya*) because they are free from the idolatry which you have accused them of, whether these *Awliya* are dead or alive.

Has the following saying of the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him), never come to your ears, 'Mention the good qualities of your deceased ones and refrain from mentioning their misdeeds,' while in another saying, 'Withhold your tongues from the Muslims and if anyone among them should pass away, speak good about him.' He also said, 'The Muslim is he whose hand and tongue is safeguarded from the other Muslims.' What an imposed affliction is this upon yourself, pursuing the faults of the Muslims among those who are dead and alive? Do you not know that the Law has defined the meaning of slander, which is prohibited unanimously as follows, 'Slander is to mention about your brother that which he detests.' *Abū Huraira* (may Allāh be pleased with him) narrates, 'That which you hate to speak personally of in front of your brother is considered as slander.' It is said 'Slander is to mention about your brother that which is found in him, but if you mention something about him which is not found in him, then you have defamed him (fabricated lies against him).' To what section does this belong? May Allāh have mercy on you. Is this slander or defamation?

The truth is that they belong to both since you have slandered some of them and defamed others. ‘God doth admonish you, that ye may never repeat such (conduct) if you are (true) believers’ [24:17].

After you have scorned the conditions of the Muslims, ridiculing the sons of the believers and after you have mentioned most of the faults of your nation's sons, the non-Muslims will be very contented with it, and by Allāh, should they hear it from you, you would most certainly have received a beautiful praise from them. You then concluded the chapter stating, [95]

‘The best of affairs in religion is that which conforms to *Sunnah* and the worst of affairs are the created innovations.’

In reply I say, Whatever you have mentioned in this chapter by disgracing the Muslims, exposing the faults of those attached to Allāh, under what section does this fall? The section of *Sunnah*? The *Sunnah* of the Messenger (blessings and peace be upon him) of Allāh? Or the *Sunnah* of the rightly guided Khalifs? So by the grace of Allāh, inform me, who among the companions and those who followed them allowed that Muslims should be openly disgraced? You have even gone to the extent of pursuing to publicise the shamefulfulness of the people of Allāh. So I ask you to tell me by Allāh as your witness, which innovation in this chapter is it that has opposed the *Sunnah* and the consensus of the Islamic scholars. Is it the holding of a rosary in one's hand and its signals as you have mentioned? Yet it is necessary for the intelligent man to say, Some evils are lesser than others, so what is it about the sons of Sufism that hurts you, is it that they pray, fast and read the Qur'ān and observe the characteristics of Islam, or is it the gifts which they accept, which you intend to consider as unlawful. Since the ruling of the Law is contrary to this. It says, ‘The most permissible of lawfulness is the gift offered without request.’ Do you not know that the sacredness of the

pious people passes on to their sons and the sons of their sons as long as they follow in their traces as Muslims. Especially if they are descendants of the Messenger (blessings and peace be upon him) of Allāh, and of his kinship, in compliance to what the Divine text contains in imposing love towards them as a duty.

Allāh says, 'Say, no reward do I ask you for this, except the love of those near of kin.' (42,23). Have you not heard that *Musa* and *Khidr* (may Allāh be pleased with them) freely rendered their service to two orphans whose father was pious? Which virtue is more noble than the one towards the sons of the pious? No, by Allāh! Your saying does not decrease them nor the saying of those who are of your kind. But my desire for the sons of the pious is that they should inherit godliness from their fathers. 'And those who believe and whose families follow them in Faith,- to them shall We join their families' [52:21].[96]

Then you included another chapter which you called the second chapter, 'And one of the errors is to imitate the unbelievers and the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) has confirmed this in his saying, 'You will certainly follow the ways of those who were before you (i.e. Jews and Christians) span by span and cubit by cubit. So much so that even if they entered the hole of a mastigure you would follow them, and if anyone of them should have sexual relations with his wife in public, then you would want to do the same to the end of what you pursued in this matter.'

Then you mentioned in general some innovations, specifically imposing caution against it. What you have mentioned is the clear truth, its rays cannot be hidden from the blind man let alone the man who can see. But it appears to me that what you have mentioned is merely as a preparation, in order to afterwards by your own ability, link it to the graves of the pious, and those who visit them, which is soon to become evident. Since, if it was your intention to

fight innovations in general, then you would have debated every innovation separately, but I see the pivot of your skill revolves only around what is mentioned. If you wanted to make people wary against imitating the unbelievers, you would have entered into a chapter specifically imposing caution against its actual diseases, and following foreign habits and its ability to spread amongst our sons and daughters, so that we may preserve our Islamic practices and Arab morals. Instead, you have in most cases brought forward that which is of no use, except for causing conflict in accordance to what is evident.

Do you not see that after you have transmitted *Sidi Ali Al-Ajhuri's* statement, which speaks about the veneration, of the graves until the common people would have almost worshipped it, you said, 'If it had been in our present time, then he (*Al-Ajhuri*) would have said they are worshipping the graves, and not 'almost', for their actions and sayings clearly point towards this.' By Allāh! How amazing, when did the community of Muḥammad (blessings and peace be upon him) renounce their faith in order to worship graves? Why have you not paused at the saying of *Al-Ajhuri* and left a choice to yourself and the muslims? And since you have conveyed this peculiarity unto them, God forbid! It would have been more eloquent for you to have referred to it indirectly rather than stating it bluntly. How courageous of you! By Allāh![97]

No believer would be so bold to revile anyone with apostasy, let alone confirming it, passing this verdict upon the choicest of the Community's servants. There is no one among the adherents of the *Sunnah (Ahl al-Sunnah)* except that they would venerate the pious people of the Community and find it a blessing to visit their graves and have recourse by their side regarding important matters. They have no other intention except that they should mediate on their behalf unto Allāh Most High. When you were explicit in what has just been

mentioned, I was afraid that the expression would not be consistent, meaning it would not be understood. In view of the fact that the people of this time are apostates worshipping the graves, you came with what guarantees with conformity, you said 'It is recorded in an authentic narration from *A'isha* (may Allāh be pleased with her) that *Ummu Habiba* and *Ummu Salama*, remembered a church with images in it, which they saw in Abyssinia. They mentioned it to the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him), and he said 'Verily among those people, when a pious man dies, they would build a mosque over his grave and create in it those images. On the day of Resurrection they will be the most evil of creation in the sight of Allāh.' and the people of this age have followed them in this, they are the evil ones among creation.' In reply I say may Allāh, on behalf of the Muslims, reward you with what you are worthy of [in the Eyes] of Allāh. The Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him) would not be contented to hear someone speaking about his Community as the most evil among the creation and the creatures. Does it not suffice you to make their practices repulsive and diminishing their beliefs, until you have placed them in the lowest level of the Hell-fire comparing them with the idol-worshippers?

The aim of the Law is to speak about them as the most evil of creation (because the Law would in the utmost degree refer to them (idol-worshippers) as the most evil of creation). But you speak about the sons of your own faith saying they are the most evil of the creation and creatures. Even if we say that the generality of the community resembles that which has been mentioned, does the one who resemble have the same strength as the one resembled to? So when the Law has passed the judgment on the 'resembled' (i.e. idolaters) that they are the most evil of creation, is it then not imperative (necessary) for the ressembler, to be the most evil of creation, just like (the resembled) let alone being the most evil of creation and the creatures.

