A COLLECTION OF CRITICAL ESSAYS



The Integrity of Transmission

A Critical Examination of the Case Against the Sunni Hadith Method

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Introduction

This volume brings together a series of critical essays examining four objections to the Sunni *hadith* method advanced by Hassan al-Qadri in a lecture published by the Purified Truth channel entitled: 'Why Do the Shia Not Trust Sunni *Hadith*?' The lecture advances a cumulative case: that primary features of Sunni *hadith* methodology, when considered alongside early Islamic politics and the treatment of historical reports, compromise confidence in the Prophetic traditions preserved by its scholars. The first objection concerns *adalat al-sahaba* and the exemption of the Prophet's Companions from the ordinary procedures of *al-jarh wa'l-ta'dil* applied to later transmitters. The second concerns the relationship between the Sunni *hadith* tradition and the Umayyad and Abbasid states, and whether political patronage determined which reports achieved acceptance. The third asks whether leading traditionists discouraged or suppressed accounts of the Companions' shortcomings (*mathalib al-sahaba*). The fourth extends this allegation to editorial omissions, anonymisation and the purported alteration of transmitted reports. These are serious methodological questions, and they deserve to be assessed by examining the propositions they actually entail. The existence of a theological presumption does not, without further argument, demonstrate defective authentication; political incentives do not themselves establish successful interference; and a preference concerning the public dissemination of controversial history is not equivalent to the deliberate falsification of religious evidence. Equally, the integrity of a transmitted report must be distinguished from the historical reputation of an individual mentioned within it. The essays accordingly examine al-Qadri's citations against the primary *hadith* collections, early biographical criticism, Quranic exegesis and the explanations of classical scholars. Arabic source passages are

presented with English translations and references so that the reader may evaluate the evidence rather than accept conclusions resting on paraphrase alone. The object is not to deny that the first Muslim generations experienced political division, personal shortcomings or contested scholarship; it is to determine whether the particular evidence advanced establishes the more consequential claim that Sunni *hadith* transmission is methodologically unreliable. Although composed in response to a contemporary lecture, the underlying enquiry is broader: what constitutes evidence of corruption in a transmitted tradition, and how should theological premises, historical testimony and the technical procedures of *hadith* criticism be weighed against one another? It is on that evidentiary question that the present collection principally turns.

Ibn al-Sindhi

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PART I

The Uprightness of the Companions: Divine Accreditation, Historical Fallibility and the Foundations of Sunni Hadith Criticism

1.1. Al-Qadri's Foundational Objection: What Does Adalat al-Sahaba Actually Mean?

Among the principal criticisms advanced by Hassan al-Qadri against the Sunni *hadith* method is the doctrine of *adalat al-Sahaba*, the presumed uprightness of the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad. He argues that a system which subjects later transmitters to *al-jarh wa'l-tadil*—the investigation of their moral probity and reliability—but exempts the first generation from that inquiry has created a privileged category of transmitters whose trustworthiness cannot be objectively established. He reinforces this objection by pointing to the existence of hypocrites around the Prophet, the civil strife of the first Islamic century and authentic reports of individual Companions committing sins, disagreeing, or engaging in combat.

The objection depends on a particular understanding of the doctrine: that Sunni traditionists must regard some one-hundred thousand people who encountered the Prophet as uniformly impeccable in conduct, incapable of moral transgression and beyond meaningful scrutiny. That is not what the technical doctrine means. Equally important, al-Qadri's account omits the very reason classical traditionists gave for dispensing with ordinary individual accreditation at the Companion level. They did not imagine that the earliest Muslims had somehow been empirically investigated in precisely the same

way as later transmitters. Their argument was that the Qur'an and the Prophet had already furnished an exceptional form of testimony concerning the foundational believing generation.

A proper examination must therefore proceed in order. First, what does *adalah* mean in the terminology of *hadith* criticism, and how does it differ from *ismah* (infallibility) or *dabt* (precision in preservation)? Second, what are the cumulative Quranic grounds on which the traditionists rested their exemption? Third, does the existence of hypocrites or the narrations of *al-Hawd* contradict that accreditation? Finally, how should authentic instances of moral failing and political conflict be evaluated within a doctrine that never required the Companions to be sinless?

1.1.1. Uprightness, Precision and Infallibility Are Distinct Categories

In the technical vocabulary of *hadith* criticism, *adalah* denotes the moral integrity and general religious probity necessary for a transmitter's report to be received as credible. It is not identical to *dabt*, the narrator's ability to preserve and convey what was heard accurately, nor to *ismah*, immunity from sin and error. Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani describes the upright person in *Nuzhat al-Nazar* as:

من له ملكة تحمله على ملازمة التقوى والمروءة

> *Translation: "One who possesses an established disposition compelling him towards the observance of piety and moral propriety."*

> *Reference: Nuzhat al-Nazar fi Tawdih Nukhbat al-Fikar, by Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, discussion of adalah and dabt.*

An *adl* transmitter is therefore one whose general moral probity makes his testimony acceptable. This does not stipulate that he has never committed a sin, never misunderstood a legal ruling or never misremembered a transmitted expression. The classical criteria distinguish the trustworthiness of the person from the accuracy of any individual report. A person may be fundamentally truthful and yet err in recollection; a connected chain may contain trustworthy transmitters and yet yield an anomalous or defective *matn*.

The Companion presumption concerns primarily the integrity of the genuine Companion as a transmitter, not the automatic authentication of every *hadith* ascribed to him. Its application does not dispense with establishing that the Companion actually heard or received the report, examining later transmitters, detecting interruptions in the chain, comparing recensions, investigating contradictions and identifying hidden defects. The history of *hadith* criticism is replete with instances in which a report attributed to a Companion was not accepted simply because it was attributed to that Companion. Ibn al-Salah states the traditional distinction explicitly in the thirty-ninth category of his *Ma'rifat Anwa Ulum al-Hadith*:

للصحابة بأسرهم خصيصة، وهي أنه لا يسأل عن عدالة أحد منهم

> *Translation: "The Companions collectively possess a particular distinction: the uprightness of none of them is subjected to inquiry."*

> *Reference: Ma'rifat Anwa Ulum al-Hadith, by Ibn al-Salah, type 39, Ma'rifat al-Sahaba*

This is a rule concerning a specified class of transmitters, not a declaration that all their recollections are equally accurate or that all their personal conduct was exemplary. The doctrine ought to be evaluated in the terms in which its exponents formulated it, rather than through a substitute definition equating uprightness with perfection.

1.1.2. Who Qualifies as a Companion?

An associated distinction concerns the identity of the class to which the rule applies. Al-Bukhari introduces his chapter on the virtues of the Companions with the description:

ومن صحب النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم أو رآه من المسلمين فهو من أصحابه

> *Translation: "Whoever accompanied the Prophet, or saw him while being among the Muslims, is among his Companions."*

> *Reference: Sahih al-Bukhari, Kitab Fada'il Ashab al-Nabi, introductory chapter.*

Ibn Hajar gives the developed technical definition in the introduction to *al-Isabah fi Tamyiz al-Sahaba*:

الصحابي من لقي النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم مؤمنا به، ومات على الإسلام

> *Translation: "A Companion is one who encountered the Prophet while believing in him and died upon Islam."*

> *Reference: al-Isabah fi Tamyiz al-Sahaba, by Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, introduction, definition of a Companion.*

This definition requires actual encounter, genuine faith at that encounter and death upon Islam. An outwardly Muslim hypocrite who persisted in unbelief until death does not thereby acquire the religious accreditation of the genuine Companions merely because he lived in proximity to or encountered the Prophet. Nor does the designation imply that every Companion had equal proximity to the Prophet, duration of companionship or knowledge. Ahmad ibn Hanbal's discussions in *Usul al-Sunnah* themselves distinguish degrees of companionship and precedence. An illustrative report appears in Ahmad's *Musnad*, where Asim al-Ahwal states concerning Abdullah ibn Sarjis:

قد رأى عبد الله بن سرجس رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم، غير أنه لم تكن له صحبة

> *Translation: "Abdullah ibn Sarjis saw the Messenger of Allah, although he did not possess companionship."*

> *Reference: Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal, no. 20779 (numbering of the al-Risalah edition).*

The remark is that of Asim al-Ahwal, as transmitted in Ahmad's compilation. Nor should it be taken as a categorical exclusion of Ibn Sarjis from the broader technical class of Companions. Ibn Abd al-Barr, whose explanation is cited by al-Dhahabi in *Siyar A'lam al- Nubala* under Ibn Sarjis's biography, observes that Asim intended the fuller, sustained form of companionship recognised in ordinary usage, whereas the broader technical definition includes a believer who actually encountered the Prophet. The report is thus a

valuable early illustration of the distinction between *suhbah* in the sense of prolonged personal association and *suhbah* as the technical designation employed by the *hadith* critics.

A critical distinction also exists between defining companionship and proving that an individual possessed it. Ibn Hajar discusses its establishment through widespread historical recognition (*tawatur*), recurrent transmission (*istifadah*), corroborated testimony from recognised Companions or Successors and other accepted means. An individual's unsupported claim to be a Companion cannot be certified merely by assuming the uprightness that the claim itself is supposed to establish. The transmission critics therefore did not abandon factual inquiry into the first generation; they distinguished proof of the status from the special moral presumption attached to those in whom it was established.

1.1.3. The Numerical Objection

Al-Qadri invokes the estimate of approximately one-hundred thousand Companions as though the *hadith* corpus depended on that number of independently attested first-generation authorities. The actual number of identifiable Companions from whom reports survive is far smaller. Al-Dhahabi's *Tajrid Asma al-Sahaba* places the number of Companion-transmitters in the vicinity of one-thousand five hundred, while Akram Diya al-Umari's enumeration identifies approximately one-thousand five-hundred and sixty-five across selected early collections. Such figures are estimates of an extant literary corpus, not a census of everyone who transmitted anything in the first century. The Sunni theological presumption formally concerns the larger category of genuine Companions; nevertheless, the practical transmission question concerns a substantially smaller body of identifiable narrators and concrete chains.

