

EARLY ḤANBALI CREEDS

translated by Christopher Melchert (version of 31 January 2017)

Henri Laoust first drew the attention of modern scholars to the six creeds attributed to Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal in Ibn Abī Ya‘lá (d. 526/1133), *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābilah*. See Henri Laoust, ‘Les premières professions de foi hanbalites’, *Mélanges Louis Massignon*, 3 vols. (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1957), 3:7-35, at 12-15; idem, *La profession de foi d’Ibn Batta* (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1958), xv-xvi. The creeds are quoted by Ibn Abī Ya‘lá, *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābilah*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Fiḳī, 2 vols (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-sunnah al-Muḥammadīyah, 1371/1952), Creed I at 1:24-36, II at 130-1, III at 1:241-6, IV at 1:294-5, V at 1:311-13, and VI at 1:341-5. They are also in *idem*, ed. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Sulaymān al-‘Uthaymīn, 3 vols. (n.p.: al-Amānah al-‘āmmah lil-iḥtifāl bi-murūr mi‘at ‘ām ‘alá ta’sīs al-mamlakah, 1419/1999), Creed I at 1:55-74, II at 1:349-50, III at 2:166-74, IV at 2:293-5, V at 2:339-43, and VI at 2:427-32. (Ibn ‘Uthaymīn draws on multiple manuscripts and occasionally corrects or adds something to Fiḳī’s text, so his edition is now the preferred.) Here follow translations. References to the Ibn ‘Uthaymīn edition in *italics*. The third and fourth have commentary from me in notes.

On the basis of later quotations, Saud Al-Sarhan reattributes Creed I to Ḥarb al-Kirmānī (*fl.* mid-9th cent.), Creed III to ‘Alī ibn al-Madīnī (d. 234/849) or disciples of his, and Creed IV to al-‘Abbās ibn Mūsá ibn Miskawayh (*fl.* early 9th cent.). On the basis of criticism of their transmitters, Al-Sarhan questions the authenticity of Creeds II and VI; on the basis of contradictions with other statements attributed to Aḥmad, Creed V as well. (See Saud Al-Sarhan, ‘The creeds of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal’, *Books and bibliophiles: studies in honour of Paul Auchter-*

lonie on the bio-bibliography of the Muslim world, ed. Robert Gleave [n.p.: Gibb Memorial Trust, 2014], 29-44, with comment by me, 45-50.) Four of the creeds are reproduced by Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201), *Manāqib al-imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*; therefore, excellent translations appear in *Virtues of the imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*, ed. & trans. Michael Cooperson, Library of Arabic literature (New York: University Press, 2013), 1:305-7 (IV), 309-17 (VI), 317-25 (III), and 327 (II).

After Creed VI below is appended a creed quoted by the Andalusian biographer al-Khushanī (d. 371/981?), *Ajbār al-fuḡahā’ wa-l-muḥaddithīn*, ed. María Luisa Ávila & Luis Molina, Fuentes Arábico-Hispanas 3 (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Instituto de Cooperación con el Mundo Árabe, 1992), 45-6, alternatively *Akḥbār al-fuḡahā’ wa-al-muḥaddithīn*, ed. Sālim Muṣṭafá al-Badrī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyah, 1420/1999), 33-4. It has been translated into Spanish by Mari-bel Fierro, ‘Un Credo de Ibn Ḥanbal en AL-Andalus (Época Omeya)’, *Homenaje al Dr. Jaafar Ben El haj Soulami*, ed. Mohamed Reda Boudchar & Ahmed Saidy (Tetouan: Asociación Tetouan Asmir & Asociación Marroquí de Estudios Andalusíes, 1436/2015), 91-9. Fierro also provides an improved Arabic text. It was reportedly transmitted from Aḥmad by a Ṣāliḥ al-Salūlī, not further identified by Fierro or me.

In addition to the six creeds from Ibn Abī Ya‘lá and the one from al-Khushanī, there is a letter that Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal is said to have written to the vizier ‘Ubayd Allāh ibn Yaḥyá ibn Khāqān (d. 263/877?) at the request of the caliph al-Mutawakkil, probably in 237/852. Its authenticity is accepted even by Saud Al-Sarhan. Among other places, it can be found in Ṣāliḥ ibn Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, his version of *Masā’il al-imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal* (Riyadh: Dār al-Waṭan, 1420/1999), 248-53 (Ṣ¹ in my translation below), and *idem*, *Sīrat al-imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*, ed. Fu‘ād ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Aḥmad (Alexandria: Mu’assasat Shabāb al-Jāmi‘ah, 1984), 116-

22 (Ş²), also in ‘Abd Allāh ibn Aḥmad, *al-Sunnah* (Mecca: al-Maṭba‘ah al-Salafīyah, 1349), 16-19 (‘¹) = ed. Abū Hājir Muḥammad al-Sa‘īd ibn Basyūnī Zaghlūl (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyah, 1414/1994), 21-6 (‘²). It mainly piles up quotations against elaborating theology, especially concerning the Qur’an. Ibn al-Jawzī reproduces an abridged version of it (lacking mainly the hadith that Aḥmad cites), which can be found in Cooperson’s edition and translation, 2:12-15.

At the very end is appended a translation of another Sunni creed of uncertain attribution, *Sharḥ al-sunnah*. It is attributed in a twelfth-century manuscript to the renunciant preacher Ghulām Khalīl (d. Baghdad, 275/888; v. GAS 1:511), in Ibn Abī Ya‘lā, *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābilah*, to the Ḥanbali leader al-Barbahārī (d. Baghdad, 329/941). Whether it is specifically Ḥanbali or not, it certainly enounces a distinctly uncompromising Sunni traditionalism. As before, numbers in brackets refer to the Fiqī edition of Ibn Abī Ya‘lā, numbers in *italics* to the ‘Uthaymīn edition.

Transliteration follows the Library of Congress standard. Qur’anic translations are from Alan Jones. For dates, the Hijri year is given first, then the CE year, with two CE years named where the sources do not indicate in which the event in question fell; with a question mark where the sources offer more than one date. Laudatory phrases after the mention of God are translated, but they are very liable to have been inconsistently inserted by copyists. Similar phrases after the mention of the Prophet I have omitted, partly because of the difficulty of translation, partly because some Muslims prefer that they be pronounced only by Muslims.

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I.

These are the doctrines of the people of knowledge, the adherents of hadith (*aṣḥāb al-athar*), and *ahl al-sunnah* who hold on to its roots, who are known by them, and who are to be followed in them, as they have been from (the time of) the Companions (*aṣḥāb*) of the Prophet . . . until this day of ours. I have met whom I have met of the learned men of the Hijaz and Syria and others (and found them) to adhere to them. Whoever disagrees with anything of these doctrines, or asperses them, or blames one who advocates them, he is an innovator who has departed from the community (*jamā‘ah*) and deviated from the way of the *sunnah* and the path of truth.

Their position is that faith is profession and intention and holding onto the *sunnah*; that faith increases and decreases. One says ‘I am a believer, God willing’, without expressing doubt; rather, according to the learned, it is the past *sunnah*.

[1:25] When a man is asked, ‘Are you a believer?’ he says, ‘I am a believer, God willing’, or ‘a believer, I hope’ or ‘I have faith in God, His angels, His book, and His messengers.’ Whoever asserts that faith is [1:56] profession without works, he is a Murji’. Whoever asserts that faith is profession and works ramifications (*sharā‘i*), he is a Murji’. Whoever asserts that faith increases but does not decrease, he has advocated the position of the Murji’ah. Whoever rejects saying, ‘I am a believer, God willing’, he is a Murji’. Whoever asserts that his faith is like the faith of Jibrīl, Mikā‘īl, and the angels, he is a Murji’. Whoever asserts that knowledge does good in the heart when it is not spoken of, he is a Murji’.

(One must believe in) predestination (*qadar*), its good and its evil, its littleness and muchness, what is manifest of it and what is hidden, what is sweet of it and what is bitter, what one loves of it and what one hates, what is good of it and what is bad, the first of it and the last. (One must believe that) it comes of God, by a decree He has made, a predestination He has predestined for them. None of them can escape the will of God (mighty and glorious is he). No one can go beyond His decree. Rather, they are all going to what He has created for them, standing where He predestined their actions to put them. This is just on His part, mighty and glorious is our Lord. Adultery, theft, drinking alcohol, homicide, illicit income, recognizing partners to God and all the sins are by foreordination and predestination, without any creature's having any argument against God. Rather, God has the prevailing argument against His creation. 'He will not be questioned about what He does—but they will be questioned' (Q. 21:23). God's knowledge (mighty and glorious is He) goes among His creation by an act of His will. He knew of Iblīs and others who disobeyed Him, for He will be disobeyed (blessèd and exalted be He) until the coming of the Hour. He created their disobedience for them. He likewise knows the obedience of the people of obedience, which He created for them. Everyone does the works created for him and goes to what has been foreordained for him and known of him. No one goes beyond what God has predestined and His will. God does what He wishes; is the doer of whatever He wills.

[1:57] Whoever asserts that God wills for His servants who have disobeyed Him goodness and obedience, whereas the servants have willed for themselves evil and disobedience, acting according to their will, he has asserted that the will of the servants is stronger than the will of God (blessèd and exalted be He). What greater lie against God can there be than this? Whoever asserts that adultery is not by predestination is to be asked, 'What do you think of this woman who has become pregnant by adultery

[1:26] and brought forth a child: has God (mighty and glorious is He) willed to create this child? Did He know of it before?' If he says, 'No', then he has asserted that there is a creator besides God. This is open polytheism. Whoever asserts that theft, drinking alcohol, and illicit income are not by foreordination and predestination, he has asserted that this man is capable of taking someone else's provision. This is open endorsement of the Magian position. Rather, he has taken his provision and God has foreordained that he should take it as he has. Whoever asserts that homicide is not by the predestination of God (mighty and glorious is He), and that this is by the will of His creation, he has asserted that the one killed has died at other than his term. What act of unbelief is clearer than this? Rather, that is by the foreordination of God (mighty and glorious is He). That is by His will concerning His creation and His arrangements for them. It has happened by His prior knowledge concerning them. He is the just and righteous one who does what He wishes. Whoever claims knowledge must acknowledge predestination and will over the small and mean.

We do not testify against anyone of the people of the *qiblah* that he is in Hell on account of a sin he has committed or a cardinal sin he has produced, unless there is a hadith report concerning that. It is as it has been related, [1:58] so we say that it is to be believed and we know that it is as it has come. We do not expressly enunciate our testimony (that some person is bound for Hell). We also do not testify that anyone is in Paradise on account of his good work or goodness that he has produced, unless there is a hadith report concerning that. It is as it has been related. We do not expressly enunciate our testimony (that some person is bound for Paradise).

The caliphate belongs to the Quraysh so long as there are two persons. No one may struggle with them over it, nor rebel against them. We do not testify that it will belong to anyone else before the Hour. The holy war (*jihād*) goes on continually with the imams, whether pious or reprobate.

It is not negated by the oppression of any oppressor or the justice of any just one. Friday, the two festivals, and the pilgrimage are with the *sulṭān* (reigning caliph), even if they are not pious, just, and godfearing. One pays the alms tax, the land tax, tithes, and the prescribed shares of booty to the commanders, whether they behave justly or unjustly. One submits to whomever God has appointed to rule over you. Not a hand is to be withdrawn from obedience to him, nor may you draw your sword against him in order that God should make for you a release and a way out. You may not rebel against the *sulṭān*. You must hearken and obey, not breaking your oath of loyalty. Whoever does that is an innovator, turning away and breaking with the community (*jamā'ah*).

If the [1:27] ruler (*sulṭān*) gives you a command that is disobedience to God, you certainly may not obey him. Neither may you rebel against him or deny his right. Holding back in civil strife (*fitnah*) is the past *sunnah* and obligatory to do. If you are tried, put yourself before your religion without helping to generate strife by hand or tongue. Rather, restrain your hand, tongue, and fancy (*hawā*). God is the Helper.

(One must believe in) refraining from the people of the *qiblah*, not accusing any of them of unbelief on account of a sin. Neither may you put him out of Islam on account of any deed unless there is a hadith report concerning that. Hadith is to be related as it has come. As it is related, you believe and accept it, knowing that it is as it has been related, as with leaving [1:59] prayer, drinking wine, and the like of that. Likewise if someone follows an innovation whose advocate is associated with unbelief and going out of Islam: follow hadith (*al-athar*) in that without going beyond it.¹

The one-eyed, rebelling Antichrist (*dajjāl*)—there is no doubt about that or any

¹ Later usage reserved *hadīth* for reports of what the Prophet said, *athar* for reports of what other early Muslims said, but no such terminological distinction is evident in the Ḥanbali creeds (or, so far as I know, in other ninth-century writings).

hesitation. He is the greatest of the liars. The torment of the tomb is true. The servant will be asked about his religion and his Lord, about Paradise and the Fire. Munkar and Nakīr are true. They are the tormentors of the tomb.² We ask God for steadfastness.

The basin (*hawḍ*) of Muḥammad . . . is true. His community will come to it. It has containers from which they will drink.³ The path (*sirāṭ*) is true. It will be laid down in the middle of Jahannam and the people will pass over it. Paradise is beyond that.⁴ We ask God for salvation (*salāmah*). The scale is true. On it will be weighed good and evil deeds, as God wills for them to be weighed. The trumpet is true. Isrāfīl will blow on it and creation will die, then he will blow on it again and they will rise up for the Lord of the Worlds, reckoning and judgment, reward and punishment, Paradise and the Fire. The servants' works by way of foreordination and predestination will be copied from the preserved tablet. The pen is true: God used it to write down foreordinations for everything. He has counted them in the *dhikr* (recollection), be He blessed and exalted.⁵

² A number of hadith reports in Aḥmad's *Musnad* mention interrogation in the tomb, sometimes by one angel, sometimes two, with torment consequent on wrong answers; e.g. Aḥmad, *Musnad imām al-muḥaddithīn*, 6 vols (Cairo: al-Maṭba'ah al-Maymanīyah, 1313/1895), 3:3-4, 4:287 = *Musnad al-imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*, ed. Shu'ayb al-Arna'ūt, & al., 50 vols (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1413-21/1993-2001), 17:32-6, 30:449-505. (References to the latter edition henceforth in *italics*.) The names Munkar and Nakīr do not appear, though.

³ The basin is often mentioned in Aḥmad's *Musnad*, sometimes along with its containers; e.g. Aḥmad, *Musnad* 3:230 19:54-6.

⁴ A number of hadith reports in Aḥmad's *Musnad* mention a *sirāṭ* (with *ṣād*) over Jahannam by which the believers will pass to Paradise, with some being pulled off into Hell. However, none of them refers expressly to *sawā' jahannam*. V. Aḥmad, *Musnad* 2:368-9, 3:11-12, 16-17, 209 14:413-15, 141-4, 17:202-7, 20:209-10.

⁵ *Dhikr* here may refer directly to the Qur'an, as in Q. 15:6, where the *dhikr* is said to have been sent down on the Prophet. Alternatively, it may be equivalent to qur'anic *kitāb*, evidently referring to God's knowledge more generally, the Qur'an being one element of it.

The intercession on the Day of the Resurrection is true. A number will intercede for a number so that they do not go into the Fire. Another number will come out of the Fire by the intercession of intercessors.⁶ A number will come out of the Fire after entering it and remaining there for as long as God wills—then they will come out of the Fire. A number will remain there [1:60] forever, they being the people of polytheism, [1:28] disbelief (*takdhīb*), perverseness, and ingratitude (*kufr*) toward God, mighty and glorious is He. Death will be slaughtered on the Day of the Resurrection between Paradise and the Fire.⁷

Paradise and what is in it has been created, likewise the Fire and what is in it. God (mighty and glorious is He) created them. He created creatures for them. They will disappear, nor will what is in them ever disappear. If an innovator or secret unbeliever (*zindīq*) should argue by the saying of God (mighty and glorious is He), “Everything will perish except His face” (Q. 28:88), and the like of this by way of ambiguous verses of the Qur’an, he is to be told that everything for which God has decreed disappearance and destruction is going to destruction. Paradise and the Fire were created for remaining, not disappearance and destruction. They are part of the Afterworld, not this world. The *hūr al-ʿīn* will not die at the arrival of the Hour, the blowing (of the trumpet), or ever, for God has created them for remaining, not disappearance. He has not decreed death for them. Whoever says other than this is an innovator who has strayed from the straight path.

He created seven heavens, one on top of another, and seven earths, some lower than others. Between the highest earth and the lowest heavens is the length of a five-hundred-year journey. Between each heaven and the next is the length of a five-hundred-

year journey. The water is above the seventh, highest heaven. The throne of the Most Merciful (mighty and glorious is He) is above the water. God (mighty and glorious is He) is on the throne. The chair is at the place of His feet. He knows what is in the seven heavens and earths, what is between them, what is underground, what is at the depth of the seas, and every hair or tree that sprouts, every plant and vegetable, where every leaf falls. He knows the number of [1:61] every word, the number of stones and sand and dust. He knows the weight of the mountains, the works of the servants, their deeds, their speech, and their breaths. He knows everything. Nothing of that is hidden from Him. He is on the throne above the seventh heaven. Below Him are screen of light and fire and darkness and what He knows best.

If an innovating dissident (*mukhālif*) argues by the saying of God (mighty and glorious is He), ‘We are nearer to him than his jugular vein’ (Q. 50:16), His saying, ‘He is with you wherever you are’ (Q. 57:4), and His saying, ‘There is no private meeting of three men but He is the fourth of them’ up to His saying ‘He is with them, wherever they may be’ (Q. 58:7) and the like of this by way of the ambiguous verses of the Qur’an, [1:29] say that what He means by that is knowledge, for God is on the throne above the seventh, highest heaven while knowing all that. He is apart from His creation, but there is no place that escapes His knowledge.

God (mighty and glorious is He) has a throne, while the throne has bearers who bear it. God (mighty and glorious is He) is on His throne. It has no definition. God knows better its definition. God (mighty and glorious is He) hears and does not doubt, sees and does not doubt, knows and is not ignorant, is generous and not stingy, clement and not rushed, preserving and not forgetting, awake and not oblivious, near and not inobservant. He moves, speaks, [1:62] observes, looks, laughs, joys, and loves. He loves and hates, detests and is pleased. He is angered and displeased, has mercy and for-

⁶ Various intercessors are named in Aḥmad’s *Musnad*, usually the Prophet Muḥammad alone but sometimes extending to, for example, ‘the angels, the prophets, and the martyrs’: Aḥmad, *Musnad* 5:43 34:90-3.

