

The Methodology of Ahlus-Sunnah wal- Jamaa'ah in Criticizing Individuals, Books and Groups

Shaykh Rabee' bin Haadee Al-Madkhalee

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Second Printing of the Book

All praise is for Allaah and may the peace and blessings be on Allaah's Messenger, his family, Companions and those who follow his guidance. To proceed:

Allaah knows that I did not intend by writing this book of mine: "The Methodology of Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamaa'ah in Criticizing Individuals, Books and Groups" anything but to clarify the truth, justice and fairness, which represent this great methodology. And I expended my greatest efforts in bringing to open this truth and in disproving what opposes and negates it.

So I ask Allaah, the Most Generous, Lord of the Mighty Throne, that He make it sincerely for His Face (alone) and for supporting His Religion. And I ask that He place it in my scale of good deeds (on the Day of Judgement).

And indeed, from that which I thank and praise Allaah for is that it has become evident that the book has been met with great acceptance amongst the people of truth and fairness, the followers of the Salafi methodology. And they are many, many in this land as well as outside of it.

And I ask Allaah, the Most Generous that He grant our brothers who were deceived by that deluding and misleading methodology (of Muwaazanaḥ), which dons the dress of justice and fairness on the outside, yet holds underneath it the destruction of the methodology of the Salaf, of which true justice and fairness cannot be found except in it. I ask Allaah that He grant them the ability to return to the truth, and that He make them avoid the pathways of the people of falsehood, stubborn rejection and proud arrogance. And I ask Him that He protect us and them from the evil plots of the devils – the devils among mankind and the jinn – and that He cause us all to come out from the whirlpool of vain desires and confusion, which has had its deadly currents demolish hearts, souls, the proper Creed and manners. Verily, Allaah indeed hears the supplication.

And I can't forget to mention to the noble readers that after I finished writing my book "The Methodology of Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamaa'ah in Criticizing", I sent a

copy of it to his eminence, our teacher, the great scholar, Shaikh ‘Abdul-‘Azeez bin ‘Abdillaah bin Baaz, Head of the Committees for Knowledge-Based Research, Religious Verdicts, Da’wah and Guidance. And he was kind enough to forward it to the noble Shaikh, ‘Abdul-‘Azeez bin ‘Abdillaah Ar-Raajihee in his letter (no. 488) on 3/13/1412H. So Shaikh ‘Abdul-‘Azeez bin ‘Abdillaah Ar-Raajihee put into effect the order of his teacher, Shaikh ‘Abdul-‘Azeez bin ‘Abdillaah bin Baaz and began to study the book and then to summarize it in a good manner, in which he added to it the author’s summary in his conclusion. Then he attached it to the following letter, which he sent to Shaikh ‘Abdul-‘Azeez bin ‘Abdillaah bin Baaz:

“In the Name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy. From ‘Abdul-‘Azeez bin ‘Abdillaah Ar-Raajihee to his eminence, our Shaikh and father, ‘Abdul-‘Azeez bin ‘Abdillaah bin Baaz, may Allaah preserve him, grant him success and prolong his life, Ameen.

As-Salaam ‘Alaikum wa Rahmatullaahi wa Barakaatuh. To Proceed:

Your letter numbered (no. 488) was sent to me on 3/13/1412H, attached with a book by the Shaikh, Rabee’ bin Haadee Madkhalee, a teacher in the Islamic University at Madeenah, with the title “The Methodology of Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamaa’ah in Criticizing Individuals, Books and Groups” so that I may review it and comment upon it.

So based on this, your eminence, you will find attached to this letter my comments on it.

May Allaah preserve you and safeguard you. And Allaah is the One who grants success. May the peace and blessings be on Muhammad, his family and Companions.

Your son, ‘Abdul-‘Azeez bin ‘Abdillaah Ar-Raajihee.”

After Shaikh Ibn Baaz read the comments of Shaikh ‘Abdul-‘Azeez Ar-Raajihee on the book, he sent me the following letter, giving me the glad tidings that he was happy with the answer of Shaikh Ar-Raajihee and supplicating for me with things that I hope Allaah will answer:

“Number 1673 on 9/8/1412H:

From ‘Abdul-‘Azeez bin ‘Abdillaah bin Baaz to the noble brother, Doctor Rabee’ bin Haadee bin ‘Umair Al-Madkhalee, may Allaah grant him all that pleases Him and increase him in knowledge and Faith,

Ameen.

Salaamun ‘Alaikum wa Rahmatullaahi wa Barakaatuh. To Proceed:

I am attaching here for you the letter I received in response from Shaikh ‘Abdul-‘Azeez bin ‘Abdillaah Ar-Raajihee concerning your book “The Methodology of Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamaa’ah in Criticizing Individuals, Books and Groups” because I had forwarded it to him due to my inability to review it. So he responded with what he saw concerning the book and his response pleased me, all praise be to Allaah. And I am pleased with the research you did in it.

I ask Allaah that He make us and you and the rest of our brothers from among the callers of guidance and the supporters of the Truth. Verily, He is the Most Magnanimous, the Most Generous.

Was-Salaam ‘Alaikum wa Rahmatullaahi wa Barakaatuh.
Head of the Committees for Knowledge-Based Research, Religious Verdicts, Da’wah and Guidance.”

May Allaah bless our Shaikh in his lifespan and reward him for these words of encouragement and nice response. And may He make us and him and all of the Muslims from among those who call to the Qur’aan and the Sunnah and defend them. Verily, my Lord indeed hears the Supplications.

It seems proper to me that I now present our noble readers with another statement of our Shaikh as well as the statements of Shaikh ‘Abdul-‘Azeez al-Muhammad as-Salmaan and Dr. Shaikh Saalih Al-Fawzaan, a member of the committee of Senior Scholars, since all of them will support the topic of this book and pour water into its river.

Shaikh ‘Abdul-‘Azeez bin Baaz, may Allaah preserve him and grant him success, was asked the following question: “With regard to the methodology of Ahlus-Sunnah in criticizing the people of innovations and their books, is it an obligation to mention both their good qualities and their defects, or just their errors?”

So the Shaikh responded: “What is well known from the words of the scholars is to criticize the bad qualities for the purpose of warning and to clarify the errors, which they erred in to warn against them. As for the good that they have, then it

is already known and their good is accepted. However, the goal is to warn against their errors – the Jahmiyyah, the Mu'tazilah, the Raafidah and so on.

So if necessity mandates that one mention what good they have in them, then he may do so. And if the questioner asks: 'What do they have with them of truth?' or 'What do they agree with Ahlus-Sunnah on?' And the person being asked knows, then he may mention that to them. However, the greatest aim and the most important matter is that one mention and clarify what they are upon from falsehood so that the questioner can beware of them and so that he will not incline towards them."

Then another person asked him: "There are some people who say al-Muwaazanah is an obligation – which is that when you criticize an innovator for his innovation so that the people are warned about him, you must also mention his good qualities so that you don't oppress him."

So the Shaikh answered: "No, it is not required. It is not required. This is why when you read the books of Ahlus-Sunnah you will find that their intention was to warn. Read the books of Al-Bukhaaree – in "Khalq Afaal al-Ibaad", in "Al-Adab al-Mufrad", in his "Saheeh", the book "as-Sunnah" of 'Abdullaah bin Ahmad, "Kitaab at-Tawheed" of Ibn Khuzaimah, the "Refutation" of 'Uthmaan bin Sa'eed Ad-Daarimee against the People of Innovation and so on.

They mentioned their errors for the purpose of warning against their falsehood; the aim wasn't to enumerate their good qualities.

The goal was to warn against their falsehood. Their good qualities have no worth with respect to the one who disbelieves. If the innovation he commits causes him to disbelieve, then his good qualities become nullified. And if his innovation doesn't lead him to disbelief, then (still) he is upon dangerous ground. So the aim is to clarify and expose the errors and mistakes, which it is an obligation to warn against."

