

Introduction to *I'la al-Sunan*

Mufti Taqi al-'Uthmani

Translated by Zameelur Rahman¹

All praise to Allah, Lord of the Worlds, and blessings and peace be upon our leader and our master, Muhammad, and his family and all his companions, and on all who follow their way to the Day of Recompense.

As for what follows:

I cannot find in this fortunate and joyous moment any word or expression or means to express what is in my heart of the emotions of delight and gratitude to Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) that He has enabled me to produce this book and present it to readers in this splendid suit and wonderful dress of writing and print. It does not befit the like of me to expect such great fortune, but it is purely the grace of Allah (Exalted is He) and only His favour on a weak and weary slave who is unable to be grateful as is deserving, and has no [option] but to borrow words from His Noble Messenger (Allah bless him and grant him peace): "I am unable to praise You – You are as You praised Yourself!"

I would like, before speaking about the book, to present to the noble reader a brief biography of the imam, the magnificent scholar, the great caller [to Allah], the sage of the nation (*hakim al-ummah*), Shaykh Ashraf 'Ali ibn 'Abd al-Haqq al-Thanawi, may Allah Almighty show expansive mercy to him, for he was the first to undertake this immense academic project, and he paved its way, and called the scholars to it, and illuminated the path for them, and he remained with them for the duration of the work as a supervisor supervising them and as a guide guiding them, looking at every letter of what they wrote and assisting them by his beneficial words, and overflowing them with his sciences.

¹ Note from the translator:

This is a translation of Mufti Muhammad Taqi al-'Uthmani's introduction to 'Allamah Zafar Ahmad al-'Uthmani's monumental twenty-volume compendium of hadith-proofs for the Hanafi *madhhab* called *I'la al-Sunan*, written in 1976 CE for his critical edition of the first volume of this book, comprising of useful biographies of Mawlana Ashraf 'Ali al-Thanawi and 'Allamah Zafar Ahmad al-'Uthmani, and a discussion on the background to the compilation of *I'la al-Sunan*

Biography of Hakim al-Ummah Imam Shaykh Ashraf ‘Ali al-Thanawi

He (Allah have mercy on him) was from the genius and unique scholars and the righteous and sincere callers, who lit the lamps of renewal in India with bright flames and shining lights, and devoted their lives to elevating the word of Allah and reviving the religious sciences, guarding the frontiers of Islam, remaining steadfast on calling to Allah, and enduring what they suffered in this path.

He (Allah have mercy on him) was born on the morning of the fifth of Rabi‘ al-Thani in the year 1280 after the Prophetic migration (upon its bearer be peace) (September 1863 CE) in a noble family whose lineage reached the Commander of Believers, our master, ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab (Allah Almighty be pleased with him and make him content), in the village of Thana Bhawan in Muzaffarnagar District, which is considered to be from the villages which are recognised in the Indian lands for its outstanding men and its knowledgeable scholars and its great saints, like the great scholar and verifier, Shaykh Muhammad A‘la al-Thanawi author of *Kashshaf Istilahat al-Funun* – that great academic encyclopaedia which has gained the praise and trust of the people of knowledge in the eastern and western regions of the globe; and like the great scholar, Shaykh Muhammad al-Thanawi, and Hafiz Muhammad Damin al-Shahid, and the knower [of Allah], the verifier, Hajj Imdad Allah al-Muhajir al-Makki, who are referred to in all corners of these lands as the “three pivots” (*al-aqtab al-thalathah*), Allah Almighty show expansive mercy to them.

Hakim al-Ummah (Allah have mercy on him) was born in this village that flourished with knowledge and devotion, scrupulousness and piety, and he grew up in this purely religious environment. Here, he memorised the Qur‘an, and learnt the primary Persian and Arabic [subjects] and the sciences of religion at the hands of expert teachers. From the prime of his youth, he was dedicated to [gaining] knowledge and [attending to] the scholars, devoted to acts of obedience and far-removed from useless activity. From the brittleness of his nature was that since his early childhood he could not bear to look at another’s belly while it was uncovered, and when he would unexpectedly see one of the children with his belly uncovered he would be overcome by nausea, so the children would [deliberately] come before him and expose their bellies in front of him so that he would vomit, and as such he (Allah have mercy on him) would be exhausted of vomiting again and again, and this brittleness in his nature was an existential reason from Allah Almighty making him averse to mixing with most children, and as a consequence he was far-removed from their vain activities and their futility.

He (Allah have mercy on him) became accustomed to night prayer when twelve years old, and the wife of his paternal uncle would sometimes wake up in the middle of the night and see him praying, and she would try to make him lessen it out of affection for him, but because of its rootedness in his soul, he was unconcerned with this and continued with his prayer.

Thus he began his education in his hometown in the primary religious sciences until he reached his fifteenth year, whereupon he travelled to Dar al-‘Ulum Deoband, which was and still is the biggest centre for religious sciences in India and an academic seminary filled with people of knowledge, virtue, recognition and piety, and a sweet pool of the pools of knowledge and devotion, from which thousands of men graduated with immense knowledge and extensive experience and deep insight and righteous works and religious firmness and sound taste in calling to Allah and striving in His path. Thus, he (Allah have mercy on him) was admitted into this auspicious institute, and received all the Arabic, literary, rational and transmitted sciences

with teachers that recall the memories of the ancients in their extensive knowledge and their quality precision, like the imam and great warrior, Shaykh Mahmud al-Hasan al-Deobandi, who is called “Shaykh al-Hind” due to his lofty rank in knowledge and piety and due to his constructive and continuous efforts in the cause of liberating India from the hands of oppressive English colonisers; and like our master, the knower [of Allah], the verifier, Shaykh Muhammad Ya‘qub al-Nanotwi, who was known for his proficiency in all the sciences and arts, and his preoccupation with *dhikr* and acts of obedience; and like the imam, the philosopher, Mawlana Shaykh Muhammad Qasim al-Nanotwi, the founder of Dar al-‘Ulum Deoband whose reputation for penetrating insight and deep thought and marvellous works on the science of dialectical theology (*kalam*), beliefs, jurisprudence and hadith spread [throughout India]; and like Mawlana Shaykh Sayyid Ahmad al-Dihlawi who reached the zenith in the rational sciences and he excelled in the mathematical sciences by mere [personal] study without studying them with a teacher.

In brief, Hakim al-Ummah al-Thanawi (Allah have mercy on him) stayed in Dar al-‘Ulum amongst these teachers and their peers (Allah have mercy on them), and he acquired benefit from them, from their sciences and their service and their company. Through his entire student life he had no engagement besides studying his books and serving his teachers and professors. In Deoband, he had a number of relatives, who would often send to him invitations to eat with them, but he would make the excuse to them that he did not enter this city but for the purpose of learning and studying, so he did not visit them for the period of five years until he completed his studies.

While he was a student at Deoband, the Christians sent their missionaries to all parts of India, and they threatened the Muslims and invited them to debate and argue, so when he (Allah have mercy on him) found the opportunity, he went out to them, debated them and overcame them with his far-reaching proofs and his clear speech, as a result of which he became well-known amongst the students and the public as a strong debater and skilled orator. However, this was in the period of his study at Deoband, and after he became an experienced scholar, he (Allah have mercy on him) was the farthest of people from debate and argumentation, due to what he had seen that such debates and discussions lack sincerity and integrity, and rarely help in bringing people to guidance and rightness.

Thus, he (Allah have mercy on him) studied in Dar al-‘Ulum at Deoband until he completed his studies in the year 1300 H. It was from his humbleness that when the school board decided to inaugurate a big ceremony to distribute the certificates and turbans to the graduates, the Shaykh (Allah have mercy on him) became frightened and he went with some of his classmates to his teacher, Mawlana Shaykh Muhammad Ya‘qub al-Nanotwi (Allah have mercy on him) – who was then the head teacher – and said: “We heard that the school is going to present us with a certificate of completion of the sciences, and will place turbans on our heads, although the reality is that we are not deserving of this certificate and this honour, and we fear that this will be a reason for bad opinion of the school, that it produces the likes of us who have no knowledge.”