⁷ e.g. Aḥmad, *Musnad* 3:9 17:120-2.

gives. He makes destitute, gives, and withholds. He descends every night to the lowest heaven however He wills. 'There is nothing like Him; He is the Hearing and the Observing' (Q. 42:11). The servants' hearts are between two of the Most-Merciful's fingers. He turns them over as He wills and fills them with whatever He desires.⁸ He created Adam with His hand in His image.⁹ The heavens and the earth on the Day of the Resurrection are in His hand. He will put His foot in the Fire, causing it to recoil. He will remove a number from the Fire with His hand. The people of Paradise will look at His face, see Him, and honour Him. He will manifest Himself to them and give to them. The servants will be reviewed before Him on the Day of the Resurrection. He will undertake to evaluate them by Himself, no one else being delegated to undertake this other than Him (mighty and glorious is He).

The Qur'an is the speech of God. He has spoken it. It is not create. Whoever asserts that the Qur'an is create, he is an unbelieving Jahmi. Whoever asserts that the Qur'an is the speech of God, then stops without saying it is increate, this is worse than the first saying. Whoever asserts that his pronunciation and recitation of it are create while the Qur'an is the speech of God, he is a Jahmi. Whoever does not pronounce that whole group unbelievers is like them.

'And God spoke to Moses directly' (Q. 4:164) by His mouth. He gave him the Tawrah from His hand to his hand. God (mighty and glorious is He) has not ceased to be a speaker. 'Blessèd be God, the fairest of [1:63] creators' (Q. 23:14). Dreams are from God (mighty and glorious is He). They are true. When someone sees something in his sleep that is not nonsense, he relates it to someone learned, telling the truth about it, and the learned one interprets it by sound principles without distortion, then the dream is true. Dreams from prophets are inspiration. What ignorant person is more ignorant

than one who depreciates dreams and asserts that they are nothing? I have heard that [1:30] those who say this also think that ablution is unnecessary after nocturnal ejaculation, when it is related of the Prophet . . . that the believer's dream is speech by which the Lord speaks to His servant, also that dreams are from God (mighty and glorious is He). God makes good happen.

It is a clear, sound, manifest, and well-known that one (should) recollect the good points of all of the Companions of the Messenger of God . . . and refrain from mentioning their faults and the disagreements that broke out among them. Whoever insults the Companions of the Messenger of God . . . or one of them, disparages him or asperses them, exposes their faults or blames one of them, he is a foul Rāfiḍi innovator and dissident. God will not accept from him either required works or supererogatory.¹⁰ Rather, loving them [1:64] is orthodoxy, praying for them brings one near to God, following their example is a way and taking up their hadith is a virtue.

The best of the community after the Prophet . . . were Abū Bakr, 'Umar after Abū Bakr, 'Uthmān after 'Umar, and 'Alī after 'Uthmān. Many stop at 'Uthmān. They are the rightly-guided caliphs. Then the Companions of the Messenger of God . . . are the best of people after these four. No one may mention anything of their faults or reproach any of them for a fault or deficiency. Whoever does that, it is incumbent on the ruler to correct and punish him. He may not forgive him. Rather, he should punish him and demand that he repent. If he repents, it is accepted from him. If he is steadfast, then the punishment is repeated and he is imprisoned perpetually until he either dies or recants.

⁸ V. Aḥmad, *Musnad* 4:182 29:178-9.

⁹ V. further below, Creed V, also Christopher Melchert, "God created Adam in his image", *Journal of Qur'anic studies* 13/1 (2011): 113-24.

¹⁰ *Lā yaqbalu Allāhu minhu ṣarfan wa-lā 'adlan*. The meaning of this expression (many examples in hadith) is disputed, but Ibn Ḥajar identifies this as the majority interpretation: Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath al-bārī*, ed. 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn 'Abd Allāh Bin Bāz, 15 vols (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1428-9/2008), 4:443, *ad Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ, k. faḍā'il al-Madīnah* 1, *bāb ḥaram al-Madīnah*.

The claim of the Arabs is recognized, likewise their virtue, and precedence. They are to be loved. This is on account of the hadith report of the Messenger of God . . . , ‘Loving them is faith, despising them hypocrisy.’¹¹ One does not take up the position of the Shu‘ūbīyah and the lowest of the converts who do not love the Arabs. One does not recognize any virtue in them. They are about innovation, hypocrisy, and dissension.

Whoever declares forbidden profits, trading, and licitly-gotten wealth, he is ignorant, wrong, and a dissident. Rather, licit profits are permitted. God (mighty and glorious is He) and His Messenger . . . have declared them permissible. [1:31 1:65] It is incumbent on a man to provide for himself and his dependents from the bounty of his Lord. If he leaves that on account of disapproving gain, he is a dissident. Everyone is fully entitled to whatever wealth he has inherited, from which he has sought profit, that has been bequeathed him or that he has gained, not as the dissident theologians say.

Religion is solely the Book of God (mighty and glorious is He), hadith (*āthār*), authoritative precedents (*sunan*), and what has been related of persons who are trusted with sound, strong, known reports, which confirm each other, going back to the Messenger of God . . . and his Companions (God’s pleasure be upon them), the Followers, the Followers of the Followers, and those after them by way of known imams to be followed; also orthodox theologians (*al-mutakallimīn bi-al-sunnah*) and those learned in hadith, who do not recognize any innovation and are not denounced for lying or accused of dissidence. They are not adherents of analogy or opinion (*qiyās, ra’y*), for analogy concerning religion is vain, likewise opinion, which is even more vain. The adherents of opinion and analogy concerning religion are straying innovators, unless there is a report concerning that from one of the earlier, trustworthy imams. Who-

ever asserts that he disapproves of bestowing authority on someone else (*taqlīd*), and will not recognize anyone’s authority to define his religion, this is a reprobate saying in the sight of God and His Messenger All he wants by that is to nullify hadith (*athar*) and void knowledge and orthodoxy, going it alone in opinion, theology, innovation, and dissidence.

These doctrines and positions that I have described are the doctrines of *ahl al-sunnah wa-al-jamā’ah wa-al-āthār*, those occupied by narrations, carriers of knowledge whom we have met and from whom we have learnt hadith and the binding precedents. They are the known, trustworthy, [1:66] truthful imams. They are to be followed and learnt from. They were not adherents of innovation, dissidence, or confusion. This is the position of their imams and learned ones before them. Hold onto that, may God have mercy on you; learn it and teach it. God makes good things happen.

The adherents of innovations have terms and names that do not resembles the names of the righteous or the learned of the community of Muḥammad One of their names is al-Murji’ah. They are the ones who assert that faith is profession without works, and that [1:32] faith is profession and works branches; that faith can be isolated and that people do not differ in their faith; that the faith of the angels and the prophets is one; that faith does not increase or decrease, and that one does not express any reservation about faith; that whoever professes faith with his tongue without performing any works is a true believer—this is the position of the Murji’ah. This is the foulest of doctrines, the most misleading, and the furthest from guidance.

The Qadarīyah are those who assert that they have ability, will, and power, and that they possess for themselves good and evil, harm and benefit, obedience and rebellion, guidance and straying; that the servants have the initiative, without there having preceded that anything on the part of God (mighty and glorious is He) or in His

¹¹ Cf. ‘Loving the Anṣār is faith, despising them hypocrisy’: Aḥmad, *Musnad* 3:70 18:208-9.

knowledge. Their position corresponds to that of the Magians and Christians. It is the root of secret unbelief (*zandaqah*).

The Mu'tazilah are those who support the position of the Qadariyah and follow them in their faith. They disbelieve in the torment of the tomb, intercession and the basin. They disapprove of prayer behind anyone of the *qiblah* or observing the Friday prayer except behind someone who shares their fancies. They assert that the servants' works are not on the Preserved Tablet. [1:67] The Nuṣayrīyah are Qadariyah. They are the adherents of grains and carats, who say that whoever takes a grain, a carat, or a denier illicitly is an unbeliever. Their position is parallel to that of the Khawārij.

The Jahmīyah are the enemies of God. They are those who assert that the Qur'an is create, that God (mighty and glorious is He) did not speak to Moses, and that God is not a speaker, nor speaks or pronounces. They say much that I dislike to relate. They are unbelievers, secret unbelievers, and the enemies of God. The Wāqifah are those who assert that the Qur'an is the speech of God but that our pronunciation of the Qur'an and our recitation of it are create. They are corrupt Jahmīyah. [1:33]

The Rāfiḍah are those who dissociate themselves from the Companions of Muḥammad . . . , insulting and disparaging them. They pronounce the four imams unbelievers: 'Alī, 'Ammār, Miqdād, and Salmān.¹² The Rāfiḍah have nothing of Islam about them. The Maṣūriyah are Rāfiḍah worse than the Rawāfiḍ. They are those who say that whoever kills forty persons who disagree with them will enter Paradise. They are the ones who terrify the people and consider their property licit to plunder. They are the ones who say that Gabriel (peace be upon him) made a mistake with the Message. This is clear unbelief unmixed with faith. We take refuge with God from them. [1:68] The Saba'iyyah are Rāfiḍah.

¹² The thought is evidently that, by making out that these four recognized 'Alī rather than Abū Bakr as the rightful successor to the Prophet, they effectively accuse them of unbelief.

They are close to those whom I have mentioned, disobeying with the imams, lying. One type of them say that 'Alī is in the clouds and that 'Alī will be sent before the Day of the Resurrection. This is a lie, deceit, and slander.

The Zaydīyah are Rāfiḍah. They are the ones who dissociate themselves from 'Uthmān, Ṭalḥah, al-Zubayr, and 'Ā'ishah. They think it right to fight with anyone of the descendants of 'Alī who rebels, whether righteous or reprobate, until he is victorious or defeated. The Khashabīyah¹³ uphold the position of the Zaydīyah. They claim to adhere to the love of the family of Muḥammad . . . , but they lie. Rather, they despise the family of Muḥammad . . . before everyone else. The *shī'ah* (party) of Muḥammad . . . are the people of the binding precedent and hadith (*ahl al-sunnah wa-al-athar*), whoever and wherever they are, who love the family of Muḥammad . . . and all the Companions of Muḥammad Whoever mentions any of them in connection with anything bad, asperses them, dissociates himself from any of them, insults them, or exposes their faults, he is a foul, befouling Rāfiḍi.

As for the Khawārij, they have passed through the faith and departed from the nation. They have broken loose from Islam, split off from the great majority (*jamā'ah*), and strayed from the path and guidance. They have rebelled against the ruler. They have drawn the sword against the community. They have declared licit their blood and their wealth. [1:69] They have attacked those who have not joined them except for whoever [1:34] advocates their position, who takes a similar position and opinion to theirs, and sits firmly with them in the house of their straying. They insult the Companions of Muḥammad . . . , his in-laws and sons-in-law. They dissociate themselves from them and accuse them of unbelief and enormities. They think that the

¹³ Saud Al-Sarhan suggests that that 'Khashabīyah' be reinterpreted as 'Ḥasanīyah'.

laws of Islam require turning away from them.

They do not believe in the torment of the tomb, the basin, intercession, or anyone's coming out of the Fire. They say that whoever tells a lie or commits a major or minor sin, then dies impenitent, he is in the Fire, living there forever. They advocate the position of the Bakrīyah concerning the grain and carat. They are Qadarīyah, Jahmīyah, Murji'ah, and Rāfiḍah. They do not think one should pray in the assembly except behind their imam. They think it right to delay the prayer. They think it right to fast before seeing the new moon and to break the fast before seeing it. They think it right to marry without either a guardian or the ruler. They think temporary marriage is right in their religion. They think it is right to trade a dirham for two dirhams. They do not think it right to pray in leather shoes (*khifāf*) or to wipe them (for the ritual ablution). They do not think the ruling power (*sultān*) has a claim to their obedience. They do not think that the Quraysh must exercise the caliphate over them. There are many other things in which they differ with Islam and its people. Suffice it for a straying group for this to be their opinion, their doctrine, and their religion: they have nothing to do with Islam.

[1:70] Among the names of the Khawārij are al-Ḥarūrīyah. They are the people of Ḥarūrā' and the Azāriqah, being the followers of Nāfi' ibn al-Azraq. Their position is the foulest of positions and the furthest from Islam and the *sunnah*. The Najdīyah are the followers of Najdah ibn 'Āmir al-Ḥarūrī. The Ibāḍīyah are the followers of 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Ibāḍ. The Ṣufrīyah [1:71] are the followers of Dāwūd ibn al-Nu'mān. There are the Muhallabīyah, the Ḥārithīyah, and the Khurramīyah¹⁴—all of those are Khawārij, reprobates, rejecters of

the *sunnah*, going out of the community, people of innovation and straying.

The Shu'ūbīyah are people of innovation and straying. They are those who say, 'The Arabs and clients are one, in our opinion.' They think the Arabs have no (special) claim. They recognize no grace on their part, nor do they admire them, rather they despise the Arabs and regard them with rancour, envy, and spite in their hearts. This is an [1:35] ugly position. It was originated by a man of the people of Iraq. A few followed him in it, and he was killed believing in it.

The people of opinion (*aṣḥāb al-ra'y*) are straying innovators, enemies of the *sunnah* and of hadith (*athar*). They negate hadith and repudiate the Messenger . . . They take Abū Ḥanīfah and anyone who advocates his position as a leader and follow his religion. What straying could be clearer than that of someone who advocates this and leaves what the Messenger and his Companions say in order to follow the position of _____ and his companions?¹⁵ Let this suffice to characterize a wicked, straying, unrestrained group.

[1:72] *Al-wilāyah* is an innovation (demanding that the ruler be a *walī*). *Al-barā'ah* is an innovation (declaring that one has nothing to do with the ruler). These are those who say that so-and-so has assumed the headship (*tawallā*) while we have nothing to do with so-and-so. This position is an innovation, so beware of it. Whoever takes any of these positions or thinks them right and correct, who is pleased by them or embraces them, he has differed with the *sunnah*, left the great majority, and abandoned hadith. He has advocated dissidence and entered into innovation. He is no longer on the way. Nothing good happens save by God.

I have seen that the people of fancies, innovations, and dissidence have disgraceful, ugly names by which they identify the people of the *sunnah*, meaning by

¹⁴ Saud Al-Sarhan suggests that 'Khurramīyah' be reinterpreted as 'Khāzimīyah', for which sect see Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt al-islāmīyīn*, ed. Helmut Ritter, Bibliotheca islamica 1, 2nd edn (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1963), 96.

¹⁵ 'Abū Ḥanīfah' in one manuscript, but even it has a marginal note saying that there was a blank space in the original: v. Ibn Abī Ya'lā, *Ṭabaqāt*, ed. Ibn 'Uthaymīn, 1:71n.

that to fault them, asperse them, sow dissension among them, and reproach them in the minds of the foolish and ignorant. As for the Murji'ah, they call the people of the *sunnah shukkāk* (doubters). The Murji'ah have lied. Rather they are the doubters, more resembling disbelief (*takdhīb*). As for the Qadarīyah, they called the people of the *sunnah* and *ithbāt* (reaffirming God's attributes) *mujbirah*. Likewise the Qadarīyah: it is more suitable to associate them with lying and dissidence. They have removed the predestination of God (mighty and glorious is He) away from his creation and said He is incapable (blessed and exalted be He).

As for the Jahmīyah, they call the people of the *sunnah mushabbihah* (anthropomorphists). The Jahmīyah have lied, those enemies of God. Rather, it is more suitable to associate them with anthropomorphism and disbelieving. They have attributed lying to God (mighty and glorious is He), saying what is false and counterfeit. They have committed unbelief by their position. [1:36] As for the Rāfiḍah, they call the people of the *sunnah nāṣibah* (hostiles). The Rāfiḍah have lied, [1:72] for rather it is they to whom this is best appropriate, since they have shown hostility to the Companions of the Messenger of God . . . with insults and defamation. They have said of them what is not true and attributed to them injustice, unbelief, oppression, boldness towards God (mighty and glorious is He) and holding light the claim of the Messenger of God They deserve better to be reviled and punished.

As for the Khawārij, they name the people of the *sunnah* and *jamā'ah murji'ah*. The Khawārij have lied in what they say, for rather they are the Murji'ah, asserting that they are the people of faith and right before the people and that those who disagree with them are unbelievers. As for the people of opinion, they name the followers of the *sunnah nābitah* (upspringers) and *hashwīyah* (chatterers). The people of opinion have lied, those enemies of God, for rather they are the upspringers and chatterers, having left the hadith of the Messenger of God,

advocating opinion instead. They have reasoned out their religion on the basis of what seems right and made judgements contrary to the Book and the *sunnah*. They are innovators, ignorant, strayers, seekers of the world by lying and untruth. God have mercy on a servant who has advocated the truth and followed hadith, holding to the *sunnah* and taking guidance from the pious. God makes good things happen. O God, confound the nullity of the Murji'ah, make little the guile of the Qadarīyah, bring low the fortune [1:74] of the Rāfiḍah, efface the ambiguity of *aṣḥāb al-ra'y*, relieve us of the encumbrance of the Khārijīyah, and speed vengeance against the Jahmīyah.

II.

Ninety-nine men of the Followers, the imams of the Muslims, the imams of the pious ancestors, and the jurists of the major centres have agreed that the *sunnah* is what the Messenger of God . . . left at his passing. [1:350] The first of it is satisfaction with the decree of God (mighty and glorious is He) and surrender to His command. It is patience with His judgement. It is taking what God has commanded and quitting what God has forbidden. It is faith in predestination, its good and its evil. It is leaving off disputing and arguing over religion. It is wiping the shoes. It is fighting the Holy War behind every caliph, pious or reprobate. It is performing the ritual prayer over whoever dies of the people of the *qiblah*. It is that faith is word and deed, increasing by obedience and decreasing by disobedience. It is that the Qur'an is the speech of God, sent down on the heart of His prophet Muḥammad It is increate however it is recited. It is patience under the flag of the ruling power whether it represents justice or oppression. It is not to rebel against rulers by the sword, even if they are oppressive. It is not to pronounce anyone an unbeliever [1:131] who is of the people of the *qiblah*, even if they commit cardinal sins. It is to hold back from what was disputed among the Companions of the Messenger of God It is that the best persons after the Mes-

senger of God . . . were Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān, and 'Alī the paternal cousin of the Messenger of God It is hoping for mercy for all of the Companions of the Messenger of God . . . , his children, his wives, and his in-laws (may God be satisfied with all of them). This is the *sunnah* that they made obligatory, to which they submitted. To take it is guidance, to quit it straying.

III.