[From a cassette recording of one of the classes he gave in the Summer of 1413H in Taa'if after Salaat al-Fajr]

Shaikh ‘Abdul-‘Azeez al-Muhammad as-Salmaan, may Allaah preserve him, was asked the following question: “Is making a balance (Muwaazanah) between the good and bad qualities a condition when talking about the innovators, according to the Methodology of the Salaf?”

So the Shaikh responded: “Know, may Allaah grant success to us, you and all the Muslims, that no report can be found from anyone amongst the Salaf as-Saalih – from the Sahaabah and those who followed them in goodness – with praise and glorification for anyone amongst the people of innovation, those who support the innovators or those who call to support them. This is because the people of innovation have diseased hearts, and it is feared for the one who mixes with them or calls upon them that he will be affected by what they have from this chronic disease. This is since the sick person contaminates the healthy person, and not the opposite.

So beware, beware of all the innovators. From the people of innovation whom we are obligated to distance ourselves from and boycott are: The Jahmees, the Raafidees, the Mu’tazilah, the Maturediyyah, the Khawaarij, the Sufis, the Ash’arees and anyone following their way from the groups that have deviated from the methodology of the Salaf. So the Muslim must beware of them and warn against them. May the peace and blessings be on Muhammad and his family.”

Shaikh Saalih bin Fawzaan Al-Fawzaan, may Allaah preserve him, was asked the following question after having been asked numerous questions previously concerning groups and parties: “Okay, Shaikh, you should warn against them without mentioning their good qualities for example? Or should you mention both their good and bad qualities?”

So he, may Allaah preserve him, responded: “If you mention their good qualities, this means that you have call to them. No, do not mention that. Mention the error that they are upon only. This is because you are not entrusted to study their deeds and evaluate them...you are only entrusted with exposing the error they are upon so that they may repent from it, and so that others can beware of it. But if you mention their good qualities, they will say: “May Allaah reward you, this is what we were seeking...”

[From a cassette recording of his third class from his classes on “Kitaab at-Tawheed”, which he gave in the Summer of 1413H in Taa’if]

Chapter 2: Introduction to the First Printing of the Book

Verily, all praise is for Allaah. We praise Him, we seek His assistance and we ask Him for His forgiveness. And we seek refuge in Him from the evils of our souls and from the evils of our actions. Whosoever Allaah guides, there is none that can lead him astray. And whosoever is lead astray, there is no guide for Him.

I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allaah - alone and with no partner. And I bear witness that Muhammad is His slave and His Messenger.

To proceed:

Indeed Allaah sent Muhammad with the Guidance and the Religion of Truth, in order that it can gain supremacy over all religions, even though the disbelievers may hate it.

And Allaah commanded His Messenger (*sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) to establish the call (*da'wah*) to Him with wisdom, fair admonition and arguing that is done in the best manner. Likewise He commanded him to openly declare the truth, as He says: **“So proclaim openly that which you have been commanded, and turn away from the polytheists.”** [Surah Al-Hijr: 94]

And He commanded him to wage Jihaad against the polytheists, disbelievers and hypocrites, by way of the Qur'aan, the sword and the spear, to the point that there would remain no more fitnah and the Religion would all be purely for Allaah alone. And so that the word of the disbelievers can become the lowest (in the land) and so that word of Allaah can be the highest.

The Messenger of Allaah (*sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) rose to fulfill this great obligation of professing the truth and performing Jihaad for the sake of Allaah - the way it should be performed – up until the day he died.

Then his (*sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) rightly-guided Khaleefahs continued upon his methodology after him - and so they waged Jihaad against those Muslims who apostated in the Arab peninsula (after the Prophet's death). This was such that they brought this crucial movement of apostasy to an end. Then they carried the banner of Jihaad to all parts of the world and Allaah gave them

victory over the strongest forces of kufr (disbelief) at that time – the Persians, the Romans and others. And so this brought to reality Allaah's promise:

"Allaah has promised those among you who believe and do good deeds, that He will certainly grant them ascendancy in the land as He granted it to those before them, and that He will grant them the ability to practice the Religion, which He has chosen for them. And He will place in exchange of their fear a sense of security (provided), that they worship Me and do not ascribe any partners to Me. And whoever disbelieves afterward, then those are the evildoers." [Surah An-Noor: 55]

The Commander of the Believers, 'Umar Ibn Al-Khattaab (*radyyAllaahu 'anh*) – the ingenious one through whom Allaah gave glory to Islaam – served as a preventive barrier and a closed door in the face of *fitan* (trials), corruption and evil. So the heretics and fire-worshippers (*Majoos*) conspired against him and eventually carried out their plot by murdering him. So he went back to his Lord as a martyr, after having filled the earth with justice, Eemaan and light. But that firm and solid door (which he had established) fell apart after his death and so the various forms of *fitnah* entered and penetrated into the ranks of the Muslims during the time of the noble Khaleefah 'Uthmaan Ibn 'Affaan (*radyyAllaahu 'anh*). And it grew worse and worse to the point that it led to the death of this Khaleefah. So he too, went back to his Lord as a martyr that was wronged.

As a result of these afflictions, there transpired that which occurred between the fourth righteous Khaleefah 'Alee (*radyyAllaahu 'anh*) and Mu'awiyah Ibn Abee Sufyaan (*radyyAllaahu 'anh*). However, they were both *mujtahids* in that matter - so the one who was correct earned two rewards, while the one who erred was given one.

Then there came to pass the *fitnah* of the people of innovation from the Khawaarij – those whom the Messenger of Allaah (*sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) described, concerning their excessiveness in worship, as: **"They will shoot out from the Religion just as the arrow shoots out from the (hunted) prey."** And he (*sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) described them as: **"The worst of mankind and creatures."**

And he (*sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said: **"They are the worst of those below the surface of the heaven"** and **"Kill them wherever you find them, for indeed, he who kills them will have a great reward with Allaah."** [Agreed Upon]

As well as that which holds the greatest warning to those who call towards being close and having sympathy for the innovators – in that they are worse, more vile

and possess more dangerous plots and schemes (than the innovators do). That was why 'Alee (*radyyAllaahu 'anhu*) killed these individuals as he was commanded to by the Messenger of Allaah.

Then there appeared the fitnah of the ideologies of the Raafidah and the Zanaadiqah. And 'Alee (*radyyAllaahu 'anhu*) did not see anything more fitting to cure the hearts of the believers other than to burn them in fire. And he received aid from those noble Companions who took part in this campaign.

So this is what the Messenger of Allaah (*sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) and his righteous Companions prescribed for us from firmness and determination when dealing with innovators and heretics.

Then as time passed on and the best of generations came to an end, the innovations grew worse, their domains widened and their sects became many. Thus it became a reality what the Messenger of Allaah (*sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) informed us of and warned us about, when he said:

“You will follow the ways of those who came before you inch by inch and cubit by cubit, such that if they were to enter into the hole of a lizard, you would surely follow after them.” We said: “O Messenger of Allaah! Do you mean the Jews and the Christians?” He said: “Who else?” [1]

And when he said:

“The Jews divided into seventy-one sects and the Christians divided into seventy-two sects. And my ummah will divide into seventy-three sects. All of them will be in the Hellfire except one.” They said: “Which one is it, O Messenger of Allaah?” He said: “The one that adheres to that which I and my Companions are upon.”

And in another wording, he (*sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said: **“It is the Jamaa'ah.” [2]**

The scholars of Islaam such as Ibn Al-Mubaarak, Yazeed Ibn Haaron, Ibn Al-Madeene, Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, Al-Bukhaaree, Al-Khateeb Al-Baghdaadee, Ibn Taimiyyah and Ibn Rajab have interpreted this saved and victorious sect as being Ahl-ul-Hadeeth and those who adhere to their methodology. Many of these interpretations of theirs occur when mentioning the Prophet's (*sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) saying: **“There will not cease to be a group from my ummah triumphant upon the truth. Those who abandon them will not**

be able to harm them nor will those who oppose them, until Allaah's order (promise) comes to pass and they are upon that (condition)."