The distinction is significant. An invocation of a vast population is not itself evidence that an established Companion-transmitter fabricated a Prophetic report, nor does it eliminate the need to identify the actual transmitters on whose reports the extant collections depend.

1.1.4. Addressing the Prior Historical and Exegetical Divide

There is, however, a more fundamental difficulty with the manner in which al-Qadri frames his objection. The Sunni and Twelver Shi'a approaches to the earliest Muslim generation do not begin from the same historical and exegetical premises. Consequently, a criticism that takes the presumed moral disqualification of prominent Companions as its starting point and then faults Sunni *hadith* critics for not reaching that conclusion, risks becoming circular before the technical discussion of *al-jarh wa'l-ta'dil* has even begun.

Within a prominent strand of Twelver Shi'a polemical historiography, leading Companions—particularly those whose transmissions form part of the Sunni *hadith* corpus—are assessed through an adverse reading of events following the Prophet's death. Their political conduct is treated as evidence of serious religious and moral failure, and in more severe polemical formulations, even apostasy. By contrast, the Sunni traditionists begin with the Qur'an's repeated accreditation of identifiable groups among the Prophet's earliest followers: the Emigrants, the Helpers, the foremost believers and the Pledgers. They read the subsequent historical record in light of that divine testimony, without supposing that the individuals praised thereby became infallible. The disagreement, therefore, is not merely over the reliability of one transmitter or the moral implications of one historical event. It concerns the prior question of what evidentiary weight ought to be assigned to the Qur'an's praise of the foundational believing community, and to whom that praise applies.

This is precisely where the danger of circular reasoning arises. If the religious standing of the most prominent Companions receiving divine accreditation is regarded as already forfeited, the Quranic passages adduced by Sunni scholars will invariably be interpreted so as to exclude those very individuals. Under that interpretive assumption, no accumulation of verses can carry the weight *Ahl al-Sunnah* assign to them, because their application has been ruled out in advance. Yet the applicability of those verses is the very matter that requires demonstration, not something that can be settled by presupposing the historical verdict one seeks to establish. Nor is it sufficient simply to reverse the presumption: the Sunni exegetical case must be made from the actual wording, grammar, early interpretation and historical referents of the relevant passages. That is the purpose of the detailed Quranic examination below.

Put plainly, al-Qadri's methodological objection cannot be sustained merely by observing that the Sunni *hadith* critics did not subject the Companions to the same individual accreditation procedures as later transmitters. The critics themselves stated *why* they made that distinction: they understood the first believing generation to have received exceptional accreditation from Allah and His Messenger. A serious challenge must therefore confront that justification at its source. To describe the exemption as an arbitrary or uncritical assumption while sidestepping the cumulative Quranic case is to mistake a disagreement over foundational evidence for an inconsistency within the Sunni method itself.

1.2. Why the Hadith Critics Exempted the Companions: The Qur'an as Divine Ta'dil

The central omission in al-Qadri's account is not whether the exception exists —Sunni authorities openly and repeatedly acknowledge it—but why they believe it exists. The foundation was not an unexamined decision to exempt the earliest Muslims from scrutiny. It was the contention that God Himself had accredited the believing generation through repeated declarations of truthfulness, genuine faith, sincerity, sacrifice, divine pleasure and forgiveness. What subsequent *mu'addilun* attempt to establish concerning a transmitter's outward probity by examining human testimony, the traditionists regarded as already established at an exceptional level through divine revelation concerning the first believing community. This is made unambiguous by the very author al-Qadri cites, al-Khatib al-Baghdadi. The relevant chapter of his *al-Kifayah fi Ilm al-Riwayah* is entitled:

باب ما جاء في تعديل الله ورسوله للصحابة وأنه لا يحتاج للسؤال عنهم وإنما يجب ذلك فيمن دونهم

> *Translation: "Chapter concerning the accreditation of the Companions by Allah and His Messenger, and why inquiry concerning them is unnecessary although required for those below them."*

Al-Khatib begins by reiterating the ordinary rule: a connected *hadith* is not accepted for practice until the uprightness of its transmitters has been established. He then explains the exception:

لأن عدالة الصحابة ثابتة معلومة بتعديل الله لهم وإخباره عن طهارتهم واختياره لهم في نص القرآن

> *Translation: "For the uprightness of the Companions is established and known through Allah's accreditation of them, His testimony to their purity, and His selection of them in the explicit text of the Qur'an."*

> *Reference: al-Kifayah fi Ilm al-Riwayah, by Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, chapter on divine and Prophetic accreditation of the Companions.*

There is, moreover, a crucial qualification in al-Khatib's own formulation which al-Qadri does not mention when appealing to his words. Having stated that the Companions require no human accreditation after Allah's testimony concerning them, al-Khatib adds:

إلا أن يثبت على أحدهم ارتكاب ما لا يحتمل إلا قصد المعصية، والخروج من باب التأويل، فيحكم بسقوط عدالته

> *Translation: "Except where it is established that one of them committed an act admitting no interpretation other than deliberate disobedience, outside the scope of legitimate interpretation, in which case his uprightness would be judged forfeited."*

Al-Khatib immediately continues:

وقد برأهم الله تعالى من ذلك، ورفع أقدارهم عنه

> *Translation: "Allah, however, has exonerated them from that and elevated their standing above it."*

> *Reference: al-Kifayah fi Ilm al-Riwayah, by Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, chapter on the accreditation of the Companions (vol. 1, pp. 186–188 in the edition cited by later scholars; pagination varies between editions).*

This qualification is central to the interpretation of his position. Al-Khatib did not define *adalah* as a state logically incapable of forfeiture, nor did he assert that an action admitting no legitimate interpretation could never be relevant to moral accreditation. Rather, he articulated the criterion in principle, before maintaining that the Companions' established religious standing had not been overturned by evidence meeting that criterion.

Whether al-Qadri agrees with his application is a distinct question; it is not accurate to quote his presumption of uprightness while omitting the qualification which he expressly attached to it.

This is the doctrinal argument al-Qadri has to answer. It is insufficient to object that the Companions were not subjected to exactly the same later biographical investigation while leaving unexamined the Quranic texts which, in the eyes of the traditionists, constitute the grounds for that exception. Al-Khatib himself adduces not one verse but a series of passages, including Qur'an 3:110, 2:143, 48:18, 9:100, 8:64 and 59:8–9. The relevant argument is cumulative: specific, identifiable groups within the foundational community are commended on different occasions and for different religious qualities, often with language concerning their inward sincerity rather than merely their outward association. The following passages illustrate the depth of that case.

1.2.1. Qur'an 59:8–10: The Truthfulness of the Emigrants and the Excellence of the Helpers

A particularly important example appears in Surat al-Hashr, which separately identifies the virtues of the Emigrants and Helpers. Concerning the Emigrants, Allah declares:

للفقراء المهاجرين الذين أخرجوا من ديارهم وأموالهم يبتغون فضلا من الله ورضوانا وينصرون الله ورسوله أولئك هم الصادقون

> *Translation: "For the poor Emigrants who were expelled from their homes and deprived of their possessions, seeking Allah's bounty and pleasure, and supporting Allah and His Messenger: those are the truthful."*
>
> *Reference: Qur'an 59:8.*

The concluding declaration is especially relevant:

أولئك هم الصادقون

> *Translation: "Those are the truthful."*
>
> *Reference: Qur'an 59:8.*

The construction combines the demonstrative *ulaika* with the independent pronoun *hum*, producing an emphatic identification of the individuals described as truthful. Al-Tabari explains the expression as referring to those whose actions corroborated the sincerity of their profession of faith. An early interpretation is preserved from Qatadah ibn Diamah. Al-Tabari transmits through Bishr ibn Mu'adh, Yazid ibn Zuray and Sa'id ibn Abi Arubah, from Qatadah, who explains the religious sacrifices of the Emigrants:

هؤلاء المهاجرون تركوا الديار والأموال والأهلين والعشائر، خرجوا حبا لله ولرسوله، واختاروا الإسلام على ما فيه من الشدة

> *Translation: "These Emigrants abandoned their homes, possessions, families and clans. They departed out of love for Allah and His Messenger, preferring Islam despite the hardships it entailed."*

> *Reference: Jami al-Bayan, by al-Tabari, commentary on Qur'an 59:8.*

The chain to Qatadah consists of recognised transmitters, and the statement is authentically attributable to him. The verse therefore does not merely commend the Emigrants for undertaking a particular journey. It identifies their sacrifice, religious intention and support for the Prophet as manifestations of genuine truthfulness. The importance of this declaration for the doctrine of *adalah* is evident. Truthfulness constitutes one of the indispensable moral qualities required of a reliable transmitter. The verse does not independently establish the accuracy of every report subsequently attributed to an Emigrant. Nevertheless, it provides direct Quranic testimony concerning the sincerity and truthfulness of an identifiable group occupying a central position in the transmission of early Islamic teachings. The immediately succeeding verse describes the Helpers:

والذين تبوءوا الدار والإيمان من قبلهم يحبون من هاجر إليهم ولا يجدون في صدورهم حاجة مما أوتوا ويؤثرون على أنفسهم ولو كان بهم خصاصة

> *Translation: "And those who had established their home and faith before them love those who emigrated to them. They harbour no resentment concerning what the Emigrants were given, and they give preference to others over themselves even though they themselves are in need."*

