

FORTY HADĪTH IN CLARIFICATION OF THE MADHHAB OF THE SALAF—THAT IS THE MADHHAB OF AHLUL-HADĪTH

By Abu Khadeejah ‘Abdul-Wāhid Alam

6. The Guidance of the Early Generations: They are the Salaf and Those Who Follow them are Salafis

‘Imrān Ibn Husayn (رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ) narrated that Allah’s Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

خَيْرُكُمْ قَرْنِي ثُمَّ الَّذِينَ يَلُونَهُمْ ثُمَّ الَّذِينَ يَلُونَهُمْ قَالَ عِمْرَانُ لَا أَدْرِي أَذَكَرَ النَّبِيَّ
صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ بَعْدَ قَرْنَيْنِ أَوْ ثَلَاثَةً. قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِنَّ
بَعْدَكُمْ قَوْمًا يَخُونُونَ وَلَا يُؤْتَمِنُونَ وَيَشْهَدُونَ وَلَا يُسْتَشْهَدُونَ وَيَنْذِرُونَ وَلَا يَفُونَ
وَيُظْهِرُ فِيهِمُ السِّمَنُ

**“The best of you is my generation, then those coming after them, and
then those coming after them.”**

‘Imran said: ‘I do not know whether the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) mentioned two
or three generations after his generation.’ The Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) added,

**“There will come after you people who will be dishonest and will not be
trustworthy and will give testimony without being asked to give it, and
will make vows but will not fulfil them, and obesity will appear among
them.”³⁹**

Explanation:

This hadeeth confirms the saying of Allah (تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى):

³⁹ Al-Bukhārī, no. 2651.

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ
بِاللَّهِ

“You are the best nation raised for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allāh.” (Āli ‘Imrān: 110)

This verse addresses the Sahābah primarily and then those who follow them in these qualities. For this reason, ‘Abdullāh Ibn Mas‘ūd (رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ) stated:

“Allah looked into the hearts of the servants and found the best heart of all the servants to be the heart of Muhammad (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), so He chose him for Himself and sent him with the Message. Then He looked into the hearts of the servants after the heart of Muhammad and found the hearts of the servants after the heart of Muhammad and found the hearts of his Companions to be the best of the hearts of his servants, so He made them ministers of His Prophet, fighting for His religion. So, whatever the Muslims (i.e., the Sahābah) see to be good, then with Allah, it is good—and whatever they see to be evil, then with Allah, it is evil.”⁴⁰

The Sahābah were the foremost in prohibiting innovations and misguidance, and foremost in inviting people to follow the Path that the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) left them upon. Imām Ad-Dārimi (رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ) reported that ‘Amr Ibn Salamah (رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ) said: “We were sitting at the door of Abdullāh bin Mas‘ūd (رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ) before the *Dhuhr* prayer. So, when he came out, we would walk with him to the Masjid.

Then Abu Mūsā Al-Ash‘arī (رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ) came along and said: ‘Has Abu Abdur-Rahmān (Ibn Mas‘ūd) come out to you yet?’ We said: ‘No.’ So he sat down with us until he came out of his house. When he exited, we all stood and Abu Mūsā said to him: ‘O Abu Abdur-Rahmān! I just saw in the Masjid an affair that I found to be reprehensible, but I did not see, *alhamdulillah*, except that which was seemingly good!’ Ibn Mas‘ūd (رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ) said: ‘What did you see?’ He

⁴⁰ Reported by Imām Ahmad in *al-Musnad*, no. 3187, graded as *hasan* by Imām al-Albānī in *Ad-Da‘eefah*, no. 533.

replied: ‘If you are alive until we reach the Masjid, you will see it. I saw in the Masjid groups of people sitting in circles waiting for the Prayer. In each circle, there was a man with stones in his hand, and he said to them: ‘Say *Allāhu Akbar* a hundred times.’ So, they repeated *Allāhu Akbar* a hundred times. Then he said: ‘Say *Lā ilāha illallāh* a hundred times.’ So, they repeated *Lā ilāha illallāh* a hundred times. Then he said: ‘Say *Subhānallāh* a hundred times.’ So, they repeated *Subhānallāh* a hundred times.’

Ibn Mas‘ūd (رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ) said: ‘So what did you say to them?’ Abu Mūsā (رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ) said: ‘I didn’t say anything. I was waiting for your opinion or waiting for your command.’ Ibn Mas‘ūd (رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ) said: ‘Rather, you should have told them to count their sins instead and assured them that their good deeds will not be lost.’