So this group did not cease to exist ever since the time when the calamities originated and the desires created divisions within the ummah, resulting in the number (seventy-three) mentioned above. This group did not cease to be upon Allaah's command, calling others towards the truth and spreading the sciences brought down from the prophethood. Nor did they desist from safeguarding and protecting the Religion. Nor did they refrain from refuting the schemes of the conspirators, the false claims of the liars and the distortions of the ignorant. Neither the abuse and plotting of the schemers nor the evil planning of the conspirators was able to prevent them from doing that. And the difficulties that they experienced did not increase them, except in further confirming the truth and displaying strength in the face of falsehood. Such was the case during the times of Imaam Ahmad and 'Abdul-Ghaneer Al-Maqdisee and during the time of Ibn Taimiyyah.

Then Allaah paved the way for the da'wah of the Imaam, the reformer, Shaikh Muhammad Ibn 'Abd-il-Wahhaab in the Arab peninsula – the site of revelation and the place of the Message. But this only came after the darkness of ignorance, misguidance and disorder had reigned over it for generations. So he raised the banner of Tawheed and held high the flags of Islaam. And due to his efforts and the efforts of his brothers from the people of Tawheed and the Sunnah, a state based upon Tawheed and the Sunnah was established. But the ongoing battles between them and the people of falsehood continued and progressed to a standstill, until the state of Tawheed and the Sunnah finally became settled and its foundations firmly rooted at the hands of the king 'Abd-ul-'Azeez and his Muslim brothers, who were sincere warriors and truthful scholars.

And thus the light of Tawheed and Eemaan spread throughout the world, removing the darknesses of Shirk and innovation from here and there. This came about by way of the distribution of the books of the Salaf As-Saalih (righteous predecessors), such as those on the subjects of Hadeeth, Tafseer and Tawheed, and especially those of Shaikh-ul-Islaam Ibn Taimiyyah and Ibn Al-Qayyim. It came about by way of the founding of schools of various grade levels, beginning with elementary schools and continuing onto universities and institutes of higher and specialized studies. This was in connection with the centers of da'wah that were spread out both inside (Saudi Arabia) and outside of it, in order to carry the message of Tawheed and the Sunnah. As well as all those other things which took sleep away from the opponents of Truth and Tawheed from amongst the secularists, Jews, Christians, communists and deviant innovators such as those who form into sects, parties and movements.

However, the most dangerous of these (above) categories and the ones who produced the worst consequences were the people of innovation – the spiteful ones that are filled with hatred. This is since by their plotting, scheming and their camouflaging of themselves behind the cover of the Sunnah, they were able to penetrate every barrier. Thus they managed to pour into every crack from these schools, universities and masajid. And they were able to create a group that carried their ideologies, whether all of it or some of it, and whether intentionally or unintentionally.

So this group – which they had trained and prepared according to the way they saw fit – began to form movements calling the people towards these ideologies in the universities, schools and elsewhere. And they upheld it by becoming active in this place and in that place. And these were crucial and significant times in which the da'wah (call) to Allaah had a great need for enthusiastic and active individuals that would raise its flag with firmness and conviction, fighting the armies of falsehood, schemes and plots and thus turning them back upon their heels in disgrace

So then using the name of Salafiyyah and the names of justice and fairness, this group was able to present the innovators – those who waged war against the people of Sunnah and Tawheed in their own land – as ones who were oppressed. And they corrupted the minds and the beliefs of many of the youth, distorting the image of the Salafi Manhaj and its adherents in the eyes of the youth. Then the figureheads within this group began calling towards a “new methodology” with regard to criticizing methodologies, ideologies, books and individuals – and they claimed that this was the methodology that was just and fair. So many of the youth and those who wrote in their favor began to think that such was the correct way. Rather, they even claimed that it was the methodology of Ahl-us-Sunnah wal-Jamaa'ah! And this spread and circulated in the writings of some of those who ascribed themselves to the Salaf. And it had an effect on many of the youth, such that they accepted it and clung onto it, thinking that it was the truth and that it was just. And then unfortunately, that began to become deeply rooted in their hearts and they did not realize that this was a way of thinking that was foreign to Islaam and Muslims. This view crept into them from their enemies in the same manner that other (deviant) ideologies had crept into Islaamic societies.

The effects of this methodology became clearly apparent in the conversations, debates, writings and attitudes of many of the youths and teachers. So this methodology began to take firm root in the people's hearts. And from its evil consequences was that it weakened the principle of *Al-Walaa wal-Baraa* (loyalty and disassociation) to Allaah and for the sake of Allaah, and to the methodology of Allaah and those who adhere to it – those whom it is obligatory to love and to be loyal to for the sake of Allaah. Instead there became manifest the loyalty, love and esteem for the callers, books, ideologies and methodologies that were all far

from the Salafi Manhaj, and for their people and not its people. Rather, that became the main avenue used in fighting against the Salafi Manhaj. And they changed it with strong determination so that it (the manhaj) would be replaced from its original form, halting its progression in its tracks after its departure had already taken place.

This (new) methodology had a great influence upon writers who we once thought were from the best of the Salafis and from the virtuous characters, personages and figures. We ask Allaah to grant them the ability to tread the way and methodology of their righteous predecessors in regards to calling to the clear methodology of the Salaf, the dedicated education of the youth that are upon it and implanting love for it and its followers whether they are dead or alive, and to follow their example and strengthen themselves by affiliating themselves to them.

Furthermore, this methodology, of which it is claimed that it is balanced and fair, has had a great influence upon the youth whom we used to and still have not stopped having hope in, that they will take a hold of the Salafi Manhaj with resoluteness and carry its banner with firmness, calling to it with vigor and sacrificing for its sake every expensive and cheap thing from wealth, status, activities and actions that they have. But unfortunately the state of current affairs is not this way.

That is why the hearts indeed tremble with fear for them, that these methodologies should mix in with them and they adopt them, and that their (evil) banners mix with theirs and they adopt them. And there is nothing after the truth except falsehood. So they will display to them that everyone is upon truth or that they are all brothers coming from one origin. And it is possible that they will take some of these (ideas) as a substitute for the true Salafi Manhaj and that they will prefer that banner over its banner, since it is very glamorous, loud and radiant. And this is even if this (methodology) is empty and void of any principles of Islaam and blind in the subject of clinging onto the Qur'aan and the Sunnah.

This methodology we have been indicating has many other signs, which I do not see fit to mention here.

I hope that Allaah grants me success in presenting the (true) Islaamic Salafi Manhaj with regard to criticizing individuals, groups, books and calls, based upon the texts of the Qur'aan and the Sunnah, and the texts indicating the position the Muslim scholars took and the behavior they implemented in the books of *Al-Jarh wat-Ta'deel* and in the books of Sunnah and Islamic beliefs.

I undertook this project motivated by my love for this believing youth, whom I consider – by Allaah – to be the greatest of treasures in this life. And we would ransom our souls and livelihoods for them. And we strictly watch over their

proper procession upon the ways and paths of this life. So if their souls, minds and hearts yearn for the home of their first love,[3] then that is from what Allaah loves and is pleased with.

*“Place your heart wherever you wish from your desires
For the true love is only for the first loved one
How many homes on the earth is the young man’s heart attached to
Yet his longing will always be for his first (original) home.”*

But if some of them refuse, insisting to be upon indecisiveness, confusion, inconsistencies and shakiness, then know that the hearts are between the two fingers of the Most Merciful - He changes it however He wills.

And to Allaah belongs the Command of what came before and what will come after.

Footnotes:

[1] Saheeh Al-Bukhaaree: Book of ‘Itisaam (no. 7320); Saheeh Muslim: Book of Knowledge (no. 2669)

[2] Reported by Ahmad, Abu Dawood, Ad-Daarimee, At-Tabaraanee and others, and it is authentic.