Do you not know that what the Prophet mentioned was as a form of caution unto his community? ‘With this doth God warn off His servants’ [39:16] [98] since the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him) was very confident about his community's certainty, did not waiver in any way. Why should he, when he himself testified to this certainty, according to what *Ibn 'Umar* has narrated about the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him) saying, ‘No community has been given a more excellent certainty than that which was given to my Community’. It is also narrated from him that the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him) said, ‘there is not a community except that some of them will go to hell and some will go to heaven, except for my Community, they are all in paradise’, transmitted from (*'al-Jāmi` al-Saghir*).

So where is your testimony for the Community, from that of the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him) and what evidence of certainty is there which you have furnished for the Community? Do you think that it is different in the case of exaltation towards the pious men considering the fact that it is Allāh Himself who exalts them. Yes, then there are those individuals who have exceeded the normal bounds of exaltation, but whatever the case may be they have never gone as far, in exalting the pious, compared to what you have described them with. Have you no other road to take in your reminder and your admonition than this callous road which you have chosen and which is of no use other than revealing your ill-natured faith? Have you not come across the saying of Allāh in the Qur'ān ‘Invite to the path of your Lord with wisdom and good admonition’ [16:125]? To which section does this treatise of yours belong? Is it to the section of wisdom or of beautiful admonition?

Even if we say you have followed the *Wahabi* teachings, which advocates absolutely the prohibition of visiting the tombs of the pious, you still require a style more graceful than this

in order to plant this belief in the hearts of those firmly believing and trying to destroy what is in their hearts. The Community is less likely to repeatedly drink from that faith which is in the same cup. Then you said, ‘Let us return then to the discussion of visiting. As for the woman, it is not permissible for her to visit the graves, as agreed by general consensus and known in the books of *Fiqh*. The Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him) said, 'Allāh has cursed the female visitors of the graves and those who have taken it for mosques'.

As for the man [99] whose belief is strengthened with faith and knowing with certainty that the Giver and the Depriver is Allāh and that benefit and harm comes from none but Him Most High, that there is no lawful restriction in the place like women, for example, and the exposition of silk, its flag, silver vessels and statues, the visit of them becomes permissible for him. Otherwise if the matter is not so it becomes unlawful. In any case, staying away is best as a precaution because of the weakness of faith in this age. So when the person wants to ask Allāh anything, he asks in any place or at any time, so the matter is about intention and in the manifestation of the slavehood.’ That which you have mentioned in this sentence pertaining to the laws of visiting, you were right in one way and in another way you erred excessively. After a while I will inform you about the error, but first as for that which is right in this sentence is when you said ‘visiting is permissible if there is no lawful restriction’.

Then you said,

‘Let us return then to the discussion of visiting. As for the woman, it is not permissible for her to visit the graves, as agreed by general consensus and known in the books of *Fiqh*. The Messenger of Allāh (blessings and

peace be upon him) said, 'Allāh has cursed the female visitors of the graves and those who have taken it for mosques'. And as for the man [99]whose belief is strengthened with faith and knowing with certainty that the Giver and the Depriver is Allāh and that benefit and harm comes from none but Him Most High, that there is no lawful restriction in the place like women, for example, and the exposition of silk, its flag, silver vessels and statues, then the visit of them becomes permissible for him. Otherwise if the matter is not so, it becomes unlawful. In any case, remoteness is best as a precaution because of the weakness of faith in this age. So when the person wants to ask Allāh anything, he asks in any place or at any time, so the matter is about intention and in the manifestation of the slavehood'.

That which you have mentioned in this sentence pertaining to the laws of visiting, you were right in one way and in another way you erred excessively. After a while I will inform you about the error, but first as for that which is right in this sentence is when you said 'visiting is permissible if there is no lawful restriction'.

As for the error, it is explained from the prohibitions which you have mentioned. You mentioned that one of the prohibitions are decoration of silk, flags and silver vessels, as if you are saying whenever these matters are found at a tomb, it is unlawful to visit it. So, if the obligation of this statement is binding then you are saying that the visiting of the Sacred House of Allāh and of the grave of the Prophet Muḥammad (blessing and peace be upon him) is prohibited, as in these two Holy Sanctuaries are found the silk and silver which the eye has never seen and the ear has never heard. Are you not aware that the covering of the

Ka'bah is made from pure silk? and in the two holy sanctuaries there are golden and silver vessels of which the value is inconceivable. If what has been mentioned, is part of the lawful restrictions, then you have just eliminated the Hajj from the followers of Muḥammad. Indeed the usage of silk has been made unlawful according to what is mentioned, but looking at it has never been prevented by the Law, as in the case of it being a decoration on the wall or the covering of the *Ka'bah*.

If the prevention is related to something like this, it goes back to the person who makes use of it, not [100] the one who looks at it. This is what I have known from the Law, before Allāh pointed out to me your perceptions.

After you have established that visiting the tomb is permissible, in accordance to the conditions which you confirmed, you said

‘But in any case, remoteness is best as a precaution because of the weakness of faith in this age. So when the person wants to ask Allāh anything, he asks in any place, at any time, since the matter is about intention and the manifestation of slave hood’.

The exception here is inappropriate, because if the conditions which you have established are found, then visiting the graves is recommended, according to the existence of the command which is testified in the Prophetic narrations. But if the conditions are lacking then prohibition is obligatory as you have mentioned. Until now I still say, distance is best as a precaution for the possible mixing of women with men, or if the person believes firmly that he is able to secure himself from this, and they are but few, distance is more appropriate. For this reason it is necessary upon the leaders that should they permit women to visit the graves, they should restrict it to a specific day and their reward is with Allāh.

You then produced one of the most important principles of the religion responsible for bringing together any disagreement between two contenders. This principle only escaped you when you had to associate it with all the criticism which you have established against the Sufis when you said, ‘the matter is about intention’.

Based on this acknowledgement, it is necessary upon you not to distort any aim, considering that the intention of the person is sincere and purely for the sake of Allāh. In accordance with the authentic narration of the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him), ‘Actions are but by intention, and every man shall have but that which he intends.’ Thus, he whose migration is for Allāh and His Messenger’ It is also reported in the narration of Abu Huraira (may Allāh be pleased with him), ‘People will be resurrected according to their intention’ and with this principle it becomes very clear to us, what the objective of a question in all matters of interpretative judgement [101] and controversial issues is. There is not a believer except that he tries his utmost in that which can bring him closer to Allāh Most High. The matter is about intention, as you have mentioned. Then you mentioned this in a number of Prophetic narrations, containing the pure *tawhid* of Allāh, like the saying of the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him) ‘And when you ask, ask Allāh and when you seek help, seek help from Allāh.’

It is this Prophetic narration and others similar to it upon which the axis of Sufism turns. I have not seen anyone more protective over the pure *tawhid* than the Sufis. Their writings are the most just proof and the one who has not become immersed in their sciences will never be completely free from a faith that is tarnished. It is for this reason that the *Imām* of this order (*Abū al-Hasan Al-Shadhili*) said, ‘The one who is not immersed in this knowledge dies on the brink of major sin’.

Then you mentioned the main reason why the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him) prohibited the visiting of graves during the early period of Islam saying,

‘Some of the scholars of religion say that the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) prohibited the visiting of graves during the early period of Islam, because the pagan Arabs used to exalt the graves and possibly worshipped them. Therefore he (blessings and peace be upon him) safeguarded the faith of the believers through prohibition and when the situation was stabilized, he (blessing and peace be upon him) made visiting permissible.’

This is a probability and to me there has appeared another probability, that the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him) prohibited the visiting of graves during the early period of Islam, because none of the idolaters’ graves were worth visiting. When the graves became over crowded with Muslims and their martyrs, he (blessings and peace be upon him) then made it permissible in order for them to find their blessings and stand at their tombs, seeing it as a reflection and a reminder and Allāh knows best.