> *Reference: Qur'an 59:9.*

The verse subsequently associates protection from avarice with ultimate success:

فأولئك هم المفلحون

> *Translation: "Those are the successful."*
>
> *Reference: Qur'an 59:9.*

Al-Tabari identifies the people described with the Ansar and explains their preference for the Emigrants through their love, generosity and willingness to place the needs of others before their own. This identification is supported by an early report from Mujahid ibn Jabr. Al-Tabari transmits through Muhammad ibn Amr, Abu Asim, Isa ibn Maymun and Ibn Abi Najih, from Mujahid, who states concerning the opening of Qur'an 59:9:

الأنصار نعت

> *Translation: "It is a description of the Ansar."*
>
> *Reference: Jami al-Bayan, by al-Tabari, commentary on Qur'an 59:9.*

The report is preserved through the established exegetical transmission of Ibn Abi Najih from Mujahid, with a corroborating route recorded by al-Tabari. An even more explicit early explanation appears from Hasan al-Basri concerning the phrase *wa-la yajiduna fi sudurihim hajah*. Al-Tabari transmits through Muhammad ibn al-Muthanna, Sulayman Abu Dawud, Shu'bah and Abu Raja, from Hasan, who explains the expression as:

الحسد

> *Translation: "Envy."*
>
> *Reference: Jami al-Bayan, by al-Tabari, commentary on Qur'an 59:9.*

The chain to Hasan al-Basri is sound, with corroborating routes through Shu'bah and Ibn Ulayyah. An authentic Prophetic report provides further insight into the early application of this verse. In *Sahih al-Bukhari* (no. 4889), Abu Hurairah recounts that an Ansari man and his wife accommodated a hungry guest of the Prophet despite possessing scarcely enough food for their

own children. They gave the guest priority over themselves, and the verse concerning preferring others despite personal need was revealed in connection with their conduct. The narration establishes a direct relationship between the Quranic commendation and an authenticated instance of the Helpers' self-sacrifice. The following verse extends the discussion to those who succeed the earliest believers, describing them as seeking forgiveness for their predecessors and praying that their hearts remain free of resentment towards the faithful. Allah states:

والذين جاءوا من بعدهم يقولون ربنا اغفر لنا ولإخواننا الذين سبقونا بالإيمان ولا تجعل في قلوبنا غلا للذين آمنوا ربنا إنك رءوف رحيم

> *Translation: "And those who come after them will pray, Our Lord! Forgive us and our fellow believers who preceded us in faith, and do not allow bitterness into our hearts towards those who believe. Our Lord! Indeed, You are Ever Gracious, Most Merciful."*
>
> *Reference: Qur'an, 59:10.*

The succession of these passages is noteworthy. The Emigrants are identified through truthfulness and sacrifice; the Helpers through compassion and selflessness; and later believers through recognition of the religious precedence of those who came before them. The Quranic commendation of the earliest community is therefore not an isolated declaration restricted to one historical event. It constitutes part of a wider scriptural portrayal of their religious character.

1.2.2. Qur'an 8:74: Their Identification as Genuine Believers

Another important passage appears in Surat al-Anfal:

والذين آمنوا وهاجروا وجاهدوا في سبيل الله والذين آووا ونصروا أولئك هم المؤمنون حقا لهم مغفرة ورزق كريم

> *Translation: "Those who believed, emigrated and struggled in Allah's cause, and those who gave refuge and support: those are the true believers. For them are forgiveness and a generous provision."*
>
> *Reference: Qur'an 8:74.*

The verse separately identifies the principal characteristics of the Emigrants and Helpers before bringing them together under a single declaration:

أولئك هم المؤمنون حقا

> *Translation: "Those are the true believers."*
>
> *Reference: Qur'an 8:74.*

The grammatical construction is emphatic. The demonstrative *ulaika*, the independent pronoun *hum*, and the expression *haqqan* reinforce the affirmation of genuine faith. Al-Tabari explains:

أولئك هم أهل الإيمان بالله ورسوله حقا

> *Translation: "Those are the people who truly possess faith in Allah and His Messenger."*
>
> *Reference: Jami al-Bayan, by al-Tabari, commentary on Qur'an 8:74.*

The passage is particularly significant when considered alongside al-Qadri's appeal to the existence of hypocrites within the early Muslim community. The Qur'an does not merely record that certain individuals professed Islam outwardly. It identifies the Emigrants and Helpers who fulfilled these religious characteristics as genuine believers. The distinction between outward religious association and divinely affirmed faith is therefore already present within the scriptural language itself. It constitutes a further declaration of genuine faith and divine forgiveness concerning two principal groups within the first Muslim generation.

1.2.3. Qur'an 57:10: Different Ranks and a Shared Divine Promise

An especially consequential passage appears in Surat al-Hadid:

لا يستوي منكم من أنفق من قبل الفتح وقاتل أولئك أعظم درجة من الذين أنفقوا من بعد وقاتلوا وكلا وعد الله الحسنى

> *Translation: "Those among you who spent and fought before the victory are not equal to those who spent and fought afterwards. The former possess a higher rank, although Allah has promised the best reward to both."*
>
> *Reference: Qur'an 57:10.*

This verse is particularly relevant because it expressly distinguishes between different degrees of merit within the early Muslim community while simultaneously extending a divine promise to both categories. The distinction between those who spent and fought before the *fath* and those who did so afterwards establishes that religious precedence was not regarded as uniform. Yet the concluding expression is significant:

وكلا وعد الله الحسنى

> *Translation: "And to each Allah has promised the best reward."*
>
> *Reference: Qur'an 57:10.*

Al-Tabari explains that the promise concerns both categories of believers and preserves early interpretations identifying *al-husna* with Paradise. He transmits through Muhammad ibn Amr, Abu Asim, Isa ibn Maymun and Ibn Abi Najih, from Mujahid, who explains:

الجنة

> *Translation: "Paradise."*

A corresponding interpretation is transmitted through Bishr ibn Mu'adh, Yazid ibn Zuray and Sa'id ibn Abi Arubah, from Qatadah:

الجنة

> *Translation: "Paradise."*
>
> *Reference: Jami al-Bayan, by al-Tabari, commentary on Qur'an 57:10.*

The latter chain is sound to Qatadah, while the former is supported by the established exegetical transmission from Mujahid through Ibn Abi Najih. The construction *kullan* functions as an accusative object placed before the verb, encompassing both groups previously distinguished in rank. The verse therefore combines differentiation of merit with a common eschatological assurance. Its significance for the present discussion is twofold. First, the Qur'an itself distinguishes between the religious ranks of different Companions. Accordingly, the Sunni principle of collective uprightness does not entail the assertion that all Companions possessed equal spiritual excellence. Second, the divine promise is not confined exclusively to the

earliest and most distinguished participants. It extends, within the categories described, to those whose sacrifices occurred subsequently. The wording does not eliminate the need to determine which particular individuals fulfilled the conditions mentioned. Nevertheless, it supplies further scriptural testimony that divine promises concerning the early believers were not restricted to one isolated group or event.

1.2.4. Qur'an 9:100: Divine Pleasure, Paradise and the Grammar of the Foremost Believers

Among the most significant passages remains the declaration concerning the foremost predecessors:

والسابقون الأولون من المهاجرين والأنصار والذين اتبعوهم بإحسان رضي الله عنهم ورضوا عنه وأعد لهم جنات تجري تحتها الأنهار خالدين فيها أبدا

> *Translation: "The foremost predecessors among the Emigrants and the Helpers, and those who followed them in righteousness: Allah is pleased with them, and they are pleased with Him. He has prepared for them gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they shall abide eternally."*
>
> *Reference: Qur'an 9:100.*

The significance of this verse lies not merely in its commendation of the earliest believers, but in the relationship established between divine pleasure and their ultimate eschatological destiny. The verb *radiya* appears in the perfect tense, and the expression *radiya Allahu anhum* constitutes an affirmative declaration of divine pleasure. The stronger argument, however, arises from the subsequent promise:

وأعد لهم جنات تجري تحتها الأنهار خالدين فيها أبدا

> *Translation: "And He has prepared for them gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they shall abide eternally."*
>
> *Reference: Qur'an 9:100.*

The expression *khalidina fiha* constitutes a circumstantial accusative construction describing the recipients' condition in Paradise, while *abadan* denotes perpetuity. Al-Tabari explains that they will neither die therein nor depart from it. The declaration is therefore not limited to approval of an earlier act. It explicitly associates the individuals described with an everlasting eschatological reward. The interpretation is reinforced by the earliest exegetical tradition. Al-Tabari authentically transmits from al-Sha'bi an identification of the foremost predecessors with those who participated in the Pledge of al-Ridwan. The chain is:

حدثنا ابن بشار، قال: حدثنا يحيى، قال: حدثنا إسماعيل بن أبي خالد، عن الشعبي

Al-Sha'bi identifies the earliest Emigrants as:

الذين شهدوا بيعة الرضوان

> *Translation: "Those who witnessed the Pledge of al-Ridwan."*

> *Reference: Jami al-Bayan, by al-Tabari, report no. 17101, commentary on Qur'an 9:100.*

The chain consists of Muhammad ibn Bashshar, Yahya ibn Sa'id al-Qattan and Isma'il ibn Abi Khalid, all recognised and reliable transmitters. The attribution is sound. Al-Tabari further preserves corroborating routes through Isma'il ibn Abi Khalid and Mutarrif ibn Tarif. He also records alternative interpretations identifying the foremost predecessors with those who prayed towards both qiblahs. An authentic independent attribution of this interpretation is transmitted from Muhammad ibn Sirin:

حدثنا ابن بشار، قال: حدثنا معاذ بن معاذ، قال: حدثنا ابن عون، عن محمد، قال: المهاجرون الأولون: الذين صلوا القبلتين

> *Translation: "The earliest Emigrants are those who prayed towards both directions of prayer."*

> *Reference: Jami al-Bayan, by al-Tabari, report no. 17114, commentary on Qur'an 9:100.*

The transmission through Muhammad ibn Bashshar, Mu'adh ibn Mu'adh and Abdallah ibn Awn to Ibn Sirin is sound. These differences concern the boundaries of the category rather than the divine commendation itself.