[3] I mean by this the Methodology of the Salaf with regard to Tawheed and holding onto the Qur’aan and Sunnah.

Chapter 3: The Methodology of Islaam in Criticizing and Evaluating Statements and Individuals

The Noble Qur'aan praises the believers without mentioning their mistakes and it condemns the disbelievers and hypocrites without mentioning their good qualities:

Allaah praises the believers in many ayaat of the Qur'aan and He mentions what He has prepared for them of great reward. But He does not mention any of their defects or sins with respect to comparing between them (i.e. Muwaazanah) even though "all of the children of Aadam are sinners and the best of sinners are those who repent." There is a great benefit behind this, which is: So that the souls (of the believers) can be incited into taking their example and embarking on the following of their methodology.

On the other hand Allaah condemns the disbelievers, hypocrites and evildoers in many ayaat, describing them with what is found in them from disbelief, hypocrisy and evil. He describes them as being deaf, dumb and blind, and He describes them with misguidance and ignorance. All of this is without mentioning any of their good qualities, since it was not necessary for them to be mentioned. This is because their disbelief and misguidance spoiled and blemished those good qualities they had and converted them into floating particles of dust (i.e. useless).

Allaah, the Most High says: **"And We shall turn to whatever (good) deeds they did and make them like scattered floating particles of dust."** [Surah Al-Furqaan: 23]

And He says: "Say: **'Shall We inform you of who the greatest losers with respect to deeds will be? Those whose efforts have been wasted in this life while they thought that they were acquiring good through their deeds.'**" [Surah Al-Kahf: 103-104]

And He says: "And Allaah did not wrong them but rather it was they who wronged themselves." [Surah Aali 'Imraan: 117]

Allaah has related to us the stories of the disbelieving nations that rejected His messengers, informing us of their disbelief, rejection and shameful acts, followed by their demise and destruction, as is stated in the Qur'aan. However, He did not mention any of their good qualities. This is because the chief objective behind

mentioning that (in this way) was to warn and caution us about what they committed from disbelief and rejection against the messengers so that our destination and end will not be like their destination and end.

Furthermore, Allaah described the Jews and the Christians using the vilest of attributes, and He threatened them with the severest of threats. And He did not mention any of their good qualities, which were nullified due to their disbelief and rejection of Muhammad (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) and what they committed of disbelief and distortion of their revealed books.

The tribe of Quraysh also had good qualities, which were ruined and nullified by their disbelief and denial of the greatest of messengers (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam).

And when there was captured from them he who was captured on the day of Badr, he (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said: "If Al-Mut'im Ibn 'Adiyy [1] were alive and he were to ask me for these rotten individuals (i.e. the prisoners), I would surely give them to him."

And Allaah, the Most High, says: **"Perish the two hands of Abu Lahab and may he perish! His wealth and his children will not benefit him. He will be burned in a Fire of blazing flames. And his wife too, the carrier of wood, on her neck will be a twisted rope of palm fiber."** [Surah Al-Masad: 1-5]

There is no doubt that Abu Lahab and his wife possessed good qualities, and they both came from honorable and respectable families. However, they invalidated all of that by their disbelief and vile stance towards the Messenger of Allaah (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam).

And this is the methodology that is so often misunderstood for it leads people to think that this wise methodology is void of any justice. Far removed and high is Allaah above that!

The Prophet's warning to his ummah about the People of Desires:

The Prophet (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) warned his ummah about the People of Desires, without going into mentioning their good qualities. This was because their bad qualities outweighed their good ones and because their danger was more severe and greater than the benefit anticipated from (mentioning) their good qualities.

'Aa'ishah, the mother of the Believers, said:

"The Messenger of Allaah (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) recited this ayah: **'It is He who sent down to you the Book. In it are verses that are entirely clear, from the foundations of the Book, and other verses that are not entirely clear. But as for those in whose hearts there is deviation, they follow those verses that are not entirely clear, seeking fitnah (mischief) and looking for their hidden meanings. But no one knows its hidden meaning except Allaah. And those who are firmly grounded in knowledge say: We believe in it, the whole of it - (clear and unclear verses) are from our Lord. But none accept the reminder except those who possess understanding.'** [Surah Aali 'Imraan: 7] Then he said: **'If you see those who seek after that which is not entirely clear from it (the Qur'aan), then they are the ones whom Allaah has named (here), so beware of them.'**" [2]

And Abu Hurairah (radyAllaahu 'anhu) reported that the Prophet (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said: **"There will be in the last part of my ummah a people who will speak to you about things that neither you nor your fathers heard of before. So beware and let them beware."** [3]

It is well known that the innovators are not void of any good qualities. However, Allaah's Messenger (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) did not delve into them nor did he mention them. Nor did he (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) say: **"Get benefit from their good qualities and speak good about them."**

But unfortunately, the affairs have now turned head over heels! And so we find many who attribute themselves to the Salafee Manhaj showing loyalty to the innovators and befriending them and their methodologies and books. And we find them defending all of that for them and running away and causing others to run away, warning against the people of Truth and the Sunnah! Indeed, to Allaah we belong and indeed to Him we will return!

While explaining these two (above) hadeeths, Imaam Al-Baghawee (rahimahullaah) said:

"The Prophet (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) has informed us that this ummah would divide into groups, and that desires and innovations would appear amongst them. And he (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) declared salvation for whoever follows his Sunnah and the Sunnah of his Companions. So it is a must upon every Muslim, when he sees a man dispersing any type of vain desire or innovation knowingly, or he is scorning any part of the Sunnah, to abandon him and free himself of him, whether he is dead or alive. Thus, he does not greet him with Salaam when he encounters him nor does he respond to him if he is greeted initially. He is to continue doing this until that individual abandons his innovation and returns to the truth.

As for the forbiddance of abandoning (i.e. making Hijrah from) one's brother for more than three days, [4] then that is with regard to a disagreement that occurs between two people in matters related to friendship or family ties. It is not with regard to the Religion, for indeed, abandoning the people of vain desires and innovation is unending, until they repent." [5]

Then he (Al-Baghawee) goes on to mention the hadeeth of Ka'ab Ibn Maalik about those three individuals who refrained from going out on the war expedition of Tabook. And there occurs in it, his (Ka'ab) saying: **"...and the Messenger of Allaah forbade the Muslims from speaking to the three of us, so the people avoided us and became like strangers to us. And I felt as if I were in a foreign country."** And he mentioned how all of the Muslims abandoned them three until fifty nights had been completed.

Al-Baghawee (rahimahullaah) then said:

""There is evidence in this (hadeeth) for abandoning the people of innovation. It is as if the Messenger of Allaah (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) feared hypocrisy for Ka'ab and his (two) brothers when they refrained from going on the expedition with him. So he commanded that they be abandoned, up to the point that Allaah revealed the confirmation of their repentance and the Messenger (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) knew they were absolved (from it). The Sahaabah, the Taabi'een, the successors of the Taabi'een and the Scholars of the Sunnah have continued to carry out this (understanding), unanimously agreeing on showing enmity towards the innovators and abandoning them." [6]

The Position of the Sahaabah and the Taabi'een towards the People of Innovation:

Ibn 'Umar (radyAllaahu 'anhumaa) said concerning the people who rejected Al-Qadr (Divine preordainment): *"Inform them that I am free from them and they are free from me (i.e. nothing to do with each other)."*

And Abu Qulaabah said: *"Do not sit with the people of desires [or he said - the people of argumentation] for indeed I do not feel safe lest they plunge you into their misguidance and they cause you to doubt some of the things you already know."*

One man from the people of innovations once said to Abu Ayyoob As-Sakhtiyaanee: *"O Abu Bakr, can I have one word with you?" So he turned away from him saying: "Not even half a word!" [7]*

By Allaah, this is the true walaa (allegiance) to Allaah and to Islaam!