The roots of the *sunnah* in our view are holding onto the model of the Companions of the Prophet . . . and taking them for a model; renouncing innovations, every innovation amounting to straying; renouncing disputations; not to sit [2:167] with the advocates of fancies (heretics); and renouncing arguments, contention, and disputations over religion. The *sunnah* in our view amounts to the *athar* (transmitted dicta) of the Messenger of God The *sunnah* is the explication of the Qur'an, the evidences of the Qur'an. There is no analogy concerning the *sunnah*. Similitudes are not to be made up for it.¹⁶

Neither is it to be perceived by reason or fancies: that is merely innovation.¹⁷ It is the renunciation of fancy. Among the features of the *sunnah*, none of which may be omitted, rejected, or disbelieved in without one's ceasing to be one of its people,¹⁸ are these: belief in predestination, its good and bad; belief in hadith reports concerning it; and not to say 'why?' or 'how?' It is just belief and faith in it. Whoever does not know the interpretation of the hadith, whose reason does not reach

it, that suffices for him and the judgement will be in his favour. What is incumbent on him is to believe in it and surrender to it, like the hadith report that is truthful and believed¹⁹ [1:242] and its like concerning predestination and all the hadith reports about the sight.²⁰

Even if the ears are repelled by it, the hearer disgusted, he must believe in it; even if he does not wish a letter of it. Other hadith reports passed down by the trustworthy (are likewise to be accepted). One should not dispute with anyone, nor engage in formal debate, nor learn the art of argument. Talk of predestination, the sight (of God in the afterlife), the Qur'an, and other topics of hadith is rejected and forbidden. Someone who does it, even if his talk should agree with the *sunnah*, is not of the people of the *sunnah* until he rejects argument and surrenders.²¹

One should believe in *āthār* and the Qur'an. The Qur'an is the speech of God, being increate—he does not shrink from saying 'It is increate.' The speech of God is not distinct from it, nor is anything of it create. Beware of debating anyone who has come up with new ideas about it, such as

¹⁹ About the formation of the embryo and particularly its being predestined to happiness or misery at the time the soul is breathed into it. No 4 among Nawawī's Forty Hadith; also Aḥmad, *Musnad* 1:382, 430 6:125-7, 7:169-70.

²⁰ i.e. of God in the afterlife. The Mu'tazilah and other rationalists tended to believe in free will, lest God be unjust (condemning someone for a crime He Himself had foreordained). They also rejected hadith reports to the effect that the believers in Paradise would see God, as they here see the full moon. They insisted that the sight of God cannot be physical sight, since God is immaterial. Aḥmad preferred to accept what had come down without such commentary and qualification.

²¹ Some of Aḥmad's fiercest polemics were directed against would-be Sunni theologians: men who proposed to defend Sunni tenets by means of rational argument. Aḥmad seldom names any of his adversaries among the Qadarīyah, Murji'ah, Khawārij, or Mu'tazilah, but he is quoted as naming several of these would-be Sunni theologians: al-Karābīsī, Abū Thawr, al-Muḥāsibī, and a few others. Most of these men were associated with the nascent Shāfi'i school of law.

¹⁶ Creeds are intrinsically theological, but Aḥmad was actually more of an anti-theologian. He did not want correct belief to be ramified (as by analogy); he did not look for rational apologetics to persuade the doubtful; he did not look for rational arguments to reassure himself.

¹⁷ 'Innovation' (*bid'ah*) means 'heresy' in the loose sense of an opinion repugnant to orthodoxy. The idea is that the Qur'an and Muḥammad laid down every correct practice and belief in his lifetime, so doctrinal development could only be degeneration.

¹⁸ i.e. the orthodox.

talking of its pronunciation and so on.²² (One also avoids) whoever says, ‘I do not know whether it is create or increate.’ It is simply God’s speech, and this one is responsible for [2:168] an innovation. He is like the one who says it is create. It is simply God’s speech, increate.

One must believe in the sight (of God) on the Day of Resurrection, as it is related of the Prophet . . . in sound hadith, and that the Prophet . . . saw his Lord. It is soundly handed down of the Messenger of God It was related by Qatādah < ‘Ikrimah < Ibn ‘Abbās, by al-Ḥakam ibn Abān < ‘Ikrimah < Ibn ‘Abbas, and by ‘Ali ibn Zayd < Yūsuf ibn Mihrān < Ibn ‘Abbās.²³ Hadith, in our view, is to be interpreted after its evident meaning, as it came from the Prophet Talk of it (theological discourse) is an innovation. We believe in it as it came, after its evident meaning. We do not debate with anyone concerning it.

²² Most would-be Sunni theologians, led on this point by Karābīsī, held that the Qur’an was increate but conceded that one’s pronunciation of it was not. Aḥmad strenuously opposed all further discussion of the matter. The question also arose of whether faith was create. Aḥmad disliked that one should say either ‘create’ or ‘increate’, since it was a new question one had better avoid addressing altogether. Dāwūd al-Zāhirī (d. 270/884), a jurist with a significant following in the tenth and eleventh centuries, was willing to concede that the Qur’an, while increate, had yet appeared in time. For this reason, Aḥmad refused to let him through the door to salute him.

²³ No such hadith reports are found in Aḥmad, *Musnad*. It does include one report < Hilāl (ibn Khabbāb) < ‘Ikrimah < Ibn ‘Abbās, ‘He saw the Antichrist (*al-dajjāl*) by his eye, not the sight of sleep; likewise ‘Isá, Mūsá, and Ibrāhīm’ (Aḥmad, *Musnad* 1:374 5:476-8). It also includes a report to the contrary, by which ‘Ā’ishah said, ‘Whoever relates to you that Muḥammad . . . saw his Lord has lied’ (Aḥmad, *Musnad* 6:49-50 40:275-7). But the first of these *isnāds*, Qatādah < ‘Ikrimah < Ibn ‘Abbās, is defended by Aḥmad according to Ibn Abī Ya’lá, *Ṭabaqāt*, ed. Fiqī, 2:45-6 = ed. ‘Uthaymīn, 3:81. One version concludes with the Prophet saying, ‘I saw my Lord (mighty and glorious is He)’, the other with the Prophet saying, ‘I saw my Lord (mighty and glorious is He) as a beardless youth with short, curly hair, dressed in red.’

One must believe in the scale on the Day of Resurrection, as it came: ‘The servant will be weighed on the Day of Resurrection. He will not weigh so much as a gnat’s wing.’²⁴ The deeds of the servants will be weighed, as it has come in *āthār*. One believes in it and considers it true. One turns from whoever rejects that and refuses to argue about it. One believes that God will speak to His servants on the Day of Resurrection. There will be no interpreter between him and them. One believes in it and considers it true. One must believe in the basin; that the Messenger of God . . . will have a basin on the Day of Resurrection to which he will bring his nation, its breadth equal to its length, a month’s journey across, able to contain the number of the stars of heaven, as *athar* have soundly conveyed in more than one version.

One must believe in the torment of the tomb; that this nation will be tried in its tombs, asked about their faith [1:243] and submission. (One will be asked) ‘Who is his Lord?’ ‘Who is his prophet?’ (The angels) Munkar and Nakīr will come to him, however God wills and however he wishes. One believes in it and considers it true. One must believe in the intercession of the Prophet . . . and in a group that will come out of the Fire after having burnt [2:169] and become coals. He will order them to go to a river at the gate of Paradise, as the *athar* has come. However God wills it, and as God wills it, that is to be believed and held true. One must believe in the anointed Antichrist (*al-masīh al-dajjāl*) who rebels, with ‘unbeliever’ written between his eyes, and in the hadith reports that have come down concerning him. One must believe that this will be and that ‘Isá (Jesus) will come down and kill him at the gate of Ludd, and in the hadith reports that have come down concerning him.’²⁵

²⁴ No such hadith report is found in Aḥmad, *Musnad*.

²⁵ Again, the Mu’tazilah and other rationalists rejected hadith reports describing various features of the End Times, but the Sunni position was to insist on them. ‘The torment of the tomb’ refers to

Faith is word and deed, increasing and decreasing, as it has come in the *āthār*: 'The most perfect of the believers in faith are the best-natured of them' and 'Whoever omits to pray has committed unbelief.'²⁶ Among all works, there is none that it is unbelief to omit except for prayer. Whoever omits it is an unbeliever. God has made it licit to kill him.²⁷

The best of this nation, after its Prophet, were Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, then 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, then 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān. We put these three first, as the Companions of the Messenger of God . . . put them first. There is no disagreement over this.²⁸ Then, after these three, are the five

purgatorial pains that Muslims will suffer between their deaths and the Day of Resurrection for offences not punished in life. For example, a thief who suffers amputation for his theft will not suffer further in the Afterlife, but the thief who goes undetected will. But no Muslim, according to developed Sunni theology, will suffer eternal damnation.

²⁶ The first expression (for which see Aḥmad, *Musnad* 2:250, 472 12:364-6, 16:114) shows that there are degrees of faith, the latter that prayer is part of faith. Paul is famous for the proposition that salvation is by faith alone, without works. The works about which he argues, though, are not good deeds but ritual observances distinguishing Jews from Gentiles: circumcision, observing days, and avoiding meat and drink previously dedicated to idols. Similarly, when the Sunni party got to particulars in its disagreement with the Murji'ah, a ritual, the five-times-daily prayer, was the chief work disputed. The Sunni party said it was a part of faith, so persons who were more or less observant had accordingly more or less faith.

²⁷ The Ḥanbali position here is extreme: adherents of other schools of law (including the Shi'i) called for capital punishment for obstinate refusal to pray but they still accorded the executed sinner the rights of a Muslim to be washed, shrouded, prayed over, and buried with the Muslims. Aḥmad's position seems a logical extension of his dispute with the Murji'ah as to whether faith comprehends works as well as profession of belief. But he had to restrict it to prayer to maintain his opposition to the Khawārij, who considered that all cardinal sins amounted to apostasy.

²⁸ Note that these are the first three of the four Rightly Guided Caliphs. Some Shi'ah would put 'Alī next to or at least right after the Prophet, all ahead of 'Uthmān, but Aḥmad put all three of these ahead of 'Alī.

who made up the council (*shūrā*): 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, al-Zubayr, Ṭalḥah, 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Awf, and Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ.²⁹ Every one of them was suited to the caliphate and every one was an imam. In this, we go by the hadith report of Ibn 'Umar, 'We used to count, while the Messenger of God . . . was alive and his Companions many, Abū Bakr, then 'Umar, then 'Uthmān, then fall silent.'³⁰

Then after the members of the council were the emigrants from Mecca who fought at Badr, then the people of Medina who fought at Badr, of the Companions of the Messenger of God . . . by order of conversion, one after another. Then the best people after these were the Companions of the Messenger of God . . . , the generation among whom he was sent. Everyone who was with him for a year, a month, a day, an hour, or (even just) saw him is one of his Companions and has Companionship in proportion to how long he was with him, how early he converted, how much he heard him and saw him. The least of them in Companionship is better than anyone from the next generation who did not see him, even if he should meet God with all (good) works, for those were with the Prophet . . . , saw him, and heard him. Whoever saw him with his eyes and believed in him, [1:244] though for only an hour, was better on account of his Companionship than the Follower, even if they did every good work.³¹

One believes in hearkening and obedience to the imams and the Commander of the Faithful, whether pious or reprobate; whoever has assumed the caliphate, upon whom the people are agreed and satisfied with, and whoever has come out against them with the sword until he has become caliph and is called the Commander of the Faithful. There will be frontier raiding (*ghazw*) with the commanders until the Day

²⁹ This refers to the council that elected 'Uthmān to the caliphate, according to Sunni tradition, on the death of 'Umar.

³⁰ Aḥmad, *Musnad* 2:14 8:243-5.

³¹ This makes some difference to the authority of conflicting dicta from Companions and Followers.

of the Resurrection, whether pious or reprobate. It is not to be omitted. The division of booty and application of prescribed punishments are left to the imams. No one may asperse them or contend with them. The alms tax is to be paid over to them. [2:171] Whoever pays them has fulfilled his duty, whether they are pious or reprobate.³²

The Friday prayer behind them and behind whomever they have appointed is to be carried out and consists of two sets of bowings. Whoever goes beyond them is an innovator who has left the *āthār* and goes against the *sunnah*. He enjoys no virtue by his Friday prayer if he does not accept prayer behind the imams, whoever they may be, pious or reprobate. The *sunnah* is that one pray two sets of bowings with them and believe that this is complete, with no doubt about that in your breast.

Whoever rebels against the imams of the Muslims, whom the people have agreed upon and confessed to be caliphs, in whatever way, by consent or acquiescence to superior force, this rebel has split the Muslims' staff and gone against the *āthār* of the Messenger of God If he dies in rebellion, he dies as one did before Islam. Fighting the ruler is not permitted, nor rebelling against him, to anyone. Whoever does that is an innovator following other than the *sunnah* and the path.

Fighting robbers and rebels is permissible. When they threaten a man's person or property, he may fight them on his own for the sake of himself and his property, defending them in any way he can. He may not, if they have departed and left him, seek them out or follow their track. No one but the imam may do this, or one whom the Muslims have appointed. One may defend himself only where he resides and intending not to kill anyone. If one physically engages in battle in self-defence, may

God make far the one he might kill.³³ If one is killed in this state, defending himself and his property, I have hopes that the testimony will be in his favour, as has come in the (pertinent) hadith reports. All the *āthār* (hadith reports) concerning this (indicate) that you are ordered only to fight him, not to kill him, pursue him, or finish him off if he is thrown down or wounded. If he takes a prisoner, he may not [2:172] kill him or execute the prescribed punishment. Rather, he should raise the matter before whomever God has appointed for him to judge him.

We do not testify of anyone [1:245] who prays toward the Ka'bah that any work will put him in Paradise or the Fire. We are hopeful for the pious but fear for him. We fear over the sinning evildoer but we hope for God's mercy for him. Whoever meets God with a sin for which he should go to the Fire but is penitent and not persistent in it, God will accept his repentance. God accepts the repentance of his servants and wipes out bad deeds. Whoever meets him having suffered the prescribed punishment for his sin in this world, that is an atonement for him, as it has come in the *khābar* from the Messenger of God Whoever meets him persistent, impenitent for the sins that have merited punishment, his affair is up to God: if He wills, He will torment him and if He wills, He will forgive him. Whoever meets Him as an unbeliever, He will torment him and not forgive him.

Stoning is a claim on anyone who has committed adultery while *muḥṣan* when he has confessed or proof been presented. The Messenger of God . . . stoned and the Rightly Guided imams stoned.³⁴ Whoever disparages any of the Companions of the Messenger of God . . . or despises him on account of anything he did or mentions his faults is an innovator until he calls for

³² Shi'ah commonly held that obedience was due only to the proper caliph descended from 'Alī. The Khawārij and others held that obedience was due the imam only so long as he avoided gross sin. But Aḥmad's Sunni party was resolutely quietist.

³³ That is, may God protect the righteous Muslim from killing anyone, even in self-defence.

³⁴ This goes against the Khawārij and others who rejected the stoning penalty because it was not in the Qur'an. In Islamic law, *muḥṣan* effectively indicates a free Muslim who has married another free Muslim.

mercy on all of them and has a clean heart towards them all.³⁵

Hypocrisy is unbelief: that one should deny God and worship another while publicly professing Islam. The like of the hypocrites are those in the time of the Messenger of God . . . of whom he said . . . ‘There are three that, in whomever they are found, he is a hypocrite.’³⁶ This is hyperbole (*taghlīz*). We relate it as [2:173] it has come to us without explanation. There is also his saying, ‘Do not turn back after me into unbelievers, striking off one another’s heads.’³⁷ It is like (the saying) ‘When two Muslims meet with their swords, the killer and the killed are in the Fire.’³⁸ It is also like (the saying) ‘Insulting a Muslim is dissoluteness and fighting him is unbelief’³⁹; like ‘Whoever says to his brother, “You unbeliever”, has brought it on one of them’⁴⁰; like ‘It is unbelief in God to renounce one’s lineage, even as to details

³⁵ This is directed against the Shi‘ah, who criticized the Companions for refusing the caliphate to ‘Ali. The Rightly Guided Caliph ‘Uthmān was killed by some Companions, whom the next Rightly Guided Caliph, ‘Alī, did not punish. Other Companions, notably Ṭalḥah and al-Zubayr, fought to the death against ‘Alī: how could they all have been right? The Sunni position was simply not to ask.

³⁶ The full text of this last hadith report reads, ‘There are three that, if they are found in a man, he is a pure hypocrite, even if he fasts, prays, and asserts that he is a Muslim: if he speaks, he lies; if he promises, he breaks it; if he is trusted, he betrays’: Aḥmad, *Musnad* 2:200 11:467-8. Various hadith reports and passages of the Qur’an apparently threaten damnation to persons who commit offences short of unbelief. These were typically harmonized with the more hopeful Sunni dogma about who would be saved (i.e. all non-apostate Muslims), as here, by interpreting the threat as an exaggeration intended to discourage bad behaviour but not to affect theology by being interpreted literally.

³⁷ Aḥmad, *Musnad* 1:230 3:477, among 15 occurrences altogether.

³⁸ Similar hadith reports with different words for ‘meet’ (*tawājaha*, *tawajjaha*, or *iltaqayā* after the subject) are found in Aḥmad, *Musnad* 4:401, 403, 410, 418, 5:43 32:361-2, 387, 452-3, 526, 34:87-90.

³⁹ Aḥmad, *Musnad* 1:385, 411, 433 6:157-8, 7:19-20, 194-5; similar at *Musnad* 1:439 7:238-9.

⁴⁰ Aḥmad, *Musnad* 2:112 10:147.

(*wa-in daqqa*)⁴¹ and other such hadith reports that are sound and memorized. We submit to them even if we do not know their interpretation. We do not talk or dispute about them. We do not interpret such hadith reports as these save by what has come down. We do not reject them save for what is better than they.

Paradise and the Fire have indeed been created (already), as it has come from the Messenger of God: ‘I entered Paradise and saw a palace’, ‘I saw al-Kawthar (a river in Paradise)’, ‘I looked into the Fire and saw that most of its inhabitants were women’, and ‘I looked into the Fire and saw [2:174] such and such.’⁴² Whoever asserts that they have not been created is giving the lie to the Qur’an and the hadith of the Messenger of God [1:246] I do not consider him a believer in Paradise and the Fire.

Whoever dies of the people who pray toward the Ka‘bah, pronouncing God one, is to be prayed over and his forgiveness asked. Asking forgiveness is not to be withheld from him. Nor may one omit prayer over him on account of any sin he once committed, whether small or great. His affair is up to God (mighty and glorious is he).

IV.

The character of a believer of *ahl al-sunnah wa-al-jamā‘ah* is this: whoever testifies that there is no god but God alone, none sharing with Him, and that Muḥammad is His servant and messenger; who confesses all that the prophets and messengers have brought, and holds to them in their outward sense. He does not doubt his faith. He does not accuse anyone of unbelief on account of a sin.⁴³ He leaves what is beyond him up to God (mighty and glorious is he) and com-

⁴¹ Similar but not identical at Aḥmad, *Musnad* 2:215 11:592-3.

⁴² e.g. Aḥmad, *Musnad* 1:298, 358-9 4:442-4, 5:368-70.