However, Shaykh al-Nanotwi replied: “You only say this because you are in the embrace of [your] teachers, so you consider your knowledge insignificant before these [scholars]; but I bear witness that just as you leave this school, your rank will be recognised, and you will become outstanding in the field of knowledge with no comparison.”

His (Allah have mercy on him) speech came true as Hakim al-Ummah al-Thanawi (his secret be sanctified) became the greatest recourse for the 'ulama and the commoners, and the greatest axis of learning and religion, and the 'ulama of that time confirmed that he was a marvel of his age in knowledge and piety, unequalled and unmatched.

His Teaching

In Kanpur there was a famous school called al-Fayd al-'Am, in which Mawlana Shaykh Ahmad Hasan al-Amrohowi taught, who was an advanced teacher whose reputation in all the sciences spread [throughout India], especially in the rational sciences. He had encountered some things that he disliked from the school committee, so he resigned from teaching there and founded another school.

Therefore, the owners of the school, al-Fayd al-'Am, requested from the scholars of Deoband to send to them a teacher, and Shaykh al-Thanawi had just graduated from Dar al-'Ulum in that year, so his teachers selected him to answer their call. Thereupon, he (Allah have mercy on him) moved to Kanpur in the month of Safar in the year 1300 H (1883 CE). Thus, he began his first exodus to benefit the people at the onset of the fourteenth century. Hereof, some of the scholars considered him a reviver (*mujaddid*) of this century in the Indian lands.

In brief, he (Allah have mercy on him) became occupied in Kanpur with teaching, calling [people to Allah], admonishing and writing, and very soon he came to be known amongst the students for his great knowledge, brilliant teaching and powerful oration, even though he had been given the position of an experienced teacher while still in the prime of his youth. Then he founded in Kanpur another school with the name Jami' al-'Ulum which remains by the grace of Allah Almighty till this day. Thus, a great multitude became his students. From the most eminent of his students are Shaykh Muhammad Ishaq al-Bardawani, who had memorised the entire *Sahih* of al-Bukhari by heart, and Mawlana Muhammad Mustafa al-Bajnuri, the author of beneficial works in the Urdu language, and Mawlana Shaykh Zafar Ahmad al-'Uthmani, for whose overflowing knowledge and expansive experience *I'la al-Sunan* is sufficient proof.

His Return to his Hometown

In brief, Shaykh al-Thanawi (Allah have mercy on him) stayed in Kanpur for a period of fourteen years, benefitting people with his lessons, his sermons and his writings. Then solitude was made dear to him, so he resigned from the school at Kanpur in Safar of the year 1315 H (1897 CE) and appointed his student Mawlana Shaykh Muhammad Ishaq al-Bardawani as his replacement there. Then he returned to his hometown Thana Bhawan and he stayed in the Zawiyah (spiritual convent) of his spiritual teacher (*shaykh*), called al-Khanqah al-Imdadiyya, because his spiritual teacher, Hajj Imdad Allah, the emigrant to Mecca, had instructed him to [do] so. Then, he remained in this Zawiyah till Allah Almighty took his [soul] in the year 1362 H (1943 CE). In this Zawiyah, Allah produced by his hands mammoth works on religion, such [works] that large committees and global commissions are unable to [produce]. Indeed it is difficult for us to mention all of these achievements, or most of them, in this brief biography, but we will [suffice with a] selection of some of them. Allah gives accordance.

His Writings

Hakim al-Ummah Shaykh al-Thawawi (Allah have mercy on him) was the most prolific author of his time. There are none in this century who are equal to him or match him in the number of books written, as he left behind him around a thousand published books that range between large and small. There is no religious subject that Muslims are in need of in this time except he has a published book or treatise or sermon regarding it. We are unable to mention all of them in detail in this short essay, but here is a list of some of the most important of them:

As for Qur'anic exegesis, he has a marvellous exegesis in the Urdu language with the title *Bayan al-Qur'an* in four large volumes with large size paper. It includes important academic discussions about exegesis, syntax, rhetoric, jurisprudence, speculative theology and Sufism. The value of this book will only be appreciated when a man refers to it after studying the extended books from exegetical works, for he has combined their essence and their spirit using simple academic and comprehensive expressions.

He hoped to compile *Ahkam al-Qur'an* in the Arabic language himself, in order to collect therein the issues of jurisprudence and theology derived from the Noble Qur'an, in particular the issues which arose in these latter times and have no mention in the earlier works. However, this was towards the end of his life when it was difficult for him to write by himself, so he delegated its composition to four scholars: my respected father, Mawlana Shaykh Mufti Muhammad Shafi' and the respected Mawlana Mufti Jamil Ahmad (Allah preserve them), and Mawlana Shaykh Zafar Ahmad al-'Uthmani, the author of *I'la al-Sunan*, and Mawlana al-Muhaddith Shaykh Muhammad Idris al-Kandihlawi the author of *al-Ta'liq al-Sabih 'ala Mishkat al-Masabih* (Allah Almighty have mercy on them). Thus, Mawlana Shaykh al-'Uthmani compiled two volumes of it, and my respected father Mufti Muhammad Shafi' compiled two volumes, and Mawlana Shaykh al-Kandihlawi compiled one volume. These volumes were printed in Karachi with [old] lithographic print, and the remainder have not yet been printed. May Allah enable us to produce this book in a form pleasing to the readers.

The Shaykh also has a small treatise, *al-Taqdir fi al-Tafsir*, in which he criticised some of the modern exegeses, and in which he explained valuable rules from the principles of exegesis of which many people in our time are heedless. He has twenty three other treatises on exegesis and the sciences of the Qur'an.

As for hadith, he had himself compiled *Jami' al-Athar* and *Tabi' al-Athar*, and he gave special attention to the compilation of *I'la al-Sunan*, and a notice on these books will come separately if Allah wills.

In jurisprudence, he has *Imdad al-Fatawa* in six large volumes in the Urdu language, which is a collection of his fatwas which he wrote himself. He (Allah have mercy on him) was the leading authority in issuing fatwas in India. Fatwa-seekers from the eastern and western parts of the earth would refer to him and 'ulama and scholars would write to him on difficult issues, the solution to which was problematic for them, so the Shaykh answered them and solved the difficult and obscure matters with the utmost verification and scrutiny, in a manner that cooled their breasts and satisfied their thirst. Indeed *Imdad al-Fatawa* bears witness to the depth of his insight in jurisprudence. There are valuable discussions in it related to jurisprudence and an explanation of most of the issues which arose in the latter times. This book is now considered the greatest source for muftis in Pakistan, India and Bangladesh.

He also has the book *Beheshti Zewar* (Heavenly Ornaments) which is in approximately 700 pages with large size paper, in which he assembled issues relating to all the chapters of jurisprudence, creed and spirituality. Originally, it was written for the edification of women, so in addition to religious issues, he included in it all that women need in their family life. A group of 'ulama helped him in writing this book. Although the purpose of this book was to edify women, many men have also benefitted from it, and 'ulama find it indispensable. It has been translated into a number of local languages.

He also has *Tahdhir al-Ikhwān 'an al-Riba fi al-Hindustan* and *Rafi' al-Dank 'an Manafi' al-Bank* on the verification of the matter of usury; and *al-Iqtisad fi al-Taqlid wa al-Ijtihad* and *al-Hilat al-Najizah li al-Halilat al-'Ajizah* in which he verified the issues relating to the wives of a lost man, an impotent man, a madman, and a cruel man, and the issues of delegating divorce (*tafwid al-talaq*) and [marital] choice after puberty (*khiyar al-bulugh*), and in most of these juristic issues he issued fatwas according to the *madhhab* of the Malikis, and he verified their *madhhab* by seeking fatwa from their scholars. He has many treatises besides these in verifying particular juristic issues.