If the scholars of the Sunnah of this time were to deal with the innovators with such a determined and resolute manner, the innovations would have died within their own crevices. And the publishing companies would not be able to print their books because there would be no customers to buy them. Nor would you hear anyone's voice speaking loudly in their defense of the innovators, not to mention books being written in their defense! But however the Salafee youth have become attracted to these kinds of books and tapes the same way the moth is attracted to fire!

Indeed, to Allaah we belong and indeed to Him we will return!

You have seen how the Sahaabah, the Taabi'een and the scholars of Islaam have dealt with innovators - did they did take into consideration any of their good qualities or not?!

That was from their firmness and sternness with regard to putting an end to falsehood and from their understanding of the objectives of Islaam, which includes:

"Preventing evil takes precedence over bringing about good"

The Prophet's mentioning of defects found in specific individuals without mentioning their good qualities, for the purpose of advising:

'Aa'ishah (radyAllaahu 'anhaa) reported that:

"A man asked permission to enter in the presence of the Prophet (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam). So when he (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) saw who it was, he said: 'What an evil brother to his family he is and what an evil son to his family he is.' So when the man sat down, the Prophet (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) smiled in his face and extended kindness and cheerfulness to him. When the man left, 'Aa'ishah (radyAllaahu 'anhaa) said: 'O Messenger of Allaah! When you saw the man, you said such and such. But then you smiled in his face and extended kindness to him!' So the Messenger of Allaah (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said: 'O 'Aa'ishah! When did you observe me being vile-mannered? Verily, the people with the worst position in the sight of Allaah are those whom the people stay away from, for fear of their evil.'" [8]

Al-Haafidh Ibn Hajr (rahimahullaah) said:

"Al-Qurtubee (rahimahullaah) said: 'In this hadeeth there is proof for the permissibility of backbiting those who openly profess their sin or evil or what is similar to that, such as unfairness when ruling or calling to innovations. This goes as well for the permissibility of evading them and protecting oneself from their evil, so long as that does not lead towards trickery or deceit in the Religion of Allaah.'" [9]

And when Faatimah Bint Qays finished her waiting period from her divorce of her husband Abu 'Amr Ibn Hafs, she mentioned to the Prophet (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) that Mu'awiyah Ibn Abee Sufyaan and Abu Jahm had both proposed to her for marriage. So the Messenger of Allaah (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said [instructing and advising]:[10] **"As for Abu Jahm, he does not put down the stick that he carries on his shoulder (i.e. he beats his wives). And as for Mu'awiyah, he is utterly poor and has no wealth of his own. Marry Usaamah Ibn Zayd (instead)."** She said: **"But I do not like him."** He said (again): **"Marry Usaamah."** So she married him and Allaah placed good in their marriage and she was extremely happy. [11]

There is no doubt that these two men had merits as well as good qualities. However, the present situation called for advising and counseling and no more than that was required. So if mentioning the good qualities was necessary in the example of this situation, which was that of advising and counseling, the

Messenger of Allaah (ṣallAllaahu ‘alayhi wa ṣallam) would have indeed prescribed that for us and he would have fulfilled that in the best manner.

But as for this new methodology, then it necessitates that one mention the good qualities in such a situation. However those who adhere to it do not know that the one being advised will become confused and bewildered, and thus he has fallen into something that causes harm to him. So the benefits and advantages of advising are neglected. And the one advising no longer becomes an advisor or a warner. Rather, he becomes an inciter and an instigator towards that which causes harm.

'Aa'ishah (radīAllaahu ‘anhaa) reported that: **"Hind Bint 'Utbah said: 'O Messenger of Allaah! Verily Abu Sufyaan is a stingy man and he does not give me what is sufficient for me and my children. May I take from him while he is not aware of it? The Prophet (ṣallAllaahu ‘alayhi wa ṣallam) said: "Take what is sufficient for you and your children, in goodness." [12]**

Al-Haafidh Ibn Hajr (rahimahullaah) said:

"This hadeeth is used as evidence for the permissibility of mentioning things about people that they don't like (to have mentioned), if it is done for the purpose of seeking a legal ruling, complaining and other than that. And it is one of the cases in which backbiting is permitted." [13]

So Allaah's Messenger did not reprimand her for mentioning the oppressive side of Abu Sufyaan, nor did he require her to mention his good qualities, even though he was a man that possessed good characteristics.

But those who adhere to this new methodology do not take the likes of these matters into account, nor do they distinguish between the benefits and the dangers. In fact, they have eradicated the aspect of benefit and began to take the dangers and harms of innovations very lightly. So they do not achieve the true benefits of advising that was achieved by Islaam and the scholars of the Salaf. So when they eradicated that aspect, they were made to believe that anyone that mentioned the defects or innovations of an individual or a group, warning and advising the ummah, did so in the absence of justice. And that he fell into the depths of betrayal.

The Prophet's warning about the Khawaarij:

'Alee (radyAllaahu 'anhu) said:

*"When I narrate a hadeeth to you from the Allaah's Messenger (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam), then that I would be dropped from the sky to the ground is more beloved to me than to say something upon him which he (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) did not say. But when I narrate to you something that is between you and I, (there may be an error in it), for indeed war is a matter of outwitting. I heard the Messenger of Allaah (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) say: **'There will appear during the Last Days a people that will be young in age and have foolish ideas. They will speak using the best speech amongst the creatures. They will recite the Qur'aan but it will not go past their throats. And they will shoot out from the Religion just as the arrow shoots out from the hunted prey. So if you encounter them, kill them. For indeed, in killing them, there is a reward with Allaah on the Day of Judgement for the one who kills them.'**" [14]*

'Ubaydullaah Ibn Abee Raafi', the freed slave of Allaah's Messenger (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) reported that when Al-Harooriyyah (i.e. the Khawaarij) set out to fight and he ('Ubaydullaah) was with 'Alee Ibn Abee Taalib, they said: **'There is no Rule except that of Allaah's.'** So 'Alee (radyAllaahu 'anhu) said: **'(They use) A true statement by which they intend falsehood. Indeed, the Messenger of Allaah (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) described a people, of which I do not see their description, except in these individuals. They will speak the truth with their tongues but it will not go beyond this part of them - and he pointed to his throat. They are from the most hated of Allaah's creation to Him. Amongst them is a black man who has one hand that is (like) the teat of a goat or the nipple of a breast.'** So when 'Alee Ibn Abee Taalib (radyAllaahu 'anhu) killed them, he said: **'Look (for his body)!'** So they looked but they did not find anything. So 'Alee said: **'Go back and look again, for I swear by Allaah, neither have I lied nor has a lie been told to me'** saying this two or three more times. Then they found him in one of the ruins. So they brought him over until they placed his (dead) body before 'Alee (radyAllaahu 'anhu). ('Ubaydullaah said): I witnessed all that occurred there, from their affair (i.e. of the Khawaarij) and from what 'Alee said about them." [15]

And in the hadeeth of Abu Sa'eed Al-Khudree concerning the situation of the man Dhul-Khuwaysirah, the Prophet (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said: **"There will come out from his progeny a people that will recite the Book of Allaah fluently, but it will not go past their throats. They will shoot out from the Religion just as the arrow shoots out from the hunted prey - (and I think he sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam said) - If I would reach them (i.e. their time), I would surely kill them with the slaughter the people of Thamood experienced."** [16]

Abu Dharr (radyAllaahu 'anhu) reported that the Messenger of Allaah (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said: **"Verily, after me from my ummah (or he sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam said): There will come after me from my ummah a people that will recite the Qur'aan, but it will not go past their throats. They will come out from the Religion just as the arrow comes out from the hunted prey. Then they will not return to it. They are the worst of mankind and creatures."** [17]

And in the hadeeth of 'Alee concerning their description, the Prophet (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said: **"Your recitation of the Qur'aan is nothing compared to their recitation. Your prayer is nothing compared to their prayer. And your fasting is nothing compared to their fasting. They will recite the Qur'aan thinking that is (a proof) for them, when in fact it is (a proof) against them. Their prayer will not go beyond their throats. They will shoot out from Islaam just as the arrow shoots out from the hunted prey. If the army that sets out against them knew what was stated upon the tongue of their Prophet (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) about them, they would just rely upon doing this deed."** [18]

O Allaah! Verily, we seek refuge in You from the evil of desires and misguidance!