⁴³ This is directed especially against the Khawārij, who considered cardinal sinners to have apostatized.

mits his affair to God (mighty and glorious is he). He is not cut off by sins from God's protection.

He knows that everything is by God's judgement and decree, both good and evil.⁴⁴ He hopes for the doer of good from among the nation of Muḥammad . . . and fears for their sins. (He knows that) no one of Muḥammad's nation will go to Paradise or the Fire on account of a good deed he has acquired or sin he has acquired in order that it be God (mighty and glorious is He) who sends His creation where He pleases.⁴⁵

He recognizes the claim of the pious ancestors whom God chose for companionship with His prophet. He puts Abū Bakr, 'Umar, [2:294] and 'Uthmān first. He recognizes the claim of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, Ṭalḥah, al-Zubayr, 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Awf, Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqāṣ, and Sa'īd ibn Zayd ibn 'Amr ibn Nufayl over the rest of the Companions. These nine were with the Prophet . . . on the mountain of Ḥirā', when the Prophet said, 'Be still, Ḥirā', for no one is on you save who is a prophet, a saint, or a martyr', the Prophet being the tenth of them.⁴⁶ He prays for mercy on all Muḥammad's Companions, the small and the great.⁴⁷ He relates their virtues and refrains

from talking about what they quarrelled about amongst themselves. (He participates in) the ritual prayers of the two festivals, the fear prayer, the Friday prayer, and assemblies with every ruler, whether pious or reprobate; also wiping the shod feet in travelling and otherwise and shortening (the ritual prayer) in travelling.⁴⁸

The Qur'an is God's speech and what He sent down. It is increate. Faith is both word and deed, increasing and decreasing.⁴⁹ Holy war (*jihād*) has been standard practice since God sent Muḥammad . . . and will continue so until the last band fights the Antichrist (al-Dajjāl). No tyrant's tyranny will hurt them.⁵⁰ Buying and selling are licit until the Day of the Resurrection, as ordained by the Book and

they aspersed the Companions, mainly for allowing others to succeed Muḥammad ahead of 'Alī.

⁴⁸ Here are a series of ritual observances only the unorthodox avoid. The two festivals are those of the three days following the great Ramadan fast and the tenth day of the Islamic month Dhū al-Ḥijjah, when Muslims around the world sacrifice animals along with the pilgrims outside Mecca. The fear prayer is a shortened version for when one fears attack, broached by the Qur'an but described mainly in hadith; hence, willingness to perform it indicates acceptance of hadith. Men are normally required to pray the Friday noon prayer in the assembly at the mosque. Refusal to do so may indicate unwillingness to express loyalty to the ruler, which Aḥmad thought incompatible with Sunni orthodoxy. It was a major point of contention between Sunni and Shi'i jurisprudents whether the minor ritual ablution required one to remove the shoes to wash the feet or merely to wipe off the shoes. A special, shortened version of the ritual prayer for those travelling was again supported by hadith.

⁴⁹ Here, Aḥmad takes on the Murji'ah over the nature of faith. For the Murji'ah, faith seems to have been indivisible: one had it or not. At most, a Muslim's actions corroborated his profession of faith. But for the Sunni party, obedience, especially performance of the ritual prayer, was also a part of faith, so that one person might easily have more than another.

⁵⁰ That is, contrary to the Shi'ah and others, it was righteous to participate in the holy war against the infidel even if the commander was personally unrighteous, as by collecting excessive taxes or having usurped his authority from among the descendants of 'Alī.

⁴⁴ Sunni Islam is predestinarian, against the Mu'tazilah and others.

⁴⁵ 'Acquisition' became a technical term of Ash'ari vocabulary in the next century, and here is some justification for the claim of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī (d. 324/935-6?), the most successful Sunni theologian, that he was simply following Aḥmad. It had to do with the question of whether acts are created by the men who commit them or by God: Ash'arī proposed that men 'acquire' their acts from God. But Aḥmad does not seem to be concerned with that question, and his usage should be taken as non-technical; that is, he asserts that men acquire acts in the sense that they build up a record that will count for or against them at the Last Judgement.

⁴⁶ This refers to a hadith report of how the Prophet once stilled an earthquake (see Aḥmad, *Musnad* 1:59, 187-8 1:478-9, 3:175-7). The point is that 'Alī was better than most other Companions (e.g. Mu'āwiyah) but not all (notably Ṭalḥah and al-Zubayr).

⁴⁷ This is directed above all against the Shi'ah, of whom the Sunni party continually complained that

the *sunnah*.⁵¹ One says *Allāhu akbar* four times at funerals.⁵² (One must have) faith in the basin and intercession.⁵³ One prays for the welfare of the Muslims' imams. Do not rebel against them with the sword and do not fight in civil strife (*fitnah*), rather stick to your house. (One must have) faith that the people of Paradise will see their Lord (blessed and exalted be He). (One must have) faith that the monotheists will come out of the Fire after having been burnt, as it has come in hadith reports from the Prophet . . . concerning these things.⁵⁴ [2:295] We believe in considering them truthful. We do not make up similitudes for them.

This is what the knowledgeable of all the horizons have agreed upon.⁵⁵

V.

It has come from the Messenger of God . . . that he said, 'Whoever meets God with a sin for which he should go to the Fire, penitent for it or determined, God may make him repent. Whoever meets him having suffered the penalty for that sin in the world, it is his atonement (*kaffārah*)'—so the hadith report came from the Messenger of God . . .

⁵¹ This is against certain renunciants, especially the Sufis of the Mu'tazilah, who called for living on whatever should come one's way, such as unbidden alms, as a sign of true trust in God.

⁵² The Sunni schools of law agree on four against the Shi'ah, who call for five.

⁵³ The basin is a feature of the landscape at the Last Judgement, described in hadith. The intercession is that of the Prophet for the cardinal sinners of his nation.

⁵⁴ The Qur'an apparently includes some Muslims among the damned, Mu'tazili theology emphatically so, but Sunni theology tends to restrict eternal perdition to non-Muslims.

⁵⁵ 'The knowledgeable' translates *al-'ulamā'*, which normally means those learned in religious matters, especially Islamic law. For Aḥmad, *'ilm* ('knowledge') meant above all hadith, so the *'ulama'* for him probably amounted practically to the traditionists. His adversaries were those who slighted hadith. Sunni orthodoxy has always been defined by consensus, particularly the consensus of those learned in Islamic law (after the Sunni fashion—the Shi'ah and others had their forms of law, as well, but the Sunni party did not count their opinions in reckoning consensus).

Whoever meets him determined, impenitent for his sins that merit punishment, [2:340] his affair is God's, whether he wishes to punish him or forgive him, so long as he has died in Islam and the *sunnah*. Whoever disparages any of the Companions of the Messenger of God . . . or despises any of them for anything or mentions his faults, he is an innovator, turning from the great majority. He should wish for mercy on all of them and be peaceful in his heart towards all of them.

Hypocrisy is unbelief in God: to be an unbeliever toward God and to worship someone else while making a show of Islam in public; to be like the hypocrites in the time of the Messenger of God Whoever of them openly shows unbelief is to be killed. It is not like these hadith reports that have come. 'Whoever has three characters, he is a hypocrite.' This is by way of exaggeration. They are to be related as they have come. It is impermissible for anyone to interpret them. It is the same for his saying 'Do not become unbelievers after me, striking off one another's heads.' It is like his saying, 'If two Muslims meet with their swords, the killer and the killed are both in the Fire.' It is like his saying, 'Insulting a Muslim is depravity, fighting him unbelief.' It is like his saying, 'Whoever says to his brother "You unbeliever", he has brought it on one of them.' It is like his saying, 'It is unbelief in God to renounce one's lineage, even as to details.' It is like these hadith reports that are sound and to be memorized. We submit to them, even if we do not know their interpretation. We do not talk or debate about them, nor do we interpret them. Rather, we relate them as they have come. We believe in them, knowing they are true, as said the Messenger of God We submit to them and do not reject them.

We do not omit to pray over anyone of the people of the *qiblah* on account of a sin [2:341] he has committed, little [1:312] or great, unless he is one of the people of innovations whom the Prophet . . . has excluded from Islam: the Qadarīyah, Murji'ah, Rāfiḍah, and Jahmīyah. He said, 'Do

not pray with them and do not pray over them.’ It is as came the hadith report from the Messenger of God . . . from among the sound hadith reports, that the Prophet . . . saw his Lord. It is related of the Messenger of God Qatādah related it < ‘Ikrimah < Ibn ‘Abbās and ‘Alī ibn Zayd related it < Yūsuf ibn Mihrān < Ibn ‘Abbās. One has faith in that and believes it.

(One believes) that the people of Paradise will see God (mighty and glorious is He) with their eyes. (One believes) that the servants will be weighed against their deeds. Among them will be some who weigh as much as a gnat’s wing. (One believes) that God (blessèd and exalted be He) will speak to His servants with no translator between Him and them. (One believes) that the Messenger of God . . . has a basin whose containers are greater than the number of stars in Heaven. (One has) faith in the torment of the tomb and the trial of the tomb. The servant will be asked about faith and Islam, who is his Lord, what is his religion, and who is his prophet. (One believes) in Munkar and Nakīr. (One has) faith in the intercession of the Prophet . . . for a group who will emerge from the Fire. (One must have) faith in the intercession of the intercessors. (One must believe) that Paradise and the Fire are create and have been created, as has come the report from the Messenger of God . . . : ‘I entered Paradise and saw in it a palace’, ‘I saw al-Kawthar’, and ‘I have looked upon the Fire and seen its people.’ Whoever asserts that they have not been created is [2:342] giving the lie to the Messenger of God . . . and to the Qur’an. (He is) an unbeliever in Paradise and the Fire. He is to be asked to repent. If he repents (well and good); otherwise, he is to be killed. (One must believe) that when there is no longer any intercession for anyone, God (be he exalted) will say, ‘I am the most merciful of the merciful’, then put His hand into Jahannam and bring out of it what no one else could count. If He wishes, He will bring them all out. (One must believe in) the hadith report of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Āmir al-Ḥaḍramī, ‘Then He put His hand

between my shoulders and I felt cold in the middle of my breast’⁵⁶ and ‘Jahannam will not cease to ask, “Is there more? Is there more?” until the Lord (blessèd and exalted be he) comes to her, puts His foot into her, so that she recoils and says “*Qaṭṭi, qaṭṭi*, enough, enough.”’⁵⁷ Thus has come the report from the Messenger of God

We do not consider any of the people of the *qiblah* as bound for Paradise or the Fire save whom the Messenger of God . . . has testified [1:313] (that he is bound) for Paradise: Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān, ‘Alī, Ṭalḥah, al-Zubayr, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf, Sa’d ibn Abī Waqqās, and Sa’īd ibn Zayd ibn ‘Amr ibn Nufayl. (One must believe) that Ādam . . . was created in the image of the Most Merciful, as has come the report from the Messenger of God . . . related by Ibn ‘Umar from the Messenger of God⁵⁸ Likewise, it is a sound report from the Messenger of God . . . that he said, ‘There is no heart but that it is between two fingers of the Most Merciful’s’⁵⁹ and ‘Both His hands are right.’ (One

⁵⁶ A feature of what Frederick Colby calls ‘the Primitive Version’ of Muḥammad’s ascension, in which God reaches down from His throne to touch him, but not here attributed to Ibn ‘Abbās. V. Frederick S. Colby, *Narrating Muḥammad’s night journey: tracing the development of the Ibn ‘Abbās ascension discourse* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 35. No such hadith report through any ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Āmir al-Ḥaḍramī appears in the *Musnad*, but the incident is described by Ibn ‘Abbās at Aḥmad, *Musnad* 1:368, 4:66, 5:437-42, 27:171-4, by other Companions at Aḥmad, *Musnad* 5:58, 243 34:195, 36:442-4.

⁵⁷ Similar but not identical hadith reports are found at Aḥmad, *Musnad* 2:368-9, 3:134, 141, 229-30, 234, 279 14:413-15, 19:373-4, 428-9, 21:94, 124, 391-2.

⁵⁸ Aḥmad, *Musnad* includes hadith to this effect at 2:244, 251, 315, 232, 434, 463, 519 12:275-6, 13:504-6, 14-45-6, 16:41-2, 427, but all through Abū Hurayrah, not Ibn ‘Umar. The version through Ibn ‘Umar with ‘in the image of al-Raḥmān’ is to be found in Abū Bakr ibn Abī ‘Āṣim al-Nabīl, *al-sunnah* (Beirut: Dār Ibn Hazm, 1424/2004), 117. V. further Christopher Melchert, “‘God created Adam in his image’”, *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 13/1 (2011): 113-24.

⁵⁹ Similar but not identical at Aḥmad, *Musnad* 4:182 29:178-9.

must have) faith in that. Whoever lacks faith in that, knowing that it is true, as said the Messenger of God . . . , he has attributed lying to the Messenger of God He is to be asked to repent. If he repents (well and good); otherwise, he is to be killed, since it is a true report from the Messenger of God that God, when He created Ādam, struck his right side with His hand, then struck with His other hand—both His hands being right ones—Ādam’s left side. Then He said of the first, ‘Of the people [2:343] of Paradise’ and of the other, ‘Of the people of the Fire.’⁶⁰

(One must have) faith in predestination, the good and evil of it. (One must believe that) faith is word and deed, increasing and decreasing. It decreased with little work and increases with much work. (One must believe that) the Qur’an is the speech of God, increate, however it is heard and recited. From Him it appeared and to Him it will return. (One must believe that) the best of people after the Messenger of God . . . were Abū Bakr, then ‘Umar, then ‘Uthmān, then ‘Alī.

Muḥammad ibn ‘Awf, to whom Aḥmad dictated this creed: ‘I said to him, “O Abū ‘Abd Allāh, they say that you stop at ‘Uthmān.” He said, “They have lied about me, by God. Relate to them the hadith report of Ibn ‘Umar: ‘We used to distinguish, among the Companions of the Messenger of God . . . , saying Abū Bakr, then ‘Umar, then ‘Uthmān. The Prophet . . . would hear of that and not reject it.’ The Prophet . . . did not say, ‘Do not prefer anyone after those.’ No one has any argument in that. Whoever stops at ‘Uthmān and does not make ‘Alī the fourth, he is not following the *sunnah*, Abū Ja‘far.’”

VI.

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate: God be praised who created

remnants in every time of the people of knowledge, bidding whoever has strayed to guidance, forbidding them to do what is bad, reviving the dead by the Book of God (exalted be He) and the people of ignorance and badness by the *sunnah* of the Messenger of God How many a one killed by Iblīs have they revived. How many a one who has strayed and wandered have they guided. How good are their effects on people. They banish from the religion of God (mighty and glorious is He) the distortion of the extremists, the professions of the nullifiers, the interpretation of the straying who have taken up the banners of innovations and released the bridle of temptation. They say things against God, concerning God (God be exalted far above what the oppressors say), and concerning His Book without knowledge. We take refuge in God from every misleading temptation. God bless Muḥammad.

Now then, may God cause to happen for us and you what involves His obedience and make to miss us and you what involves His anger. He asks of us and you to do the work of those who know Him and fear Him. He is to be asked about that. I enjoin you and myself to fear God the Great and to adhere to the *sunnah*. You know what is licit for whoever turns from it and what has come regarding those who follow it. We have heard of the Prophet . . . that he said, ‘God (mighty and glorious is He) will put His servant into Paradise by means of the *sunnah* onto which he held.’ Therefore, I order you not to prefer anything to the Qur’an, for it is the speech of God (mighty and glorious is He). It is what God has spoken, so it is increate. It is that by which He informed the past generations, so it is increate. What is in the Preserved Tablet [2:428], what is in the written copies and the people’s recitation, however it is recited and however it is described, it is the speech of God, increate. Whoever says it is create, he is an unbeliever in God the Great. Whoever does not pronounce him an unbeliever is an unbeliever. Then, after the Book of God, (it is necessary have faith in) the *sun-*

⁶⁰ Similar but not identical at Aḥmad, *Musnad* 1:44-5 1:399-402.

nah of the Prophet . . . and hadith from him, also from the rightly-guided Companions of the Prophet (It is necessary) to believe what has come by means of the messengers and to follow the *sunnah* of deliverance, it being what the people of knowledge have transmitted, one great one after another.

Beware of the opinion of Jahm, for he is an adherent of opinion (*ra'y*), dialectical theology (*kalām*), and disputations. Those of [1:343] the people of knowledge whom we have met agree unanimously that the Jahmīyah are divided into three parties. One group among them says that the Qur'an is the speech of God, create. Another group says that the Qur'an is the speech of God, then are silent. They are the cursèd *wāqifah* (abstainers). Some of them say that our pronunciation of the Qur'an is create. All of these are unbelieving Jahmīyah. They are to be asked to repent. If they repent, (well and good); otherwise, they are to be killed. Those of the people of knowledge whom we have met agree unanimously that whoever says this, if he does not repent, is not to be married or act as qadi, neither may one eat what he slaughters.

Faith is both profession and works, increasing and decreasing. If you do well, that is its increase. Its decrease is that you do badly. Men go out from *īmān* to *islām*, whereas nothing put a man out of *islām* save sharing the honour of God the Great with another or rejecting one of the obligations laid down by God (mighty and glorious is He), denying it. If he omits it from laziness or unconcern, then it depends on the will of God. If He wills, He will punish him; if He wills, He will forgive him.

As for the cursèd Mu'tazilah, those of the people of knowledge whom we have met agree unanimously that they pronounce someone an unbeliever on account of a sin. Whoever is with them believes likewise. Thus, they assert that Adam was an unbeliever. [2:429] They assert that Joseph's brothers, when they pronounced their father Jacob a liar, were unbelievers. The Mu'tazilah are agreed that whoever steals a grain is an unbeliever, his wife to be separated from

him and he to resume the pilgrimage if he was performing the pilgrimage. Those who say this are unbelievers. They are not to be married, nor is their testimony to be accepted.

As for the Rāfīdah, those of the people of knowledge whom we have met agree unanimously that they say 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib was better than Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq and that 'Alī's conversion was prior to Abū Bakr's conversion. Whoever asserts that 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib was better than Abū Bakr has rejected the Book and the *sunnah* on account of the saying of God (mighty and glorious is He), 'Muhammad is the Messenger of God. Those with him [are hard on the unbelievers]' (Q. 48:29); in this, God put Abū Bakr first after the Prophet The Prophet . . . said, 'If I had taken a close friend (*khalīl*), I would have taken Abū Bakr. But God took your companion (*ṣāhibukum*) for a close friend and there is no prophet after me.' Whoever asserts that 'Alī's conversion was prior to Abū Bakr's conversion has lied, for the first to convert was 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Uthmān, the freedman of Ibn Abī Quḥāfah. At that time, he was thirty-five years old, while 'Alī was seven [2:430] years old. The ordinances, obligations, and prescribed punishments did not apply to him.