Then you started with the establishment of a new rule when you said,

‘And since ignorance has become prevalent, nothing is left of knowledge except for the name and the faith has become weak because of the belief that the (deceased) *Shaykh* who is visited is able to cause harm and bring benefit. So the visiting of these graves in general is prohibited, because the cause [102] goes with the effect in the case of existence and non-existence. What adds to that is the meeting of males and females and many a times this becomes the intended purpose.’

This is a declaration coming from you, making it permissible to change the law from 'recommended' to 'prohibited' and the like. This is a means which creates the fear that the religion of Allāh should become a target in the hands of those who want to manipulate it. They change the law when an uncertainty arises, either by a negative or positive cause. By Allāh as your witness, have those Sufis whose deeds you have quoted, ever expressed the permissibility of a lawful to become unlawful or an unlawful to become lawful? Yes they say so, but a matter that is less significant than that is when they make the assemblies of *dhikr* permissible and the loud reading of *La ilaha illa Allāh* and what is of its kind. You have classified them amongst the group of misleading innovations. The truth is that what you have established with regard to this case is more deserving of being called innovation.

As for your justification with regard to the prohibition of visiting, because of the fact that the general people believe the (deceased) *Shaykh* who is visited is able to give and deprive and so on. You have already mentioned this in the beginning regarding that which is forbidden. I certainly do not think that the like of such beliefs could be found among the general public individually. The muslims in general only believe in the existence of intermediaries between them and Allāh, Most High. They refer to them in the important matters because they have not yet reached the station where mediation is omitted, like in the case of your station which you have reached as you claim. It is for this reason that they do not seek intercession except with that which can bring them closer to Allāh.

Mixing of the sexes

As for your saying ‘... and what adds to this is the mixing of males and females ...’ your duty is to make this the only reason for the prohibition of visiting the graves, but not an absolute prohibition other than the restriction of the meeting. This is certainly the most harmful thing that needs attention, because the meeting of males and females is obviously harmful. The mixing of women particularly cannot be condoned, let alone generally. Then you sought the evidence that visiting is non-beneficial,[103] in the quotation of *Ibn `Arabi al-Hātimi* where he says, ‘The dead cannot benefit you because benefit arises from deeds and his deeds are severed’. So it is evident from this that your prohibition from visiting is not due to the lack of fulfillment of conditions but, it is only your belief that the dead cannot benefit at all. Otherwise you would not have quoted the saying of *Ibn `Arabi*.

I do not say he is wrong, but what I do say is the wrong understanding of what is meant by *Ibn Arabi's* saying, that no benefit can be derived from the dead as with regards to that which concerns the education of the disciple and his traveling in the path of Allāh. Therefore it is made conditional that the *murshid*, whom he accompanies, should be a Knower of the Path, and the stipulation of life is a condition for the companionship. This benefit is not attainable except from the one who is alive. But as for the benefit which is an expression of mediation and intercession towards Allāh Most High through the elect of His creation, seeking blessings through their obedience, is an acknowledgement of the Law. Nay, the Law has permitted us to seek blessings, in order to obtain access to Allāh Most High through that which has absolutely no life like the Black Stone and the Sacred House for example, and that of its kind. Let alone that it should prohibit us from seeking intercession and blessings through the pure souls and the illuminated bodies. I caution you indeed that you should interpret the saying of *Ibn Arabi* to be, ‘absolutely non-beneficial in the case of seeking intercession and blessings through every dead being’, since it would

include the generality of those whom Allāh has favoured among His Prophets, the Sincere (Lovers) the martyrs and the righteous.

Do you not see that Allāh has revealed unto the one who was at the summit of the most distinguished among them ‘Truly thou wilt die (One day) and truly they (too) will die (one day)’ (39:30). Thus do you see me finding you generalising a statement without considering that to which your statement is legally binding. But this statement of yours is inadequate to the minds of the *Ahl al-Sunnah* because the successors (*Khalaf*) of the *Ahl al-Sunnah* will never seize to take the example from their worthy ancestors (*As-Salaf*) and seeking blessings through their honour except when there will be no one left on the face of the earth who will say Allāh! Allāh!**[104]** according to the Prophetic narration. In any case you continued going to great lengths in defaming the Sufis, proving that there is no benefit in their meetings during their lifetime, cautioning from being in their company and proving ill benefit in their meeting during their lifetime. You feared that it might be suspected that visiting them after death, they might bring benefit, so you quoted the saying of *Ibn Arabi*, ‘Verily the dead cannot benefit you’. It has however become clear, from what you have gathered, that there is no benefit in them during their lifetime or when they are dead, and this is the judgment which you have passed, but Allāh will judge what is beyond that.

Then you mentioned one of the unlawful innovations ‘the shaving of the beard or clipping it to the skin and leaving the moustache’. So I say, as for your mentioning of shaving the beard, it ought to be called an innovation because it clashes with a transmitted *Sunnah*, which is 'the hanging of the beard and the trimming of the moustache' in the Prophet's command in more than one Prophetic narration. If the doer of such an act understands, he will know of his own accord that he has committed a innovation because he has no text at hand which he could rely on. I sincerely wish that our scholars of *fiqh* should pay attention

to matters like these, because if such an act is generally abominable, then it is more abominable exclusively.

I then see that you have been uninterested in mentioning that snuff, which is popularly used in our times, is an innovation. In my opinion nothing has prevented you from determining the text on this issue, unless you have considered it as approved, or that you have found for it a support in the *Sunnah*, God forbid! Or else you would have condemned the user with the strongest condemnation, meaning it in every painful statement and it might hopefully be that way, if by Allāh's will life becomes prolonged. After it would be confirmed that it is a blameworthy innovation, because I see that you take great care in guarding the *Sunnah* - acting in accordance with the saying of the Messenger of Allāh blessings and peace be upon him[105] 'You must follow my *Sunnah* and the *Sunnah* of the rightly guided *Khalifs* and cling stubbornly to it.' I do not know what it is with regards to that which your tongue has uttered in ripping apart the honour of the Sufis and seeking to discover their faults. Is it the *Sunnah* of the Messenger of Allāh blessings and peace be upon him or of the rightly guided *Khalifs*? Allāh forbid!

Allāh says, scaring away the believers from mentioning their brothers with evil, 'Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead Brother? Nay, ye would abhor it... ' [49:12]. But you allowed yourself to be seduced, or should we say that your devil inspired you to commit this vice, claiming that you are alerting people and warning them against being deceived by the *Sufis*, because Allāh has revealed unto you their secrets. So you found them to be opposite to what they outwardly display. Even if we should consider this belief to be confirmed in the heart of the one who accepts your belief. Having a bad opinion of those attached to Allāh, or pretending to be righteous whoever he might be, until all its characteristics has been fulfilled

in this despicable state among the latter followers. Then it would not be unlikely that such a believer incline towards the ancestors.

What is certain is that if this was in the time of the Prophets and the Messengers, his view on them would never increase his view on the pious people of his time. It is not unlikely that he would be among those who said about the Messenger of their time ‘they are nothing but liars’ and so forth. I thank Allāh for your sake that the era of the Messengers has passed, otherwise you would be amongst the losers. After you insinuated, spoke frankly, alluded to and then expounded, the goal in all this is only to prohibit people from being Sufis and associating with them during their lifetime, or visiting them when they are dead. After you have exerted yourself vehemently, you then mentioned a section cautioning in it people who might want to imitate them. You said,

‘The third chapter - Imitating the pious people, is amongst the misleading actions]’ Up until now I do not understand the meaning of this construction,[106]except that I do know that it is a very unusual style since you first mentioned a chapter on ‘Imitation of disbelievers are amongst the misleading actions’, and now you mention ‘Imitation of the pious which is amongst the misleading actions’.