So, then he walked on, and we walked on with him until he reached one of those circles and stopped and said: ‘What is this that I see you doing?’ They replied:

يَا أَبَا عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ حَصًّا نَعُدُّ بِهِ التَّكْبِيرَ وَالتَّهْلِيلَ وَالتَّسْبِيحَ

‘O Abu Abdur-Rahmān, these are stones with which we are counting the *Takbeer*, the *Tahleel* and the *Tasbeeh*.’ He said to them:

فَعُدُّوا سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ فَإِنَّا ضَامِنٌ أَنْ لَا يَضِيعَ مِنْ حَسَنَاتِكُمْ شَيْءٌ وَيَحْكُمَ يَا أُمَّةَ مُحَمَّدٍ مَا أَسْرَعَ هَلَكَتُكُمْ هَؤُلَاءِ صَحَابَةُ نَبِيِّكُمْ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مُتَوَافِرُونَ وَهَذِهِ ثِيَابُهُ لَمْ تَبَلْ وَأَنْيَتُهُ لَمْ تُكْسَرْ وَالَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ إِنَّكُمْ لَعَلَى مِلَّةٍ هِيَ أَهْدَى مِنْ مِلَّةِ مُحَمَّدٍ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَوْ مُفْتَتِحُو بَابِ ضَلَالَةٍ

‘Rather, you should count your sins! And I assure you that you will not lose any of your good deeds! Woe to you, O Ummah of Muhammad! How quickly you have hastened to your destruction! **Here are the Companions of your Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ)** still widespread—and here are his garments still not worn out—and his utensils that have not yet broken. By the One in whose

Hand is my soul, either you are upon a religion more guided than the Religion of Muhammad (ﷺ) or you have opened a door of misguidance.’

They said:

وَاللَّهِ يَا أَبَا عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ مَا أَرَدْنَا إِلَّا الْخَيْرَ

‘By Allah, O Abu Abdur-Rahmān! We did not intend except good.’ He replied:

وَكَمْ مِنْ مُرِيدٍ لِلْخَيْرِ لَنْ يُصِيبَهُ إِنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ حَدَّثَنَا أَنَّ قَوْمًا يَفْرُءُونَ الْقُرْآنَ لَا يُجَاوِزُ تَرَاقِيهِمْ وَائِمْ اللَّهُ مَا أَدْرَى لَعَلَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ مِنْكُمْ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّى عَنْهُمْ

‘And how many people intend good but never attain it. Indeed, Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) narrated to us that there will be a people who will recite the Qur’an, but it will not pass beyond their collarbones. I do not know, but perhaps most of them are from among you.’ Then he turned away from them.”

‘Amr bin Salamah said: “I saw most of them who were sitting in those circles fighting against us on the day of the battle of Nahrawān alongside the Khawārij.”⁴¹

The first three or four generations of Muslims closely followed the Prophet (ﷺ) and the foremost of them are the Sahābah, then those who followed them (Tābi‘een), and then those who followed them (Atbā‘ at-Tābi‘een). Collectively, they are referred to as the Salaf (the Pious Predecessors), and it is obligated to follow their way and methodology. Imām Mālik Ibn Anas (d. 179 رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ) said:

⁴¹ Reported by ad-Dārimī, no. 210, Ibn Abī Shaybah in *al-Musannaf* no. 19736, At-Tabarānī in *al-Mu‘jam al-Kabeer* no. 8636—graded *saheeh* by Al-Albānī, see *As-Saheehah*, no. 2005.

لَنْ يَصْلَحَ آخِرُ هَذِهِ الْأُمَّةِ إِلَّا بِمَا صَلَحَ بِهِ أَوَّلُهَا فَمَا لَمْ يَكُنْ يَوْمَئِذٍ دِينًا لَا يَكُونُ
الْيَوْمَ دِينًا

“The latter part of this Ummah will never be rectified except by that which rectified its first part. So, whatever was not religion that day cannot be religion today.”⁴²

Al-Imām Muhammad Nāsir ad-Deen Al-Albānī (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) stated: “Among the Salaf was one of the eminent Imams of the Muslims, he was well-known and followed — he is Imām Mālik ibn Anas, the Imam of the Abode of Migration of the early believers (Madinah). He, may Allah be pleased with him, used to say a saying that is ‘worthy of being written in gold’, and that is his saying:

‘Whoever introduces an innovation believing it to be good has claimed that the Messenger of Allah (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) as betrayed the Message [the Risālah he was sent with]. Recite then, the saying of Allah (تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى):

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتِمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ
دِينًا

This day I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion.⁴³

Then he followed it with some words that clarify the meanings contained in this Qur’anic text, so Mālik said:

فَمَا لَمْ يَكُنْ يَوْمَئِذٍ دِينًا لَا يَكُونُ الْيَوْمَ دِينًا

⁴² This narration is established from Imām Malik. Qādi Iyād cited it in *Ash-Shifā* (2/87-88). Ibn Taymiyyah stated in *Majmū‘ Al-Fatāwā* (1/353, 27/118) that it is established from Mālik. Shātibi cited it also in *Al-I‘tisām* (1/111) with a slightly different wording.