We believe in foreordination and predestination, the good of it and the bad, the sweet of it and the bitter. (We believe) that God created Paradise before mankind, [1:344] then created people deserving of it. Its blessing is perpetual. Whoever asserts that anything of Paradise comes to an end is an unbeliever. He also created the Fire before He created mankind, then created people deserving of it. Its torment is perpetual. (We believe) that the people of Paradise will definitely see their Lord. (We believe) that God will bring out numbers from the Fire by the intercession of Muḥammad (We believe) that God spoke to Mūsā and took Ibrāhīm as a close friend. The path (*sirāṭ*) is true, the scale (*mīzān*) is true, and the prophets are true. 'Īsā ibn Maryam is the Messenger of God and His Word.

(One must have faith) in the basin and intercession. (One must have faith) in Munkar and Nakīr and the torment of the tomb. (One must have) faith in the angel of death who seizes the spirits, then returns them to their bodies in the graves. They will be asked about faith and pronouncing God one. (One must have) faith in the blowing of the trumpet. The trumpet is a horn that Isrāfil will blow. (One must have faith) that the tomb in Medina is the tomb of Muḥammad . . . and that with him are Abū Bakr and ‘Umar. (One must believe that) the servants’ hearts are between the Most Merciful’s fingers. (One must believe that) the Antichrist (*al-dajjāl*) will come out against this community without a doubt and (that) ‘Īsā ibn Maryam will descend and kill him at the gate of Ludd. Whatever dubious thing the knowledgeable have repudiated, it is to be rejected. Beware of [2:431] all innovations.

No eye has seen, after the Prophet . . . , a better than Abū Bakr, nor after Abū Bakr has an eye seen a better than ‘Umar, nor after ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān has an eye seen a better than ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (may God be pleased with all of them). They are, by God, the rightly-guided caliphs. We testify that the ten are bound for Paradise, they being Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān, ‘Alī, Ṭalḥah, al-Zubayr, Sa’d, Sa’īd, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf al-Zuhrī, and Abū ‘Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrāḥ. Of whomever the Prophet . . . has testified that he is bound for Paradise, we testify that he is bound for Paradise. (We also believe) raising the two hands in the ritual prayer is an addition among the good deeds, likewise saying aloud *āmīn* at the prayer leader’s saying *wa-lā al-dāllīn* (Q. 1:7). (One must believe in) the ritual prayer over whoever dies of the people of this *qiblah*, their evaluation being incumbent on God (mighty and glorious is He). (One must believe in) going out with every leader in fighting and pilgrimage. (One must believe in) performing the prayers of Friday and the two festivals behind them. (One must) leave alone the faults of the Companions of the Messenger of God Speak of their virtues but refrain from (speaking of) whatever

they quarrelled over. Do not ask the advice of anyone of the people of innovations concerning your religion. Do not accompany him in your travel.

There is no marriage without a guardian, a suitor, and two upright witnesses. Temporary marriage is forbidden until the Day of the Resurrection. [1:345] Whoever pronounces a threefold divorce in one locution is ignorant; however, she has become forbidden to him until she marries another husband. One says *Allāhu akbar* [2:432] four times at funerals. If someone says it five times, one says it along with him. Ibn Mas‘ūd said, ‘Say *Allāhu akbar* as many times as your leader.’ Al-Shāfi‘ī disagreed with me. He said that if he says *Allāhu akbar* more than four times, one repeats the prayer, arguing on the basis that the Prophet . . . prayed over al-Najāshī and said *Allāhu akbar* four times. Wiping the shod feet is for the traveller to perform for three days and nights, the sedentary for one day and one night. When you enter the mosque, do not sit until you have performed two sets of bowings to hail the mosque. The *witr* prayer is one set of bowings. The *iqāmah* is by ones.

Love all the people of the *sunnah*. May God make us and you die following the *sunnah* and the great majority. May God bestow on us and you following knowledge. Pay attention to what He likes and is pleased with.

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Andalusian creed.

Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥanbal left as his testament that he testifies that there is no god but God alone, without any sharer. He testifies that Muḥammad is His servant and Messenger He affirms all that the prophets . . . have brought. My heart is bound by all that appears on my tongue. I do not doubt my faith. I do not accuse anyone of the people of pronouncing one (monotheists) of unbelief on account of a

sin. I leave all that is unseen to God (may His mention be glorified). I know that everything is by His judgement and decree, both good and evil coming from God (glorious and mighty is he). I hope for the one of the nation of Muḥammad . . . who does good and fear on account of their bad points. I do not place anyone of the nation of Muḥammad . . . in Paradise on account of his good deeds nor the Fire on account of his sins in order that it be God (glorious and mighty is he) who places his creation where he wills. I recognize the claim of those forbears (*salaf*) whom God (glorious and mighty is he) chose for the Companionship of his Prophet . . . I put first Abū Bakr and ‘Umar, then ‘Uthmān, then ‘Alī . . . I pray for mercy on all of the Companions of the Prophet . . . , taking after their virtues and refraining from (considering) what they quarrelled about. I pray on Friday and the two festivals with every pious and reprobate (leader). I wipe the leathern socks whether settled or travelling. I shorten the ritual prayer in travelling. (I believe in) the holy war—God (glorious and mighty is he) sent Muḥammad . . . with it (and it will continue) to the last group of people fighting the Anti-christ (*Dajjāl*).

The Qur’an is the speech of God (glorious and mighty is He). It was sent down by Him and is increate. Buying and selling are (licit) by the rule of the Book and the *sunnah* Faith is word and deed, increasing and decreasing. One says *Allāhu akbar* four times at funerals. One prays for the wellbeing of the leaders of the Muslims, not rebelling against them with the sword or fighting in civil strife—rather, you are to stick to your house. (I have) faith in the torment of the tomb and in Munkar and Nakīr. (I have) faith in the basin, intercession, and the scale. (I have faith) that God (mighty and glorious is he) is on the throne sitting up however He wills, knowing of every place so that nothing is hidden from Him. (I have) faith that numbers of the people of pronouncing one will come out of the Fire, as has come by hadith from the Messenger of God

These are the things to believe in. Similitudes (hypothetical examples) are not to be struck for them. One is to take after the Book of God (glorious and mighty is He), the hadith of the Messenger of God . . . , and the hadith of his Companions (God’s mercy and satisfaction be upon them). (One is) to leave *ra’y* and innovations. (One is) to leave the *qunūt* invocation is the morning ritual prayer. (One is) to leave pronouncing aloud, meaning *bi-smi ‘Llāhi ‘l-Raḥmāni ‘l-Raḥīm*. I testify that God (be He blessed and exalted) speaks and that what he says is true. His creation is creation. His speech is distinct from his creation (mighty and glorious is he). ‘The parallel of Jesus with God is like that of Adam. He created him from dust and then said to him, “Be”, and he was’ (Q. 3:59). His word ‘be’ is not create. The Qur’an is the speech of God. It is not create. Praise be to God who has no sharer.’

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Aḥmad’s letter to ‘Ubayd Allāh.

[Ṣ¹248 Ṣ²116 ‘¹16 ‘²21] To ‘Ubayd Allāh—may God prepare for you a good end, Abū al-Ḥasan, in all affairs, and defend you against the hateful things of this world and the hereafter by His mercy. I hereby write to you (may God be pleased with you) what the Commander of the Faithful asked for. May God help him with respect to the Qur’an by means of what I have at hand. [²22] I ask God to prolong the good fortune of the Commander of the Faithful. May God strengthen him and his support. The people have been sunk into nullity and severe disagreement, plunged in it, till the caliphate devolved on the Commander of the Faithful, so that God, by means of the Commander of the Faithful, forbade every innovation. The humiliation and narrowness of their places of confinement (*dīq al-maḥābis*) have van-

ished away.⁶¹ I ask God to answer the pious prayer for the Commander of the Faithful [S²117] and that He bring that to completion for the Commander of the Faithful; that He increase his good intention and help him in what he is about.

It has been mentioned on the authority of 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbās (God's mercy be upon him) that he said, 'Do not strike one part of the Book of God against another, for that drops doubt into your hearts.' 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Amr mentioned that a group were sitting at the door of the Prophet One said to [S¹249] another, 'Did not God say such-and-such?' Another said, 'Did not God say such-and-such?' The Messenger of God . . . heard that and came out. It was though there were a pomegranate seed on his face as he said, 'Were you commanded to this, to strike part of the Book of God against another? The nations before you went astray in this manner. You have nothing to do with this. Look to what you were commanded to do and do it. Look to what you were forbidden to do and stop doing it.'⁶² It is related of Abū Hurayrah < the Prophet . . . that he said, 'Arguing (*mirā*) about the Qur'an is unbelief.'⁶³ It is related of Abū Juhaym, one of the Companions of the Prophet . . . , that he said, [117] 'Do not argue about the Qur'an, for arguing about it is unbelief.'⁶⁴ [S²118]

'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbās said that a man came to 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. 'Umar [223] began to ask him about people. He said, "O Commander of the Faithful, some of them have recited the Qur'an as saying such-and-such." Ibn 'Abbās said, "I said, 'By God, how I dislike that that they should

nowadays race to the Qur'an this way.' But 'Umar scolded me, saying '*Mah*'. I went to my house dejected and sad. When I was thus, there came to me a man who said, 'Respond to the Commander of the Faithful.' So I went out and found him waiting for me at the gate. He grabbed my hand and took me aside, saying, 'What did you object to in what this man said?' I said, 'O Commander of the Faithful, when they race this way, each will say he is right (*yaḥtaqqū*) and they will become opponents to one another. When they become opponents one to another, they will disagree; when they disagree, they will begin to fight among themselves.' He said, 'Your father belongs to God. By God, if it were up to me, I would make the people suppress it until I had brought it forth.'⁶⁵ [S¹250]

It is related of Jābir ibn 'Abd Allāh that the Prophet . . . used to make himself available to the people at the Mawqif (at 'Arafāt?), saying, 'Is there a man who will carry me to his people? Quraysh have prevented me from conveying my Lord's speech.'⁶⁶ It is related of Jubayr ibn Nufayr that the Messenger of God . . . said, 'You will not return to God with anything better than what has come out of Him', meaning the Qur'an.⁶⁷ It is related of Abū Umāmah that the Prophet . . . said, 'The servants will not approach God by the like of what has come out of Him', meaning the Qur'an.⁶⁸ It is related of 'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd that he said, 'Attend to the Qur'an alone. Do not write anything about it but the speech of God.'⁶⁹ It is related of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb that he said, 'This Qur'an is the speech of God, so put it in [224] its (proper) places.'

⁶¹ I take it that 'places of confinement' alludes to the withdrawal of the orthodox from public spaces forced on them by the Inquisition.

⁶² Aḥmad, *Musnad* 2:195-6 11:434. Similar at *Musnad* 2:178, 181 11:250-1, 304-5. Without the red face but specifying that they were quarrelling over predestination at *Musnad* 2:196 11:434-5.

⁶³ Aḥmad, *Musnad* 2:286, 300, 424, 475, 503, 528 13:241, 369-71, 15:288, 16:133, 318, 486-7. With *jidāl* instead of *mirā*' at *Musnad* 2:258, 478, 494 12:476-8, 16:155, 260-1.

⁶⁴ Aḥmad, *Musnad* 4:169-70 29:85.

⁶⁵ Plainly, this translation calls for amendment.

⁶⁶ Aḥmad, *Musnad* 3:390 23:370-1.

⁶⁷ Jubayr ibn Nufayr (d. Homs, 80/699-700?) was the son of a Companion but never met the Prophet himself.

⁶⁸ Aḥmad, *Musnad* 5:268 36:644-5.

⁶⁹ *Lā taktubū fīhi shay'an illā kalām Allāh*—alternatively, 'Do not write anything in it but God's speech', meaning to exclude chapter titles, verse divisions, and other such things from written copies, which might be relevant to Aḥmad's polemic if that includes explanatory glosses.

A man said to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, ‘O Abū Sa‘īd, when I recite the Book of God and consider it, I look on my work and despair, losing hope.’ [Ṣ²119] So al-Ḥasan said to him, ‘The Qur’an is the speech of God while the works of the sons of Adam tend to weakness and falling short, so work and take cheer.’

Farwah ibn Nawfal al-Ashja‘ī said, ‘I used to be the neighbour of Khabbāb, one of the Companions of the Prophet [118] I went out with him one day from the mosque. He took my hand and said, “O you, approach God by what means you can. You will not approach Him by anything He likes better than His speech.”’ [Ṣ¹251] A man said to al-Ḥakam ibn ‘Utaybah,⁷⁰ ‘What brought the people of fancies to this?’ He said, ‘Disputing.’ Mu‘āwiyah ibn Qurrah,⁷¹ whose father met the Prophet . . . , said, ‘Beware of these disputations, for they bring works to nought.’ Abū Qilābah,⁷² who met more than one of the Companions of the Messenger of God . . . , said, ‘Do not sit with the adherents of fancies’ or else he said ‘the adherents of disputations, for I do not trust that they will not plunge you into their straying and confuse some part of what you know.’ Two adherents of fancies came to Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn.⁷³ They said, ‘O Abū Bakr, shall we relate hadith to you?’ He said, ‘No.’ They said, ‘Shall we recite to you a verse of the Book of God?’ He said, ‘No. Leave me or I will certainly leave you.’ The two men got up and left. Someone in the group said, ‘O Abū Bakr, what did you have against their reciting to you a verse from the Book of God?’ Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn said, ‘I feared that they should recite a verse and distort it, so that that would lodge in my heart.’ [Ṣ²120]

Muḥammad (ibn Sīrīn) said, ‘If I knew that I were to be tried immediately, I would leave it.’ A man of the adherents of

innovations said to Ayyūb al-Sakhtiyānī,⁷⁴ ‘May I ask you about a word?’ He turned away, saying, ‘Not even half a word.’ Ibn Ṭāwūs⁷⁵ said to one of this sons with whom a man of the people of innovations was speaking, ‘My son, put your fingers in your ears so that you don’t hear what he says.’ Then he said, ‘Tight!’ ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz⁷⁶ said, ‘Whoever exposes his religion to disputations will shift around much.’ Ibrāhīm al-Nakha‘ī⁷⁷ said, ‘No good thing has been kept hidden away from them for you on account of some virtue you have.’⁷⁸ [Ṣ¹251] Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī used to say, ‘The worst medicine is what mixes up a heart’, meaning an innovation. Ḥudhayfah ibn al-Yamānī, one of the Companions of the Prophet . . . , said, ‘Fear God, O you Qur’an reciters. Take the path of those before you. By God, if you stay upright, there are many who have preceded you. [219] If you leave it (uprightness), leaning left and right, you will go far astray’ or else he said ‘clearly (astray)’. I have abstained from mentioning chains of transmitters because of the previous oath sworn by me, which the Commander of the Faithful knows about. If not for that, I would have mentioned them (these reports) with chains of transmitters.

God (glorious be His praise) said, ‘If any of the polytheists seeks your protection, grant him protection until he can hear the words of God’ (Q. 9:6). [Ṣ²121] He said, ‘His indeed is the creation and the command’ (Q. 7:54), saying ‘creation’, then

⁷⁴ Abū Bakr ibn Abī Tamīmah, Basran jurist and worshipper, d. 131/749.

⁷⁵ ‘Abd Allāh ibn Ṭāwūs ibn Kaysān, Yemeni worshipper, d. 132/749-50.

⁷⁶ Famously pious Umayyad caliph, r. 99-101/717-20.

⁷⁷ Ibrāhīm ibn Yazīd, Kufan jurist, d. 96/714?

⁷⁸ Reading *lam yuddakhar ‘anhum khayr khabī’ lakum li-faḍl ‘indakum*, a composite of different versions of Aḥmad’s letter (thanks to Geert Jan van Gelder for finding a parallel passage in Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyah, *I’lām al-muwasqī’in*, not traced by me). The idea is that there is no reason for the present generation to discover what the Companions did not know, especially by theological speculation.

⁷⁰ Kufan jurist, d. 113/731-2?

⁷¹ Basran, d. 113/731-2.

⁷² ‘Abd Allāh ibn Zayd, Basran, d. 104/722-3?

⁷³ Basran traditionist, d. 110/729.

‘command’ informing (us) that the command is increate. He said (mighty and glorious is He), ‘The Merciful—He has taught the Recitation, created man, taught him exposition’ (Q. 55:1-4), informing (us) that the Qur’an is part of his knowledge. He said, ‘The Jews will not be pleased with you nor will the Christians until you follow their creed. Say, “God’s guidance is the [only] guidance.” If you follow their whims after the knowledge that has come to you, you will have no protector or helper against God’ (Q. 2:120). He said, ‘If you follow their whims after the knowledge that has come to you, you will in that case be one of the wrong-doers’ (Q. 2:145). He said, ‘Thus we have revealed it as a criterion in Arabic. If you follow their whims after the knowledge that has come to you, you will have no protector or defender against God’ (Q. 13:37). The Qur’an is thus part of the knowledge of God. In these verses is evidence that what he brought is the Qur’an, as on account of His saying, ‘If you follow their whims after the knowledge that has come to you’ (Q. 2:120). [S¹253 S²123]

It is related of more than one of the pious who have preceded us that they said the Qur’an is the speech of God, increate. It is He who brought it to him. I am not a master of *kalām* (dialectical theology). I know no talk of anything of this except what is in the Book of God or hadith from the Prophet . . . or his Companions or the Followers. As for other than that, talk of it is not praiseworthy. [r²26] I ask God to prolong the life of the Commander; that He make him fast and extend to him His aid, He having power over everything.

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Al-Barbahārī’s creed.

[2:18 3:38] Beware of small new things. Small innovations return until they become large. Likewise every innovation that has been brought forth in this nation: it started small and resembled the truth, which deceived those who entered it, then they

were unable to leave it, so it became great and a religion to be adhered to. Thus they turned away from the straight path and left Islam. Look (God have mercy on you) into everyone whose talk you have heard, especially of your own time, and do not be in a hurry. Do not enter into any of it till you have [2:19] inquired and investigated whether any of the Companions of the Prophet . . . spoke of it, or any of the learned. If you come across a report of them, then hold to it and do not leave it behind for anything, nor chose anything over it, so that you fall into the Fire.

Know that leaving the way has two aspects. One is that a man has slipped off the way without his wanting anything but good. He is not to be imitated in his slip, for he is going to perdition. Then there is a man who stubbornly opposes the truth. He is dissident with regard to the pious before him. He is a strayer and a leader astray, a satan in this nation. Anyone who recognizes him has a duty to warn the people of him and to make his story clear to them, lest anyone else should fall into his innovation and be lost.