These were worshippers of Allaah that were sincere in their recitation, prayer and fasting, such that the Companions of Allaah's Messenger were not able to compete with them in that. However it turned into something despicable for them and a sign of their deviance. And along with this, Allaah and His Messenger considered them as being ones who possessed foolish ideas. This exhaustive worship that they performed, which wore them out and kept them awake at night, and because of which they suffered extreme thirst, profound sleeplessness and fear from Allaah, did not intercede on their behalf. It was of no use to them before Allaah. So they are the worst of mankind and creatures. And they shoot out from the Religion in the same manner that an arrow shoots out through a hunted prey.

If the Messenger of Allaah were to reach their time, he would kill them with the slaughter that 'Aad and Iram received.

So where are those who defend the people of innovation - those who are worse than these individuals?!

Where are those who protect them under the shadow of this foreign methodology that is in opposition to the methodology of Allaah and His Messenger?!

Where are those who defend the Raafidah, the grave worshippers, Sufis, Ash'arees and Hizbees (party spirit supporters)?!

Where are the ones who defend and the protect the modern day rationalists and Jahmiyyah who deny Allaah's attributes?!

Rather, those who defend the people of innovation have added to these innovations the innovation of the Khawaarij!

Who, by Allaah, is upon truth and justice?! Is it the one who warns against the innovators sincerely advising for the sake of Allaah, His Religion and the Muslims?! Or is it these individuals?!

Footnotes:

[1] Translator's Note: Mut'im Ibn 'Adiyy was a non-Muslim that had assisted the Prophet by giving him protection to come back into Makkah after his uncle Abu Taalib, who had been protecting him till then, died.

[2] Reported by Al-Bukhaaree in his Saheeh: Tafseer Surah Aali 'Imraan (no. 4547) and Muslim in his Saheeh: Book of Knowledge (no. 2665)

[3] The Introduction to Saheeh Muslim (1/12)

[4] Translator's Note: As occurs in the hadeeth reported by Al-Bukhaaree and Muslim, in which the Prophet forbade a Muslim from abandoning (i.e. making Hijrah) from his brother for more than three days, by not talking to him.

[5] Sharh-us-Sunnah (1/227)

[6] Sharh-us-Sunnah (1/227)

[7] Sharh-us-Sunnah of Imaam Al-Baghawee (1/227)

[8] Saheeh Al-Bukhaaree: Book of Manners (no. 6032)

[9] Fath-ul-Baaree (10/452)

[10] These are the words of Shaikh Rabee' not part of the hadeeth.

[11] Saheeh Muslim: Book of Divorce (no. 1480)

[12] Saheeh Al-Bukhaaree: Book of Charity (no. 3564) and Saheeh Muslim: Book of Judgements (no. 1714)

[13] Fath-ul-Baaree (9/509)

[14] Saheeh Muslim: Book of Zakaat (no. 1066)

[15] Saheeh Muslim: Book of Zakaat (no. 1066)

[16] Saheeh Muslim: Book of Zakaat (no. 1066)

[17] Saheeh Muslim: Book of Zakaat (no. 1067)

[18] Saheeh Muslim: Book of Zakaat (no. 1066)

Chapter 4: Guidelines with regard to Criticizing Individuals and Groups

These are guidelines, which define those whom we are required to respect and honor from among mankind, such that it is not permissible to harm their honor. And they define those whom it is permissible to speak about and criticize, rather, whom it is obligatory to criticize at the time of necessity and benefit, without having to mention their good qualities.

• Those whom we are obligated to honor

First: The Messengers and Prophets, may Allaah's peace and blessings be upon all of them

Allaah has related to us their stories, showing their striving and perseverance, while He has repudiated those who denied and opposed them. And He commanded the Messenger of Allaah (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) as well as his ummah to follow their example.

Second: The Companions, may Allaah be pleased with them

There is nothing that the Muslim ummah should feel towards them except love and respect. Allaah has praised them highly in His Book. And He spoke about their high rank, their efforts and the sacrifices they made with their wealth and their lives in the Cause of Allaah.

Similarly, the Messenger of Allaah (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) praised them highly, both on an individual and a group level. This is such that the scholars of Islaam devoted special and close attention to their merits and qualities, writing many books concerning their virtues and special characteristics.

Furthermore, the Messenger of Allaah (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) forbade us from insulting them, saying: **"Do not revile my Companions. For I swear by the One in whose hand my soul is in, if one of you were to give in charity the likes of mount Uhud in gold, it would not equal a mudd (handful using 2 hands) of one of them nor even half of it."** [1]

Ahl-us-Sunnah wal-Jamaa'ah are well aware of their position and status, and so they guard it with the strictest form of guarding. And they forbid others from speaking vainly about what occurred of dispute between 'Alee (radyAllaahu 'anhu) and Mu'awiyah (radyAllaahu 'anhu) and those who supported them from the rest of the Companions. Rather, they assert for them the reward that is given to the mujtahids. And they ruled that all those who spoke about them – or even about one of them – were upon deviance, misguidance and heresy.

Third: Those who followed them in goodness

This includes those who reached the (time of the) Companions of Allaah's Messenger (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) and were guided by their guidance, such as the seven scholars of Fiqh of Madeenah and those who followed their way in the rest of the towns. Then after them, are the scholars of Hadeeth, Fiqh and Tafseer – those who strove upon the way of the righteous Companions and Successors. And it includes those who followed their methodology with regard to Creed, holding tightly onto the Book and the Sunnah, avoiding innovations, vain desires and its adherents, and defending the truth and its adherents, up until this day of ours and after it, until Allaah's promise comes about.

They are the ones whom the Messenger of Allaah (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) was referring to when he said: **"There will not cease to be a group from my ummah, triumphant upon the truth. Those who abandon them will not be able to harm them nor will those who oppose them, until the order (promise) of Allaah, the Mighty and Majestic, comes."**

They are better known as Ahl-ul-hadeeth, as has been agreed upon by the Imaams of Islaam and the scholars of guidance. And no one opposes them in regard to what they have agreed on except those from the people of vain desires, ignorance and misguidance.

Imaam Ahmad, Al-Haakim and Ibn Al-Qayyim have indeed accused those who criticize them of being heretics. And those who spoke vilely about them (the scholars) have been repudiated severely by Ibn Qutaybah, Ar-Raamaharamee, Al-Khateeb (Al-Baghdaadee) and others.

And there is no doubt that no one speaks against them except for those whom Allaah has led astray and blinded. So if one of these (scholars) errs in an issue from the issues in which Ijtihad is allowed, it must be clarified but not in the manner of condemning.

Shaikh-ul-Islaam Ibn Taimiyyah (rahimahullaah) said with regard to these (scholars):

“So whoever is known to have (the ability to perform) the allowable Ijtihad, then it is not permissible for him to be mentioned in a manner of condemnation or blame, because Allaah has forgiven him of his error. Instead, it is an obligation due to what he possesses of Eemaan and Taqwaa to show loyalty and love to him, and to fulfill what Allaah has mandated from his rights, such as praising him, making du’aa (supplication) for him, and so on.” [2]

• Those whom it is permissible to criticize, disparage and warn the people against their harm:

First: The People of Innovation

It is permissible – rather obligatory – to speak about the people of innovation and warn against them and their fabrications, whether individually or as groups and whether they are absent or present. They include those among the Khawaarij, the Rawaafid, the Jahmiyyah, the Murji'ah, the Karaamiyyah and the people of Rhetoric – those whose knowledge of Kalaam (rhetoric) has brought them to corrupted and deviant beliefs,[3] such as the rejection of all or some of Allaah's Attributes. [4]

So it is an obligation to warn against these types of people, their books and their misguided ways. And how great in number they are!