⁴³ Al-Mā‘idah: 3.

‘So, whatever was not religion on that day (in the Prophet’s time) cannot be religion today.’

Allah stated: **‘This day I have perfected your religion...’** — that is it, nothing new remains to be added. So, whatever was not religion then, is not religion now. **‘And nothing will rectify the latter part of this Ummah except that which rectified its first part.’**

Who is the latter part of this Ummah? We are, without a doubt, from it. So we desire righteousness, and we desire reform. Yet many, many of those who claim to be reformers and who seek to establish the Islamic state upon the earth do not focus or concentrate this Madinan statement of Mālik (رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ): **‘Nothing will rectify the latter part of this Ummah except that which rectified its first part.’**

And with what was the first part of this Ummah set right? By innovations, or by following the Sunnah? There is no doubt that the answer is known to all — even to those who speak of ‘good innovations’ (*al-bid‘ah al-hasanah*)—they cannot but agree with us that the affair of this Ummah was set right at the beginning of its history only through their following of their Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ):

إِذَا فَلْيَكُونُوا مَعَنَا دَعْوَةً وَسَلُوكًا

Therefore, let them be with us — in **call and conduct**.⁴⁴

So, the Madhhab of the Salaf is the true Madhhab to follow. Shaikh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah (رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ) stated:

لَا عَيْبَ عَلَى مَنْ أَظْهَرَ مَذْهَبَ السَّلَفِ وَانْتَسَبَ إِلَيْهِ وَاعْتَزَى إِلَيْهِ بَلْ يَجِبُ قَبُولُ ذَلِكَ مِنْهُ بِالإِتِّفَاقِ فَإِنَّ مَذْهَبَ السَّلَفِ لَا يَكُونُ إِلَّا حَقًّا.

⁴⁴ See *Silsilah al-Hudā wan-Noor*, 214.

“There is no criticism against anyone who makes manifest the *madhhab* (way) of the Salaf, ascribing himself to it, and attaching himself to it. Indeed, it is obligatory to accept this ascription from him for verily the *madhhab* of the Salaf is not except the Truth.”⁴⁵

Imām Al-Awzā‘ī (d. 157 H رَحِمَهُ اللهُ) said:

أَصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ عَلَى السُّنَّةِ وَقِفْ حَيْثُ وَقَفَ الْقَوْمُ وَقُلْ بِمَا قَالُوا وَكُفَّ عَمَّا كَفُّوا عَنْهُ
وَأَسْلُكْ سَبِيلَ سَلَفِكَ الصَّالِحِ فَإِنَّهُ يَسْعُكَ مَا وَسَعَهُمْ.

“Bear patiently upon the Sunnah and stop where the people [before you stopped], and speak with what they spoke, and withhold from whatever they withheld themselves from, and traverse the Path of your righteous Salaf, for indeed you are sufficed with whatever sufficed them.”⁴⁶

He (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ) also said:

عَلَيْكَ بِآثَارِ مَنْ سَلَفَ وَإِنْ رَفَضَكَ النَّاسُ وَإِيَّاكَ وَآرَاءَ الرِّجَالِ وَإِنْ زَخَرَفُوا لَكَ
بِالْقَوْلِ

“Upon you is to follow the narrations and the path of the Salaf even if the people reject you. And beware of the opinions of men even if they beautified with fine speech.”⁴⁷

Ash-Shaikh Al-‘Allāmah Muhammad Ibn ‘Sālih Al-‘Uthaimeen (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ) stated in explanation of these words: “*And beware of the opinions of men*: Meaning, beware of the opinions of men, that is, what is said based solely on personal

⁴⁵ Majmoo‘ al-Fatāwā, 4/149.

⁴⁶ Reported by Al-Lālikā‘ī in *Sharhu Usool I’tiqād Ahlis-Sunnah wal-Jamā‘ah*, 1/154.

⁴⁷ Reported by Al-Ājurri (d. 360 H) in *Ash-Sharī‘ah*, p. 58 (1/139).

reasoning, without any reliance upon the Book of Allah or the Sunnah of His Messenger (ﷺ).