As for beliefs and theology, he has *al-Intibahat al-Mufidah fi al-Ishtibahat al-Jadidah* which is a book unique in its field, in which he compiled the doubts which the atheists produce against Islam, and the distortions perpetrated by those who try to travel in the caravans of the Westerners, and he refuted them with a powerful and beneficial refutation; and he proved the basic Islamic beliefs using rational proofs that are convincing to all possessors of sound intellect and seekers of truth. We have just recently published with the help of Allah Almighty an English translation. He also has *al-Masalih al-'Aqliyyah li al-Ahkam al-Naqliyyah* and its translation in English has also been published. He has *Shahadat al-Aqwam 'ala Sidq al-Islam* in which he compiled the disbelievers' praise of Islam and its teachings. He has *Islah al-Khayal*, *Ashraf al-Jawab*, *al-Iksir fi Ithbat al-Taqdir*, *al-Khitab al-Malih fi Tahqiq al-Mahdi wa al-Masih*, *Dhayl 'ala Sharh al-'Aqa'id al-Nasafiyyah*, *Dirayat al-'Ismah* in refutation of philosophy, *Hidayat al-Hikmah*, and many other treatises.

As for spirituality, he has *Masa'il al-Suluk min Kalam Malik al-Muluk* in the Arabic language, in which he derived the issues relevant to the spiritual journey (*suluk*) and Sufism from the Noble Qur'an; and *al-Tasharruf bi Ma'rifati Ahadith al-Tasawwuf*, in which he compiled the hadiths from which issues of Sufism are derived, and he explained them with sufficient commentary while elaborating on the principles of Sufism and its fundamental issues; and *Sharh al-Mathnawi li Mawlana al-Rumi* in 8 volumes; and *Ma'arif al-'Awarif* in two volumes; and *al-Takashshuf 'an Muhimmat al-Tasawwuf* and *Talkhis al-Bidayah li al-Ghazali* and *Tarbiyat al-Salik wa Tanjiyat al-Halik* which is a collection of letters to his disciples answering their questions about spiritual illnesses, and it contains amazing anecdotes on detecting spiritual defects and treating them – no book has been compiled on this subject besides this as far as we know. He has many treatises on spirituality besides what we mentioned.

As for calling [to Islam] and giving counsel, he has *Hayat al-Muslimin*, *Ta'lim al-Din*, *Furu' al-Iman*, *Jaza' al-A'mal*, *Adab al-Mu'asharah*, *Huquq al-Islam*, *Huquq al-Walidayn*, *Irshad al-Ha'im fi Huquq al-Baha'im*, *al-Qawl al-Sawab fi Mas'alat al-Hijab*, *Ilqa' al-Sakinah fi Ibda' al-Zinah*, *Islah al-Rusum*, *Hifz al-Iman* in refutation of baseless innovations and beliefs, *Aghlat al-'Awamm*, *Islah Inqilab al-Ummah*, *Huquq al-'Ilm*, *Kathrat al-Az waj li Sahib al-Mi'raj*, *Islah al-Nisa'* and many other books.

As for litanies and supplications, he has *al-Ma'mul al-Maqbul fi Qurbat 'ind Allah wa Salawat al-Rasul* in which he summarised the transmitted supplications from *al-Hisn al-Hasin* and divided them into seven sections, and this book has reached most of the Muslim houses in these lands and is recited daily; and he has *Zad al-Sa'id* on the forms of blessings on the prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace); and *al-Khutab al-Ma'thurah* in which he collected the sermons of the Noble Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) and the rightly-guided caliphs; and *Khutbat al-Ahkam li Jumu'at al-'Amm* and *Zawal al-Sunnah 'an A'mal al-Sanah*.

As for [Prophetic] biography, he compiled *Nashr al-Tib fi Dhikr al-Nabiyy al-Habib*.

And on miscellaneous rare issues: *Bawadir al-Nawadir*, *Bada'i' al-Fara'id* and *al-Lata'if wa al-Zara'if*.

This is a short selection of some of his writings, and all this excludes his sermons published in large volumes, which will be discussed in what follows:

His Sermons

When he was a student at Deoband, the Shaykh (Allah have mercy on him) was examined on admonishing and sermonising. A gathering would be held every Friday which the students attended, and they delivered their speeches one after another. The Shaykh (Allah have mercy on him) was from the champions of this competition and was distinguished in this field, such that after completing his studies he became the most famous sermoniser and admonisher of his time. During his stay in Kanpur, he began to counsel the people and call them towards good. Gatherings would be held for this in every corner of the corners of the city, and then in every city from the cities of India. His sermons became famous in all the corners of the lands. For them, mounts would be saddled, and to hear them, difficulties would be endured, and opportunities would be seized. Truthfully, his sermons were like an ocean with no visible coast. There was knowledge and wisdom and proverbs and anecdotes and wonders and treasures in them which are not contained in books. And there were insights into exegesis, hadith, jurisprudence and Sufism in them which are not found in the available literature. In them, the Shaykh distributed the pearls of his gnosis that polished the hearts and illuminated the minds.

His sermons had such an impact on reforming souls and proportioning minds that nothing similar exists in this time, for how many men after listening to them withheld from what they were accustomed to of sins, and how many deviants because of them repented from innovations and passions, and how many men fumbling in doubts have been guided by them to faith and certainty?! The number of those in whom these counsels caused a transformation surpasses thousands of men and women. We praise Allah that a large number of these counsels were recorded by his students and his disciples during his sermons, and from them twenty volumes have been published, each volume comprising of at least 700 pages.

Hence, these published counsels are continuous springs flowing to this day, not scarce and not ceasing, and not depleting and not drying up. And there are innumerable men, who did not accompany Shaykh al-Thanawi and did not see him, but they attained the benefits of his company by his published counsels, and an immense religious transformation occurred in their lives.

From his practices in admonishing was that he would not accept [anything] in exchange for it, such that if a man were to offer him anything after an admonition which apparently seemed to be in exchange [for the lecture] he would never accept it. In his admonitions, he would prefer the method of inciting hope (*targhib*) rather than inducing fear (*tarhib*), and he said: "I have experienced the natures of people in this time, and I found they benefit more from what gives them hope than they benefit from what puts fear in them, which is why in my admonitions I most frequently encourage hope and rarely induce fear." (*Sirat Ashraf*, p. 137, quoting from *Wa'z al-Batin*)

He would supplicate to Allah (Glorified is He) before starting the admonition saying: "O Allah! Grant me the ability to deliver what the attendees are in need of and what will rectify their states." (Ibid, quoting from *Dhamm al-Nisyan*)

Controversial issues amongst the Muslims would not interfere in his admonitions unless a controversial matter came up during [the course of] his speech, whereupon he would explain it with a sufficient explanation, gently and softly, tactfully and with good-will, not being harsh in them against his opponents, and not going into excess when criticising them as is the habit of the sermonisers of our time. Rather, he would follow the example of the Prophets (upon them peace) in soft speech (Qur'an 20:44) and good admonition (Qur'an, 16:125).

His Utterances (*Malfuzat*)

Every day after Zuhr, he (Allah have mercy on him) would conduct a public gathering in the Khanqah Imdadiyyah, in which his students and disciples and the common people gathered, and he would admonish them and answer their various questions, and speak to them with whatever occurred to him without restricting [himself] to one subject and not another subject. One of the attendees in these gatherings would record his speech and whatever beneficial lessons he delivered in them. Then these speeches of his were published under the title *al-Malfuzat* (Utterances) in more than twenty volumes. These utterances consist of rare anecdotes of knowledge and wisdom, subtleties and wonders, stories and events, admonitions and lessons, counsels and guidance, etiquettes and characteristics, criticisms and refutations. The 'ulama of these lands have experienced that it has a strong effect in building a sound religious temperament and in encouraging towards righteous deeds.

