

Al-Muhannad 'ala al-Mufannad Translation

Foreword by Mufti Mahmud Ashraf al-'Uthmani¹

After praising Allah (Great and Glorious is He) and blessing the Prophet, the Seal of the Prophets, our chief and our intercessor, Muhammad, and his family and all his companions:

The fortunate and respected brother, Master Muhammad ibn Adam al-Kawthari, al-Hindi thumma al-Biritani (Allah deliver him and preserve him from every evil) sent to me a transcript of *al-Muhannad 'ala l-Mufannad* which is [currently] undergoing a new edition with beneficial and useful footnotes written by the aforementioned respected brother. I found it agreeable and accessible for readers of this book. This new edition along with its beneficial footnotes will become the best print of this book. Allah reward the respected brother the best of rewards from His presence and deliver him and grant him the ability to further serve the upright, monotheistic, magnanimous and clear religion in his bright future.

[After] this, of that which the reader ought to know with respect to this book are two important points:

First, this book is called *al-Muhannad 'ala l-Mufannad* (The Sword against the Disproved), and although it has become famous as *'Aqa'id Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jama'ah* (Beliefs of the People of the Sunnah and the Group) or as *'Aqa'id 'Ulama Deoband* (Beliefs of the Scholars of Deoband) in some places in India, it is not in reality an independent book on creed. Nor did its author, the respected shaykh, the jurist, and hadith-scholar, Khalil Ahmad al-Saharanpuri (Allah Exalted is He have mercy on him), write it as an independent book on creed. It is but a compilation of questions and answers which were asked by the Arab scholars at that [time], so the shaykh responded with these answers, and these questions and answers were compiled into a book and were printed with the name *al-Muhannad 'ala l-Mufannad*.

Since most of these questions were related to beliefs, and in the correct jargon, were related to the branches which pertain to beliefs and the science of Kalam, it became famous as *al-'Aqa'id* (The Beliefs). The truth is that most of it pertains to the peripherals of Kalam not with the fundamentals and the decisive creeds [of Islam]. For this [reason], if a Muslim does not know some or most of it, there will not be any defect in his submission and faith, like the issue of taking an intermediary while supplicating (question 3) or preoccupation in Sufi practices (question 11) or the ruling on Wahhabis (question 12) or the ruling of celebrating the Prophetic birth (on him be blessing and peace)

¹ The great scholar, the jurist, the jurisconsult, Shaykh Mahmud Ashraf al-'Uthmani, one of the contemporary jurists of Pakistan and a teacher, professor of hadith and a member of the Ifta Committee (deputy jurisconsult) at Dar al-'Ulum Karachi. He studied jurisprudence with his grandfather, the Grand Mufti, the great scholar, Shaykh Muhammad Shafi' who was described by Imam al-Kawthari as a master jurist (*faqih al-nafs*). He compiled some beneficial works. From them is a book in defence of Mu'awiyah (Allah be pleased with him) and a book on the characteristic of forbearance. His grace is one of the most beloved elders and teachers to the students of knowledge in Pakistan since patience, forbearance and humility are manifest in him. Allah preserve him and benefit the Muslims with his breaths. (Mufti Muhammad ibn Adam al-Kawthari)

(question 21) or the possibility of the occurrence of lying or reneging on a promise (questions 23, 24 and 25) and other peripheral issues that are mentioned in this chapter. For this [reason], it is best not to call this book *'Aqa'id Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jama'ah* and it would be more suitable to call it *Maslak Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jama'ah* (The Methodology of the People of the Sunnah and the Group).

Secondly, although these issues mentioned in the book are undoubtedly sound, some of them are established by decisive texts and some of them are established by probabilistic texts and some of them are established by the statements of the great scholars using sound analogy while no decisive or probabilistic text mention them like the issue of the blessed piece of land [in which rests the body of Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him)] being superior to the Throne (*'arsh*) and the Seat (*kursi*).

Hence, these issues are not [all] at the same level. Rather, their levels differ according to their authenticity, and by the difference of their authenticity and levels, their rulings differ. So it is possible that an issue from the issues which are mentioned in this book is a decisive issue whose denier will be declared a disbeliever like the issue of the finality of prophethood (question 16); and it is possible that its denier will not be declared a disbeliever but will be accused of heresy like one who completely denies the life of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) (question 5); and it is possible that its denier will be accused of deviating from the straight path and from the four agreed-upon schools like the issue of taqlid (question 8, 9 and 10); and it is possible its denier will only be accused of ignorance like the issue of pledging allegiance at the hands of spiritual masters (*shuyukh*) (question 11) because people are enemies of what they don't know; and it is possible that the ruling of the issue mentioned in the book is ambiguous requiring something extra like the issue of taking an intermediary (question 3 and 4) since it is undoubtedly permissible according to the great majority of the scholars but becoming accustomed to taking an intermediary in every supplication as some do is not established in the three generations whose greatness has been attested to, so taking an intermediary is permissible but becoming accustomed to it in every supplication is not established.

Hence, these issues which are mentioned in this upstanding book are undoubtedly sound, established by the sources of the Shari'ah, but their levels differ, and by the differences in their levels, their rulings differ.

If the reader understands these two points which we just mentioned, the reader will be saved from excess and negligence in these sound issues.