1.2.5. The Grammatical Distinction Between the Foremost Believers and Their Righteous Followers

A further grammatical consideration concerns:

والذين اتبعوهم بإحسان

> *Translation: "And those who followed them in righteousness."*
>
> *Reference: Qur'an 9:100.*

The expression *bi-ihsan* qualifies the manner in which subsequent believers follow the foremost predecessors. It does not, by its immediate grammatical construction, impose an express future condition upon the divine pleasure already declared concerning the *sabiqun al- awwalun*. Al-Tabari's discussion of the received reading is especially significant because it explicitly identifies the grammatical distinction between the foremost believers and those who follow them. He writes:

والقراءة على خفض «الأنصار»، عطفا بهم على «المهاجرين»

> *Translation: "The accepted reading places al-Ansar in the genitive, coordinating them with al-Muhajirin."*

He subsequently explains:

وإلحاق «الواو» في «الذين اتبعوهم بإحسان» ... على أن «التابعين بإحسان» غير «المهاجرين والأنصار»

> *Translation: "The inclusion of the conjunction waw in 'those who followed them in righteousness' establishes that the righteous followers constitute a category distinct from the Emigrants and Helpers."*
>
> *Reference: Jami al-Bayan, by al-Tabari, commentary on Qur'an 9:100, discussion following report no. 17118.*

This is al-Tabari's own grammatical conclusion and does not depend upon the authentication of the preceding historical reports concerning the discussion between Umar, Zayd ibn Thabit and Ubayy ibn Ka'b. Those reports possess their own transmission questions and are not necessary to establish the grammatical point. The distinction rests instead upon the received Quranic reading itself. The genitive *al-Ansar* is coordinated with *al-Muhajirin*, identifying the foremost predecessors among both groups, while the conjunction preceding *alladhina ittaba'uhum bi-ihsan* introduces those who subsequently follow them through righteous conduct. The latter are therefore grammatically distinct from the former. This distinction matters because al-Qadri's argument tends to treat the condition of righteousness expressed through *bi-ihsan* as though it were a universal qualification suspending the commendation of every group mentioned in the verse. Yet the grammatical construction places the expression within the clause describing the followers. It is not an express condition attached to the earlier designation *al-sabiqun al-awwalun*.

The subsequent predicate *radiya Allahu anhum* encompasses the groups described, but this does not erase their grammatical differentiation. Consequently, the verse expressly commends the foremost Emigrants and Helpers while additionally extending divine pleasure to those who follow their example in righteousness. The distinction between the groups is grammatically established, and the condition governing righteous adherence cannot simply be transferred from the latter category to the former without exegetical justification. Nevertheless, Qur'an 9:100 should not be treated as an isolated and exhaustive proof of the collective uprightness of every individual subsequently classified as a Companion. Its significance is cumulative: it forms part of a broader scriptural body repeatedly affirming the truthfulness, sincerity, merit and religious distinction of the earliest believing community.

1.2.6. Qur'an 48:18: The Pledge Beneath the Tree and Knowledge of What Was in Their Hearts

Al-Qadri specifically invokes the declaration concerning the participants at al-Hudaybiyyah:

لقد رضي الله عن المؤمنين إذ يبايعونك تحت الشجرة فعلم ما في قلوبهم فأنزل السكينة عليهم وأثابهم فتحا قريبا

> *Translation: "Allah was certainly pleased with the believers when they pledged allegiance to you beneath the tree. He knew what was within their hearts, and therefore sent tranquillity upon them and rewarded them with a near victory."*
>
> *Reference: Qur'an 48:18.*

The verse concerns the believers who pledged allegiance to the Prophet at al-Hudaybiyyah, conventionally estimated at approximately one-thousand four-hundred participants. Al-Qadri correctly observes that the number was considerably smaller than the total population subsequently classified as Companions. Nevertheless, the significance of the verse concerns the nature of the divine commendation. Al-Tabari interprets the declaration concerning their hearts as referring to their sincerity, fidelity and determination to persevere alongside the Prophet. Ibn Kathir similarly explains the expression through their truthfulness and obedience. The verse therefore does not merely commend an outward act of allegiance. It associates divine pleasure with God's knowledge of their inward sincerity. An early explanation of the tranquillity bestowed upon the participants is authentically transmitted from Qatadah. Al-Tabari records the following chain:

حدثنا بشر، قال: حدثنا يزيد، قال: حدثنا سعيد، عن قتادة

Concerning *fa-alima ma fi qulubihim fa-anzala al-sakinata alayhim*, Qatadah explains:

أي الصبر والوقار

> *Translation: "That is, patience and dignity."*
>
> *Reference: Jami al-Bayan, by al-Tabari, commentary on Qur'an 48:18.*

The chain through Bishr ibn Mu'adh, Yazid ibn Zuray and Sa'id ibn Abi Arubah is sound to Qatadah. The Quranic declaration is supplemented by explicit Prophetic testimony concerning those who pledged allegiance beneath the tree. Jabir ibn Abdullah relates that the Prophet addressed them at al-Hudaybiyyah, saying:

أنتم خير أهل الأرض

> *Translation: "You are the best people upon the earth."*

> *Reference: Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 4154, Kitab al-Maghazi, chapter concerning al-Hudaybiyyah.*

Jabir adds that they numbered approximately one-thousand four-hundred and that, had he retained his eyesight, he could have shown his listeners the location of the tree. The further implications of this commendation are elucidated in a narration transmitted by Umm Mubashshir, who heard the Prophet say in the presence of Hafsah:

لا يدخل النار إن شاء الله من أصحاب الشجرة أحد، الذين بايعوا تحتها

> *Translation: "None of the people of the tree who pledged allegiance beneath it shall enter the Fire, God willing."*

> *Reference: Sahih Muslim, no. 2496, Kitab Fada'il al-Sahabah, chapter on the virtues of those who pledged allegiance beneath the tree.*

When Hafsah raised the Quranic statement that everyone would come to it, the Prophet replied by citing the immediately following verse concerning Allah's deliverance of the God-fearing:

ثم ننجي الذين اتقوا ونذر الظالمين فيها جثيا

> *Translation: "Then We shall deliver those who were mindful of Allah and leave the wrongdoers therein on their knees."*

> *Reference: Qur'an 19:72.*

The Prophetic commendation therefore extends beyond approval of an outward pledge on a single occasion. It specifically identifies its participants as the best people of their time and connects their status with an assurance concerning the Fire. These testimonies concern identifiable participants whose outward fidelity and inward sincerity were explicitly commended. They do not establish that those individuals became incapable of committing subsequent sins or errors. Nevertheless, they provide substantial grounds for rejecting an interpretation that treats the divine commendation as nothing more than conditional approval of an outward historical act.

1.2.7. Qur'an 48:29: The Prophet's Followers, Their Character and the Meaning of Minhum

Perhaps the most comprehensive collective description of the Prophet's followers appears in the concluding verse of Surat al-Fath:

محمد رسول الله والذين معه أشداء على الكفار رحماء بينهم تراهم ركعا سجدا يبتغون فضلا من الله ورضوانا سيماهم في وجوههم من أثر السجود ذلك مثلهم في التوراة ومثلهم في الإنجيل كزرع أخرج شطأه فآزره فاستغلظ فاستوى على سوقه يعجب الزراع ليغيظ بهم الكفار وعد الله الذين آمنوا وعملوا الصالحات منهم مغفرة وأجرا عظيما

> *Translation: "Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. Those with him are firm against the unbelievers and compassionate among themselves. You see them bowing and prostrating, seeking Allah's bounty and pleasure. Their distinguishing marks are upon their faces from the effects of prostration. Such is their description in the Torah. Their likeness in the Gospel is that of a crop which sends forth its shoots, strengthens them, grows thick and stands firmly upon its stalks, delighting the cultivators, so that through them He may cause the unbelievers to feel dismay. Allah has promised those among them who believe and perform righteous deeds forgiveness and a tremendous reward."*

> *Reference: Qur'an 48:29.*

The importance of the verse lies in the breadth of its description. It does not merely identify the Prophet's followers through physical association. Rather, it characterises them through a series of positive religious and moral qualities: firmness in confronting unbelief, mutual compassion, devotion to worship, sincere pursuit of divine favour and the visible manifestations of religious humility. Al-Tabari explicitly interprets *wa-lladhina ma'ahu* as those among the Prophet's Companions who followed him upon his religion. Thus, the companionship described in the verse is not reducible to geographical proximity. It is qualified by religious adherence.

1.2.7.1. Mutual Compassion and Religious Conduct

Al-Tabari interprets *ruhamau baynahum* as referring to the mutual tenderness and compassion of the believers. He preserves an early explanation from Qatadah:

أَلقى الله في قلوبهم الرحمة بعضهم لبعض

> *Translation: "Allah placed compassion within their hearts towards one another."*

The report is transmitted through:

حدثنا بشر، قال: حدثنا يزيد، قال: حدثنا سعيد، عن قتادة

Reference: Jami al-Bayan, by al-Tabari, commentary on Qur'an 48:29.

The chain to Qatadah is sound, comprising of reliable transmitters. This interpretation is especially consequential because the Quranic commendation concerns an inward moral disposition, not merely a visible act of worship. The divine description attributes mutual compassion to the believing community accompanying the Prophet. Nevertheless, this should not be misconstrued as an assertion that no disagreement or hostility could ever subsequently arise among individual Companions. The description concerns the moral character attributed to the community in the Quranic context, and its theological implications must be considered alongside the wider scriptural and historical record.