By God, this is amazing! What are all these misguidance which have encompassed the Muslims? That which we know is the good with which the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) came ‘He who imitates people is considered to be of them’, even though he has never reached their degree and it is for this reason that the poet said,

‘So imitate the pious even if you are not like them.

Verily, the imitation of the distinguished ones, is salvation’.

I wish I knew what the practice of the instructed *Sunnah* is, if not to be an expression of imitating pious ancestors in their words, actions and states. That which might have prevented you from the true meaning of the wording is your poor expression. It might have wanted to say, appearing to be pious with a wicked intention is amongst the misleading acts. Good arrangement of expression failed you, just as having a good opinion escaped you. Otherwise the concept of imitating the pious as being amongst the misleading actions, has never been said by anyone besides you. As for your transmission of the saying of the author of '*al-Madkhal*', in accordance to what will follow, is in non-conformity to your translation of the chapter and neither does it correspond to your belief of the doctrine of Sufism. You have distorted it from its very source while the writer of '*al-Madkhal*' is opposed to that. He has acknowledged it with full acknowledgement and his rejection relates only to what is ascribed to that and it might in fact be the contrary in the same matter.

Has he not documented a chapter prior to the chapter which you have transmitted from him, in which he says 'Know that the path of the People is pure' and from this can be gathered that he has honoured the doctrine of *Sufism* with great honour. He has only rejected the people of his time who did not fulfill the conditions required by their contemporaries and it is not unlikely that there will be intruders and innovators in every age.

CHAPTER FIVE: PROTECTING THE DOCTRINE

All this can be gathered [107] from his saying ‘...some of them...’ to the end of what he mentioned about the conditions which he considered to be nothing but misrepresentation.

What helps us to know that he has acknowledged the Sufis is, when he mentions in one of his statements, ‘... no person would think that what he mentioned is a rejection of any pledge to be taken from its people for themselves with its condition. Since the pious ancestors (*Salaf*), may Allāh allow us to benefit from them, followed the same way’. He continued by saying, ‘... neither do I reject any association towards the *Shaykhs* with its condition.’ After an overall discussion he mentions some of the morals of the people of Sufism as follows, ‘So these were their states and excellent conduct and they are an example for those who will come after them and cling to their path. I ask Allāh not to turn us away from their state.’

This is some of what (*al-Madkhal*) contains, which is a proof that its author had a regard for the doctrine of Sufism, like other great scholars beside him. He is innocent from that which you have ascribed unto him, since you have purposely and selectively quoted in order to harmfully mislead the one who has no knowledge of the author of (*al-Madkhal*). Had it not been for his book bearing testimony in his favour, it would have been assumed that he followed your belief in the condemnation of Sufism. Your example is like that which has been narrated from *Abū Darda*, where he says that the Messenger of Allāh said, ‘The example of the one who sits and listens to wisdom and only speaks bad of what he has heard from the speaker, is like a man who goes to a shepherd asking, ‘ Shepherd, donate unto me a

sheep from your herd.' The shepherd tells him, 'Go and take by the ear of the best sheep.' He then goes and takes by the ear of a sheepdog.' In this Prophetic narration is the clearest comparison of what you did with the author of (*al-Madkhal*) and others from whom you have transmitted.

The sufis, saints or charlatans

As for that which *Tartusi* and others mentioned, according to what is understood from his transmitted chapters, this is not his true belief about Sufis. This is the very chapter you relied on when you said,

'He says in (*al-Madkhal*) 'the chapter which mentions some of those who imitate the *Shaykhs*, and [108] people of power and this is a wide and diverse chapter. Whilst it is almost impossible to encompass all of it due to its vastness, we shall refer to some of it. Amongst them are some who claim to be pious and religious and that they are of the people of union (with *Allāh*). He relates the stories of some of the great men who have passed and then decorates his own speech with it. In this way he would claim these states upon himself, claiming that he has a part in it and amongst them are some who confer on themselves miracles, breaking through the usual course of nature, while being deprived of it by the characteristic which opposes it. Then there is the one amongst them who claims to have seen *Khidr* who confirm it with an oath so that its acceptance could be more convincing. Then there are some who, when he wishes to set forth an idea in order to camouflage the masses into

believing his speech and that he is amongst the pious. He places before them the quotation of evidence from the Book of Allāh, 'On the day of Judgement wilt thou see those who told lies against God;-, Their faces will be turned black' [39:60]. He would also swear by *Allāh* to this evidence and that he definitely has seen and he was addressed through his heart.'

In reply I say that I do not reject the existence of misrepresentation of certain individuals amongst the pious for such is *Allāh's* way with His creation. Some people have even claimed Prophethood and there is no dispute in all this. The only dispute is your rejection of the doctrine of Sufism and your degrading and accusing of heresy the groups of *dhākirūn* whichever group they may belong to. What the author of (*al-Madkhal*) has mentioned is a probability, since what is it that tells you or him that there cannot be sincere ones amongst the individuals referred to, whereas that which is hidden belongs to *Allāh*. The Messenger of *Allāh* (blessings and peace be upon him) has said, '*Allāh* has hidden three in three things...' and one of these is, the *Wali* hidden in His creation. For this reason the having of a good opinion is one of the most important qualities of this religion. *Shaykh Abdul Wahab Sharani* says in book (*Al-Minan*), 'One of the blessings which Allāh has bestowed upon me, is the veneration of everyone upon whom I see the appearance of the *Sufis* and the characteristics which they display.'**[109]** 'This and its like can only appear from someone who believes in the existence of piety within those who are attached to *Allāh* Most High and not from those who remove the good from the Community in general. Then you said,

'A man has already claimed all that which has been discussed, but I will add more to his long citation. Some feeble-minded and those who are knowledgeable have been deceived by him. He claims that he has a

perfect state, but *Allāh* has exposed all of them so that they would be an example for those who reflect.’

We have always found you to be careless in what you have transmitted, but as for attributing this shame to the one who claims all this, is correct if it happened according to what you have mentioned. But to ascribe it to the one who believes all this, then no, because *Allāh* has left him to deceive himself.

'Umar Ibn Abdul 'Aziz (may *Allāh* be pleased with him) said, ‘The one who has deceived us with *Allāh* has only deceived himself.’ Yes, a liar cannot deceive the one who has a bad opinion, just as he cannot benefit from someone who tells the truth. He is in actual fact deceived by Satan, the supreme liar, since he has caused him to have a bad opinion of the *dhākirūn* . Yet, he did not know that the sign of the love of *Allāh* is the love for HIS *dhikr* and the sign of the love of His *dhikr* is the love for the *dhākirūn* . Are you not aware that the *dhikr* is a testimony to the faith of the person in any case and the one who opposes *dhikr*, will testify to the hypocrisy of such a person. We do not know what sin you have committed, but its punishment would be for you, because of your attacking the honour of the *dhakirun*.

