

The Distinguishing Signs of *Ahl al-Bid'ah*—(The People of Innovation)¹

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Abū 'Uthmān al-Sābūnī (d. 449H) (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ) said:

“And the characteristics [resulting] from [the effects of] innovations upon their people are obvious and manifestly clear. The most apparent of their signs and characteristics is the severity of their enmity and hatred towards the carriers of the narrations of the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), their disdain of them, their scorn of them [considering them to be valueless] and naming them with **Ḥashawiyyah** (Worthless People), **Jahalah** (the Ignorant), **Zāhiriyyah** (Literalists), and the **Mushabbihah** (those who liken Allāh to the creation). [And this], due to their belief [concerning] the narrations of the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), that they are devoid of any knowledge and that the [real] knowledge is that which Shayṭān throws at them from the results of their corrupt intellects, the dark whisperings of their chests [i.e. souls], the false notions of their hearts [which are] empty of any goodness, their words and proofs which are devoid [of truth] and their unjustified and futile doubts.

And I heard [al-Ustādh] Abū Maṣṣūr Muḥammad bin 'Abdullāh bin Hamshād the 'Ālim (Scholar) the Zāhid (Abstemious) (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ) saying: I heard Abū al-Qāsim Ja'far bin Aḥmad al-Muqri' al-Rāzī saying: [The

¹ From: 'Aqīdat al-Salaf wa Aṣḥāb al-Ḥadīth (p.101-107) of Abū 'Uthmān al-Ṣābūnī.

following] was read out to ‘Abdur-Rahmān bin Abī Ḥātim ar-Rāzī while I was listening: I heard my father— and he meant by that, the Imām in his city, Abu Ḥātim Muḥammad bin Idrīs al-Ḥanẓalee ar-Rāzī—saying:

“The sign of Ahl ul-Bid‘ah (the People of Innovation) is that they attack those who cling to the narrations. The sign of the Zanādiqah (the heretics) is that they call Ahl us-Sunnah ‘**Hashawiyah**’ (the worthless ones) seeking to invalidate the narrations thereby. The sign of the Qadariyyah is that they call the Ahl us-Sunnah ‘**Mujbirah**’ (those denying free-will for mankind and saying they are compelled to do their actions). The sign of the Jahmiyyah is that they call the Ahl us-Sunnah ‘**Mushabbihah**’ (those who liken Allāh to the creation). And the sign of the Rāfidah is that they call those who cling to the narrations ‘**Nābitah**’ and ‘**Nāsibah**’².”³

[Abu Uthmān said]:

“I say: I have seen that Ahl ul-Bid‘ah (the People of Innovation)—with respect to these names which they have named Ahl us-Sunnah with [and not a single one of them befits them, a bounty and grace from Allāh]—have behaved with them (i.e. Ahl us-Sunnah) in the same manner as the way [taken by] the Mushrikūn—[may Allāh curse them]—with the Messenger of Allāh (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ). They divided [the various sayings] amongst themselves [to accuse him with]. So some of them called him a magician. Others called him a soothsayer. Others called him a madman. Others called him someone put to trial and others called him a fabricator, a forger, a liar. Yet the Prophet

² Those having a hatred for ‘Alī—Allāh be pleased with him— and his offspring.

³ Ibn Abī Ḥātim mentioned it in his Aṣl us-Sunnah wa l’itiqād ud-Dīn. Also Lālikā’ee reported it in his Uṣūl ul-l’itiqād (2/179) and adh-Dhababī quoted it from al-Lālikā’ī in al-‘Uluww (p.139).

(صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) was far removed and free from all those vices and he was nothing but a messenger, a chosen one, a prophet. Allāh, the Mighty and Majestic, said:

أَنْظُرْ كَيْفَ ضَرَبُوا لَكَ الْأَمْثَالَ فَضَلُّوا أَفَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ سَبِيلًا

See how they coin similitudes for you, so they have gone astray and are not able to find a (Right) Path. (25:9)

[And] likewise, the Innovators—may Allāh forsake them—have divided [the various sayings] amongst themselves [to accuse] the Carriers of his [the Messenger's] narrations, and the Transmitters of his narrations and the Reporters of his aḥādīth, those who guide themselves by him and who seek guidance from his Sunnah [known as the Ashābul-Hadeeth]. So some of them have called them 'Hashawiyyah' and others have called them 'Mushabbihah' and others have called them 'Nābitah' and others have called them 'Nāsibah' and others have called them 'Jabariyyah'.

Yet, the People of Ḥadīth are safe and secure from these blameworthy characteristics, [they] are free, pure and unblemished. And they [Ashābul-Hadeeth] are but illuminated adherents of the Sunnah, a well-pleasing [model of] behaviour, straight and levelled paths [of truth and guidance], and far-reaching and strong proofs. Allāh—whose Magnificence is great and sublime—has granted them success in following His Book, His Revelation and His Speech, [in following the closest to Him among His Friends], in seeking to guide themselves by His Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and by his narrations in which he has commanded his Ummah with the best and just of sayings and actions and has forbidden them from the evil sayings

and actions. He [Allāh] has supported them in clinging tightly to his [the Messenger's] way and behaviour and in guiding themselves by [fulfilling] the requirements of his Sunnah. [He has made them to be among the followers of His closest Friends —⁴ has honoured them and strengthened them upon it]. And He has opened and expanded their breasts towards loving him (the Prophet) and loving the Scholars of his Sharī'ah and the Scholars of his ummah. And whoever loves a people then he will be with them on the Day of Judgement due to the ruling [in the saying] of the Allāh's Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ): "A man will be with the one whom he loves."⁵

⁴ A word occurs here which could not be deciphered by the checker of the manuscript.

⁵ A ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth, reported from a number of Companions which reaches the level of mutawātir, amongst them: i) Anas bin Mālik (reported by Ahmad in his Musnad, Bukhārī in his Ṣaḥīḥ, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī and others) ii) 'Abdullāh bin Mas'ūd (reported by Aḥmad in his Musnad, Bukhārī, Muslim, and at-Ṭabarānī in as-Saghīr) iii) Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī (reported by Aḥmad, Bukhārī, Muslim and Abū Nu'aym) iv) Abū Dharr (reported by Aḥmad, Bukhārī in Adab al-Mufrad, Abū Dāwūd, ad-Dārimī, and Ibn Ḥibbān).