1.2.7.2. The Meaning of the Marks of Prostration

Allah states:

سيماهم في وجوههم من أثر السجود

> *Translation: "Their distinguishing marks are upon their faces from the effects of prostration."*

> *Reference: Qur'an 48:29.*

The expression was interpreted in several ways by the earliest exegetes. Some understood the marks as manifestations of religious devotion appearing in the Hereafter, while others interpreted them as characteristics visible in the present life. Al-Tabari preserves an especially important interpretation from Mujahid ibn Jabr. He transmits:

حدثنا ابن بشار، قال: حدثنا أبو عامر، قال: حدثنا سفيان، عن حميد الأعرج، عن مجاهد

Mujahid explains the marks of prostration as

الخشوع والتواضع

> *Translation: "Reverence and humility."*
>
> *Reference: Jami al-Bayan, by al-Tabari, commentary on Qur'an 48:29.*

The chain through Muhammad ibn Bashshar, Abu Amir al-Aqadi, Sufyan al-Thawri and Humayd al-Araj is sound to Mujahid. Another authenticated route through Sufyan, Mansur ibn al-Mu'tamir and Mujahid identifies the distinguishing characteristic as:

الخشوع

> *Translation: "Reverence."*
>
> *Reference: Jami al-Bayan, by al-Tabari, commentary on Qur'an 48:29.*

These reports demonstrate that the marks described in the verse were not necessarily understood as physical calluses or superficial marks on the forehead. Rather, an important early interpretation identified them with the moral and spiritual consequences of worship. Al-Tabari ultimately adopts an inclusive interpretation, maintaining that the description may encompass the visible characteristics of religious devotion in this world and the distinguishing marks of the believers in the Hereafter. The exegetical significance is considerable. The Qur'an's accreditation of the Prophet's followers concerns their religious character, inward dispositions and devotion to God, rather than merely their conditional presence within an identifiable historical community.

1.2.7.3. The Agricultural Simile and the Growth of the Muslim Community

The verse subsequently likens the Prophet's followers to a flourishing crop:

كزرع أخرج شطأه فآزره فاستغلظ فاستوى على سوقه

> *Translation: "Like a crop that sends forth its shoots, strengthens them, grows thick and stands firmly upon its stalks."*
>
> *Reference: Qur'an 48:29.*

Al-Tabari interprets this image as representing the development of the Muslim community from a small number of initial believers into a growing and increasingly established religious body. The simile is therefore one of growth, consolidation and mutual strengthening. An early explanation from Qatadah explicitly identifies the agricultural description with the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad. Al-Tabari transmits through Bishr ibn Mu'adh, Yazid ibn Zuray and Sa'id ibn Abi Arubah, from Qatadah:

هذا مثل أصحاب محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم في الإنجيل

> *Translation: "This is the description of the Companions of Muhammad in the Gospel."*
>
> *Reference: Jami al-Bayan, by al-Tabari, commentary on Qur'an 48:29.*

The chain to Qatadah is sound. The statement reflects his interpretation of the Quranic passage; it does not constitute independent documentary evidence concerning the text of the historical Gospels. Al-Tabari also preserves a direct explanation attributed to Anas ibn Malik concerning the term shat. He transmits:

حدثنا يعقوب بن إبراهيم، قال: حدثنا ابن علية، عن حميد الطويل

Anas reportedly asked:

تدرون ما شطأه؟

> *Translation: "Do you know what its shoots are?"*

He then explains:

نباته

> *Translation: "Its growth."*
>
> *Reference: Jami al-Bayan, by al-Tabari, commentary on Qur'an 48:29.*

The chain through Ya'qub ibn Ibrahim, Isma'il ibn Ulayyah and Humayd al-Tawil is sound to Anas. The explanation provides a Companion-era understanding of the vocabulary employed in the simile, although the broader theological application of the image belongs to the exegetical discussion. The structure of the verse is also noteworthy. It first describes the Prophet's followers through their moral and devotional characteristics, then presents them through the metaphor of a community developing in strength and number. The concluding declaration concerning forgiveness and tremendous reward follows this extended commendation. Accordingly, the final promise should not be considered in isolation from the affirmative description preceding it. The verse constitutes an extended Quranic portrayal of a community distinguished through its religious adherence, worship, compassion and growth.

1.2.8. The Grammatical Significance of Minhum

The concluding promise reads:

وعد الله الذين آمنوا وعملوا الصالحات منهم مغفرة وأجرا عظيما

> *Translation: "Allah has promised those among them who believe and perform righteous deeds forgiveness and a tremendous reward."*
>
> *Reference: Qur'an 48:29.*

An interpretative question concerns the preposition *min* in *minhum*. If understood partitively, the promise may be interpreted as restricted to a subset of the previously described group. However, the early grammatical tradition expressly recognises a non-partitive interpretation. Al-Zajjaj, in *Ma'ani al-Qur'an wa-Irabuh*, explains the possibility of interpreting *min* as distinguishing a category from what lies outside it:

تخليصا للجنس من غيره

> *Translation: "Distinguishing a category from what lies outside it."*

Reference: Ma'ani al-Qur'an wa-Irabuh, by al-Zajjaj, commentary on Qur'an 48:29.

He illustrates this construction through the Quranic expression *min al-awthan* in verse 22:30, where the preposition does not imply that only some idols are impure. Ibn Atiyyah subsequently adopts the non-partitive construction explicitly:

هي لبيان الجنس وليست للتبعيض

Translation: "It identifies the category and does not denote partition."

Reference: al-Muharrar al-Wajiz, by Ibn Atiyyah, commentary on Qur'an 48:29.

Al-Qurtubi and Ibn Kathir likewise discuss or adopt this interpretation. Al-Zajjaj nevertheless recognises an alternative reading in which the promise is understood in relation to the continued faith and righteous conduct of its recipients. The grammatical question therefore could admit more than one interpretation. The strongest conclusion, however, is that *minhum* does not necessarily denote a restricted subset of the Prophet's followers. A partitive interpretation cannot be demanded solely upon the basis of the preposition. Nor can the grammatical construction, by itself, establish that any particular individual previously commended by the Qur'an subsequently forfeited the divine promise. Such an allegation requires independent evidence.

1.2.9. The Cumulative Significance of the Quranic Testimony

Read together, these passages amount to substantially more than a conditional expression of approval during one historical incident. Qur'an 59:8 identifies the Emigrants as truthful; Qur'an 8:74 describes the Emigrants and Helpers as genuine believers; Qur'an 57:10 distinguishes degrees of merit while promising both groups the best reward; Qur'an 9:100 declares divine pleasure and everlasting Paradise for the foremost believers; Qur'an 48:18 attests to the inward sincerity of those who pledged beneath the tree; and Qur'an 48:29 portrays a believing community through devotion, mutual compassion, humility and a divine promise of forgiveness.

The exegesis of al-Tabari, the preserved explanations of early authorities including Qatadah, Mujahid, al-Sha'bi and Ibn Sirin, and the grammatical discussions of al-Zajjaj and Ibn Atiyyah demonstrate why traditionists did not

regard this cumulative testimony as a casual or incidental compliment. The object of accreditation is not a nameless aggregation of everybody who physically entered the Prophet's presence. It is a believing community repeatedly identified by real religious characteristics and historical commitments. Some declarations reach the earliest and most distinguished groups in particular; others extend to additional believing participants. Together they underwrite the wider Sunni appraisal of the generation. It is important to recognise what this argument asserts: the *hadith* critics were not issuing their own accreditation in defiance of the revelation; they understood themselves to be recognising accreditation already bestowed by the revelation. For that reason, they treated the ordinary procedures of personal *al-jarh wa'l-ta'dil* as inapplicable to those whose standing was established on these grounds. The separate tasks of establishing individual companionship and examining actual *hadith* transmissions, however, remained necessary.

1.3. Qur'an 9:101 and the Presence of Hypocrites: Who Is Being Accredited?

Al-Qadri appeals to the Qur'an's acknowledgement that hypocrites existed among those outwardly associated with the Prophet. This is true, and the Sunni tradition does not deny it. The question is whether those concealed unbelievers can simply be identified with the Emigrants, Helpers and other groups of distinguished believers whom the same Qur'an has explicitly accredited. Qur'an 9:100 and 9:101 must be read alongside one another, not treated as mutually cancelling declarations. Qur'an 9:100 has just commended the foremost Emigrants and Helpers through a declaration of divine pleasure and Paradise. The succeeding verse provides an important distinction:

وممن حولكم من الأعراب منافقون ومن أهل المدينة مردوا على النفاق لا تعلمهم نحن نعلمهم

> *Translation: "And among the Bedouins surrounding you are hypocrites, and among the people of Madinah are those who have become entrenched in hypocrisy. You do not know them; We know them."*
>
> *Reference: Qur'an 9:101.*

The juxtaposition of these verses is significant. Qur'an 9:100 identifies the foremost believers through divine commendation and the promise of eternal Paradise. Qur'an 9:101 identifies an unspecified group through concealed hypocrisy and the threat of punishment. Al-Tabari explains that the latter verse concerns hypocrites among the surrounding Bedouin communities and some of the inhabitants of Madinah. Ibn Atiyyah likewise explains the elliptical grammatical construction as referring to a group among the inhabitants, rather than the population collectively.