Know (God have mercy on you) that a servant’s Islam is not complete until he is a follower, a believer, and a submitter. Whoever asserts that something remains of the matter of Islam for which the Companions of the Messenger of God . . . suffice, [3:39] he has accused them of lying. Let this suffice as a splitting, for he has aspersed them; he is an innovator, a strayer leading astray, introducing something to Islam that is not part of it.

Know (God have mercy on you) that there is no analogy (*qiyās*) in the *sunnah*. No examples are to be made up for it. It does not involve following fancies. It is believing the reports (*āthār*) of the Messenger of God . . . without any ‘how’ or explanation. One does not say ‘why?’ or ‘how?’ Dialectical theology (*kalām*), disputation, argument, and hypocrisy are all new things, throwing doubt into the heart, even if their practitioner hits on the truth and the *sunnah*.

Know that talk of the Lord (be He exalted) is something new, an innovation and straying. The Lord is not to be spoken of save as He has described himself (mighty and glorious is He) in the Qur'an and what the Messenger of God . . . made clear to his Companions. He (glorious be His praise) is One. 'There is nothing like Him. He is the Hearing and the Observing' (Q. 42:11). (He is) our Lord, the first without 'when?', the last without an endpoint. He knows what is secret and hidden. He has sat up on His throne. His knowledge is everywhere. There is no place beyond His knowledge. One does not say with regard to the attributes of the Lord (be He exalted) 'why?' or 'how?' except for one who doubts God (blessèd and exalted be He). The Qur'an is the speech of God, His revelation and His light. It is increate. What is of God is increate. [2:20] Thus said Mālik ibn Anas⁷⁹ [3:40] and the jurists before and after him. Hypocrisy concerning it is unbelief.

(One must have) faith in the sight on the Day of the Resurrection. They will see God (might and glorious is He) with the eyes of their heads as he judges them without any screen or translator. (One must have) faith in the scale on the Day of the Resurrection, on which good and evil will be weighed, with two palms and a tongue. (One must have) faith in the torment of the tomb and Munkar and Nakīr. (One must have) faith in the basin of the Messenger of God . . . , every prophet having a basin except Šāliḥ . . . , for his basin is his camel's teat. (One must have) faith in the path that will lead them out of the pit of Jahannam. There is no prophet but that he has the power of intercession for the sinners and wrongdoers on the Day of the Resurrection; likewise the righteous, the martyrs, and the good. After that, God will have abundant grace for whomever He pleases. (One must have faith in) leaving the Fire after they had been burnt and become coals. (One must have) faith in the path through Jashannam. Whoever God wills will take the path. Who-

ever God wills will pass. Whoever God wills will fall into Jahannam. They will have lights in proportion to their faith.

(One must have) faith in the prophets and the angels. (One must have) faith in Paradise and the Fire: that they were created; that Paradise is in the seventh heaven, with the throne for its roof; that the Fire is in the seventh, lowest earth. They were both created. God (be He exalted) knows the number of the people of Paradise [3:41] and whoever will enter it, also the number of the people of the Fire and whoever will enter it. They will never cease to be. They will endure with God's endurance forever and ever. Adam . . . was in the everlasting, create Paradise. He was put out of it after having rebelled against God (mighty and glorious is He).

(One must have) faith in the Antichrist (*al-masīḥ al-dajjāl*). (One must have) faith in the descent of 'Īsā the son of Maryam . . . , who will come down and kill the Antichrist. He will marry, pray behind the one who stands up (*al-qā'im*) of the family of Muḥammad . . . , then die and be buried by the Muslims.

(One must have) faith that faith is profession, works, and intention, increasing and decreasing. It increases as much as God wills, it decreases until nothing of it remains. [2:21]

The best of this nation and of all nations, after the prophets . . . are Abū Bakr, then 'Umar, then 'Uthmān, then 'Alī. In this, one hearkens to the Prophet . . . and does not deny him. Then the best of people, after these, are Ṭalḥah, al-Zubayr, Sa'd (ibn Abī Waqqāṣ), Sa'id (ibn Zayd), and 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Awf, all of whom were suitable for the caliphate.⁸⁰ Then the best of people after these were the Companions of the Messenger of God . . . , the generation among whom he was sent, [3:42] the first Muhājirūn and the Anṣār, they being the ones who prayed toward both *qiblahs*. Then

⁷⁹ Medinese jurist, d. 179/795.

⁸⁰ The Fiḳī edition here adds Abū 'Ubaydah 'Āmir ibn ('Abd Allāh ibn) al-Jarrāḥ, sometimes counted the last of the ten promised Paradise, but apparently without a basis in the manuscripts.

the best of people after those who associated with the Messenger of God for a day, a month, a year, less than that or more. We wish for mercy upon them and we recollect their virtues while keeping away from their slips. We mention nothing but good in connection with all of them on account of the saying of the Messenger of God . . . , ‘When my Companions are mentioned, refrain.’ Sufyān ibn ‘Uyaynah said, ‘Whoever says a word (against) the Companions of the Messenger of God . . . is a heretic.’ The Prophet . . . said, ‘My Companions are like the stars: whichever of them you follow, you are under guidance.’

(It is necessary) to hearken to and obey the imams as to whatever God loves and is pleased by. Whoever assumes the caliphate by consensus or their being pleased by it, he is the Commander of the Faithful. No one may spend a night thinking that there is no imam over him, whether pious or reprobate. Pilgrimage and raiding go on with the imam. The Friday prayer behind them is permissible. One prays after it six sets of bowings, with a separation after each two. Thus said Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal. The caliphate belongs amongst the Quraysh until ‘Īsá the son of Maryam descends. Whoever rebels against any of the imams of the Muslims is a Khārijī who has broken the unity (lit. the stick) of the Muslims and [3:43] gone against hadith, so that he dies the death of the Jāhiliyyah. [2:22] It is not permissible to fight the ruler (*sulṭān*) or to rebel against him, even if he is tyrannical. That is what the Messenger of God . . . said to Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī, ‘Have patience, even if he is an Abyssinian slave’, and what he said to the Anṣār, ‘Have patience until you meet me at the basin.’ It is permissible to fight the Khawārij when they impose themselves on the Muslims, threatening their wealth, their persons, and their families. It is not permissible for one to look for them if they go away, to finish off their wounded, to take them captive, or to pursue them when they turn away. Know that no obedience is due a human in disobedience to God (mighty and glorious is He).

Whoever is of the people of Islam, we do not testify of him (that he is saved or lost) on account of good or evil, for you do not know how it will be sealed for him at death. You hope for him the mercy of God and fear for his sins. You do not know what has preceded death by way of repentance to God, nor what God has produced [3:44] at that moment when he dies in Islam. You hope for him the mercy of God and fear for his sins. There is no sin but that the servant may repent of it. Stoning is a true claim, wiping the shod feet is the *sunnah*, and shortening the prayer while travelling is *sunnah*. (As for) fasting while travelling, whoever wishes fasts and whoever wishes breaks the fast. There is no harm in performing the ritual prayer wearing trousers.

Hypocrisy (*nifāq*) is to manifest Islam with the tongue while hiding unbelief in one’s mind. Know that the world is the house of faith and submission (*īmān wa-islām*). The nation of Muḥammad . . . has in it Muslim believers when it comes to their inheritances, slaughters, and being prayed over. We do not testify in anyone’s favour as to the truth of (his) faith unless he should follow all the rules of Islam. If he falls short in anything of that, his faith is deficient until he repents. Know that faith in God (be He exalted) is complete faith or deficient faith, except for what someone manifests to you by way of grossly neglecting the rules of Islam.

The ritual prayer over whoever has died of the people of the *qiblah* is *sunnah*. The male and female adulterers who have been stoned, one who kills himself, and others of the people of the *qiblah*, along with the drunk and others—the ritual prayer over them is *sunnah*. None of the people of the *qiblah* goes out of Islam until he repudiates a verse of the Book of God (mighty and glorious is he) [2:23], repudiates something of the hadith (*athar*) of the Messenger of God . . . , prays to other than God, or sacrifices to other than God—then it is necessary to put him out of Islam. If he has not [3:45] done anything of that, then he is a believer and a Muslim, in name if not in truth.

Anything at all you have heard of the hadith (*āthār*) that your reason does not reach, such as the saying of the Messenger of God . . . , ‘The hearts of the believers are between two of God’s fingers’, his saying ‘God descends to the lowest Heaven descending on the Day of ‘Arafah and the Day of the Resurrection’, that ‘More will keep being thrown to Jahannam until He puts His foot onto it (glorious be His praise)’, God’s saying (be He exalted) to His servant, ‘If you walk to me, I shall rush to you’, his saying, ‘God created Adam in His image’, the saying of the Messenger of God, ‘I saw my Lord in the best form’, and the like of these hadith reports. Incumbent on you is to submit, believe, relinquish authority, and accept. Interpret none of this according to your whim. It is obligatory to believe this. Whoever interprets any of this according to his whim or rejects it, he is a Jahmī. Whoever claims to see his Lord in the house of this world, he is an unbeliever in God (mighty and glorious is he). Thinking (*al-fikrah*) about God is an innovation on account of the saying of the Messenger of God . . . , ‘Think of the creation but do not think of God.’ Thinking about the Lord throws doubt into one’s heart.

Know that reptiles, predators, and beasts of burden all act by command, as the tiny ants, flies, and ants act by command. They do nothing except by the permission of God (be He exalted). (It is necessary) to believe that God knows what was at the beginning of time, what is not and what is. He has counted them and reckoned them a reckoning. Whoever says that He knows only what has been and what [3:46] is, he has committed unbelief in God the Great.

There is no marriage except with a guardian, two upright witnesses, and a bride price, be it small or great. Whoever has no [2:24] guardian, the ruler (*sultān*) is the guardian of whoever has no guardian. When a man divorces his wife three times, she is forbidden to him. She does not become permissible to him until he has married another wife. The blood of a Muslim man who testifies that there is no god but God and testifies

that Muḥammad is His servant and messenger is inviolate except for three things: adultery after marriage (to a free Muslim), apostasy after believing, or killing a believing soul without cause, for which he is to be killed. Other than that, the blood of a Muslim is inviolate to another Muslim until the coming of the Hour.

Everything that God requires to go away will go away except for Paradise, the Fire, the Throne, the Chair, the Trumpet, the Pen, and the Tablet: nothing of these will ever go away. Then God will revive people in whatever condition He made them die on the Day of the Resurrection. He will judge them as He wills, ‘A part of them will be in the Garden and a part of them in the Blaze’ (Q. 42:7). He will say to the rest of the creation, whom He did not create for remaining, ‘Be dust.’

(One must have) faith in the settling of accounts on the Day of the Resurrection for all of creation: between men and beasts and reptiles, even an ant from another ant, until God (mighty and glorious is He) takes some from others, for the people of Paradise from the people of the Fire or for the people of the Fire from the people of Paradise, for some of the people of Paradise from others and for some of the people of the Fire from others. [3:47] (One must have) sincerity in performing works for God, satisfaction with God’s decree, patience with God’s decision, and faith in all that God has foreordained, the good of it and the evil, its sweet and its bitter. (One must have) faith in what God has said. God knows what the servants have been doing and where they are heading. They do not go out of God’s knowledge. There is nothing in the earths or heavens that God (be He exalted) does not know. Know that what reaches you could not have missed you, while what has missed you was not going to reach you. There is no creator alongside God (mighty and glorious is He).

One pronounces *Allāh akbar* at a funeral four times. This is the position of

Mālik ibn Anas, Sufyān al-Thawrī,⁸¹ al-Ḥasan ibn Šālih,⁸² Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, and the jurists. Thus said the Messenger of God (One must have) faith that with every raindrop there is an angel descending to earth from the sky, putting it where God (be He exalted) has commanded him to. [2:25] (One must have) faith that the Messenger of God . . . , when he addressed the people of al-Qalīb on the day of Badr, meaning the polytheists—they heard what he said. (One must have) faith that when a man falls ill, God rewards him for his illness; likewise that God rewards the martyr for his martyrdom. (One must have) faith that children, when anything afflicts them in the house of this world, do suffer. This is to say that when Bakr ibn ukht ‘Abd al-Wahhāb⁸³ said, ‘They do not suffer’, he lied. [3:48]

Know that no one will enter Paradise save by the mercy of God, nor will God torment anyone save for one sin after another. If He tormented the people of the heavens and the earth, the pious and reprobate of them, He would not torment them unjustly. It is impossible to say of God (mighty and glorious is He) that He has acted unjustly. Who acts unjustly is he who takes what is not his, whereas to God belong the creation and command. The creation is His creation, the house His house. ‘He will not be questioned about what he does but they will be questioned’ (Q. 21:23). One does not ask ‘Why?’ or ‘How?’ No one comes between God and His creation.

If you hear a man asperse hadith (*āthār*) and not accept them, or repudiate anything of reports of the Messenger of God . . . , suspect him of not being a Muslim. He

⁸¹ Sufyān ibn Sa’īd, Kufan traditionist and jurist, active also in the Hijaz and Basra, d. 161/777?

⁸² Al-Ḥasan ibn Šālih ibn Šālih ibn Ḥayy, Kufan jurist, d. 169/785-6.

⁸³ Probably a mistake for Bakr ibn ukht ‘Abd al-Wāḥid, Basran (fl. late 2nd/8th cent.?), to whom this opinion is attributed by Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash-‘arī, *Maqālāt al-islāmīyīn*, ed. Hellmut Ritter, 2nd edn, Bibliotheca Islamica 1 (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1963), 286-7.

is a man of bad doctrine and tenets. He is aspersing the Messenger of God . . . and his Companions. We have learnt of God, His Messenger, the Qur’an, good and evil, and this world and the hereafter [3:49] only by means of hadith (*athar*). The Qur’an is in greater need of the *sunnah* than the *sunnah* is of the Qur’an.

Dialectical theology (*kalām*), dispute, and arguing over predestination is forbidden according to all the sects, since predestination is God’s secret. The Lord (glorious is His name) forbade the prophets to talk about predestination. The Prophet . . . forbade arguing over predestination. The Companions of the Messenger of God . . . and the Followers disliked it, likewise the learned and the people of scruple (*wara’*). They have forbidden disputation over predestination. Incumbent on you is to surrender, persist, have faith, and believe in what the Messenger of God . . . said concerning everything. Be silent about everything else. [2:26]

(One must have) faith that the Messenger of God . . . was taken up to heaven, went to the Throne, heard the speech of God (mighty and glorious is He), entered Paradise, looked down on the Fire, saw the angels, heard good news from the prophets, saw the pavilions of the Throne and the Chair and all that was in the heavens. The five prayers were imposed on him that night, and he returned to Mecca the same night. That was before the Hijrah. Know that the spirits of the martyrs are in the bodies of green birds who move through Paradise. They take refuge in chandeliers under the Throne of the Almighty.⁸⁴ The spirits of the wicked and unbelieving are in the Well of [3:50] Barahūt, which is in Sijjīn. (One must have) faith that the dead will remain in his grave, that the spirit will be sent to him in order for Munkar and Nakīr to ask him

⁸⁴ Not mentioned in the *Musnad*, but the Companion Ibn Mas’ūd so tells of the spirits of the martyrs; e.g. in Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, k. *al-imārah* 33, *bāb bayān anna arwāḥ al-shuhadā’ fī al-jannah*, no 1887. By contrast, I have found no report of the Well of Barahūt in any major hadith collection.

about faith and its ramifications. Then his spirit will be withdrawn without pain. The dead one recognizes the visitor when he visits him. The believer will be comfortable in the tomb, whereas the reprobate will be tormented as God wills.

(One must have) faith that it is God who spoke to Moses the son of 'Imrān on the Day of Sinai. Moses heard speech from God with a sound that landed in his ears from Him, not anyone else. Whoever says other than this has committed unbelief in God the Great. Reason is produced (*maw-lūd*). Every human is given whatever of reason God wants. They differ in reason like particles in the sky. He will require of every human according to what He gave him of reason. Reason is not by acquisition, rather it is only (from) the grace of God. Know that God preferred some servants over others in religion and the world, which is just on His part. It is not to be said that He acted unjustly or partially. Whoever says that God's grace is on the believer and unbeliever alike is an innovator. Rather, God has preferred the believer to the [3:51] unbeliever, the obedient to the disobedient, the one protected to the one forsaken, in justice on His part. It is His grace, which He gives to whomever He pleases and denies to whomever He pleases.

It is not licit to refrain from counsel to any of the Muslims, whether pious or reprobate, in the matter of religion. Whoever refrains has cheated the Muslims. Whoever has cheated the Muslims has cheated the faith (*ghashsha al-dīn*). Whoever has cheated the faith has betrayed God, His Messenger, and the believers. [2:27] God is the All-hearing, the All-seeing, and the All-knowing. 'His hands are spread out' (Q. 5:64). He knew that people would disobey Him before creating them. His knowledge penetrates to them. His knowledge of them did not prevent Him from guiding them to Islam, to oblige them in generosity, freehandedness, and graciousness, so to Him be praise.

Know that the good tidings at death are three tidings. It will be said, 'Be of good

cheer, O beloved of God, on account of God's satisfaction and Paradise.' It will be said, 'Be of good cheer, O servant of God, on account of Paradise after the revenge.' And it will be said, 'Be of good cheer, O enemy of God, on account of God's anger and the Fire.' This is what Ibn 'Abbās said. Know that the first to see God (be He exalted) in Paradise will be the blind, then men, then women, with the eyes of their heads, as said the Messenger of God . . . , 'You will see your Lord as you see the moon on the night of a full moon. There will be no harm for you in seeing Him.'⁸⁵ Belief in this is obligatory, while denying it is unbelief.

Know that there has not been any secret unbelief or open, no doubt, no innovation, no straying, [3:52] nor any confusion in religion save from dialectal theology and its people; from disputation, wrangling, and arguing. How can a man be so bold as to wrangle, argue, and dispute when God says, 'The only ones to argue about the signs of God are those who do not believe' (Q. 40:4)? Incumbent on you is to surrender, to be satisfied with hadith (*āthār*) and the people of hadith, and restraint, silence, and faith that God will torment people in the Fire; with fetters, shackles, and chains; with fire inside them and over them and below them. It was the Jahmīyah, among them Hishām al-Fuwaṭī,⁸⁶ who said that God torments only near the Fire, thus repudiating God and His messenger.

Know that the required ritual prayers are five. They are not to be increased, nor performed out of their proper times. In travel, there are two cycles of bowings except at sunset. Whoever says they are more than five has innovated. Whoever says they are fewer than five has innovated. God will accept nothing of them except in their proper times, unless that was by forgetting, which is an acceptable excuse, so long as he performs them when he remembers, or if

⁸⁵ Aḥmad, *Musnad* 4:360, 362, 365-6 31:526-9, 540-1, 569.