Then you started to attach all that which is outside of their doctrine to the people of Sufism, when you quoted from the author of (*al-Madkhal*),

‘... and amongst them are those who claim to enter the fire not burning in front of peoples eyes.’ Should this be true, it is considered a reprehensible innovation since the condition of a miracle is to disclose it and to challenge with it. A charismatic gift is the opposite of that, because when he discloses it to people, [110] it is no longer *karamah*. They say by *Allāh*, unless it is in the case of a legitimate necessity, which requires

disclosure. Some of them disclose their *karamat* by seizing and charming snakes. Whatever is in all of this is a contradiction to the noble law and deceiving the Community with that which has no reality, since many people do it for their livelihood. So how can it be considered a *karāmah*? And some of them eat snakes while they are still alive, which is forbidden, because its eating is not permissible, except if it is slaughtered in the manner prescribed by the law. This is according to those who hold the view that it is permissible to eat bearing in mind that it has no reality because it falls under magic and sorcery. Sorcery is forbidden unanimously, so how can he be a saint notwithstanding that he has committed the acts that are forbidden? Amongst them are also some who do not take off anything from their body. This is ugly and abominable, because it resembles the practice of the monks. It is also dirty and spreads disease as well as the fact that it is prohibited. There are those of them who wear the fibre and things that do not cover the private parts.’

In my opinion, whatever you have gathered in this section has no aim other than defaming the honour of the *Sufis* and defiling their character. Your intention is also to affirm that which you have placed in the mind of the reader that this is the Sufi’s character. Far be it that the one who has regard for the principles of Sufism, knowing its laws, to believe that this is the legality of the *Sufis* or that which they rely on. Their writings have the most adequate proof if they have ever said that or instructed it and whoever invents something will bear its punishment. Sufism will always remain a sun that will never be darkened and a full moon that will never sink, as long as the *Sunnah* is acted upon and the protected. Provided the Law governs over the Sufis and others. The *Sufis* have more knowledge about Allāh's religion than you and your kind. I could almost say that they are the most

knowledgeable servants of *Allāh* concerning Him and His laws. The doubts will be removed [111] on the day when man will be gathered before Him!

In the end what you have implied by way of allusion, you sanctioned the opposite by you yourself saying,

‘... and amongst them are those who wear patched clothes which the Commander of the Righteous *'Umar bin Khattab* (may *Allāh* be pleased with him) prohibited from wearing known to us as *Bu-Darbalah*, to the point that some of the general people named their children *Bu-Darbalah* which has the meaning of piety. This is amongst the disgusting nicknames in the Law.’

In reply I say that it is your nature to reject things and then affirm it with mere opinion without considering *Allāh*'s judgment in it, as you have mentioned the prohibition of the wearing of patched clothes attributing it to *Sayyidina 'Umar bin Khattab* (may *Allāh* be pleased with him). That which is more widely known, is contrary to it since he made use of it himself. The reports have recurred from a number of sources and one of it is the narration of *Anas Bin Malik* (may *Allāh* be pleased with him) who said, ‘I saw *'Umar ibn Khattāb* circumambulating the Sacred House of *Allāh* wearing a coat in which there were twelve patches, one of which was from tanned skin.’ Thus, what you have mentioned about *Umar*'s prohibition of wearing a patched garment is farfetched, whereas it is confirmed that he wore it himself. So is it correct for him to prohibit a moral and then carry out the like of it? Especially when the law-giver has made it permissible according to a narration in which he (blessings and peace be upon him), said to *Āishah* (may *Allāh* be pleased with her), ‘If you want to follow me, do not shed a garment until you have patched it.’ And there are more examples of this kind, but we do not know what it is that you have attributed to *Sayyidina*

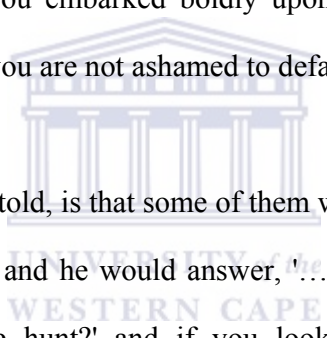
'Umar (may Allāh be pleased with him). Is it merely falsification on your part or a weakness in the narration or a restricted prohibition?

Wearing patched clothing

He would not prohibit that which is allowed by the Law nor make it permissible except for a reason that would restrict certain individuals, if that was the case. In any case, you do not ascribe the words of its narrator to his narration nor a transmitter to his transmission. This is from the point of view of what relates to the prohibition of wearing patched [112] garments.

As from the point of view which relates to your poor style of expression which you have constructed in this sentence, it requires that the argument be avoided. One of the qualities of the incompetent person is that the truth cannot be obtained from falsehood, so what is this useless roaring without any results? What is the benefit of your saying, '... to the point that some of the general people give their children the name *Bu-Darbalah*'? If it was a surname (*kunyah*) having before it a name, then especially with regards to what you have said that the meaning of *Bu-Darbalah* is piety, then from where have you taken this explanation? Oh, how far is it from its true meaning! Why do you not say that its meaning is possessor of patches? And then you said it is amongst the ugly nicknames (*laqab*) in the Law. Is it not a *kunyah* then? So what is the matter with you to call it a *laqab*? Then you restricted it to being ugly according to Law. How amazing is it not of people who, by their nature, make things ugly and then attribute it to the Law! Which Law has made that word ugly and which text is it in our Law that has defined *Bu-Darbalah* as one of the ugly nicknames? From which matter have you derived its ugliness, is it from the surname of *Abū Hurairah* (father of kittens), or is it from the surname *Abū Turab* (father of dust) which the Messenger of Allāh (blessings and peace be upon him) gave to `Ali bin Abu Talib?

What difference is there for example between the names cats, patches and dust until some of them are considered to be amongst the ugly words? It is very strange for you to say that the meaning of *Bu-Darbalah* is piety and then you said that it is one of the ugly names. In my opinion there is an enormous difference between ugliness and piety. They cannot be combined in one word, but if you had shown respect to the Law, you would not have been in such a hurry to ascribe any judgment without knowledge. Have you not heard his saying (blessing and peace be upon him), ‘Whoever passes judgment on people without knowledge is cursed by the angels of the heavens and the earth’? So what is it in this word that you should commit this crime with it compelling you to describe it as ugly according to the Law? I think [113] that you embarked boldly upon this in order to gain access to the defamation of those whom you are not ashamed to defame and this is what you said,



‘And from what is told, is that some of them would say to the *Sufi*, ‘... sell me your cloak ...’ and he would answer, ‘...when a hunter sells his net, with what will he hunt?’ and if you look at the Sufis of our time possessing the characteristics according to what we have mentioned, you will find them to be the hunters of the people of *shirk* and confusion. Aside from the masses, people of knowledge have often fallen into *shirk*, as we have seen and heard. The masses in most cases do not fall into their abyss, except after those educated people have fallen into it. With that pseudo-ascription they are able to plunder the people's wealth with falsehood thereafter becoming rich after having been poor. Often they rely on those in authority, so that every one of them could attain to his goal.’

This is the cause that their weapons strengthens and their authority becomes manifest and this is the intended purpose of their actions. They are more harmful to the Muslims than the enemy and the people of usury (*riba*), because the usurer pays a little money in order to gain much from it. You know what is mentioned about the usurer in the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*. The *Shaykh* of the *Tariqah* does not pay anything at all, while he takes the people's money using the religion. If such are his characteristics, then how can he still be considered as one of Allāh's saints?'