Likewise, the same applies to those who follow their methodology from the sects [and groups] of our time, such as those who separate themselves away from the people of Tawheed and Sunnah, oppose them and remain far away from their aspects of the methodology. In fact, they wage war against these aspects of the methodology and chase others away from it and its adherents (i.e. the scholars). The likes of these individuals are followed by those who support and defend them. And these followers of theirs mention their good qualities and praise them for it, praising their personalities and leaders. And they have preferred their (innovated) methodologies over the methodology of the people of Tawheed, the Sunnah and the Jamaa'ah!

Second: Reporters of Hadeeth and Witnesses, if they are deemed Unreliable

It is permissible to criticize these people according to the consensus of the Muslims. Rather, it is an obligation. This has been mentioned and related by An-Nawawee and Ibn Taimiyah, may Allaah have mercy on both of them.

1. So if the scholars of the science of al-Jarh wat-Ta'deel all agree upon criticizing a narrator, accusing him of lying or making gross mistakes. Or they say: "His hadeeth are to be rejected", "He has baseless (weak) hadeeth" or what resembles that, then it is permitted for everyone doing research or quoting to quote or report that. And it is not required of him – in the least – to mention that person's good qualities, not to mention doing research on all of his good qualities and then mentioning them!
2. As for the narrators of which there is differing as to whether or not they are reliable or unreliable, or the narrators who were innovators, then:

The First Type: To list the mention of that narrator's criticism first and accept it without considering the sayings of those who declared him reliable would be abandoning something from the Religion and from what has been established on the leader of the Messengers (sallAllahu 'alayhi wa sallam). And this is a great injustice and a negligence of something that is part of the Religion, which we are obligated to preserve. And it is a trust that falls on the neck of the scholars (i.e. it is their duty). So in this case, for the benefit of the Religion and for preserving it, and for the sake of giving a general benefit to the Muslims, we must seek to verify the reality of the matter. And we must weigh between the sayings of the scholars of Jarh wa-Ta'deel, taking that which is more established, whether it is from the criticism (jarh) or the approval (ta'deel).

All of this is for the purpose of bringing about this beneficial good, not because it is an obligation to make a balance for the condition of that individual who has been declared unreliable (between his good and bad qualities)! So if it is established that he is in fact unreliable after having done the research, it is permitted to relate his unreliability without mentioning this balancing (between those who criticized him and those who approved of him). And no scholar said that (mentioning) this (balancing) was obligatory.

As for the innovator, then if we are in the position of warning against the innovations, then we warn against him, mentioning his innovation only. And it is not an obligation on us to mention any of his good qualities. And if we are in the

subject of narrating reports, then it is an obligation to mention his trustworthiness and honesty, if he was in fact trustworthy and honest, for the purpose of benefiting, attaining and preserving the narration. Not for any other purpose, such as the obligation of making a balance (muwaazanah) between his good and bad qualities, as some people claim! So it is not required on us to mention his generosity or his knowledge or his courage or his efforts and good manners, as well as all those other things that have no relation to the subject of narrating.

There were some among the Salaf who would reject the reports of the people of innovation and those who were accused (of weakness, lying).

Ibn 'Abbaas (radyaAllaahu 'anhu) said: **"There was once a time in which when a man would say: 'Allaah's Messenger (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said...' our eyes would hasten to him and our ears would open wide (to listen) to him. But when the difficulties and disgrace befell the people, we did not take from the people except, for that which we knew."** [5]

And Ibn Sireen said: *"The people never used to ask about the isnaad (chain of narration). But when the fitnah (afflictions) occurred, they began to say: 'Name your men to us.' So the Ahl-us-Sunnah would be looked upon and their hadeeth would be accepted. And the people of innovation would be looked upon and their hadeeth would not be accepted."* [6]

The words of Ibn 'Abbaas and Ibn Sireen indicate that this was the general view of the Salaf at the time, during the days of the last of the Companions and their Successors (Taabi'een) after them.

Perhaps this existed in them due to their awareness of being in no need of the narrations of innovators. So they took this firm and solid stance against them. But when those who came after them were obliged to take the reports of the truthful ones among the innovators, they accepted it from them, only under certain conditions and stipulations, which consisted of taking the sound from it, while rejecting the crooked and corrupt aspects from it.

Imaam Abu Ishaaq Ibraaheem Ibn Ya'qoob Al-Jawzjaanee (rahimahullaah) said: *"Among them was he who deviated from the truth, yet still possessed an honest tongue. And his hadeeth would be widespread amongst the people since he was forsaken for his innovation but trusted with his narration. So concerning these individuals, I see no other alternative but to take from their hadeeth that which is (already) known, so long as his innovation does not become strengthened because of that."* [7]

• **Third: Those whom it is permissible to backbite:**

An-Nawawee (rahimahullaah) said: "Chapter: What is permissible from backbiting:

Know that backbiting is permissible for a legitimate and legislated reason, of which the allowance for doing it (the backbiting) would not be possible without it. And they are six reasons:

First: Oppression

Second: Seeking help for changing an evil and returning a sinner to what is correct.

Third: When seeking a legal ruling

Fourth: Warning and advising the Muslims against an evil. This is in several perspectives, one of which is: Criticizing those who have been declared unreliable in narration and testimony. This is permissible according to the unanimous agreement of the Muslims. Rather it becomes obligatory for necessity's sake..."

This is up to the point where he said:

"One last case is when one sees a student frequenting an innovator or a deviant, seeking to attain knowledge from him, and he fear that the student may be affected by that. Then it is upon him to advise him of the condition of that innovator, providing that his intention only be for the sake of advising..." [8]

His complete words will be mentioned later in its due place.

I say: So you see that he did not make it a condition for one to mention the good qualities of the person who is being warned against. And he did not say that it was an obligation to make a balance (between good and bad qualities) as those people make it an obligation, holding that if one abandons doing this balancing then it goes against the trust and it shuns equity and justice!

Shaikh-ul-Islaam Ibn Taimiyyah (rahimahullaah) said: *"Someone once said to Ahmad Ibn Hanbal: 'It is becoming difficult upon me to say, This person is such and such, and that person is such and such (i.e. criticizing them).' So he (Ahmad) said: 'If you were to remain silent and I were to remain silent, then when will the ignorant person know the authentic from the weak?'"*

And since advising is obligatory with regard to (bringing) beneficial good in the Religion, specific and general:

Such as is the case when reporters of Hadeeth have made mistakes or lied, as Yahyaa Ibn Sa'eed said: "I asked Maalik, Ath-Thawree, Laith Ibn Sa'ad – I think – and Al-Awzaa'ee about a man that was accused with regard to hadeeth, so they all said: 'Convey (expose) his affair.'"

And such as is the case when the leaders of innovation from those who voiced sayings contrary to the Qur'aan and the Sunnah and who performed worship contrary to that of the Qur'aan and the Sunnah.

Then indeed, clarifying their condition and warning the ummah against them is an obligation based on the unanimous agreement of the Muslims. This is such that it was once said to Ahmad Ibn Hanbal: "Is a man that fasts, prays and makes 'Itikaaf more beloved to you or one that speaks out against the people of innovation?" So he (rahimahullaah) said: "If he fasts, prays and performs 'Itikaaf then that is only for himself, but if he speaks out against the innovators then indeed this is for all of the Muslims. And this is better."

Shaikh-ul-Islaam, Ibn Taimiyyah, said:

"So he has explained that the benefit of (doing) this is general for all of the Muslims with regard to their Religion. And it is from the types of Jihaad that is done in the Way of Allaah. This is since cleansing Allaah's way, His Religion, methodologies and legislation, and repelling the transgression of these individuals and having enmity against them is a collective obligation (fard kifaayah), according to the consensus of the Muslims.