⁸⁶ Hishām ibn 'Amr al-Fuwaṭī (Fūṭī?), Basran Mu'tazili, fl. Baghdad, early 3rd/9th cent.

one is travelling, in which case he may combine two prayers if he wishes. [2:28] The alms tax (*zakāh*) is on gold, silver, grains, and beasts of burden, according to what the Messenger of God . . . said. If one divides it up (pays it out directly), that is permissible. If one pays it to the ruler (*imām*), that is permissible. God knows better.

Know that the first of Islam is testimony that there is no god but God and that Muḥammad is His servant and messenger. (Know that) things are as God has said. What He has said leaves nothing out, rather it is present as He says. [3:53] (One must have) faith in all the revealed laws (*sharā'i*). Know that buying and selling are licit when one buys in the markets of the Muslims according to the rule of the Book and the *sunnah*, without the entry of any oppression or cheating, any contradiction of the Qur'an or contradiction of religious knowledge. Know that it is necessary for a servant always to go with compassion so long as he is in the world, for he does not know in what condition he will die, or what is sealed for him, or in what state he will meet God (mighty and glorious is He), even if he should perform every good work. It is necessary for a man who oversees himself⁸⁷ that his hope not be cut off at death, thinking well of God and fearing on account of his sins. If God has mercy on him, it will be on account of some virtue, whereas if God punishes him, it will be on account of a sin.

(One must have) faith that God (be He exalted) gave His prophet . . . to know what would happen to his community till the Day of the Resurrection. Know that the Messenger of God . . . said, 'My community will split into 73 sects, all of them in the Fire save one', that being the great majority (*jamā'ah*). It was asked, 'Who are they, O Messenger of God?' He said, 'Where I and my Companions stand today.' Thus the faith continued until the caliphate of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, when there was complete unity. Thus it was in the time of 'Uthmān. At the killing of 'Uthmān (may God be pleased

with him) came disagreement and innovations, the people becoming sectaries. Some of the people stayed with the truth from the first change: they advocated it, worked by it, and bade to it. The affair was upright until the fourth generation. Then the age was turned upside down, innovations spread, and there came to be much bidding to other than the path of truth and the great majority. There came to be tribulation concerning everything that the Messenger of God . . . had not talked about or any of the Companions [3:54]. They bade to division, although God (mighty and glorious is He) had forbidden division. Some of them pronounced others unbelievers. Everyone bade to his own opinion and pronouncing an unbeliever anyone who disagreed with him. The ignorant [2:29], the mean, and those without religious knowledge went astray. They fed the people something of the way of the world, making them fear worldly punishment, so that people followed them from fear for their worldly fortunes and desiring worldly goods. The *sunnah* and its people were suppressed. Innovations became manifest and spread. They became unbelievers such that they did not know from many aspects. They laid down analogy and interpreted the might of the Lord and his signs, his ordinances, his command, and his prohibition according to their reason and opinion. Whatever agreed with their reason, they accepted. Whatever disagreed, they rejected. Islam then became a stranger, the *sunnah* a stranger, and the people of the *sunnah* strangers in their houses.

Know that *mut'ah*, meaning marriage to women for a term, and considering it licit (to marry them again without a waiting period) is forbidden to the Day of the Resurrection. You should recognize the virtue of the Hāshimids on account of their being relatives to the Messenger of God Recognize the virtue of Quraysh, the Arabs, and all of the tribal units. Recognize their stature and their rights in Islam. A group's client is among them. You should recognize people's rights in Islam. You should recognize the virtue of the Anṣār and

⁸⁷ Reading *yushrifu 'alā nafsih* for printed *yusrifu*.

the testament of the Messenger of God . . . concerning them, likewise the family of the Messenger. Do not [3:55] insult them. Know their virtues and their honour among the people of Medina.

Know that the people of religious knowledge did not cease to reject the position of the Jahmīyah until the 'Abbāsids' caliphate. The Ruwaybiḍah talked about the matter of the laity, aspersing the hadith (*āthār*) of the Messenger of God They took up analogy and opinion. They accused of unbelief whoever disagreed with them. The ignorant, the deceived, and those without any knowledge took up their position, so that they committed unbelief without knowing it. The nation perished in ways and committed unbelief in ways, splitting up and innovating in ways, except for those who stood firm on what had been said by the Messenger of God . . . and his Companions. They did not ignore any of them or go beyond what they had commanded. They were content with what had contented them, not wanting anything but their way and doctrine, for theirs was sound Islam and sound faith. They decked them with authority and relaxed. Know that religion is just vesting someone else with authority. One vests with authority the Companions of the Messenger of God [2:30]

Whoever says that his pronunciation of the Qur'an is create, he is a Jahmī. Whoever falls silent and does not say it is either create or increate, he is a Jahmī. Thus said Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal. The Messenger of God . . . said, 'Whoever of you lives after me, he will see much disagreement. Beware of innovated matters, for they are straying. Incumbent on you is my norm (*sunnah*) and the norm of the Rightly Guided Caliphs. Clamp onto it with your molars.' Know that the Jahmīyah went to perdition by thinking about the Lord (mighty and glorious is He) and bringing in 'Why?' and 'How?' They left hadith (*athar*) and laid down analogy. They measured religion by their opinion and so openly brought out unbelief. It is not to be hidden that they committed unbelief and accused the people of unbelief. They were

carried away until they advocated *ta'tīl* (denying God's attributes). Some of the learned, among them Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, said that the Jahmī was an unbeliever, not among the people of the *qiblah*, whose blood might be shed; not to inherit or be inherited from.

This is because he (the Jahmī) said there was no Friday, no assembly (for prayer), and no festivals. They said that whoever did not say 'The Qur'an is create' was an unbeliever. They considered it licit to draw the sword against the community of Muḥammad They disagreed with those before them. They tried the people over something neither the Messenger of God . . . nor any of his Companions had talked about. They wanted the mosques and Friday mosques to fall out of use. They belittled Islam and suspended the holy war. They acted as sectarians and went against hadith (*āthār*). They talked about the abrogated and made arguments on the basis of the ambiguous. They made people doubt their religion. They disputed about their Lord, saying there is no torment of the tomb, nor any Basin or intercession; that Paradise and the Fire had not been created. They denied much that the Messenger of God . . . had said. It was from this angle that some considered it licit to pronounce them unbelievers whose blood was licit, for whoever rejects a verse of the Book of God has rejected the whole Book, and whoever has rejected a hadith report (*ḥadīth*) from the Messenger of God . . . has rejected all hadith (*athar*), being an unbeliever in God the Great. They had their turn, and met with help from the ruler (*sultān*) in that matter [3:58]. They employed the sword and the whip in it. Knowledge of the *sunnah* and the great majority was effaced. They held them in contempt. And so they (the adherents of the *sunnah* and the great majority) became suppressed on account of the manifestation of innovations and talk of them and on account of their being so numerous. They took over sessions, publicized their opinions, [2:31] and wrote books about them. They tyrannized the people and sought to

direct them. It was a great tribulation. Only those escaped whom God protected. The least of what afflicted a man in their sessions was that he should doubt his own religion, follow them, or think their opinion true without knowing whether they were right or wrong. Thus he would become a knock-kneed doubter. Many perished until the days of Ja'far, the one called al-Mutawakkil. By his means, God put out the innovations and made truth prevail—made the people of the *sunnah* prevail. Their tongues became long in spite of their fewness and the manyness of the people of innovation until our day. Imposture, innovations, and the people of straying—there has remained of them a number who still practise by them, bid to them without let or hindrance, with nothing to prevent them from saying and doing as they do.

Know that no secret unbelief will come save from the mean rabble, the followers of every screecher, who incline at every wind. Whoever is like that has no religion. God (mighty and glorious is He) said, 'They only differed after knowledge came to them, through insolence among themselves' (Q. 45:17). They are the scholars of evil, possessors of appetites. Know that there will always remain with the people a group of the people of truth and the *sunnah* whom God guides [3:58] and by whom God guides. By their means He revivifies correct usages. They are those whom God (be He exalted) has described despite their being few where there is disagreement, for He said, 'They have not disagreed about it save who have been brought evident proofs from lust among them' but then named them as an exception, 'God guided, by His permission, those who believed to that truth about which they differed. God guides those whom He wishes to a straight path' (Q. 2:213). The Messenger of God . . . said, 'There will remain a group in my community who will manifest the truth. Those who desert them will do them no harm, until the command of God comes to them victorious.'

Know that knowledge is not by much narration and books. Rather, the learned man is he who follows religious knowledge and the *sunnah*, even if he have little religious knowledge and few books. Whoever goes against the Book and the *sunnah*, he is the follower of an innovation, even if he have much religious knowledge and many books. Know that whoever talks about God's religion according to his opinion and analogy, interpreting it without evidence from the *sunnah* and the great majority, has said something about God he does not know. Whoever says something about God he does not know, he is one of [2:32] presumptuous. The truth is what has come from God (mighty and glorious is He). The *sunnah* is what was laid down by the Messenger of God . . . The great majority (*al-jamā'ah*) is what the Companions of the Messenger of God . . . agreed on in the caliphates of Abū Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Uthmān. Whoever lets suffice the *sunnah* of the Messenger of God . . . and what his Companions and the great majority stood for will triumph over all the people of innovation. His body will relax and his religion will be safe, God willing, for the Messenger of God . . . has said, 'My community will split up'. The Messenger of God . . . has made clear which (sect) will escape: he said, 'Where I and my Companions stand.' This is the cure and the clarification, the command and the clear, the upright lighthouse. The Messenger of God . . . said, 'Beware of obstinacy. Beware of going deep. Incumbent on you is the old religion.' Know that the old religion is what was from the death of the Messenger of God . . . to the killing of 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān (may God be pleased with him). His killing was the first splitting, the first disagreement. From then on the community fought within itself and split up. Then it followed desire, fancy, and an inclination towards the world. No one has any dispensation to take up anything that the Companions of the Messenger of God . . . did not stand on. Neither may a man bid to anything he has taken up by way of it, or by ways of one of the people of innovations. He is then

like the one who created it. Whoever asserts that and advocates it, he is worse for this community than Iblis. Whoever of the people of the *sunnah* who recognizes what the people of innovations have left and what they have departed from, then held onto it, he is a master of the *sunnah* and the great majority. He deserves to be followed, to be helped and protected. He is among those for whom the Messenger of God . . . left his testament.

Know that the roots of innovations are four doors. From these four branch out 72 fancies. Every one of the innovations branches out until they make up altogether 2,800 assertions. Every one is straying. Every one is in the Fire, save [3:60] one, which is the one that believes in what is in this writing, believes it in his heart without any uncertainty or doubt. He is a master of the *sunnah*, one who will escape, God willing (be He exalted). [2:33] Know that if people stopped before innovated things without going beyond in any way, without coming up with talk not brought forth in any transmitted saying (*athar*) from the Messenger of God . . . or any of his Companions, then there would be no innovation. Know that there is nothing between a servant and his being a believer in order to be an unbeliever save that he should balk at something of what God has sent down, go beyond the speech of God, or leave some out, or deny anything of what God (mighty and glorious is He) has said, or anything the Messenger of God . . . has spoken of.

Fear God and watch yourself. Beware of going to excess in religion, for it is not a condition of truthfulness in anything. All that I have described for you in this writing comes of God (be He exalted), from His Messenger . . . , from his Companions, from the Followers, or from the third generation (*qarn*) to the fourth. Fear God, O servant of God. Incumbent on you is to believe, to surrender, to give up authority, and to be satisfied with what is in this writing. Do not refrain from talking about this piece of writing [3:61] before any of the people of the *qiblah*. Perhaps God will have

some confused person brought back by it from his confusion, some adherent of an innovation from his innovation, or some strayer from his straying, so that he should escape by its means. Fear God. Incumbent on you is the old, first affair. It is what I have described to you in this writing.

May God have mercy on a servant (and on his parents) who reads this piece of writing, spreads it, works by it, advocates it, and argues by it, for it is the faith of God and of his Messenger. Whoever considers licit anything in disagreement with what is in this piece of writing, he is not properly worshipping God, having rejected all of it, just as if a servant believed in all of what God (mighty and glorious is he) said except for doubting one letter: he has rejected all of what God has said, being an unbeliever. It is as testimony that there is no god but God is not accepted from the one who declares it except with true intention and sincere certainty. Likewise, God will not accept a thing of the *sunnah* along with omitting some. Whoever disagrees with and rejects anything of the *sunnah* has rejected the whole *sunnah*. You must accept. Leave off arguing and babbling. This is not in any way part of God's faith. [3:62]. Your time is an especially evil one, so fear God. [2:34] If there occurs civil strife, stay inside your house. Flee from harbouring civil strife. Beware of fanaticism. Everything of fighting among the Muslims over the world is a trial, so fear God alone, who has no partner. Do not be attracted to anything of their affairs. It is said, 'Whoever likes a group's works, whether good or evil, is like one who does them.' May God make things work for us. Take care to please Him. May He distance us and you from acts of disobedience to Him.

Do not look much to the stars except inasmuch as it helps you with the times of ritual prayer. Give up anything else, for it leads to secret unbelief (*zandaqah*). Beware of looking into *kalām* (theology) and sitting with partisans of *kalām*. Incumbent on you is hadith (*āthār*) and the people of hadith.

Ask them (for guidance) and sit with them; seek to acquire knowledge from them.

Know that God is not worshipped by anything like fear of God, the way of fear, caution, trepidation, and shyness before God. Beware of sitting with those who bid to longing and love, who retire alone with women, who (talk about) the path of the way (*ṭarīq al-madhhab*). All of those are gone astray.

Know that God (be He exalted) has bidden all of mankind to worship Him. He has obliged whom He wills with Islam as a grace from Him. (He has bidden to) holding back from the war of 'Alī, Mu'āwiyah, 'Ā'ishah, Ṭalḥah, and al-Zubayr (may God have mercy on all of them) and those who were with them. Do not engage in disputes concerning them. Leave God (be he exalted) to take charge of their affair, for the Messenger of God . . . said, 'Be careful concerning [3:63] my Companions, my relations, and my in-laws', also 'God (be he exalted) looked at the people of Badr and said, "Do what you will, for I have forgiven you."'

Know that the wealth of a Muslim man is not licit except when he willingly wishes (to part with it). If a man has illicit wealth that he holds on to, it is not licit for anyone to take any of it except with his permission. Perhaps he will repent and wish to return it to its owners—then you will have taken something illicit. Gain (*makāsib*) is free so long as it is clear to you that it is definitely sound, except for what is evidently corrupt. If it is corrupt, one takes of the corrupt while restraining [2:35] one's avarice. Do not say 'I will leave gain and take what they give me.' The Companions did not do that, nor do the learned of our time. 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (God be pleased with him) said, 'Gain that includes some lowliness is better than needing people.'

The five prayers are permissible behind whomever you have prayed behind unless he is a Jahmi, for he nullifies (prayers). If you have prayed behind him, repeat your prayer. If your imam on Friday is a Jahmi, being the supreme ruler, pray behind him and repeat your prayer. If your

imam is from the highest ruler while someone else is orthodox (*ṣāhib sunnah*), pray behind him and do not repeat your prayer.

(You must have) faith that Abū Bakr and 'Umar (may God have mercy on them) are in 'Ā'ishah's chamber with the Messenger of God . . . , buried there with him. If you go to the tomb, saluting them after the Messenger of God . . . is a duty. [3:64] Commanding good and forbidding evil is a duty except him whose sword and staff you fear. (So is) saluting all the servants of God. Whoever leaves off the Friday prayer and the assembly in the mosque without an excuse is an innovator. The ill person's excuse is that he has no power to go out to the mosque. (It is also an excuse) to fear a tyrannical ruler. Other than that, you have no excuse. Whoever prays behind a leader who is not to be imitated, he has no prayer. Commanding good and forbidding evil is with the hand, the tongue, and the heart but not the sword. The one among the Muslims who is presumed innocent (*mastūr*) is the one about whom there is no evident doubt.

Whatever esoteric knowledge the servants claim that is not found in the Book and *sunnah*, it is innovation and straying. No one should work according to it, nor invite to it. Any woman who gives herself to a man, she is not licit for him. They will both be punished if he receives anything from her, unless it is by means of a guardian, two upright witnesses, and a bride price. If you see a man aspersing the Companions of the Prophet . . . , know that he is a man of fancies, on account of what the Messenger of God . . . said, 'When my Companions are mentioned, refrain.' [2:36] The Prophet . . . knew what would come of them by way of slipping after his death, but he said nothing but good of them. He said, 'Leave alone my Companions (*dharū aṣḥābī*). Say nothing of them but good.' Do not speak of anything of their faults or reports of them. Do not speak of what you do not know or listen to anyone who speaks to you of it, for your mind will not [3:65] be unharmed if you do hear it. If you hear a man aspersing hadith (*al-āthār*), rejecting it, or wanting something else, sus-

pect his Islam. Do not doubt that he is an adherent of fancy and an innovator.

Know that the oppression of the ruler does not diminish any of the obligatory action of God that he imposed on us by the tongue of his prophet . . . His oppression is against himself. Your obedience and piety despite him is perfect, God willing (be he exalted); that is, the assembly and Friday. Waging the holy war with them and every act of obedience—share with them in it. If you see a man imprecating the ruler, know that he is a man of fancies. When you hear a man pray for the ruler’s welfare, now that he is a man of the *sunnah*, God willing. Fuḍayl ibn ‘Iyād⁸⁸ says, “We have not been commanded to imprecate them, even if they wrong and oppress, because their wrongdoing and oppression are against themselves and the Muslims, while their welfare is for themselves and the Muslims.”

Do not mention any of the mothers of the Muslims except saying good. If you see a man undertake to perform the obligatory actions in assembly with the ruler and others, know that he is a man of the *sunnah*, God willing (be he exalted). If you see a man hold in contempt the obligatory actions in assembly, even with the ruler, know that he is a man of fancies. The licit is what is testified to and sworn that it is licit. Likewise, the forbidden is what rankles in your breast, being ambiguous. The screened (presumptively righteous) is the one whose screening is evident, whereas the one perishing is the one whose [3:66] perishing is evident.

When you hear a man say ‘So-and-so is a Nāṣibī’, know that he is a Rāfiḍī. When you hear a man say, ‘So-and-so is a likener (anthropomorphist)’ or ‘So-and-so is talking about likening (anthropomorphism)’, know that he is a Jahmī. When you hear a man say, ‘He has spoken of the ascription of unity, [2:37] so explain to me the ascription of unity’, know that he is a Khārijī Mu’tazilī. Or (if he) says, ‘So-and-

so is a compulsionist (predestinarian)’, or he talks of compulsion or talks about justice (*‘adl*), know that he is a Qadarī, for these are invented names, invented by the people of fancies. ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Mubārak⁸⁹ said, ‘Take nothing of the people of Kufa concerning *rafḍ* (rejection of Abū Bakr and ‘Umar), nor of the people of Syria concerning the sword (rebellion), nor from the people of Basra concerning predestination, nor from the people of Khurasan concerning *irjā’* (agnosticism as to the righteousness of ‘Uthmān and ‘Alī), nor from the people of Mecca concerning exchange (*ṣarf*, of like for like), nor of the people of Medina concerning singing. Take nothing of any of these concerning these things.’