Finally, gratitude to the respected and noble brother, Master Muhammad ibn Adam al-Kawthari (Allah increase him in understanding and knowledge of the religion) who strove, favourably, to produce this book in a new style and with modern printing (Allah reward him greatly on our behalf).

The servant, Mahmud Ashraf, Allah forgive him

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Question Seven

What is your opinion on excessively sending praise on the Prophet – Allah bless him and grant him peace – and reciting Dala'il al-Khayrat or the Awrad (litanies)?

Answer

Excessively sending praise on the Prophet – Allah bless him and grant him peace – is desirable according to us and it is from the most hopeful of the acts of obedience and the most beloved of desirable acts, whether it is recitation of al-Dala'il or the litanies on blessings compiled on it or other than it. However, the most virtuous according to us is what is authentic in his wording – Allah bless him and grant him peace – and if one were to send blessing with other than what was transmitted from him – Allah bless him and grant him peace – it is not devoid of virtue and it merits the good tidings of “Whoever sends blessing on me once, Allah sends blessing on him ten times.”

Our shaykh 'Allamah al-Gangohi would recite al-Dala'il, and likewise, other mashayikh from our masters. And our master and our guide the pivot of the world, the revered Hajj Imdad Allah – Allah sanctify his mighty secret – wrote [it] amongst his councils and he instructed his disciples to divide it into set-portions [to be recited regularly], and they would narrate al-Dala'il in transmission, and Mawlana al-Gangohi – Allah's mercy be upon him – would issue licences for al-Dala'il.

Question Twenty One

Do you say that the commemoration of his (Allah bless him and grant him peace) birth is deemed blameworthy (*mustaqbah*) in the Shari'ah, from the evil and prohibited innovations (*al-bid'at al-sayyi'ah al-muharramah*), or [do you believe] otherwise?

Answer

Far be it that any of the Muslims say, let alone we, ourselves, say, that commemorating his noble birth (upon him blessing and peace), rather even commemorating the dust on his shoes and the urine of his (Allah bless him and grant him peace) camel, are deemed blameworthy in the Shari'ah, from the evil and prohibited innovations; for, commemorating the states which have the least connection with the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and grant him peace) is from the most desirable of recommended acts (*ahabb al-mandubat*) and the greatest of preferable acts (*a'la l-mustahabbat*) according to us, whether it is the commemoration of his noble birth or commemoration of his urine, feces, standing, sitting, sleeping and waking as is stated clearly in our treatise called *Al-Barahin al-Qati'ah* at various junctures therein, and in the *fatwas* of our teachers (*mashayikh*) (may Allah have mercy on them), as [is mentioned, for example] in the *fatwas* of Mawlana Ahmad 'Ali al-Muhaddith al-Saharanpuri, the student of Shah Muhammad Ishaq al-Dahlawi then al-Muhajir al-Makki, which we will quote in translation, that it may become an example of all [the other *fatwas*]:

He (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked about the *milad* function, in which manner is it permissible and in which manner is it impermissible? He replied [saying] that:

Commemorating the noble birth of our master, the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and grant him peace) using sound narrations, during times devoid of the obligatory duties of worship, and in forms not contravening the path of the Companions and the people of the three generations whose greatness has been attested to, and [in forms not] containing beliefs that may be conceived of as *shirk* and *bid'ah*, and in manners which do not contravene the conduct of the Companions which is the measure of his (peace be upon him) statement, "What I and my Companions are upon," and in gatherings free from abominations of the Shari'ah, is a cause for goodness and blessing, with the condition that it is accompanied by pure intention and sincerity and the belief that it is included within the totality of recommended good remembrances (*jumlat al-adhkar al-hasanah al-mandubah*), and is not restricted to a time from the times. When it is so, we do not know of any Muslim who rules it to be unlawful (*ghayr mashru'*) or *bid'ah*. To the end of the *fatwa*.

It is learnt from this that we do not denounce the commemoration of his noble birth. Rather, we denounce the abominable acts that are associated with it as you [may] have seen in the *mawludi* functions which [take place] in India, of narrating weak and forged narrations, the mixing of men and women, extravagance in lighting candles and decorations, and the belief that it is obligatory, by vilifying, insulting and anathematising those who do not attend their function with them, and other such abominations of the Shari'ah which are almost not found to be absent from them. If they were free of these abominations, far be it that we say that commemorating the noble birth is abominable and a *bid'ah*. How can this ugly belief be suspected of a Muslim? Hence, this attribution to us is also from the inventions of the deceptive lying deviants (Allah Exalted is He disgrace them, and curse them on land and sea and on smooth and rough land).

This which we mentioned in response, it is what we believe and we take as our religion before Allah Almighty, so if it is in your opinion true and right write your approval on it and adorn it with your seal, and if it is wrong and false, direct us to what is right according to you, for we – if Allah wills – will not trespass the truth. And if any doubt appears in your hearts about us, we will correspond with you on it until the truth becomes clear and no ambiguity remains therein.

Our final call is that all praise belongs to Allah Lord of the Worlds.

Allah bless our master Muhammad, the chief of the first and the last, and all his family, his companions, his wives and his descendents

The servant of the students of the Islamic sciences, the [one] with many sins, the lowly Khalil Ahmad – Allah give him accordance to prepare for tomorrow – said this with his mouth and signed it with his pen on Monday 18th of Shawwal, year 1325 Hijri.