His (Allah have mercy on him) Pledge in the Spiritual Path

Experience has proven that mere abundance of knowledge and expansive reading are insufficient in moulding a human being to have a firm religious understanding, since rectification of the souls and purification of the hearts and perfection of the faculties and proportioning the character-traits are almost impossible to achieve for any man except by internalising in his life the example of a man from the men of Allah, and acquiring the good fortune of his company, and acquiring benefit from his teachings, and drawing to himself those lofty capacities and that sound taste which was made possible for that man. This is why He (Glorified is He) explained the "Straight Path" (1:5) with His statement: "The path of those whom You have favoured" (1:6), indicating that the Straight Path is only the path walked upon by those favoured by Allah, of the prophets, truthful-saints, martyrs and pious (4:69); and the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) explained it with his statement: "What I and my companions are upon." He (Exalted is He) said: "And follow the way of those who have turned to Me," (31:15) and He (Exalted is He) said: "O you who believe! Have consciousness of Allah and

be with the truthful,” (9:119) indicating that a man will only be guided to the desired Straight Path by following those who turn to Allah and by staying constantly in the company of the truthful whose souls have been refined and their internal sensibilities have been proportioned. For this [reason], the practice of the ‘ulama has continuously been, since the time of the Sahabah and Tabi‘in, that they would not suffice with mere reading of books and memorisation of hadiths and listening to lectures, rather they would give special attention to staying in the constant company of the men of Allah and benefiting from their company and service.

Thus, Shaykh al-Thawfi (Allah have mercy on him) loved to accompany his teachers, and was eager to serve them, and after completing his studies, he pledged the pledge of the spiritual path to the knower [of Allah], the perceptive, Hajj Imdad Allah al-Muhajir al-Makki, and he stayed with him for a while. Then in Shawwal, he travelled and performed pilgrimage to the House of Allah and visited the resting place of the Noble Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace), and stayed with his spiritual teacher for some time. Then he performed Hajj a second time in 1310 H and he stayed in the company of his spiritual teacher for a period of 6 months, and he stayed constantly with him never parting [from him] and never separating. Due to the strength of his preparation and the perfect attention of the spiritual master, in this short time he became like a mirror in which the example of his spiritual teacher shone and his characteristics and his qualities glittered until he came to be recognised in his lands for his worship and his asceticism and his scrupulousness and his excellent guidance and training. He cleansed the path of Sufism from innovated superstitions and ugly innovations and he renewed it with a [comprehensive] renewal, so we should explain his work in some detail:

His Renewal of Sufism and the Spiritual Path

People were, in the matter of Sufism and the spiritual path, between excess and negligence. Thus, one group believed that Sufism and the spiritual path is from the newly-invented innovations having no basis in the Book and Sunnah; and another believed that Sufism and the spiritual path is the name of some unveilings and ecstatic experiences and illuminations which occur to the one walking this path, and that these states and internal experiences are end-objectives of the religion, and whoever acquires them is free from the noose of the outwards laws of the Shari‘ah, and the one from whom some feats and wonders emanate or to whom some unveilings and ecstatic experiences occur while awake or asleep, the people take him as an example and guide, however deviant his beliefs and however corrupt his deeds and qualities.

Thus, Hakim al-Ummah Shaykh al-Thawfi (Allah have mercy on him) began to refute these two notions theoretically and practically. Theoretically, he proved in his books and his sermons and his counsels and his gatherings that Sufism and spiritual excellence (*ihsan*) is one of the elements of religion and one of the branches of Islam, and that the laws of the Book and Sunnah divide into two categories: one category relating to the external acts which issue from the limbs and organs like prayer, fasting, charity, pilgrimage, marriage, divorce and other such laws of the Shari‘ah which the jurists have expounded in their books; and a second category of the laws of the Book and Sunnah relate to the internal acts which’s place is the heart and soul, and from them are commandments and prohibitions; as for the commandments, examples are: integrity and sincerity, fear and hope, desire and friendliness, patience and gratitude, humbleness and humility, love of Allah and His Messenger (Allah bless him and grant him peace), and turning and being sincere to Him, etc; and as for the prohibitions, examples are: ostentation, seeking reputation, vanity, pride, malice, envy, hopelessness, despair, love of wealth and fame, etc.

Hence, Sufism only deals with this category of divine laws, just as jurisprudence deals with the first category of them. The Qur'an and Sunnah are full of texts said in this context, although the laws relating to the inside of a human being are not usually possible to adopt except by training, exercise, edification and practice, because the internal diseases like ostentation, vanity etc. are hidden illnesses which often the sick person does not realise in himself, and he needs a knowledgeable experienced man inspecting his movements and stillness, his deeds and his thoughts, his ideas and his whispers, in order to detect them, and this inspector in Sufism is called a "spiritual teacher" (*shaykh*) and referral to him the "pledge" (*bay'ah*).

As for those unveilings and miracles, wonders and disposals, visions and experiences, Shaykh al-Thanawi (Allah have mercy on him) established that they have nothing to do with Sufism. There is no doubt that Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) often revealed some miracles at the hands of the Sahabah and saints, and there is no question that He (Exalted is He) had blessed some of his servants with true unveilings, but these are not the end-objectives of religion, nor are they a proof in the Shari'ah, and nor do they prove its bearer to be a saint or fearful [of Allah] or close to Allah Almighty, since such unveilings and disposals are not preconditioned by righteousness and piety, rather not even being Muslim and having faith, since it may occur by exercise and experience to wicked disbelieving men, as seen in the mesmerists.

Thus, the objective of Sufism is only to acquire virtuous character-traits and to avoid spiritual ailments, and the one successful in this path is he who has adorned [himself] with these virtues along with complete loyalty to the Islamic Shari'ah, and with complete adherence to the Prophetic Sunnah, and if after this Allah gives him a share in the insight (*firasah*) of faith or a portion of truthful unveilings, then that is an excess from Allah Almighty. As for the one who is deprived of these virtuous character-traits and obedience to the Prophetic Sunnah, and does not stay away from spiritual ills, he is completely removed from Sufism, the spiritual path (*tariqah*), sainthood and the spiritual journey (*suluk*), whether he flies in the wind or walks on water or ascends to the heaven.

This sound and balanced vision with respect to Sufism is detailed in different books of Shaykh al-Thanawi and his sermons with its proofs from the Book and Sunnah, and their corroborants from the examples of the Sahabah and the saints, and their evidences from sound intellect and spiritual experience, and he repelled [in them] whatever doubts had appeared about it, and he harmonised the actions of the great Sufis with the Book and Sunnah in [a manner] that the hearts find rest and the chests find coolness, and he left no room for objection except for an ignorant denier or an obstinate feigner of ignorance.

Practically, the Shaykh refuted these two ideas by his actions conforming to the Muhammadan Sunnah and instructing his disciples according to the way of the Shari'ah. Thus, whenever anyone came to him for the pledge, he commanded him firstly to fulfil his obligations in the Shari'ah, whether from the rights of Allah or the rights of servants. His attention to the rights of servants was stronger and more common, since he saw the condition of many people that they were persistent on rituals and did much remembrance of Allah, but they were deficient in the rights of the servants and opposed the Shari'ah in many social interactions. Similarly, his attention to teaching social etiquettes was more [important to him] than the attention he paid to teaching litanies and remembrances, and all optional acts. He would say: "I give most of my attention to no one being harmed by me or my disciples, whether that harm is material, like striking and argumentation, or monetary, like confiscation of rights and consuming illegally, or

what is related to his honour, like disgracing a man and backbiting him, or spiritual, like leaving another in a state of conflict and confusion, or treating him in a manner he dislikes, and if any of this occurs by mistake it is necessary to immediately seek forgiveness and pardon. I give more importance to this than anything else, such that if I see anyone disobeying the Shari'ah in its outward manifestation, that causes in me a degree of pain, but when I see anyone indifferent to fulfilling these rights, it hurts me badly, and I pray to Allah Almighty to save him from these mortal sins." (Translated from *Ashraf al-Sawanih*, 2:179)