The importance of this distinction is particularly evident when considering the senior Emigrants. Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, Ali, Talhah, al-Zubair and others in whose enmity al-Qadri is absorbed, belonged among the early believers distinguished by migration, precedence and support for the Prophet. Although the Emigrants themselves settled in Madinah, the relevant distinction is theological and contextual rather than merely geographical. The Qur'an does not identify the foremost Emigrants with the unnamed hypocrites mentioned in the following verse. On the contrary, it has already distinguished these earliest believers through the announcement of divine pleasure and Paradise. Furthermore, al-Tabari preserves an early explanation from Qatadah concerning the declaration that God knew the hypocrites whom the Prophet did not know. He records:

حدثنا الحسن، قال: أخبرنا عبد الرزاق، قال: أخبرنا معمر، عن قتادة

Qatadah states:

فما بال أقوام يتكلفون علم الناس؟ فلان في الجنة وفلان في النار!

> *Translation: "What is the matter with people who presume to possess knowledge concerning others, declaring that one person belongs in Paradise and another in Hell?"*

> *Reference: Jami al-Bayan, by al-Tabari, report no. 17121, commentary on Qur'an 9:101.*

The transmission is preserved through Abd al-Razzaq and Ma'mar from Qatadah, an established early exegetical route. Qatadah's interpretation cautions against confidently assigning concealed religious states to individuals

without sufficient evidence. Accordingly, the existence of unnamed hypocrites within the wider community cannot, by itself, establish that particular individuals expressly commended elsewhere belonged to that group. Such an identification requires independent evidence. Thus, the presence of concealed hypocrites within Madinah says nothing, without independent evidence, about the inward faith of the distinguished believers whom the preceding verse has specifically commended. This is a distinction in the Quranic text itself rather than an invention of subsequent *hadith* scholarship.

The terminology of companionship adds a second distinction. A person can be called one of the Prophet's *ashab* in an ordinary descriptive sense because he was outwardly among the people surrounding him; that does not make him a genuine believer satisfying Ibn Hajar's technical definition. Hudhayfah relates the Prophetic statement in *Sahih Muslim*:

في أصحابي اثنا عشر منافقا

> *Translation: "Among my companions are twelve hypocrites."*
>
> *Reference: Sahih Muslim, no. 2779.*

Al-Nawawi, commenting on the report in *al-Minhaj Sharh Sahih Muslim*, explains the description:

الذين ينسبون إلى صحبتي

> *Translation: "Those who are attributed to my companionship."*
>
> *Reference: al-Minhaj Sharh Sahih Muslim, by al-Nawawi, commentary on Sahih Muslim 2779.*

The term therefore bears a descriptive sense distinct from the technical accreditation of those who met the Prophet believing in him and died upon their belief. Al-Qadri's argument treats the use of a shared noun as though it necessarily erases this distinction. It does not.

1.4. The Narrations of al-Hawd: Apostasy After the Prophet and the Historical Referent

A further objection frequently raised against the Sunni doctrine of *adalat al-Sahaba* concerns the Prophetic narrations describing individuals who will be prevented from approaching the Prophet's Cistern (*al-Hawd*) on the Day of Resurrection. These reports are often invoked as though they establish that the Emigrants and Helpers, as well as those upon whose testimony the Sunni *hadith* corpus depends, abandoned the religion following the Prophet's death. However, a careful examination of their wording, historical context and the Quranic testimony concerning the earliest believers yields a substantially different conclusion. Anas ibn Malik transmits in *Sahih Muslim* that the Prophet described individuals who had accompanied him being prevented from approaching the Cistern. He declares:

أي رب أصيحابي أصيحابي

> *Translation: "My Lord, my few companions! My few companions!"*

The Prophet is then informed:

إنك لا تدري ما أحدثوا بعدك

> *Translation: "You do not know what they introduced after your departure."*
>
> *Reference: Sahih Muslim no. 2034, Kitab al-Fada'il.*

The expression *usayhabi* is a diminutive form of *ashabi*. More importantly, the narration does not identify any particular Companion among those excluded from the Cistern. Their exclusion is instead associated with something they subsequently introduced following the Prophet's departure. The nature of this change becomes considerably clearer when the narrations are examined collectively, particularly those preserved in *Sahih al-Bukhari*.

1.4.1. The Explicit Language of Apostasy in Sahih al-Bukhari

In *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Abu Hurairah transmits that the Prophet will recognise a group of individuals who will subsequently be taken away from him. When he questions their fate, he is informed:

إنهم ارتدوا بعدك على أدبارهم القهقرى

> *Translation: "They turned back upon their heels after your departure, retreating backwards."*
>
> *Reference: Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 6587.*

An even more explicit formulation appears in the narration of Ibn Abbas, preserved in *Sahih al-Bukhari*. The Prophet describes individuals being taken away from him, whereupon he will be informed:

إنهم لم يزالوا مرتدين على أعقابهم منذ فارقتهم

> *Translation: "They continued turning back upon their heels from the time you departed from them."*
>
> *Reference: Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 3447.*

The significance of these expressions should not be overlooked. The narrations do not merely describe individuals who committed sins, exercised erroneous political judgement or became involved in civil disputes. The repeated language of *irtidad*, particularly the declaration that the individuals persisted in turning back following the Prophet's departure, indicates a sustained reversal in religious allegiance. This interpretation is reinforced by the analogy the Prophet himself invokes in the narration of Ibn Abbas. Upon being informed of their condition, he recites the words of Jesus concerning his followers:

وكنت عليهم شهيدا ما دمت فيهم فلما توفيتني كنت أنت الرقيب عليهم وأنت على كل شيء شهيد

> *Translation: "I was a witness over them for as long as I remained among them. But when You took me, You were the Watcher over them, and You are a witness over all things." (Qur'an 5:117)*
>
> *Reference: Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 3447.*

The Quranic context is especially instructive. In the immediately preceding verse 5:116, Jesus is questioned concerning the subsequent worship of himself and his mother besides Allah. His response distinguishes the monotheistic message he conveyed during his earthly mission from the religious deviation

that arose among those who professed adherence to him after his departure. The analogy is consequently not concerned with an ordinary lapse in personal conduct. It concerns a fundamental departure from the religion taught by a Prophet after his departure. Read together, these two narrations in *Sahih al-Bukhari* strongly support understanding the individuals described as people whose religious allegiance underwent a profound and sustained reversal, rather than believers whose occasional shortcomings are being retrospectively equated with apostasy.

1.4.2. The Apostasy Movements Following the Prophet's Death and Their Early Identification

The historical record provides a concrete referent for precisely such a development. Following the Prophet's death, several Arabian groups openly renounced Islam, followed claimants to prophethood or rejected obligations associated with their previous profession of the religion. These events are independently established within the canonical Sunni collections. In *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Abu Hurairah explicitly describes the emergence of apostasy after the Prophet's death:

لما توفي النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم واستخلف أبو بكر وكفر من كفر من العرب

> *Translation: "When the Prophet died and Abu Bakr became his successor, those among the Arabs who disbelieved fell into disbelief."*
>
> *Reference: Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 6924.*

The narration subsequently records Abu Bakr's determination to confront those who repudiated their obligations, including the refusal to pay *zakat*, and Umar's eventual recognition of the correctness of his decision. This provides an independently attested historical setting in which groups previously associated with the Prophet's community demonstrably turned away from their former religious allegiance after his death. More importantly, this identification is not peculiar to our reading of the narrations. An early explanation explicitly connecting those excluded from the Cistern with the apostasy movements is preserved alongside *Sahih al-Bukhari*, through Muhammad ibn Yusuf al-Firabri, the principal transmitter of al-Bukhari's

Sahih. Following the narration of Ibn Abbas, al-Firabri records an interpretation attributed through al-Bukhari to his teacher Qabisah ibn Uqbah:

قال محمد بن يوسف الفربري: ذكر عن أبي عبد الله، عن قبيصة، قال: هم المرتدون الذين ارتدوا على عهد أبي بكر، فقاتلهم أبو بكر رضي الله عنه

> *Translation: "Muhammad ibn Yusuf al-Firabri said: It was mentioned from Abu Abdallah, from Qabisah, who said: 'They are the apostates who abandoned Islam during the caliphate of Abu Bakr, whom Abu Bakr subsequently fought.'"*

> *Reference: Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 2447*

Here, Abu Abdallah refers to al-Bukhari himself. The attribution is introduced through the expression *dhukira*, although Ibn Hajar subsequently records in *Fath al-Bari* (11/333) that al-Isma'ili transmitted the explanation through another connected route from Qabisah.

The importance of this report lies in its antiquity and specificity. Qabisah, who died in 215 AH, belongs to an early generation of *hadith* authorities and identifies the individuals described in the Prophetic narration with a known historical group: those who apostatised following the Prophet's death and were confronted during Abu Bakr's caliphate. This interpretation corresponds directly to the explicit language of *irtidad* in the narration and the historical events independently documented in the *Sahihain*.A closely related explanation is subsequently articulated by Abu Sulayman al-Khattabi, who distinguishes between the established Companions and those individuals from the Arabian tribes whose commitment to Islam had remained superficial. He states:

لم يرتد من الصحابة أحد، وإنما ارتد قوم من جفاة الأعراب ممن لا نصرة له في الدين، وذلك لا يوجب قدحا في الصحابة المشهورين، ويدل قوله «أصيحابي» بالتصغير على قلة عددهم

> *Translation: "None of the established Companions apostatised. Rather, certain rough Bedouins, whose attachment to the religion was not firmly established, apostatised. This does not constitute grounds for impugning the well-known Companions. Moreover, the Prophet's use of the diminutive 'usayhabi' indicates their small number."*
>
> *Reference: A'lam al-Hadith fi Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari, by Abu Sulayman al-Khattabi, vol. 3, p. 1843; cited by Ibn Hajar, Fath al-Bari, vol. 11, p. 333.*

Al-Khattabi's distinction is particularly relevant. He does not deny that individuals who had encountered the Prophet subsequently apostatised. Rather, he distinguishes those whose association with Islam was outward or insufficiently established from the recognised Companions whose religious commitment, sacrifice and fidelity to the Prophet were already known. His reference to the diminutive *usayhabi* further supports his understanding that the narration concerns a limited category, rather than the foremost body of the Prophet's Companions.