And if it were not for those whom Allaah placed to repel the harm of these individuals, the Religion would have indeed been corrupted. And the corruption experienced from these individuals is greater than the corruption experienced from being conquered by the enemies (of Islaam) during war.

For indeed, when these (enemies) conquered (the Muslim lands), they did not corrupt the hearts (of the Muslims) and what they contained from Religion, except for what came afterward. But as for these individuals, then they corrupt the hearts from the very start." [9]

And he has lengthier words on this subject, which will be mentioned later.

So this is the true methodology of the Salaf, not just a claim. And it is that methodology, which was followed by Ibn Taimiyyah and others from the sincere and honest Mujaahideen. And no criticism of a critic ever rebuked them, because they did this for the sake of Allaah.

So where is it that making this kind of balancing (between good and bad qualities) must be a condition?!

And where is the obligation for mentioning a person's good qualities (when criticizing him), which we hear so often repeated unjustly in defense of those callers to misguidance?!

Rather you have seen that Ibn Taimiyyah held that it was an obligation to refute the people of vain desires. And that it was from the different types of Jihaad in the Way of Allaah, since it is a way of cleansing His Religion, methodologies and legislation.

Sayings of the Imaams concerning the People of Innovation and (Hadeeth) Narrators:

Furthermore, the scholars of Islaam have indeed spoken out against the people of innovation and the (weak) reporters. And they did not indicate in the least towards the obligation of making it a condition to create this type of balancing (between good and bad qualities). They authored books on the subject of al-Jarh wat-Ta'deel and books in support of the Sunnah and in refutation of the people of innovation and in criticizing them. And they wrote books on the defects (of hadeeth) and books on the fabricated ahaadeeth. They did not make it an obligation to make this type of balancing (Muwaazanah) at all. In fact, they even wrote books specifically with just Jarh (discrediting of reporters) in them, and limiting them to mentioning only those (narrators) that were declared unreliable or those who were spoken about with criticism. So they did not place this principle (of Muwaazanah) as a condition at all.

Thus Imaam Al-Bukhaaree – who was who he was with regard to possessing authority, religious characteristics, good manners and piety – wrote two books on weak narrators and he named them "Al-Kabeer" and "As-Sagheer".

And An-Nasaa'ee wrote a book about the weak and rejected narrators called ad-Du'afaa wal-Matrookeen.

Al-'Aqeelee wrote a book on weak narrators, which is known as ad-Du'afaa.

Ibn 'Adiyy authored a book, al-Kaamil, about those who were criticized.

Ibn Hibbaan wrote a book specifically about those who were declared unreliable called al-Majrooheen.

Ad-Daaraqutnee and Ibn Ma'een have numerous books in which they answer questions concerning weak narrators and rejected reporters.

Al-Haakim wrote a book called ad-Du'afaa (Weak Narrators), which is a chapter from his (bigger book) al-Madkhal.

Abu Nu'aim and Ibn Al-Jawzee wrote on this subject also.

Adh-Dhahabee wrote three books on those who were declared unreliable and those who were criticized, which are al-Meezaan, al-Mughnee and Deewaan ad-Du'afaa.

Al-Haafidh Ibn Hajr authored Lisan al-Meezaan.

And likewise, the books on al-Jarh wat-Ta'deel are filled with the discrediting of those who were declared unreliable (majrooheen), especially the books of Imaam Yahyaa Ibn Ma'een. So they did not make it a condition that this Muwaaznah (mentioning good and bad qualities) must be employed.

Indeed, this methodology, which makes this Muwaaznah a condition, is indeed from that which results in: The discrediting returning back to the (past) scholars of Islaam, and their falling into the web of being accused with injustice and treachery (i.e. since they did not mention the good deeds of those whom they criticized). We seek Allaah's refuge from a methodology that produces such kinds of consequences.

Here, it is appropriate to mention some examples of the criticism of the Imaams (scholars) on some people, in which they just mentioned the criticism without showing any consideration to what they had from good qualities.

Imaam Ahmad, may Allaah have mercy on him:

1. Al-Marwadhee (rahimahullaah) said: "Abu 'Abdillaah (Ahmad Ibn Hanbal) once mentioned Haarith al-Muhaasibee and said: 'Haarith is the source of all this affliction – meaning the innovations of the views of Jahm. There is no calamity except for Haarith.'" [10]
2. Habeeb Ibn Abee Hilaal: Ahmad said of him: "He is rejected." [11]
3. Habeeb Ibn Jahdar: Ahmad declared him a liar. [12]
4. Al-Hasan Ibn Dhakwaan: Ahmad said of him: "His ahaadeeth are forged" and in one report, he said: "He is of no significance."
5. Khaalid Ibn Yazeed Ibn 'Abd-ir-Rahmaan Al-Hamdaanee: Ahmad said: "He is nothing." [13]

Imaam Al-Bukhaaree, may Allaah have mercy on him:

1. He said: "Jisr bin Farqad: Yahyaa Ibn ad-Darees and others reported about him that: 'He is of no significance.'" [14]
2. Khaalid bin Iyaas al-Qurshee al-'Adawee al-Madane: "He is nothing." [15]
3. Dawood Ibn al-Muhbir: "His hadeeth are rejected." [16]
4. Dawood Ibn 'Ataa Abu Sulaimaan al-Madane: "His hadeeth are rejected. Ahmad said: 'I saw him and he was nothing.'" [17]

Imaam An-Nasaa'ee, may Allaah have mercy on him:

1. Ibraaheem Ibn 'Uthmaan Abu Shyibah: "His hadeeth are rejected and he was from Koofah." [18]
2. Ibraaheem Ibn Al-Hakam Ibn Abaan: "His hadeeth are rejected. He was from 'Adan." [19]

3. Ibraaheem Ibn Khatheem: "His hadeeth are rejected. He was from Baghdaad." [20]
4. Ibraaheem Ibn Yazeed Al-Khoozee: "His hadeeth are rejected. He was from 'Adan." [21]
5. Asha'ath Ibn Sa'eed as-Samaan: "He is nothing." [22]

Footnotes:

- [1] Reported by Al-Bukhaaree and Muslim from the narration of Abu Sa'eed
[2] Majmoo' al-Fataawaa (28/234)
[3] Shaikh-ul-Islaam (Ibn Taimiyyah) has stated that there is a unanimous agreement amongst the Muslims on this.
[4] Likewise, the Sufis, except for the one who ascribes himself to them, yet he in his reality and his methodology is not part of them. These include those whom the Imaams of Islaam have testified as tot heir virtue, uprightness and perseverance on the Qur'aan and Sunnah.
[5] The Muqaddimah (Introduction) of Saheeh Muslim (1/13-15)
[6] The Muqaddimah (Introduction) of Saheeh Muslim (1/13-15)
[7] Ahwaal ar-Rijaal (pg. 538)
[8] Riyaadh as-Saaliheen (pg. 489) with the verification of Al-Albaanee
[9] Majmoo' ar-Rasaa'il (5/110)
[10] Bahr-ud-Dam (pg. 99)
[11] Bahr-ud-Dam (pg. 105)
[12] Bahr-ud-Dam (pg. 109)
[13] Bahr-ud-Dam (pg. 114)
[14] Bahr-ud-Dam (pg. 114)
[15] Ad-Du'afaa as-Sagheer (pg. 418) with the verification of At-Tanaawee
[16] Ad-Du'afaa as-Sagheer (pg. 18)
[17] Ad-Du'afaa as-Sagheer (pg. 87)
[18] Ad-Du'afaa wal-Matrookeen (pg. 42)
[19] ibid
[20] ibid
[21] ibid
[22] Ad-Du'afaa wal-Matrookeen (pg. 56)