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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

و به نستعين

الحمد لله والصلاة والسلام على سيدنا رسول الله وآله وصحبه ومن والاه

Foreword To Volume One

Glory and praise all belong to Allah Most High Who said, {*Whatsoever the Messenger gives you, take it, and whatsoever he forbids, abstain*} (59:7)! Blessings and peace on our liege-lord Muḥammad and upon his House and all his Companions, Leader of the first and the last, who said: “Allah brighten the face of His servant that hears my saying, records it, remembers it, and transmits it just as he heard it! It may be one will carry wisdom without understanding it; and it may be one will carry wisdom to one that understands it better than he.”¹

عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَصَحْبِهِ وَسَلَّمَ: نَصَرَ اللَّهُ عَبْدًا سَمِعَ مَقَالَتي فَوَعَاها ثُمَّ بَلَّغَها عَنِّي، فَوَبَّ حَامِلِ فِقْهِ غَيْرِ فِقْهِهِ، وَرَبَّ حَامِلِ فِقْهِهِ إِلَى مَنْ هُوَ أَفْقَهُ مِنْهُ. الحديث رواه الترمذي، وأبو داود، وابن ماجه، وهذا لفظه، وأحمد. وهو متواتر. وعند الترمذي عن عبد الله ابن مسعود مرفوعاً: فَوَعَاها وَحَفِظَها وَبَلَّغَها. وفي مسند الشافعي: سَمِعَ مَقَالَتي فَحَفِظَها وَرَعَاها، فَأَدَّها كَمَا سَمِعَها.

¹ A mass-transmitted (*mutawātir*) ḥadīth beginning with the words *naḍḍara Allahu imri'an* (May Allah brighten the face = grant prosperity and felicity), narrated from nineteen Companions cf. al-Kattānī, *Naẓm al-Mutanāthir*. See note 47

It pleased our bountiful Creator to make knowledge of Ḥadīth and its ancillary sciences the exclusive characteristic of Muslim civilization. Alone among the nations that walked the face of the earth, this *Umma* received and kept this Divine trust together with the Last Testament – the Qur’ān – to pass it on to subsequent generations unchanged with an ever-refined array of disciplines for verification and authentication.

Among those disciplines, Ḥadīth methodology and criticism ensured that nothing alien crept into the pure Prophetic Sunna as conveyed by the upright (‘*adl*) and precise (*ḍābiṭ*) transmitters known as the “trustworthy” (*thiqa*, pl. *thiqāt*) under the strict perusal of their peers and subsequent experts. When Ibn al-Mubārak was asked about the forged ḥadīths he replied, “The giant scholars (*al-jahābidha*) dispose of them!” Then he recited, {Lo! We, even We, have revealed the Reminder, and lo! We verily are its Guardian} (15:9).² Thus he reiterated in the pithiest way that the Prophetic Sunna and authentic Ḥadīth are part and parcel of the Final Revelation – which no Muslim denies! – and that the Lawgiver preserves His *Dhikr* through the surest human means imaginable.

To that end, the Friends of Allah Most High and caliphal inheritors of the Prophet ﷺ known as the *Huffāz* spared no effort. Those were the Repellers of False Imputations to the Prophet, the Preservers, Custodians, Protectors, Caretakers, Trustees, and Storehouses of the Faith envied by the erudite Caliph Abū Ja‘far al-Manṣūr who described them as “the stained-clothed, scaly-footed, long-haired rovers of faraway lands.”³ With their photographic memories, inkwells in hand, wearing out – like Dulaf ibn Jahdar – up to seventy book-satchels, obsessed with detail, these

² Narrated by al-Khaṭīb in *al-Kifāya* (p. 80=p. 37).

³ Narrated by al-Sam‘ānī in *Adab al-Imlā’ wal-Istīmā’* (p. 19) and al-Suyūṭī, chapter on al-Manṣūr in his *Tārīkh al-Khulafā’* cf. Abū Ghudda, *Maṣnū’* (p. 187).

hawk-eyed jewellers tracked the Prophetic narrative and its reporters to the ends of the earth, oblivious of food and sleep, laughing at wealth and the world, selling the shirt on their back and eating grass if necessary as did Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘il al-Bukhārī, losing their eyesight through candle-lit night work as happened to his tireless student Abū ‘Īsā al-Tirmidhī, moving their libraries on camel-back through three continents like Abū Ṭāhir al-Silāfi, sifting the sound from the unsound, the fair from the weak, the Prophetic from the non-Prophetic, the broken-chained, and the fabricated ḥadīths, living only for the three words “*Qāla Rasūl Allah ﷺ*.” May Allah be well-pleased with all of them!

The present work is a tribute to those prestigious Predecessors. It is intended as a presentation of their thought on some of the core issues and principles of the Sunna. The first article, “The Story of Ḥadīth,” is a brief description of what we mean by that term and the genesis of its genres in response to a layperson’s question. The next two articles address the epistemic relationship of learning, understanding, and practicing in the view of the early Ulema of Ḥadīth and *Fiqh*: “Have You Ever Seen a *Faqīh*?” and “The Superiority of *Fiqh* over Ḥadīth.” The fourth article, “*Madhāhib* of the Imāms of Ḥadīth,” summarizes what we know of the schools of Law the compilers of the *Musnad*, two *Ṣaḥīḥs*, and *Sunan* followed. The fifth article, “Strictness and Laxity in Ḥadīth Criticism,” diagnoses the two extremes that distinguish the derogators and the unscrupulous from the careful ḥadīth critic. The sixth article, “*Isnād* and the Sects,” takes a glimpse at the lose/lose scenario of ill-prepared tradition-minded Muslims facing Western-minded Muslims and their agendas.

The remaining articles bring the English-speaking reader the most thorough documentation to date on seven seldom-addressed topics in ḥadīth science:

“Famous-Hadīth and Forgery Compilations” is a brief descriptive history of these two genres. “The Disclaimed (*Munkar*) Hadīth” is a comprehensive study of a sub-category of the weak hadīth that is notoriously misunderstood. “Use of Weak Hadīths in Islam” puts to rest once and for all – *in shā’ Allah!* – the programmed confusion between weak and forged. “Weak Hadīths in al-Bukhārī?” recapitulates the views of the Masters on the unparalleled integrity of the principal motherbook of Islam after the Holy Qur’ān. “Lone-Narrator Reports (*Āḥād*)” recapitulates their proofs on the probative parameters of non-mass-transmitted narrations between the two extremes of the neo-Zāhirīs and the neo-Mu’tazilīs. “Narration *ad Sensum vs. ad Litteram*” chronicles the two fashions of narrating that were equally accepted among the Predecessors: literally or to the general meaning. “Hadīth Authentication by *Kashf*” links the practice of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* and *Sunan* compilers and the proofs of spiritual disclosure (*kashf*) in the Qur’ān and Sunna – routinely misrepresented as the exclusive province of the Sufis – to the delicate issue of verification.

The book ends with its musk-seal, a full original translation of Ibn Ḥajar’s complete primer on hadīth science, *Nukhbat al-Fikar*, by my esteemed colleague Shaykh Musa Furber. May Allah reward him, our tireless editor, Shaykh Abd al-Hafidh Wentzel, and all our blessed teachers. *Āmīn.*

May Allah bless this humble endeavor, redress its mistakes, and accept it among the ornaments in illustration of the Crown Jewel of His creation ﷻ and the good pleasure of His friends.

Gibril Fouad Haddad
 Mount Qasyūn, Damascus
 in the white nights of mid-Muḥarram 1426
 corresponding to February 2005.