The significance of these explanations is that they demonstrate continuity between the early *hadith* tradition and the interpretation advanced here. Qabisah identifies the individuals with the apostates confronted by Abu Bakr, while al-Khattabi explains why their apostasy cannot simply be imputed to the distinguished Companions. These scholarly interpretations supplement the wording of the Prophetic narrations and the historical circumstances following the Prophet's death; they are not themselves part of the Prophetic text.

1.4.3. The Absence of Evidence Against the Foremost Companions

A final and decisive distinction concerns the identity of those condemned in the narrations. Neither of the two formulations in *Sahih al-Bukhari* identifies the distinguished companions: Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman or any other Emigrant, Helper and Pledger as belonging to the group expelled from the Cistern. Nor do the reports adduced for this allegation contain authenticated testimony from the recognised Companion-transmitters identifying one another as its intended subjects. More importantly, the Qur'an had already distinguished the earliest Emigrants, Helpers and other identifiable groups of believers through repeated declarations of truthfulness, genuine faith, divine pleasure and the promise of Paradise.

It is therefore methodologically untenable to take an unnamed group condemned for turning away after the Prophet's departure and, without independent identification, impose that condemnation upon individuals whose religious standing is expressly accredited elsewhere in revelation. Such an argument would not merely identify a possible historical referent; it would require disregarding the positive scriptural evidence already established concerning those individuals.

The conclusion is therefore straightforward. The narrations of *al-Hawd* establish that individuals who had previously associated with the Prophet would subsequently depart from his religious guidance and be excluded from his Cistern. They do not, however, establish that the foremost Companions, whose sincerity and religious distinction are repeatedly affirmed in the Qur'an, belonged to that category. The explicit language of *irtidad*, the analogy with the followers of Jesus, the historically attested apostasy movements, and the explanations transmitted from Qabisah and al-Khattabi together provide a substantial textual and historical foundation for identifying the individuals concerned without arbitrarily extending the condemnation to the recognised transmitters of the Prophetic Sunnah.

1.5. Al-Mizzi and the Absence of Hypocrites Among Recognised Companion-Transmitters

There is, finally, an empirical dimension to the objection. Even if individuals publicly appeared Muslim while secretly disbelieving, the question for Sunni *hadith* criticism is whether those persons became recognised transmitters of Prophetic traditions on whom the surviving corpus relies. This is why the observation attributed to the distinguished *hadith* critic Jamal al-Din al-Mizzi is especially relevant. Al-Mardawi preserves his statement in *al- Tahbir Sharh al-Tahrir*:

لم يوجد قط رواية عمن لمز بالنفاق من الصحابة

> *Translation: "No narration has ever been found from those among the Companions who were accused of hypocrisy."*

> *Reference: al-Tahbir Sharh al-Tahrir, by al-Mardawi, vol. 4, p. 1995, transmitting the observation attributed to al-Mizzi. See also Sharh al-Kawkab al-Munir, discussion of the definition of a Companion.*

The statement is also cited in the later Hanbali legal-theoretical discussion preserved in *Sharh al-Kawkab al-Munir*. Its evidentiary point is specific: the biographical and *hadith* record does not furnish recognised Prophetic transmissions from those historically identified or censured as hypocrites. This is a claim about the extant transmission corpus, not a denial that hypocrites existed or a claim that every concealed religious state is ascertainable by later historians.

The distinction therefore strikes at the practical bearing of al-Qadri's objection. It is not enough to demonstrate that unidentified hypocrites lived around the Prophet. One would need to show that a particular narrator relied upon as a genuine Companion was established to have persisted in concealed unbelief and nevertheless became an accepted authority on that basis. Al-Mizzi's observation is directed precisely against the assumption that the first fact automatically entails the second.

1.6. Historical Fallibility, Moral Probity and the Mistake of Treating Faith as Binary

A final part of al-Qadri's argument is that the Companions' recorded sins, rivalries and participation in political conflict necessarily defeat the doctrine of *adalah*. Here the divergence between the Sunni and Twelver approaches to the early historical record comes most succinctly into view. In Twelver polemical assessments, an allegation concerning a Companion's conduct becomes the starting point from which his entire religious standing, and potentially his integrity as a transmitter, is assessed. Sunni traditionists instead begin with the Quranic and Prophetic testimonies already examined and ask how authenticated shortcomings should be understood alongside them. The relevant disagreement is thus about which evidence is primary and what follows from an established error. The Sunni account does not deny human fallibility. Rather, it rejects the assumption that faith and moral worth are binary states in which one lapse necessarily reduces every prior virtue to nothing. A Companion's transgression does not nullify the entirety of his

religious standing. Allah repeatedly commended the earliest believers while already knowing their capacity to err, their moments of weakness and the disputes that would arise after the Prophet's death. Their divine accreditation was not issued through ignorance of their subsequent history.

1.6.1. Qur'an 9:117: Divine Mercy Amid the Believers' Weakness

Another revealing passage concerns the expedition of Tabuk:

لقد تاب الله على النبي والمهاجرين والأنصار الذين اتبعوه في ساعة العسرة من بعد ما كاد يزيغ قلوب فريق منهم ثم تاب عليهم إنه بهم رءوف رحيم

> *Translation: "Allah has certainly turned in mercy towards the Prophet, the Emigrants and the Helpers who followed him during the hour of hardship, after the hearts of some of them had nearly deviated. Then He turned towards them in mercy. Indeed, He is compassionate and merciful towards them."*

> *Reference: Qur'an 9:117.*

This verse is especially valuable because it explicitly acknowledges the possibility of religious weakness among individuals who accompanied the Prophet. The declaration *min badi ma kada yazighu qulubu fariqin minhum* recognises that the hearts of some among the believers came close to faltering under the exceptional difficulties of the expedition. Al-Tabari identifies the circumstances with Tabuk and explains that the severe hardships of the journey nearly caused some individuals to incline away from steadfastness. The historical identification of the *sa'at al-usrah* with Tabuk is also transmitted from Mujahid. Al-Tabari records through Muhammad ibn Amr, Abu Asim, Isa ibn Maymun and Ibn Abi Najih, from Mujahid:

في ساعة العسرة: في غزوة تبوك

> *Translation: "The hour of hardship refers to the expedition of Tabuk."*

> *Reference: Jami al-Bayan, by al-Tabari, report no. 17423, commentary on Qur'an 9:117.*

The report is transmitted through the established exegetical route of Ibn Abi Najih from Mujahid. Yet the passage does not conclude by permanently disqualifying those individuals from divine favour. Rather, it expressly announces God's mercy and acceptance of their repentance. The significance is difficult to overlook. The Qur'an acknowledges the possibility of weakness among the earliest believers while simultaneously affirming divine mercy towards them.

This provides a particularly important response to an argument which assumes that the existence of moral or religious weakness necessarily invalidates the scriptural accreditation of the Companions. The verse itself distinguishes between human fallibility and the ultimate judgement of divine favour. It also demonstrates that the Quranic portrayal of the first Muslim generation is not one of unqualified personal perfection. The presence of scriptural accreditation alongside acknowledged human weakness is therefore not a contradiction introduced by later Sunni theology. It is a feature of the Quranic account itself. A further Quranic illustration appears immediately after 9:101. Allah speaks of others who acknowledged their sins:

وآخرون اعترفوا بذنوبهم خلطوا عملا صالحا وآخر سيئا عسى الله أن يتوب عليهم

> *Translation: "And others admitted their sins, having mixed righteous deeds with other evil deeds. Perhaps Allah will turn towards them in mercy."*
>
> *Reference: Qur'an 9:102.*

The Qur'an does not portray the presence of both righteous and wrongful deeds in the same person's life as a logical impossibility. The theological problem imagined in the objection— that praise and fallibility cannot coexist —does not arise from the Quranic account; it is imposed upon it.

1.6.2. Al-Shafi'i on the Moral Probity of an Imperfect Transmitter

The distinction is expressed with striking clarity in a statement of al-Shafi'i, recorded by Ibn Abi Hatim in *Adab al-Shafi'i wa-Manaqibuh*, in the chapter concerning legal judgements. Al-Buwayti reports that al-Shafi'i said:

لا أعلم أحدا أعطى طاعة الله حتى لم يخلطها بمعصية الله إلا يحيى بن زكريا عليهما السلام

> *Translation: "I do not know of anyone who rendered obedience to Allah without mixing it with disobedience, except Yahya ibn Zakariyya, peace be upon them."*

He then states:

فإذا كان الأغلب الطاعة، فهو المعدل، وإذا كان الأغلب المعصية، فهو المجرح

> *Translation: "When obedience predominates, the individual is accredited as upright; and when disobedience predominates, he is subjected to criticism."*

> *Reference: Adab al-Shafi'i wa-Manaqibuh, by Ibn Abi Hatim al-Razi, chapter Bab fi al-Ahkam, p. 233 in the Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah edition. The same report appears in al-Khatib al-Baghdadi's al-Kifayah in the discussion of moral accreditation.*

This is not a rule that every serious offence can be dismissed or that the conduct of transmitters is irrelevant to *jarh*. Al-Shafi'i is articulating the fundamental distinction between a person's prevailing character and the impossibly exacting demand that he never indulges in a sin. The application to the Companions is straightforward: to establish that a person committed a sin is not yet to establish that his prevailing quality was dishonesty or that he deliberately falsified Prophetic speech. The Sunni doctrine does not depend upon such an equation. The Prophet's own treatment of a Companion repeatedly punished for consuming intoxicants offers a particularly telling example. In *Sahih al-Bukhari*, when a man called for the individual's damnation, the Prophet answered:

لا تلعنوه فوالله ما علمت أنه يحب الله ورسوله

> *Translation: "Do not curse him, for by Allah, I know that he loves Allah and His Messenger."*

> *Reference: Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 6780.*

The offence was neither ignored nor excused from punishment. Yet the Prophet simultaneously affirmed a genuine religious virtue in the man who committed it. This is incompatible with the claim that every grave transgression necessarily annihilates a believer's sincerity or every dimension of his moral standing.