I can only say that I have never benefited anything from what you have mentioned in this statement more than what I know about your shamelessness and your lack of manliness. Modesty is a part of faith and he who is not modest in front of man, is not modest in front of Allāh. Have you not heard what Allāh has threatened the slanderers with? Has Allāh not prohibited you when He says, 'Nor speak ill of each other behind their backs. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Nay, you would abhor it' [49:12]. Is this not amongst the major sins? Hasan al-Basri (may Allāh be pleased with him) narrated that the Messenger of Allāh (blessing and peace be upon him) said, 'amongst the major sins is for a man is to display arrogant behaviour towards the [114] honour of his brother. *Ibn 'Umar* narrated that the Messenger of (blessing and peace be upon him) said, 'Whoever harms a Muslim has harmed me and whoever harms me has harmed Allāh .' (*al-Jami` al-Saghir*).

In any case, I think that you do acknowledge to the Islam of the Sufis. If so, then why all these afflictions which has committed you to your cause of defaming their reputation, since you have defiled them in every form and referred to them by every vice. If you had excluded anyone amongst them then he would have interceded for you regarding my correspondence to you. In this you have generalised by saying, 'The intended purpose of

their deeds is only to gain access in accumulating the world...’ and other things with which you have referred them with. Are you not aware of their asceticism, mortification of appetites and their turning away from the world, until they have become a proof against people of your kind, now and in the future?

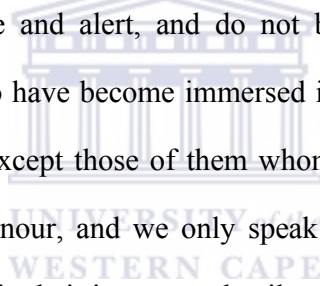
Have you ever seen the one in whose heart the love of the world has become firmly established and mixed with his marrow, that he is able to cut himself off from the pleasures of the world of today in order to gain mastery over it in the future? This is one of the most obvious absurdities for the one who is able to use his reason. How is it possible to leave off something for the purpose of gaining access to it, even if we should say that their deeds were for that purpose. Would you have been able to do what they did, sincerely for the sake of Allāh so that you may be an example if you claim to be of those who are sincere. Nay ‘It is indeed hard, except to those who are humble...’ [2:45].

I have scrutinised carefully that which you have mentioned and found, Allāh knows best, that which you bear is only envy. In it is some kind of objection that you have towards Allāh in His allotment. Since He has bestowed upon them and deprived you and this is Allāh's allotment. Neither they nor you have any access to it. Do you not know that the company of the *dhākirūn* who are advanced to the foremost in guidance, Allāh has promised them the like of that.

Allāh says, ‘God has promised, to those among you who believe and do righteous deeds, that He will, of a surety grant them in the land, inheritance (of power), as He granted it to those before them; that He will establish in authority their religion- the one which He has chosen for them; [115] and that He will change (their state), after the fear in which they (lived), to one of security and peace’ [24:55]. And they have indeed become princes after

they were poor. ‘For God bestows His abundance without measure on whoms He will’ [2:212].

We have most certainly, by Allāh, given up the world, yet you summoned us, and we became unmindful of it, yet you attached us, and we will continue to resist it with our hearts, while she (world) still comes after our track, thus she is one of our followers and you are one of her followers, ‘That is the decree of (Him), the Exalted in Might, the All-Knowing’ [36:38] whether you like it or not. But I wish that Allāh pardons you and forgives you before you quiet down soon, because death is near and that which you have pursued is difficult. Then, after you presented your slander in detail, you said with the aim of advice to the Muslims so that they may adhere to your abominable belief about the *dhakirun*,



‘So become aware and alert, and do not become like the misled and deceived ones who have become immersed in their vessel and we do not speak with them except those of them whom Allāh has assisted by His Grace and His Honour, and we only speak with those who have never become immersed in their impure and evil vessel.’

In reply I say: Enough is all this by which you are occupied in defaming the honour of the *dhākirūn*, who have attached themselves to Allāh Most High, and all this is due to lack of faith, otherwise it would have prevented you from laying attacks on the *dhākirūn* and you would have contented yourself with their *dhikr* whatever the case may be, because it testifies to the *Imān* (faith) of its possessor, just as opposing the *dhākirūn* would testify to the hypocrisy of its opponent.

I ought not to prolong the discussion with one having this description, because some wise men were asked regarding those like you, ‘Why do you not admonish so and so?’ And they

would say, 'He has a lock on his heart and its key is lost.' But I hope and pray to Allāh that the benefit of what we have written should not be lost whether it reaches (returns to) you or others beside you, so in whoever's hand our letter falls, [116] nothing stops him from comparing between the two speeches and then he lay down one of the books in respect of the other. I do not absolve myself (of blame), I am only absolving the doctrine from what you have attributed to it of ignorance, misguidance and idleness, until the one who has a clear mind is not deceived by the falsehood which your letter contains, and the shamelessness that you have pursued in it, with the purpose of deceiving the servants of Allāh and depreciating what Allāh has elevated, but the caravans are not hindered by the barking of the dogs.

‘But God will complete (the Revelation of) His Light, even though the Unbelievers may detest (it).’ [61:8].

You said in one of your arguments (statements) which you have falsified,

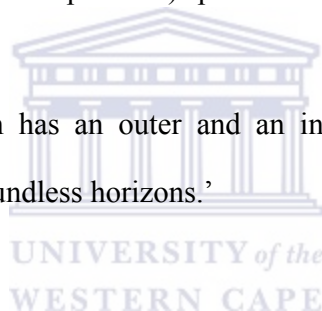
‘Verily for the one who wishes for the safety and security of his religious and worldly affairs, it is incumbent on him to observe Allāh 's Holy Book, the sunnah of His Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him) and the path followed by the worthy ancestors (may Allāh be satisfied with them all). It is the one and only path leading towards Allāh , he should also refrain from all the innovations introduced by the innovators’

This is a word of truth and an authentic statement, however your intention with it was wrong, namely your statement, ‘and to refrain from all the innovations introduced by the innovators’

By this you implied that they are the Sufis, as well as that which they enjoined upon those whose wish it is to belong to them, and for the attachment, and for the companionship of the *Murshid* etc., Then you referred to yourself as a firm adherent of the Qur'an and *Sunnah* of the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him), and assuming the character of the ancestors in word and deed.

What a difference between the two groups! Like the difference between doubt and certainty. Here I am going to clear the clouds for you so that you may be just to yourself if you are of those of reason. By Allāh, what knowledge do you have of Allāh's Book? Where as the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) spoke about it when he said,

‘Verily the Qur'an has an outer and an inner meaning, and restricted boundaries and boundless horizons.’



In another narration,

‘Verily every verse has an outer and inner meaning, restricted boundaries and boundless horizons, from seven to seventy interiors.’

So, have you acquired any of these inner meanings? Nay! You have never even encompassed its outer meaning, so where are you from [117] its inner meanings, its restricted boundaries and boundless horizons. Where is your understanding from the companions’ understanding of Allāh 's Book? *Abdullah ibn Abbas* has said,

‘If I should tell you what I understand about the commentary (*Tafsir*) of the verse in which Allāh says 'Through the midst of them (all) descends His Command.' [65:12], you would either stone me or call me a disbeliever (*kufr*)’

(*Shar’ ani* mentions this in his book (*Al-Yawakit Wa l-Jawahir*.) And most certainly do I say that the meaning of some of the verses in the Qur'an which has escaped you is much more than what you have obtained from the entire Qur'an. Such is the aim (goal) amongst the elect of the Sufis, whom you claim to be your enemy. This is some of what relates to the Book of Allāh .