In another place he said: "The head and foundation of good character is that a man is concerned with no one being harmed because of him, and this is what the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) taught by his comprehensive saying: 'The Muslim is the one from whose tongue and whose hand [other] Muslims are safe.' Everything that is a cause for harming another, it is included in bad character, even if its [outward] form is in the form of service or etiquette and veneration which people claim to be good character, because the reality of good character is to give rest to another, which is given priority over service, for service without giving rest is a fruit skin without a seed. Although social etiquettes are below beliefs and worship from the perspective of them being symbols of the religion, nonetheless, they have priority over beliefs and worship from another perspective, which is that in infractions of belief and worship there is harm to a human being's self, but in infractions of social etiquette there is harm to others, and a man harming another is worse than him harming himself. Therefore, Allah Almighty first said: 'Those who walk on the earth gently, and when they converse with the ignorant, they say: Peace,' (25:63) in which social etiquettes are taught, and then He said: 'Those who spend the night for their Lord, prostrating and standing,' in which rituals are taught, so good social conduct has priority over the obligations from some perspectives. As for its priority over optional acts, it is established from all perspectives." (Translated from *Adab al-Mu'asharah*)

Shaykh al-Thanawi (Allah have mercy on him) did not possess mere theories and empty thoughts, rather these theories were manifested in his works and his life, and even in the life of his disciples. For, the Khanqah Imdadiyyah was a house of education, unique in its style in the world, in which characters were refined, and minds were edified, and individual and social etiquettes of life were taught. Muslims from all sides and corners of India come together, from them 'ulama and senior scholars, and from them doctors and engineers, and from them employers and teachers, and from them farmers and factory workers, and from them men from all walks of life. They came to him and stayed with him for long periods and they may have had with them wives and children, and the Shaykh would look at their states and teach them the religion and make them learn the Islamic characteristics, and describe for them the means to acquire them and train them to [practice] the social etiquettes and explain to them their subtleties, and turn their attentions to their spiritual illnesses, and explain to them the means to rid [themselves] of them. This Khanqah had a superb rota in everything, which none could oppose; and this rota itself was a living example of Islamic social etiquettes, encouraging a man to organise his life and keep check of his moments and be concerned with fulfilling rights and avoiding harm to others.

Eventually, this Zawiya became a great factory wherein [real] men were built, and excellent qualities and upright etiquettes were moulded. Were we to expand on these qualities and etiquettes which the Shaykh would apply and train others with, we would have a long discussion [ahead of us]. However, we wish to present to the noble reader some examples of his conduct and habit, so that this subject becomes somewhat clear:

1. Whenever he (Allah have mercy on him) needed to speak to anyone, or tell him something, he would never ask him to [come] to him, rather he would walk to him himself, even if he was his student or his disciple or his younger relatives, and he would say: "It should be that the one in need goes to the one he needs not *vice versa*." One of the doctors, Hakim Muhammad Hashim, was from his disciples and close followers, who would frequently come to him, but whenever the Shaykh needed to describe to him some of the symptoms of his illness, he would go to him himself so long as that was not too difficult because of his illness. (*Ashraf al-Sawanih*, 2:43)
2. He would never give two instructions simultaneously to any of his servants, rather he would give him one instruction and then another instruction after he finished the first, and he would say: "I do this so it is not burdensome on the servant to remember the second instruction, so I bear the difficulty of remembering [it] myself, and do not burden the servant with it." (ibid)
3. He would not intercede for anyone except with justice, and if he knew or thought that that was burdensome on the one he interceded to, he would never do this, and he would say: "The people generally take into account in the affair of intercession the right of the one interceded for, and they do not take into account the right of the one interceded to, while helping a person is a praiseworthy deed and avoiding harm is obligatory, so how is it permissible to leave an obligation to attain [something] praiseworthy?" (*Sirat Ashraf*, p. 280)
4. He would not insist on a guest to stay in his company for long against his will, even if the guest was from the most beloved of people to him, and his stay from the most desirable of what he enjoyed. Likewise, he would not force a guest to partake of too much food against his will so that it would not be burdensome on him.
5. Whenever he wrote to anyone a letter in which was a question to the one written to, he would place therein an addressed envelope along with stamps for the reply even if the one written to was from his students or his younger relatives.

Thus, he (Allah have mercy on him) would attend to these delicate matters in social etiquettes. On this, he has a separate work. His life, and the life of his disciples, and his method in the Khanqah Imdadiyyah was a practical explanation of these Islamic etiquettes, such that the people recognised his disciples for observance of these subtleties in [their] characteristics and dealings and interactions.

In this manner, he (Allah Almighty have mercy on him) lived for 48 years in al-Khanqah al-Imdadiyyah, benefiting people through his knowledge, his counsels, his works and his teachings, until Allah Almighty took his [soul] in the month of Safar of the year 1362 after the Prophetic migration (1943 CE), may Allah Almighty shower him with His forgiveness and His pleasure and leave him to reside in the highest places of His gardens.

Biography of the Author ('Allamah Zafar Ahmad al-'Uthmani)

As for the biography of Mawlana Shaykh Zafar Ahmad al-'Uthmani (Allah Almighty have mercy on him), we will suffice here with quoting what our teacher, the great and perceptive scholar, the verifier, Shaykh 'Abd al-Fattah Abu Ghuddah (Allah preserve him), wrote in the introduction to his book *Inha' al-Sakan ila man Yutali'u l'la al-Sunan* which the Shaykh published with the title *Qawa'id fi 'Ulum al-Hadith*. Mawlana Shaykh al-'Uthmani (Allah have mercy on him) was alive at that time, so we will firstly quote the statement of Shaykh 'Abd al-Fattah Abu Ghuddah (Allah preserve him), and then add to it a few lines:

He is the erudite scholar, verifier, researcher, scrutiniser, firm proof, exegete, hadith-master, proficient and skilled jurist and theoretician, historian, man of letters, scrupulous, ascetic and insightful Sufi, Zafar Ahmad ibn Latif al-'Uthmani al-Thanawi, born on the 13th of Rabi' al-Awwal in the year 1310 H (October, 1892 CE), in the land of his forefathers near Dar al-'Ulum Deoband, the greatest of the institutes of learning in the Indian lands. His mother died when he was three years old, so his grandmother brought him up with the most excellent upbringing. She was a pilgrim and righteous woman. Thus, he received her righteousness and her piety from her. When he was five years old, he began to recite the Noble Qur'an with its senior memorisers in Deoband, like Hafiz Namdar, a teacher at Dar al-'Ulum, and his deputy, Hafiz Ghulam Rasul, and Mawlana Nadhir Ahmad, who was the brother of his grandmother. When he was seven years old, he began to read Urdu and Persian books and the textbooks of numeracy and mathematics with the magnificent scholar Mawlana Muhammad Yasin who was the father of the leading scholar of Pakistan today, our master, the great scholar, Shaykh Muhammad Shafi' al-Deobandi, the Grand Mufti at Karachi, and the founder of Dar al-'Ulum al-Islamiyyah there (his lofty shadow be extended).

Then he moved from Deoband to Thana Bhawan to [join] the circle of his maternal uncle Mawlana Muhammad Ashraf 'Ali al-Thanawi (Allah sanctify his secret), and he began to read Arabic books on morphology, syntax and literature with the able scholar Mawlana Muhammad 'Abd Allah al-Gangohi, and he received from his uncle Hakim al-Ummah something of the science of Tajwid, and a selection of his *al-Talkhisat al-'Ashr* and [some] volumes of *al-Mathnawi* by al-Jalal al-Rumi, and he read with his brother, Mawlana Sa'id Ahmad, part of *al-Talkhisat*.