Even if they adorn it: Meaning, even if they embellish the wording and make it sound beautiful, for falsehood does not become truth by its adornment and beautification.”⁴⁸

Ash-Shaikh Sālih Aalush-Shaikh commented on these words of Imām al-Awzā‘ī: “Even if they adorn opinions with words, embellish their speech, decorate it, and beautify it, beware of them and of it. Do not turn away from the Sunnah because someone has beautified his opinion with eloquent expressions. Hold fast to the Sunnah and to what has come from its people, even if its people do not speak eloquently or beautify their words for the true standard is adherence (to the Sunnah). Whoever follows it is the one who is saved, and whoever innovates is the one who is destroyed. May Allah protect us and you from the paths of destruction.”⁴⁹

Imām ad-Dāraqutnī (d. 385H رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ) said: “There is nothing more hated to me than theological speculation (‘ilmul-kalām).” Imām adh-Dhahabī (d. 748H رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ) commented: “The man (ad-Dāraqutnī) never engaged in theological speculation or argumentation [about the religion], he would not delve into such matters. Indeed, he was a Salafi.”⁵⁰

Al-Imām Ibn Bāz (رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ) was asked regarding the Saved Sect (*al-Firqatun-Nājiyah*), so he responded: “They are the Salafis, and whosoever treads the path of the Righteous Salaf.”⁵¹

He was also asked:

مَا تَقُولُ فِيمَنْ تَسَمَّى بِالسَّلَفِيِّ وَالْأَثَرِيِّ هَلْ هِيَ تَرْكِيَّةٌ

⁴⁸ See Ibn ‘Uthaimin’s *Sharh Lum‘atul-I‘tiqād*.

⁴⁹ See Sālih Aalush-Shaikh’s explanation of *Lum‘atul-I‘tiqād*.

⁵⁰ *Siyar A‘lām an-Nubalā* of adh-Dhahabī, 16/456.

⁵¹ *Majmoo‘ Rasā’il li Islāhil-Fard wal-Mujtama‘* of Muhammad Jameel Zeenu, p. 162.

“What do you say about the one who calls himself Salafi or Athari? Is this [a form of] self-praise?” He replied:

إِذَا كَانَ صَادِقًا أَنَّهُ أَثَرِيٌّ أَوْ أَنَّهُ سَلَفِيٌّ لَا بَأْسَ مِثْلَ مَا كَانَ السَّلَفُ يَقُولُونَ: «فُلَانٌ سَلَفِيٌّ فُلَانٌ أَثَرِيٌّ» — تَرْكِيبٌ لَا بُدَّ مِنْهَا تَرْكِيبٌ وَاجِبٌ.

“If he is truthful in saying he is Athari or Salafi, then there is no problem just as the Righteous Predecessors would say: ‘So-and-so is a Salafi’, ‘So-and-so is an Athari’, this type of commendation is a must, a commendation that is obligatory.”⁵²

Al-⁶Allāmah Sālih Al-Fawzān was asked:

هَلْ مَنْ تَسَمَّى بِالسَّلَفِيَّةِ يُعْتَبَرُ حِزْبِيًّا

“The one who calls himself a Salafi, does that make him partisan (hizbi)?” He responded:

التَّسَمَّى بِالسَّلَفِيَّةِ إِذَا كَانَ حَقِيقَةً لَا بَأْسَ بِهِ أَمَّا إِذَا كَانَ مُجَرَّدَ دَعْوَى فَإِنَّهُ لَا يُجَوِّزُ لَهُ أَنْ يَتَسَمَّى بِالسَّلَفِيَّةِ وَهُوَ عَلَى غَيْرِ مَنْهَجِ السَّلَفِ.
الْأَشَاعِرَةُ مَثَلًا يَقُولُونَ: نَحْنُ أَهْلُ السُّنَّةِ وَالْجَمَاعَةِ وَهَذَا غَيْرُ صَحِيحٍ لِأَنَّ الَّذِي هُمْ عَلَيْهِ لَيْسَ هُوَ مَنْهَجُ أَهْلِ السُّنَّةِ وَالْجَمَاعَةِ.
كَذَلِكَ الْمُعْتَزِلَةُ يُسَمُّونَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ بِالْمُوحِدِينَ.

“Calling oneself Salafi, if it is true, then there is no problem with it. However, if it is merely a claim, then it is not allowed for a person to call himself Salafi while he is upon other than the methodology of the Salaf. The Ash‘arīs for example, they say: ‘We are *Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jam‘ah*’, but this is not correct

⁵² From the audio entitled, *Haqqul-Muslim*, dated 16/1/1413 H, delivered in Tā’if.

because they are upon is not the methodology of *AhluS-Sunnah wal-Jamā'ah*...”⁵³

May Allah protect us and you from the paths of destruction.

⁵³ *Al-Ajwibah al-Mufeedah ‘an As’ilatil-Manāhij al-Jadeedah*, p. 16.