As for that which relates to the sunnah's of Allāh 's Messenger , I say: Verily the *Sunnah* is an expression of the way the Prophet was in his speeches, his acts and his states, and to sum it up: Whatever he spoke was wisdom, his silence was contemplation, his vision was a education, and his acts were obedience. As for his state, he was constantly with Allāh. He spent the night with his Lord, who gives to eat and drink. Where are you from these beautiful qualities? Do you think that the *Sunnah* is merely a movement of the tongue, or an expression of patched clothes? Nay, it is an expression (means) of following him in his sayings, his acts and his states.

As for the sayings and the acts, some of these were made possible by implication, and by showing the form outwardly. As for the (spiritual) states, these can only be obtained through companionship with the people of spiritual states, whom the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) referred to in his saying,

‘Frequent those whose faces will remind you of Allāh, whose speech will increase you in knowledge, and whose acts will awaken your desire for the Hereafter.’

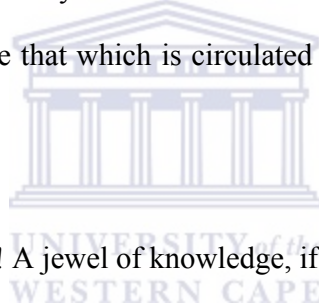
The *Sunnah* in general is an expression of exalted morals and spiritual states, resembled in the Prophet. It is like a magnet for the one in whom it is found, attracting unto it special virtues, like the character of the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) which used to attract those who were in front of him, until everyone who associated with him (blessings and peace be upon him) adopted his character without being aware.

If you had your share (of it), you would have refined the followers [118] with your character. You would have trained them, like yourself, to be much silent; illuminated their inside by your radiance, until the spiritual state emanating from you would be enough as a form of education. Because it is purer and more eloquent than the speech of the tongue, in the sight of the people with the spiritual state.

However, everything is acquired from the people of its kind. So if you were to frequent the Sufis for a very short period of time with a special character of slave-hood, which is the intrinsic requirement, derived from the verse in the Holy Qur'an ‘O ye men! It is ye that have need of God: but God is the One Free of all wants, worthy of all praise’ [35:15]; then their exhortation (eminence) would have touched you, and their state (citation) would have made you happy, and your qualities would have been transformed. ‘God will change the evil of such persons into good’ [25:70], They did not obtain those exalted states, except through their application of the Prophetic *Sunnah* and following the way of the pious ancestors, until they were the worthy ancestors in every community for those who came after them. *Shaykh Abū Madyan (may Allah be pleased with him)* says in praise of them,

‘A people of distinct character wherever they dismount
There the traces of their perfume is left behind’

Furthermore, I wish to inquire from you: Do you think that your inner state possesses that which the companions of Allāh’s Messenger (blessings and peace be upon him) possessed of the Divine sciences and hidden secrets? If so, the distinction of the community of Muḥammad (blessings and peace be upon him) would be lost. If the hidden secret of revelation were to circulate in the minds of the general people, there would be no benefit in occupying oneself exclusively with Allāh and turning one’s face towards Him. No exalted mind would hold this view. Everyone knows that what the secrets of the elect encompass of Divine Knowledge, is unlike that which is circulated by the general people and this is why *Zainul Abidin* said,



‘O My Lord! A jewel of knowledge, if I were to proclaim it
They would accuse me of being an idol worshipper.
The muslims would declare my blood permissible.
And they would consider the worse things done to me as beautiful.’

[119] And similar to this is what the *Sultan* of the lovers has said,

‘And beyond the words of the text lies a knowledge too subtle
To be grasped by sound intelligence
I obtained it, from and through my soul did I take it
And it was my soul that stretched out towards the gift’

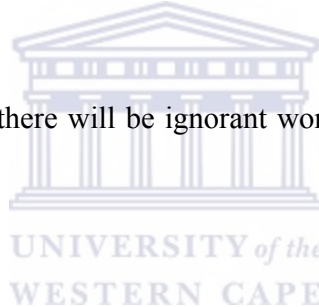
Were it not for this and its like, there would be no need for a spiritual guide in the path of Allāh, whom you have rejected according to what is understood by your statement.

You said,

‘As for their saying, 'He who has no *Shaykh*, *Shaytan* is his *Shaykh*'.

What is meant by *Shaykh* here is an expert and a knower of Allāh , who teaches people the matters of the religion, so that they do not acquire knowledge by themselves, and form their own opinions. What is meant by *Shaykh* is not the ignorant *Shaykh* of the path, to whom the Messenger (blessings and peace be upon him) referred to when he said,

'At the end of time there will be ignorant worshippers and sinful reciters of the Qur'an.'



This is a most outrageous lie. If you say that what is meant by their saying,

‘He who has no *Shaykh*, then *Shaytan* is his *Shaykh*’,

What they mean by it is the *Shaykh* who is a teacher, because everyone acknowledges to the falseness of your statement; even the teacher himself will tell you, what they mean by the *Shaykh* is the *Shaykh* who guides towards the special knowledge of Allāh . He is the one through whose companionship the disciple benefits, from whom he learns refinement of character. His inward is illuminated by his radiance. He is the one who connects the disciple to Allāh by his glance. The *Shaykh* is the one who takes the disciple from the darkness of associationism towards the light of faith, from the light of faith towards the secret of

certainty, from the secret of certainty towards the occurrence of witnessing and from the occurrence of witnessing, to being non-existent in creation. Here it is when the ‘Truth’ becomes his ears, his eyes, his hands and his feet, as mentioned in the authentic Prophetic narration. This is the aim of proximity (to Allāh). The slave becomes extinct from the proximity (of his being) to the ultimate proximity.

This is sometimes given the expressions of concealment, extinction, annihilation and effacement, amongst other terminologies of theirs. Such are the fruits of Sufism that are unknown to you. It is with this definition that *Imām Junayd* defined [120] Sufism, when he was asked about it,:

‘Sufism is that the Truth (*Al-Haqq*) should cause you to die within yourself and resurrect you in Him.’

So tell me, in the name of Allāh, do you have a share in that which we have mentioned? You are classified in accordance with your adherence to that which we have presented of the (spiritual) ranking.. If such is your case, their saying: ‘he who has no *Shaykh*, *Shaytan* is his *Shaykh*’, implies you. In my opinion, your remoteness from this is inversely proportionate to the desired nearness. It is outright rejection. This is what concerns us about your situation. However, if you have denied the ecstasy of the one who has this description, the matter would have been much easier. If we were to give you advice in particular, it would be said to you: strive sincerely and you will find a guide (*murshid*); become a companion for a short while, then you may refute this matter. If you say there is no need for the well versed, in the exoteric sciences, to seek the companionship of someone to guide him to that which is hidden from him of the Divine Secrets, then we say, the story of *Musa* with *Khidr* (may Allāh's peace be upon them) is a proof against you and those of your kind. What we have

compiled is sufficient for the one who is rightly guided. ‘And seeing that they guide not themselves thereby, they will say, ‘This is an old falsehood!’ [46:11].