Then, when his uncle Hakim al-Ummah became occupied with compiling his immense work *Bayan al-Qur'an* in Urdu, he brought him to Kanpur and admitted him into the school called Jami' al-'Ulum which Shaykh Hakim al-Ummah had founded when he resided in Kanpur, and he consigned its teaching to the most upright of his students, Mawlana Muhammad Ishaq al-Bardawani and Mawlana Muhammad Rashid al-Kanpuri. Thus, he read with them the books of hadith that have been set in the curriculum of those lands, which are: *Sahih al-Bukhari*, *Sahih Muslim*, *Sunan Abi Dawud*, *Sunan al-Nasa'i*, *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, *Sunan Ibn Majah* and *Mishkat al-Masabih*, along with what strengthens their study from the books of nomenclature and hadith principles. He also read with them the books of jurisprudence, exegesis and literature which are all part of the curriculum, and also some of the rational sciences.

When he attained the *sanad* in the Shari'ah and rational sciences, and was distinguished from amongst the noble students by the talents he possessed, he moved to Saharanpur and sat in the school Mazahir al-'Ulum and attended the lessons of hadith with the knower of Allah, the Imam, the hadith-scholar, the jurist, Mawlana Khalil Ahmad al-Saharanpuri, the author of *Badhl al-Majhud fi Sharh Sunan Abi Dawud*. After a period of close companionship with this gnostic, hadith scholar and Imam, he gave him authorisation (*ijazah*) in hadith and its sciences and in all the remaining rational and transmitted sciences, and he attained a *sanad* for the completion of higher studies in the year 1328. His age at this time was 18 years, which is a young age, none reaching the pinnacle of this level at such [a young age] except the most brilliant and exceptional [students]. In this period he also attended [lectures on] some texts of logic and engineering and higher mathematics with their instructors in the aforementioned school, from them was Mawlana 'Abd al-Latif the administrator of the school, and Mawlana 'Abd al-Qadir al-Punjabi.

In view of his superiority and his incredible intelligence and his brilliance, he was appointed as a teacher in the aforementioned school. He taught there for a period of seven years the sciences of jurisprudence, [jurisprudential and hadith] principles, logic, philosophy and other [subjects]. Then he moved to the school Imdad al-'Ulum in Thana Bhawan and was occupied with teaching the books in the curriculum of the [final] year there, which are the seven books mentioned previously, and teaching jurisprudence and exegesis. Thus, he benefitted and excelled, and a multitude of exceptional [scholars] graduated at his hands, and they propagated knowledge in those lands and they lit the paths of the Shari'ah for people.

Then Mawlana Hakim al-Ummah delegated to him the compilation of the book *I'la al-Sunan* along with issuing fatwa and teaching, so he did all of this in the most excellent way. He remained compiling *I'la al-Sunan* for around 20 years. He compiled it in 18 parts, rather volumes, and he further compiled for it two introductions in two volumes, so this amazing book was completed in 20 volumes, and he added to it another book called *Inja' al-Watan 'an al-Izdira' bi Imam al-Zaman* in which he wrote brilliant and extensive biographies of Imam Abu Hanifah and his students and their students and so forth, restricting [himself] therein to the jurists and hadith-scholars. The first part of this book was published in Karachi in the year 1387.

Then Mawlana Hakim al-Ummah instructed him to write *Dala'il al-Qur'an 'ala Masa'il al-Nu'man* in the style of *Ahkam al-Qur'an* by al-Jassas, and he compiled two large volumes of it ending at Surah al-Nisa'. It is a book that is fitting to be said of it in the language of the jurists and scholars: "Studying it is a lasting bliss, and attaining the like of it is a great victory."

He wrote a number of books in Urdu when he stayed in Thana Bhawan. From them is *al-Qawl al-Matin fi al-Ikhfa bi Amin* and *Shaqq al-Ghayn 'an Haqq Raf' al-Yadayn* and *Rahmat al-Quddus fi Tarjamati Bahjat al-Nufus* and *Fatihah al-Kalam fi al-Qira'ati Khalf al-Imam* in which he verified that it is not obligatory to recite behind the imam in all prayers especially the audible ones, and as far as the silent ones are concerned, it is permissible as is a narration from Imam Abu Hanifah as well. I said to the Shaykh (Allah Almighty preserve him) during my visit to him, when he mentioned this to me: "It is also

the opinion of Imam Muhammad,” and he said: “Yes, even if al-Kamal ibn al-Humam denied it!” He has *Kashf al-Duja* in Arabic, printed independently and as part of *al-Fatawa al-Imdadiyyah* in which he would answer the questions of fatwa-seekers which reached his uncle Hakim al-Ummah, of that which relates to jurisprudence and other [subjects], until it became seven large volumes. Shaykh Hakim al-Ummah called it: *Imdad al-Ahkam fi Masa’il al-Halal wa al-Haram*.

Then he moved to Madrasah Muhammadiyyah in Rangoon, Burma, and was occupied there with propagation and admonition and lecturing for a period of two years. Later, he returned to Thana Bhawan and carried on writing *Dala’il al-Qur’an* along with issuing fatwa and educating people. Then he travelled to Dacca in East Pakistan [now Bangladesh] before the existence of Pakistan, and he was appointed at its university as a teacher of hadith, jurisprudence and [jurisprudential and hadith] principles. Subsequently, he was appointed as the head teacher in Madrasah ‘Aliyah of Dacca, and he remained so for 8 years. There, he founded al-Qur’aniyyat al-‘Arabiyya University which is now the highest quality school in East Pakistan for learning the sciences of Qur’an, hadith, jurisprudence etc.

Afterwards, he moved to West Pakistan where he now lives in Ashrafabad of Hyderabad, Sind, to Dar al-‘Ulum al-Islamiyyah, as the head teacher there, teaching hadith and assuming responsibility of issuing fatwa to questioners and fatwa-seekers, and benefitting by his state, his speech and his good deeds students and seekers of benefit. May Allah extend his noble life and bless his good deeds and his sciences, and perfect upon him the garment of safety so his benefit multiplies and his achievements are complete and he attains the great pleasure of Allah. End quote from our teacher ‘Allamah Shaykh ‘Abd al-Fattah Abu Ghuddah (Allah preserve him) from the introduction to his edition of the book *Qawa’id fi ‘Ulum al-Hadith*.

Mawlana Shaykh Zafar Ahmad al-‘Uthmani (Allah have mercy on him) was alive when his book *Qawa’id fi ‘Ulum al-Hadith* was published in the edition of our teacher, ‘Allamah ‘Abd al-Fattah Abu Ghuddah (Allah preserve him), when he was the primary teacher of hadith at Dar al-‘Ulum al-Islamiyyah in Ashrafabad, in which he taught *Sahih al-Bukhari*, despite his old age and his ongoing illnesses and his decreased strength. He once said to me: “Whenever I feel an increase in my illness, I intensify my teaching of *Sahih al-Bukhari*, and Allah Almighty makes it a [means to] cure my illness.”

Despite his weakness and illness, he would be constant in *dhikr* and optional prayers. He attended all the prayers in the mosque and would endure great suffering because of this. Towards the end of his life, his tongue was moist with the remembrance of Allah in most times. In the month of Ramadan of the year 1394 H, the doctors forbade him to fast due to his ongoing illnesses, however he did not agree to this and said: “‘Abbas (Allah be pleased with him) did not stop fasting when he was ninety years old, and he faced hardship and suffering due to fasting, such that he would sit in a container of water, and he was not happy with [paying] compensation (*fidya*), so how can I be happy with [paying] compensation?” This is how he lived, Allah have mercy on him, until Allah Almighty took his [soul] in Dhu al-Qa’dah of the year 1394 H (1974 CE), may Allah Almighty give him rest in the safety of His mercy and pleasure. His son extracted the date of his death from [the numerical value of]: *Verily, he is in “comfort and fragrance and a garden of bliss”* (Qur’an, 56:89).