When you see a man love Mālik ibn Anas and take him for a patron (*yatawāl-lāh*), know that he is an adherent of the *sunnah*, God willing. When you see a man love Abū Hurayrah⁹⁰ and Usayd,⁹¹ know that he is an adherent of the *sunnah*, God willing. When you see a man love Ayyūb,⁹² Ibn ‘Awn,⁹³ Yūnus ibn ‘Ubayd,⁹⁴ ‘Abd Allāh ibn Idrīs al-Awdī,⁹⁵ al-Sha’bī,⁹⁶ Mālik ibn Mighwal,⁹⁷ Yazīd ibn Zuray’,⁹⁸ Mu’ādh ibn Mu’ādh,⁹⁹ Wahb ibn Jarīr,¹⁰⁰ [3:67] Hammād ibn Zayd,¹⁰¹ Hammād ibn Salamah,¹⁰² Mālik ibn Anas, al-Awzā’ī,¹⁰³ and

⁸⁹ Marwazi client, traditionist, d. 181/797.

⁹⁰ Companion, prolific traditionist, d. 59/679?

⁹¹ Probably Usayd ibn Ḥuḍayr, Companion, d. 20/640-1?

⁹² Ayyūb ibn Abī Tamīm al-Sakhtiyānī, Basran client, traditionist, jurist, d. 131/749?

⁹³ ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Awn, Basran client, traditionist, d. 151/768?

⁹⁴ Basran client, traditionist, major transmitter from al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, d. 139/756-7?

⁹⁵ Kufan traditionist, ‘Uthmānī, close to Mālik, d. 192/808.

⁹⁶ ‘Amir ibn Sharāḥīl, Kufan traditionist, jurist, d. 103/721-2?

⁹⁷ Kufan traditionist, worshipper, d. 159/776?

⁹⁸ Basran traditionist, ‘Uthmānī, d. 182/798?

⁹⁹ Basran qadi, traditionist, d. 196/811-12.

¹⁰⁰ Basran traditionist, d. 207/822?

¹⁰¹ Basran traditionist, d. 179/795.

¹⁰² Basran traditionist, d. 167/784.

¹⁰³ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Amr, Syrian jurist, d. 158/774-5?

⁸⁸ Khurasani renunciant, active in Kufa and Mecca, d. 187/803?

Zā'idah ibn Qudāmah,¹⁰⁴ know that he is an adherent of the *sunnah*. When you see a man love Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, al-Ḥajjāj ibn al-Minhāl,¹⁰⁵ and Aḥmad ibn Naṣr,¹⁰⁶ speaking well of them and advocating their position, know that he is an adherent of the *sunnah*.

When you see a man sit with one of the people of fancies, warn him and let him know. If he sits with him after coming to know, beware of him, for he is an adherent of fancies. When you hear a man who is brought a hadith report (*athar*) but does not want it, wanting the Qur'an (only), do not doubt that he is a man who has embraced secret unbelief (*zandaqah*). Go away from him and leave him. Know that all the fancies are evil, bidding to the sword. The most evil and unbelieving of them are the Rāfiḍah, the Mu'tazilah, and the Jahmīyah. They wish for the people to take up nullification (of God's attributes) and secret unbelief. Know that whoever disparages any of the Companions of the Messenger of God Know that he aims at Muḥammad . . . , and has hurt him in his grave. If there appears to you anything of innovation from a man, beware of him, for he must have hidden from you more than has appeared. When you see a man whose way and course [2:38] are evil, corrupt and reprobate, a doer of sins and an oppressor, who is yet an adherent of the *sunnah*, associate with him and sit with him, for his sinning will not hurt you. When you see [3:68] a worshipful man who exerts himself in devotions and austerity, and devoted to ritual yet an adherent of a fancy, do not sit with him, listen to his talk, or walk with him in the way, for I do not feel secure that you will not find his way attractive so that you perish with him.

Yūnus ibn 'Ubayd¹⁰⁷ saw his son when he had just come out from (the house

of) 'Amr ibn 'Ubayd.¹⁰⁸ He said, 'My son, from where are you coming out?' He said, 'From (the house of) 'Amr ibn 'Ubayd.' He said, 'My son, I should prefer to have seen you come out of the house of a hermaphrodite (*khunthā*) than to see you come out of the house of so-and-so and so-and-so. I should prefer to meet God as an adulterer, a thief, a profligate, and a betrayer to meeting him (as an adherent) of the position of the people of fancies.' Don't you know? Yūnus knew that the hermaphrodite would not lead his son astray from his faith, whereas [3:69] the adherent of an innovation would lead him astray to the point of making him an unbeliever. Beware, beware the people of your time especially. Consider with whom you sit, to whom you listen, whose company you keep. All the people are astray except for those God has protected from them. When you see a man mention al-Marāsī,¹⁰⁹ Thumāmah,¹¹⁰ Abū al-Hudhayl,¹¹¹ Hishām al-Fuwaṭī, or any of their followers or supporters, beware of him, for he is the adherent of an innovation. All of those are apostates. Leave this man who has spoken of their good station.

Testing over Islam is an innovation. As for today, testing is to be over the *sunnah* on account of his saying, 'This knowledge is religion, so investigate from whom you learn your religion. Do not accept hadith accept from those whose testimony you accept.' Let it be investigated whether he is an adherent of the *sunnah*, has knowledge, and tries to tell the truth (*ṣadūq*), him from whom you have written (hadith). Otherwise, leave him. If you want to be upstanding, right, and on the path of the people of the *sunnah* before you, beware of *kalām* (dialectical theology) and its adher-

¹⁰⁴ Kufan traditionist, d. 161/777-8?

¹⁰⁵ Basran client, traditionist, d. 217/832.

¹⁰⁶ Baghdadi traditionist, agitator, put to death in 231/848 for conspiring to rebel against the caliph al-Wāthiq in the name of the increate Qur'an.

¹⁰⁷ Basran client, traditionist, d. 139/756-7.

¹⁰⁸ Basran client, traditionist, and alleged founding figure of Mu'tazilism, d. 143/760-1? Not related to Yūnus.

¹⁰⁹ Bishr ibn Ghiyāth, Baghdadi client, Ḥanafī jurist-prudent, major advocate of the createdness of the Qur'an, d. 219/834-5?

¹¹⁰ Abū Ma'n Thumāmah ibn Ashras, Basran Mu'tazili, d. 213/828-9?

¹¹¹ Muḥammad ibn al-Hudhayl al-'Allāf, Basran client, Mu'tazili, d. 235/849-50?

ents, of argument, disputation, analogy, and formal debate over religion. Your listening to them, even if you have not accepted (anything) from them), will throw doubt into your heart. That will be acceptance enough, and so you will perish. There has never been any secret unbelief, innovation, fancy, or straying save from *kalām*, arguing, disputation, and analogy. These are the doors to innovations, doubts, and secret unbelief. [2:39 3:70]

Beware, beware (*fa-'Llāh Allāh fi nafsik*). Incumbent on you is hadith (*āthār*) and the adherents of hadith and vesting others with authority (*taqlīd*). Faith is vesting others with authority, mainly the Prophet . . . , his Companions (God be satisfied with them), and those before us who have not bidden us to confusion. Vest them with authority and relax. Do not go beyond hadith (*athar*) and the people of hadith. Stop at what is ambiguous of the Qur'an and hadith. Do not interpret anything. Do not seek on your own part some stratagem by which to refute the people of innovations, for you have been commanded to silence toward them. Do not give them power over you. Have you not learnt that Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn, with all his virtue, would not reply to the people of innovation concerning a single question nor listen to a verse of the Book of God (mighty and glorious is he) from them? He was asked about that, whereupon he said, 'I fear that they will distort it so that something will fall into my heart.' When you hear a man say 'We magnify God' when he hears hadith (*āthār*) of the Messenger of God, know that he is a Jahmī, wishing to repulse the hadith (*athar*) of the Messenger of God . . . and repel it with this word. He claims to be magnifying God when he is indifferent at hearing hadith of the sight (of God) and the descent (of God to the lowest heaven) and so on. Has he not repulsed the hadith (*athar*) of the Messenger of God . . . when he says, 'We magnify God too much for him to descend from place to place', having claimed to know more of God than others? Beware of those. The great majority of the

lowest people and others are in this state, so warn the people of them. When a man asks you a question of this sort, [3:71] seeking guidance, then guide him. If he comes to debate with you, beware of him, for in debate is arguing, disputation, exaggeration, enmity, and anger. All that has been forbidden to you. It does away with the path of truth.

We have not heard of any of our jurists or learned men that he disputed, debated, or argued. Al-Ḥasan said, 'The wise man does not argue. He does not disguise his wisdom in order to spread it. If it is accepted, he praises God. If it is rejected, he praises God.' A man came to al-Ḥasan and said, 'I will debate with you over religion.' Al-Ḥasan said, 'I know my religion. If your religion has got away from you, go and look for it.' The Messenger of God . . . heard a group at the door of his chamber. One of them would say 'Did not [2:40] God say such-and-such?' Another would say, 'Did not God say such-and-such?' He emerged angry and said, 'Where you commanded to such as this? Was it with this that I was sent to you—to strike some of the Book of God against other parts?' He forbade them to dispute. Ibn 'Umar disliked debate, likewise Mālik ibn Anas and others above and below him to this day of ours. The word of God (mighty and glorious is he) is greater than the word of creation: God (be he exalted) said, 'The only ones to argue about the signs of God are those who do not believe' (Q. 40:4). 'They do not argue over the signs of God except for the unbelievers.' A man asked 'Umar, saying, 'What are *al-nāshitāt nashṭan* (Q. 79:2)?' He said, 'If you were shaven, I would strike off your head.'¹¹² The Prophet . . . said, 'The believer does not argue. I will not intercede for an arguer on the Day of the Resurrection. Leave argument for its little good.' It is not licit for a man to say, 'So-and-so is an adherent of the *sunnah*' until he knows that there [3:72] have met in him the characters

¹¹² Perhaps an allusion to the Khawārij, perhaps just to the questioner's being yet a minor and not responsible.

of the *sunnah*. It is not to be said of him, ‘an adherent of the *sunnah*’, until there meets in him all of the *sunnah*.

‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Mubārak said, ‘The root of 72 fancies is just four of them. From these four branched out the 72 fancies: the Qadarīyah, the Murji’ah, the Shī’ah, and the Khawārij.’ Whoever puts Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān, and ‘Alī ahead of (the rest of) the Companions of the Messenger of God . . . and has not talked about the rest save to say good, praying for them, he has escaped Shi’ism, the first and last of it. Whoever says that faith is word and deed, increasing and decreasing, he has escaped Irjā’, the first and last of it. Whoever says the ritual prayer (is performed) behind ever pious and reprobate (leader) and the holy war (is waged) with every caliph, not approving of rebellion against the ruler by the sword, and prays for their welfare, he has escaped the position of the Khawārij, the first and last of it. Whoever says that all destinies are from God (mighty and glorious is he), its good and its bad; that He leads astray whom He wills and guides whom He wills; he has escaped the position of the Qadarīyah, the first and last of it, and is an adherent of the *sunnah*.

Every innovation that has appeared is unbelief in God the Almighty. Whoever advocates it is an unbeliever in God, without any doubt. Those who believe in the Return (*raj’ah*), saying that ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib is alive and will return before the Day of the Resurrection, also Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī,¹¹³ Ja’far in Muḥammad,¹¹⁴ and Mūsā ibn Ja’far,¹¹⁵ and speaking of the Imamate, and that they know the unseen, beware of them, for they are unbelievers in God the Almighty. [2:41] Ṭu’mah ibn ‘Amr¹¹⁶ and Sufyān ibn ‘Uyaynah¹¹⁷ said,

¹¹³ Abū Ja’far al-Bāqir (d. Medina, 114/732-3?), fifth imam of the Ismaili and Twelver Shi’ah.

¹¹⁴ Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Ṣādiq (d. Medina, 148/765), sixth imam of the Ismaili and Twelver Shi’ah.

¹¹⁵ Abū al-Ḥasan al-Kāzīm (d. Baghdad, 183/799), seventh imam of the Twelver Shi’ah.

¹¹⁶ Kufan traditionist, d. 169/785-6.

¹¹⁷ Kufan traditionist, transferred to Mecca, d. 198/814.

Whoever stops (refusing to express himself) at ‘Uthmān [3:73] and ‘Alī, he is a Shi’i, not considered upright (qualified to testify in court), spoken to, or sat with. Whoever puts ‘Alī ahead of ‘Uthmān is a Rāfiḍi, having rejected the hadith (*āthār*) of the Companions of the Messenger of God Whoever puts the four ahead of all of them and wishes for mercy for the rest, refraining from (talking about) their errors, he is on the path of uprightness and guidance in this matter.

The *sunnah* is that you testify in favour of the ten of whom the Messenger of God . . . testified of Paradise that they are among the people of Paradise without any doubt. We do not bless (offer *ṣalāh*) anyone except the Messenger of God . . . and his family alone. We know that ‘Uthmān was unjustly killed and that he who killed him was a wrongdoer.

Whoever affirms all that is in this piece of writing and believes in it, taking it for a guide without doubting a particle of it, not rejecting a particle of it, he is an adherent of the *sunnah* and the great majority, perfect. The great majority is completed by him. Whoever rejects a particle of what is in this piece of writing or doubts a particle of it, doubting it or abstaining with regard to it, he is the adherent of a fancy. Whoever refuses or doubts a particle of the Qur’an or anything that has come from the Messenger of God . . . will meet God as one who disbelieves (*mukadhdhib*).

Fear God [3:74] and take care and preserve your faith. It is part of the *sunnah* that you not obey anyone in disobedience to God, either one’s parents or all of creation. There is no obedience to a man in disobedience to God. Do not heed anyone in that. Leave that to God. Abhor that for God’s

sake. Faith that repentance is an obligation for all the servants (is required), and that they repent to God (mighty and glorious is He) from great sins and little. Whoever does not testify in favour of whomever the Messenger of God . . . testified about Paradise, he is the adherent of an innovation and straying, doubting what the Messenger of God . . . said.¹¹⁸

Mālik ibn Anas said, 'Whoever sticks to the *sunnah* and from whom the in-laws of the Messenger of God . . . are safe, then dies, he is among the saints (*ṣiddīqīn*), martyrs, and righteous, even if his (ritual) works be few.' Bishr ibn al-Ḥārith¹¹⁹ said, 'The *sunnah* is Islam and Islam is the *sunnah*.' [2:42] Al-Fuḍayl ibn 'Iyād said, 'When you see a man of *ahl al-sunnah*, it is as if you had seen a man of the Companions of the Messenger of God When you see a man of the people of innovation, it is as if you saw a man of the hypocrites.'¹²⁰ Yūnus ibn 'Ubayd said, 'More wonderful than the one who nowadays bids to the *sunnah* is the one who responds positively to the *sunnah*.' Ibn 'Awn used to say, as he was dying, 'The *sunnah*, the *sunnah*; beware of innovations', until he died. Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal said, 'A man of my companions died. He was then seen in someone's sleep. He said, "Say to Abū 'Abd Allāh (Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal), 'Incumbent on you is the *sunnah*, for the first thing my Lord (mighty and glorious is he) asked me about was the *sunnah*.'" Abū al-'Āliyah¹²¹ said, 'Whoever dies an adherent of the *sunnah* and outwardly righteous (*mastūr*), he is a saint (*ṣiddīq*). To be pro-

tected by the *sunnah* is salvation (*najāh*).¹²² Sufyān al-Thawrī said, 'Whoever heeds with his ear the adherent of an innovation has left the protection of God and been given over to them', meaning innovations. Dāwūd ibn Abī Hind¹²² said, 'God (blessed and exalted be He) [3:75] told Moses the son of 'Imrān by inspiration, 'Do not sit with the people of innovations. If you sit with them and something rankles in your breast of what they say, I will throw you headlong into the fire of Gehenna.'

Al-Fuḍayl ibn 'Iyād said, 'Whoever sits with the adherent of an innovation will not be given wisdom.' Al-Fuḍayl ibn 'Iyād said, 'Do not sit with the adherent of an innovation, for I fear that the curse will befall you.' Al-Fuḍayl ibn 'Iyād said, 'Whoever loves the adherent of an innovation, God will bring to nought his knowledge and put the light of Islam out of his heart.' Al-Fuḍayl ibn 'Iyād said, 'When you see the adherent of an innovation on the way, pass over to another way.' Al-Fuḍayl ibn 'Iyād said, 'Whoever sits with the adherent of an innovation, he will make him inherit blindness.' [2:43] Al-Fuḍayl ibn 'Iyād said, 'Whoever magnifies the adherent of an innovation has assisted at the destruction of Islam. Whoever smiles in the face of an innovator has belittled what God (mighty and glorious is He) sent down to Muḥammad Whoever marries his daughter to an innovator has severed relations with her. Whoever follows the funeral procession of an innovator remains under the anger of God till he returns. Al-Fuḍayl ibn 'Iyād said, 'I will eat with a Jew or a Christian but I will not eat with the adherent of an innovation. I want there to be a fortress of iron between me and the adherent of an innovation.' Al-Fuḍayl ibn 'Iyād said, 'When God knows that a man despises the adherent of an innovation, he forgives him, even if his work be little. Let not the adherent of the *sunnah* take the part of the adherent of an innovation except hypocritically. Whoever turns away his face from the adherent of an

¹¹⁸ An allusion in the first place to 'Uthmān, who married two of the Prophet's daughters, but also Abū Bakr and 'Alī, who likewise married daughters of the Prophet.

¹¹⁹ Bishr al-Ḥāfi, Baghdadi renunciant, prominent in early Ḥanbali literature, d. 227/841-2.

¹²⁰ The Qur'an continually denounces the *munāfiqīn* ('hypocrites'), who seem to be pretended friends to the Muslims as opposed to the outright *kuffār* ('unbelievers'); e.g. Q. 9:64, 'The hypocrites are afraid lest a *sūra* should be sent down against them, telling them what is in their hearts.'

¹²¹ Rufay' ibn Mihrān, Basran traditionist, d. 90/709?

¹²² Basran client, traditionist, d. 140/757-8?

innovation, God will fill his heart with faith. Whoever repulses the adherent of an innovation, God will keep him safe on the day of the greatest distress. Whoever contemns [3:76] the adherent of an innovation, God will lift him up a hundred degrees in Paradise. Never be the adherent of an innovation concerning God.'