GLOSSARY OF ARABIC TERMS

<i>adhkār</i> (pl.)	Dhikr (sing.) remembrance and invocation of the name of Allāh. Every action or utterance made for the sake of Allāh can be regarded as dhikr.
<i>aḥkām</i>	Sacred Principles and Laws of Islamic legislation
<i>Ahl al-Sunnah</i>	Followers of the example of the Prophet Muḥammad (blessings and peace be upon him)
‘ <i>ajzā’</i>	A portion of the Divine Book revealed to Prophet Muḥammad (blessings and peace be upon him)
<i>al-‘ibādah</i>	Worship and devotion to Allāh
<i>al-ishārah</i>	Allegory
<i>al-karāhah</i>	Offensive
<i>al-nadab</i>	Desired
<i>al-wujūb</i>	Obligatory
‘ <i>arīf</i>	Knower of Allāh. Lives in the Divine Presence
‘ <i>ayān</i>	Witnessing
<i>bid‘ah</i>	Innovation.
<i>burhān</i>	Evidence
<i>dalīl</i>	Proof
<i>dhākirun</i> (pl.)	Dhākir (sing.). Those who remember and invoke Allāh much.
<i>dhikr</i>	see <i>adhkar</i> (pl.) above
<i>dhikrullāh</i>	Frequent remembrance and invocation of Allāh.
<i>Din</i>	The religion of submission to Allāh. It implies a return to man’s inherent nature.
<i>diwan</i>	A collection of spiritual poems
‘ <i>Id</i>	Festival, celebration
<i>fard</i>	Compulsory, obligatory
<i>fard kifāyah</i>	A duty which is imposed on the whole Muslim community. If this duty is discharged by some, the rest are exonerated. If not, the whole community bears responsibility and blame, e.g. protecting the community.
<i>fatāwa</i> (pl.)	fatwa (singular). Legal opinion or judgement of jurists and religious scholars.
<i>Fuqahā’</i>	Muslim jurists
<i>ḥadīth</i> (sing.)	Aḥadīth (pl). Documented traditions of the teachings and actions of the Prophet Muḥammad (blessings and peace be upon him), recorded by his Companions and Family.
<i>ḥadrah</i>	Sacred dance of the Sufis
<i>ḥarām</i>	Unlawful
<i>ḥajj</i>	Sacred pilgrimage to Mecca
<i>ḥaqīqah</i>	The enduring essence of religion which transcends time. Divine Truth is unchanging. This esoteric knowledge is also called Sufism.
<i>Ībādah</i>	Worship, prayer and devotion to Allāh.
<i>iḥsān</i>	One of the three stations of Islam. A striving for excellence and perfection of faith which is rooted in a constant awareness of Allāh. When asked about <i>ihsan</i> the Prophet Muḥammad (blessings and peace be upon him) said, ‘...that you worship Allāh as if you see Him for if you do not see Him, He surely sees you.’

<i>ijma`</i>	The consensus of the Muslim community which gives legitimacy to legal decisions.
<i>ijtihad</i>	The striving and effort of scholars to arrive at a judgement The “independent” reasoning and research used to apply Islamic legislation to contemporary conditions. During the fourteenth century the “gates of ijtihad” were declared closed and scholars were expected to rely on the legal decisions of past authorities instead of using their own insights.
<i>ilhām</i>	Inspiration
<i>imān</i>	Faith based on knowledge. Firm belief and trust in Allāh.
<i>ishara</i>	isharāt (pl.). Allusion, allegory
<i>Islam</i>	Religion of submission to the oneness of Allāh. Monotheism.
<i>istinbāt</i>	Derivations, deductions.
<i>Jibril</i>	The Archangel Gabriel
<i>Jamā`ah</i>	A group
<i>Ka`bah</i>	A cube-shaped structure in Mecca. The first house of worship for mankind.
<i>kashf</i>	Raising a curtain or veil-unveiling. Essential knowledge. Direct intuition
<i>Khalaf</i>	The later followers.
<i>Khalifah</i>	The Rightly-Guided Companions and Successors of the Prophet Muḥammad (blessings and peace on them all).
<i>Lā ilāha illallāh</i>	There is no deity except Allāh, no reality except The Reality
<i>ma`rifah</i>	Knowledge which brings one closer to Allāh
<i>madhāhib</i> (pl.)	Madh-hab (sing.). In fiqh it refers to schools of thought, which one follows as far as Islamic legislation is concerned.
<i>Marwa</i>	A hill in Mecca which forms part of a sacred rite in the pilgrimage. Brisk walking/running from Safa, another hill to Marwa is a historical re-enactment of Hajar’s search for water for the baby Ismail. She was the wife of Prophet Abraham (on whom be peace).
<i>mu`adh-dhin</i>	Those who announce and call the congregation to prayer.
<i>muḥaddith</i>	A transmitter of Prophetic traditions.
<i>mujtahid</i> (s)	Mujtahidun (pl). One who exerts himself, strives and makes an effort . A religious scholar who does research.
<i>munkar</i>	Evil. The wrong action.
<i>muqaddam</i>	Represents the murshid /spiritual guide
<i>murāqabah</i>	Fear of Allāh. Watchfulness and vigilance
<i>murid</i>	Disciple of a spiritual guide and a member of a spiritual order
<i>Murshid</i>	A spiritual guide in a Sufi order.
<i>nafs</i>	The soul which is different from the Spirit (ruh) or Intellect (aql)
<i>qasidah</i>	An ode
<i>qirā`ah</i>	Reading
<i>Qur`an:</i>	The Divine Book revealed to Prophet Muḥammad (blessings and peace be upon him).
<i>qutub</i>	In Sufism it is the Pole of a spiritual hierarchy.
<i>rububiyyah</i>	Lordship
<i>Safa</i>	see Marwa above.
<i>salaf</i>	Predecessors
<i>salaf al-sāliḥ</i>	Pious predecessors

<i>saḥiḥ</i>	An authentic tradition of the Prophet Muḥammad (blessings and peace be upon him), compiled by Imām Bukhari and Imām Muslim (may Allah be pleased with both of them).
<i>samā`</i>	Audition. Hearing. Sessions of spiritual music.
<i>sanad</i>	Reliable chain of transmitters
<i>shadātayn</i>	The witnessing or declaration of faith that there is no deity but Allāh and Prophet Muḥammad (blessings and peace be upon him) is His final Messenger.
<i>Shari`ah</i>	Sacred revealed law. Each Messenger brought new laws according to the epoch and people they were sent to. Shari`ah (exoterism) varies but haqiqah (esoterism / Divine Truth) prevails and transcends time.
<i>Sunnah</i>	Sacred practices established through the example of the Prophet Muḥammad (blessings and peace be upon him), and the deeds of others which he condoned. It was documented by his Family and Companions and integrated into Islamic Law.
<i>tābi`un</i>	Followers of the Companions of the Prophet Muḥammad (blessings and peace be on them all).
<i>tafsir</i>	Exegesis. The explanation and analysis of verses of the Quran and a study of the historical context of the Revelation (sabab al-nuzul. Levels of interpretation of verses.
<i>talqin</i>	To instruct, inculcate, to inspire or teach. Spiritual initiation.
<i>tariqah</i>	A spiritual order. A road, a path, a way to draw closer to Allah.
<i>tartil</i>	Slow recitation
<i>tawaf</i>	Circumambulation around the House of Allāh - the Ka`ba in Makkah
<i>tawhid</i>	The Divine unity of Allāh. Muslims strive to integrate their personal and social lives their priorities and institutions to reflect this Oneness and the and the sovereignty of Allāh.
<i>`ubudiyyah</i>	Slavehood
<i>wajl</i>	A state resulting from the extreme consciousness of Allāh, Where the subject is fearfully wary of the Divine Presence.
<i>Waliyy</i>	Saint. Friend of Allāh
<i>Zabur</i>	Psalms of Prophet Dawud. (may Allah be pleased with him).
<i>Zakāh</i>	Purity. The term used for a fived tax proportionate to capital and income which is paid by Muslims to aid the poor. It is also used to support religious and social institutions.
<i>Zāwiyah</i>	Meeting place for Sufi gatherings and circles of Remembrance.

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