Discussion about the Book *I'la al-Sunan*

Hakim al-Ummah Mawlana Shaykh Ashraf 'Ali al-Thanawi (Allah have mercy on him) had seen for [some] time that people lengthened their tongues towards Imam Abu Hanifah (Allah be pleased with him), and they say that his *madhhab* is not supported by hadith, and that he prefers analogy and juristic opinion over authentic hadith, and other such claims which have no proof or evidence; and [he saw] that although the evidences in favour of Imam Abu Hanifah (Allah have mercy on him) were detailed in many classical works, nevertheless, they were dispersed in different books and many treatises. Therefore, Hakim al-Ummah (Allah have mercy on him) wanted to collect them into one book, so for this purpose he started [writing] a book he called *Ihya al-Sunan* (Reviving the Traditions), in which he collected the evidences of Imam Abu Hanifah from the authentic hadiths in all the chapters of jurisprudence. However, the draft of this book was lost from the author before it was printed – and whatever Allah wills, happens, and whatever He does not will, does not happen.

Then after a period of time, the Shaykh resumed its writing, and he changed his [earlier] method, and he called it *Jami' al-Athar* (Compilation of Transmissions) in which he compiled the hadiths from which Hanafis derive their *madhhab*, while paying brief attention to the quality of its chain and the ways in which evidence was deduced from them. Then he added footnotes to it with the title *Tabi' al-Athar* (Complement to the Transmissions) in which he discussed the explanation of the hadiths which apparently contradict them. Both of them were printed in a short volume from the Qasimiyya Press in Deoband around 1315 H with lithographic print.

However, both books were extremely brief, and did not go beyond the chapters of Salah, while he (Allah have mercy on him) desired to compile the like of what he compiled before, and elaborate therein discussion of the hadiths with respect to the chain and text, narration and comprehension; whereupon Mawlana Shaykh Ahmad Hasan al-Sunbhuli (Allah have mercy on him) was ready for this task, so Shaykh al-Thanawi (Allah have mercy on him) delegated to him the task of this compilation. Hence, in the main text [of the book] he collected the hadiths and reports along with a brief discussion about their chains, and he commented on them in the footnotes with respect to the text and chain with detail and elaboration. The text had the earlier title *Ihya' al-Sunan* and the footnotes had the title *al-Tawdih al-Hasan* (The Wonderful Elucidation), and Hakim al-Ummah al-Thanawi (Allah have mercy on him) would examine everything that Mawlana Sunbhuli had written letter by letter, and he changed places from it where he found the need to [do so], until he reached the Book of Hajj. Then it occurred to Mawlana Sunbhuli to take a second look at it, so he changed much of what he wrote previously, and he independently changed much of what Shaykh al-Thanawi highlighted without consulting him except in a few places; until the book changed from its previous style, and Shaykh al-Thanawi had not looked at any of it until its first volume was published and it became a new book, not what the Shaykh (Allah have mercy on him) had desired, and there were many errors in it. Thereupon, the Shaykh instructed his nephew, Mawlana Shaykh Zafar Ahmad al-'Uthmani (Allah have mercy on him), to amend what this first volume had missing and explain the errors made in it by Mawlana al-Sunbhuli. Subsequently, Mawlana Shaykh al-'Uthmani wrote a volume called *al-Istidrak al-Hasan 'ala Ihya' al-Sunan* (A Fine Amendment to the Revival of Traditions), and it was printed separately.

Then after some large and small incidents, Hakim al-Ummah al-Thanawi (Allah have mercy on him) resolved that the remainder of what Shaykh al-Sunbhuli wrote not be printed. Rather, he

instructed Mawlana al-'Uthmani (Allah have mercy on him) to compile a new book. Hence, he (Allah have mercy on him) compiled the rest of the book from the chapters of Salah to the last chapters of jurisprudence in sixteen volumes. It was from the precaution of Hakim al-Ummah al-Thanawi and his attention to the rights of Mawlana al-Subhuli that he did not like that this book which Shaykh al-'Uthmani compiled remain with its earlier title *Ihya' al-Sunan*, rather he changed the title of the text to *I'la al-Sunan* (Elevating the Traditions) and the title of the commentary to *Isda' al-Minan* (Extending Favours), so the remaining 16 volumes were published with this new title. In brief, the end result of all of this was that the first volume of this book was published with the title *Ihya' al-Sunan*, and its addendum with the title *al-Istidrak al-Hasan*, and the remainder of the book with the title *I'la al-Sunan*. These different titles were from that which confused the minds, so Mawlana Shaykh al-'Uthmani (Allah have mercy on him) wanted, for the second edition of this book, to give it one title and incorporate the discussions of *al-Istidrak al-Hasan* into the texts of *Ihya al-Sunnah* in such a way as to make it one continuous book, so he (Allah have mercy on him) did this after the death of Hakim al-Ummah al-Thanawi, and he underwent great difficulty because of this in his old age and at the end of his life. Thus, the first volume became one book which makes it a separate work of Shaykh al-'Uthmani and can be considered to be from his (Allah have mercy on him) authorship, and it is fair to call it the first volume of *I'la al-Sunan*, which is what we are presenting before the noble reader in this volume.

Thus, this is the story behind the compilation of this book and its different names. Now the book has – and all praise is to Allah – one title which is *I'la al-Sunan* by one author who is Mawlana Shaykh Zafar Ahmad al-'Uthmani (Allah have mercy on him).

As for the introductions to this book, three introductions were compiled for it, which should be discussed here:

1. The first volume of *Inha' al-Sakan ila man Yutali'u I'la al-Sunan* which is a valuable hadith-oriented introduction to the book compiled by Mawlana Shaykh Zafar Ahmad al-'Uthmani in which he commented on the important principles of the principles of hadith. And this introduction was first printed in Thana Bhawan in lithographic print and another in Karachi with type printing. Then our teacher, the great scholar, verifier, researcher and critic, Shaykh 'Abd al-Fattah Abu Ghuddah, produced it a third time in Halab of Sham, with his verification and his valuable footnotes, so he multiplied it in wonder and splendour and benefit, and he called it *Qawa'id fi 'Ulum al-Hadith*, may Allah Almighty reward him with goodness and the most abundant of rewards.
2. The second volume of *Inha' al-Sakan* which is a jurisprudence-oriented introduction to the book *I'la al-Sunan* compiled by Mawlana Shaykh Habib Ahmad al-Kiranawi (Allah have mercy on him) in which he compiled valuable discussions on the principles of jurisprudence and hadith. It was printed in Karachi with lithographic print.
3. *Inja' al-Watan 'an al-Izdira bi Imam al-Zaman*, which is a book compiled by Shaykh Mawlana Zafar Ahmad al-'Uthmani (Allah have mercy on him), in which he commented on the position of Imam Abu Hanifah in hadith and its sciences and the praise of the scholars of hadith upon him, and a detailed discussion on his teachers and his students from the great hadith-masters, and his services in the sciences of hadith, and he answered all [the objections] that are produced against him from doubts and criticisms.

[Having said] this, this work which Mawlana Shaykh Zafar Ahmad al-'Uthmani (Allah have mercy on him) completed, of incorporating *al-Istidrak al-Hasan* into the original book and calling all of this *I'la al-Sunan*, although it occurred after the death of Hakim al-Ummah Shaykh al-Thanawi (Allah have mercy on him), nonetheless, he had alluded to it in what he wrote as an introduction to the second volume of *I'la al-Sunan*. Given below is his statement with his wording in the second edition of the foreword to *Ihya' al-Sunan*:

Foreword to *Ihya' al-Sunan* in the Second Edition

All praise to Allah. I seek His help and I ask His forgiveness. We seek refuge in Allah from the evils of our souls. Whoever Allah guides, there is none to misguide him, and whoever He misguides, there is none to guide him. I bear witness that there is no deity but Allah alone – He has no partner, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger. Allah sent him with the truth as a bringer of good news and a warner before the [coming of] the Hour. Whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger, he is guided, and whoever disobeys them, indeed he harms none but himself, and does not harm Allah in the least.

To proceed: This [book] is a collection of the proofs of some of the peripherals of the *madhhab* of the earliest of the four famous *mujtahid* Imams in religion, Abu Hanifah al-Nu'man (Allah Almighty be pleased with him and them and all their followers). The need for it arose in this time when detractors lengthened their tongues towards him, so it was not possible to remain silent. I had produced a draft of parts of this some years ago in all of the chapters of jurisprudence, which I called *Ihya' al-Sunan*. However, I lost it, and praise is due to Allah in all situations. Then after a period of time, I resumed writing some of it in a style different to the previous style, and I called it *Jami' al-Athar*, and it has – with praise to Allah – been published. However, it did not go beyond the chapters of Salah, and [due to some] reasons it was not possible for me to complete it, until Allah favoured me now, since He gave me the opportunity to return to it by means of instructing one of the people who is occupied with me in serving knowledge, and he participated with me in this matter, and supported me in it in such a way that it is true to say that he is the doer and I am the assistant. I changed its style from the style of *Jami' al-Athar* to the previous style, due to it being simple and free from difficulty, while maintaining therein the sequence of *al-Hidayah*. In this attempt, I did not suffice with [discussing] the controversial issues which were intended for this compilation, rather I added to it some of the peripherals that are agreed upon, though few, for specific purposes.

Since this conformed to the draft of *Ihya' al-Sunan*, I felt [it was best] to call it by that earlier title, so it also becomes a revival of the lost [material], and Allah gives accordance to complete this entire immense project. I attached to it footnotes, elucidating the meanings of the hadiths, and discussing their chains, and I called it *al-Tawdih al-Hasan 'ala Ihya' al-Sunan*.

Moreover, know that I would examine this book till the Book of Hajj letter for letter, after the aforementioned deputy compiled it, and I changed places thereof when I found the need to [do so]. Then it occurred to him to take a second look at it, and change what needed to be changed due to his belief of his [own] expansive insight, so he corrected

many places of what he wrote before and he sought my opinion in what was confusing to him in a few of these places, and he independently reviewed most of it, until the book changed from its previous style and its subject altered, and I was not aware of this until the first part of it was published and that is this [book] in your hand. For this [reason], it was in need of compiling an amendment to it, as you will find referenced in many of the Urdu places in the margins; and Allah is asked for help.

This was begun on the last Friday of the auspicious [month of] Ramadan in the year 1331 after the Prophetic migration, on its bearer a million peace and greetings (1913 CE).

This was written by the slave, hopeful of the mercy of his Mighty Lord, Ashraf ‘Ali al-Thanawi, his open and hidden sins be forgiven.

Now, given below is what he wrote as a preface to the second volume of *I’la al-Sunan*:

Foreword to the Second Volume of *I’la al-Sunan*

All praise to Allah. I seek His help and I ask His forgiveness. We seek refuge in Allah from the evils of our souls. Whoever Allah guides, there is none to misguide him, and whoever He misguides, there is none to guide him. I bear witness that there is no deity but Allah alone – He has no partner, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger. Allah sent him with the truth as a bringer of good news and a warner before the [coming of] the Hour. Whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger, he is guided, and whoever disobeys them, indeed he harms none but himself, and does not harm Allah in the least.

As for what follows: My dear brother! First look at the foreword to the first portion of *Ihya’ al-Sunan* which will unveil for you the reality of the treatise. Then, secondly, understand that the need arose, due to some circumstances which there is no benefit in retelling, to delegate the task of compiling it to my nephew, the perceptive, brilliant, intelligent, Mawlawi Zafar Ahmad, may Allah keep him firm on the upright way; and to change its title from *Ihya’ al-Sunan* to *I’la’ al-Sunan* and the title of its commentary from *al-Tawdih al-Hasan* to *Isda’ al-Minan*, while leaving the title of its translation as it is²; and to reconstructing some of the places of the first part from it which was published previously; and to call the collection of the added [notes] and that to which they were added in the first part of *I’la al-Sunan* as “the first part,” thus this is “the second part” of it.

I set my eyes on it just like the first, letter for letter, and I found it – and all praise is to Allah – many times better than the first in narration and comprehension and in sufficiency in its subject-matter and in the leftover obligations to change some parts of it which were few. Distinguishing my speech from his speech and the like of this is just like the first. And all praise is to Allah for what He produced and performed, and verily the latter is better for you than the former.

² In the margins of the first edition, there was a translation of the hadiths of *I’la al-Sunan* into Urdu which Shaykh [Ashraf ‘Ali al-Thanawi] called *Itfa’ al-Fitan* (Extinguishing the Tribulations). In this new edition, however, this translation was removed from the margins. (Mufti Taqi al-Uthmani)

I am the slave, hopeful of the mercy of His Mighty Lord, Ashraf 'Ali al-Thanaawi al-Hanafi (his open and hidden sins be forgiven), and the date is mid-1341 after the Prophetic migration, on its bearer a thousand peace and greetings (1923 CE).

This is what Hakim al-Ummah Mawlana Shaykh Ashraf 'Ali al-Thanaawi (Allah have mercy on him) wrote, and there is now no need to quote these two forewords after these tales have folded up and the entire book has become united under one title with one author, but I wished to quote them here so it serves as a good memory and clarifies the events for one who wishes to know them.

My Work in the Production of this Book

As for my work in the production of this book, it is as follows:

1. I compared the draft of the author in which *al-Istidrak al-Hasan* was incorporated into *Ihya al-Sunan* with their printed original, and I correct it based on them
2. I checked the texts referenced in the book in most places and I clarified the discrepancies wherever they were
3. The author did not concern himself with reviewing the positions of the jurists, relying on the knowledge of the reader, so I mentioned in my footnotes these positions at the start of every chapter, drawing from the reliable recognised books to transmit the positions [of the different schools], so it becomes accessible to every reader, and he does not need [to refer to] other books while reading [it]
4. The author (Allah have mercy on him) has stated in his book the page numbers of the books referenced, but these numbers differ with different prints, so I clarified in my footnote the places of those texts by using the titles of the chapters or the numbers of the hadiths or the subsections, which do not differ by different prints; unless its place is absolutely clear
5. Some books of hadith were not printed at the time this book was compiled, like the *Musannaf* of Ibn Abi Shaybah and the *Musannaf* of 'Abd al-Razzaq and the *Sahih* of Ibn Khuzaymah and others, so the author was forced to select the hadiths of these books from secondary sources. Thus, wherever I found a useful addition while checking the texts, I added it to the book in my footnotes
6. In some places I added some supporting [evidence] for the contention of the author, or some useful points, or criticisms, briefly and concisely

[Having said] this, it is necessary for me to thank a brother beloved [to me] for the sake of Allah, the pious youth, the scholar, Mawlana Shaykh Muhammad Ishaq al-Jahlami, since he helped me for the duration of this work, a help that is appreciated, in checking the texts, chasing the sources and correcting the typing errors, and were it not for his help, it would not be possible for me to have completed this work in such a short period. May Allah Almighty reward him with goodness and the most abundant of rewards, and give him ability to [do] what He loves and approves. Amin.

Finally, I have no option but to confess the shortness of my hand and the fewness of my goods [i.e. my inexperience], and that I am unable to undertake the service of this book as it deserves to be served, although I am grateful to Allah Almighty that He has enabled me to bring it into the realm of existence. Thus, if there is anything useful in my work, it is from Allah, and if there are errors in it, they are from me and from Satan. My success is only with Allah. On him I rely and to Him I turn.

Muhammad Taqi al-'Uthmani

Dar al-'Ulum Karachi

18 Rabi' al-Awwal, 1396 H (1976 CE)

I'la al-Sunan, Idarat al-Qur'an wa al-'Ulum al-Islamiyyah, Karachi: Pakistan, 1427 H, 1:9-33