1.6.3. The Difference Between Nifaq al-I'tiqad and Nifaq al-Amal

The same distinction is crucial to the language of hypocrisy. *Nifaq al-i'tiqad* concerns inward disbelief concealed under an outward profession of Islam. *Nifaq al-amal* concerns reprehensible characteristics resembling the conduct of hypocrites without necessarily establishing inward disbelief. The distinction appears in the authentic Prophetic narration of Abdullah ibn Amr in *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*:

ومن كانت فيه خصلة منهن كانت فيه خصلة من النفاق حتى يدعها

> *Translation: "Whoever possesses one of these characteristics possesses a characteristic of hypocrisy until he abandons it."*

> *Reference: Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 34; and Sahih Muslim no. 58.*

The Prophet lists lying, betrayal of trusts, breaking agreements and wickedness in disputes as characteristics of hypocrisy. The wording expressly allows for a particular characteristic of hypocrisy to exist within a person; it does not assert that the person is thereby proved to harbour complete inward disbelief. Al-Tirmidhi, commenting upon the same report in *al- Jami* explains:

وإنما معنى هذا عند أهل العلم نفاق العمل، وإنما كان نفاق التكذيب على عهد رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم

> *Translation: "According to the scholars, this refers to hypocrisy in conduct, whereas hypocrisy of denial existed during the lifetime of the Messenger of Allah. "*

He further attributes to Hasan al-Basri the distinction:

النفاق نفاقان: نفاق العمل ونفاق التكذيب

> *Translation: "Hypocrisy is of two kinds: hypocrisy of conduct and hypocrisy of denial."*
>
> *Reference: al-Jami al-Tirmidhi, no. 2632.*

Al-Nawawi, commenting on *Sahih Muslim* (no. 58), similarly explains that possessing one of the condemned characteristics does not necessarily make a person one who outwardly professes Islam while secretly disbelieving. The conceptual error in conflating these two categories is considerable. Condemning a particular deed as hypocritical does not prove that its perpetrator is a disbelieving hypocrite in the sense condemned in Qur'an 9:101. Al-Bukhari himself furnishes an additional example in *Sahih al-Bukhari*. Abu Dharr recounts that he had insulted another man through his mother, whereupon the Prophet reproved him:

إنك امرؤ فيك جاهلية

> *Translation: "You are a man in whom there remains a characteristic of pre-Islamic ignorance."*
>
> *Reference: Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 30.*

The Prophet condemned the deed while describing the *characteristic*, not treating Abu Dharr's Islam as having disappeared. Al-Bukhari's chapter heading expressly states that sins may constitute traits of pre-Islamic ignorance without necessarily expelling the person from Islam. The same discipline is required when assessing a Companion's particular error and his established religious standing.

1.6.4. Al-Qurtubi on the First Fitnah: God's Foreknowledge and the Limits of Political Error

The relevance of the earlier Quranic accreditation to the civil wars is considered directly by al-Qurtubi in *al-Jami li-Ahkam al-Qur'an*, whilst commenting on Qur'an 48:29. He explicitly discusses the objection that the Companions might initially have been upright but that subsequent conflict and bloodshed demanded their reassessment. He does not avoid the difficulty by discussing only Companions uninvolved in the *fitnah*. Rather, he identifies those who participated in its most consequential disputes, explaining that their previous commendation was made with Allah's foreknowledge of what

would later occur and discussing their conduct within the framework of *ijtihad*. This account distinguishes an erroneous political judgement from a deliberate repudiation of Islam, while not requiring every faction to be equally correct. Indeed, *Sahih Muslim* preserves the Prophetic declaration:

تمرق مارقة عند فرقة من المسلمين يقتلها أولى الطائفتين بالحق

> *Translation: "A seceding faction (the Kharijites) will emerge during a division among the Muslims, and the party closer to the truth will kill it."*
>
> *Reference: Sahih Muslim, no. 1065.*

The report is understood to refer to the Kharijites defeated by Ali's forces at Nahrawan. The wording therefore provides an important textual basis for recognising the superior correctness of Ali's position. Similarly, *Sahih al-Bukhari* foretells the confrontation of two great factions:

تقتتل فئتان عظيمتان يكون بينهما مقتلة عظيمة دعوتهما واحدة

> *Translation: "Two great factions will fight one another, with considerable bloodshed between them, while their da'wah is one."*
>
> *Reference: Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 7121.*

Classical commentators associate this prophecy with the conflict between Ali and Mu'awiyah. The narration distinguishes their shared *da'wah* (religious call) from the question of which party possessed the stronger legal and political position. A related statement is attributed to Ali in Ibn Abi Shaybah's *al-Musannaf*:

قتلانا وقتلاهم في الجنة، ويصير الأمر إلي وإلى معاوية

> *Translation: "Our slain and their slain are in Paradise, and the matter shall remain between me and Mu'awiyah."*
>
> *Reference: al-Musannaf, by Abu Bakr ibn Abi Shaybah, no. 40688, edition of Sa'd ibn Nasir al-Shithri; no. 39035, edition of Muhammad Awwamah.*

The statement illustrates the distinction between political conflict and the ultimate religious standing of the individuals involved. Taken together, these reports support the proposition that the relative correctness of Ali's position need not entail the automatic religious disqualification of every individual

belonging to the opposing faction. Nevertheless, they demonstrate that political error, religious identity and moral trustworthiness represent distinct questions. The existence of armed conflict does not, without further evidence, establish that every participant became willing to obfuscate or fabricate Prophetic statements. Al-Qurtubi makes the identification explicit when he refers to the distinguished Companions involved:

فإن خيار الصحابة وفضلاءهم كعلي وطلحة والزبير وغيرهم

> *Translation: "For the choicest and most distinguished of the Companions, such as Ali, Talhah, al-Zubayr and others..."*

> *Reference: Al-Jami li-Ahkam al-Qur'an, by al-Qurtubi, commentary on Qur'an 48:29*

Al-Qurtubi's point is therefore not that the fighting never occurred. It is that the occurrence of these conflicts does not retroactively nullify Allah's earlier accreditation or automatically establish that the individuals involved fabricated *hadith*. The crucial transition to *hadith* criticism is frequently overlooked. One may conclude that an individual was mistaken in a political judgement, committed an offence, or held a legally erroneous position without establishing that he fabricated a report about the Prophet. Those are different allegations requiring different evidence. *Adalah* is not the denial of sin; and a specific *jarh* relevant to truthfulness cannot be manufactured merely by multiplying unrelated historical charges.

1.6.5. Critical Scrutiny of Companion Reports Did Not Disappear

The first generation itself demonstrates the difference between a presumption of fundamental honesty and an insistence upon the correctness of every recollection. The Companions themselves engaged in *matn* criticism: corroborating reports, questioning particular wordings and correcting one another's understandings of Prophetic statements, without treating this scrutiny as a declaration that the transmitting Companion was morally disqualified. A particularly explicit example concerns Umar ibn al-Khattab and Abu Musa al-Ash'ari. When Abu Musa sought permission to enter Umar's residence three times and then departed, he cited the Prophet's

instruction that one should leave if permission had not been granted after three requests. Umar did not simply accept the ruling without inquiry. He asked Abu Musa to establish that another Companion had heard it, saying:

والله لتقيمن عليه ببينة

> *Translation: "By Allah, you must establish evidence for it."*

> *Reference: Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 6245, Kitab al-Isti'dhan; Sahih Muslim, no. 2153, Kitab al-Adab.*

Abu Musa consequently approached a gathering of the Ansar. Ubayy ibn Ka'b instructed Abu Sa'id al-Khudri, the youngest present, to accompany him; Abu Sa'id then confirmed to Umar that the Prophet had indeed given that instruction. Thus, the request for corroboration was satisfied by another Companion independently attesting to the same Prophetic statement.

An equally revealing example concerns A'ishah's examination of a narration attributed to Umar and Ibn Umar regarding the deceased being punished because of the lamentation of relatives. Having been informed of the report, she distinguished the wording she understood the Prophet to have used from the more general formulation being circulated, citing the Quranic principle that no bearer of burdens bears another's burden. Crucially, when referring to the two men whose transmission she questioned, she stated:

إنكم لتحدثوني عن غير كاذبين ولا مكذبين، ولكن السمع يخطئ

> *Translation: "You are relating to me from two men who are neither liars nor regarded as liars; nevertheless, hearing can be mistaken."*

> *Reference: Sahih Muslim, no. 929, Kitab al-Jana'iz; see also al-Zarkashi, al-Ijabah li-Irad ma Istadrakathu A'ishah ala al-Sahaba, discussion of the narration concerning lamentation for the deceased.*

The methodological distinction could scarcely be more explicit. A'ishah did not equate a perceived error in transmitting or understanding a Prophetic report with deliberate falsehood on the part of Umar or Ibn Umar. Rather, she affirmed their truthfulness while identifying the possibility of an error in what had been heard or retained. Ali ibn Abi Talib supplies a third example.

When he learned that Ibn Abbas had expressed a permissive view concerning *mut'ah* marriage, Ali corrected him by adducing what he had heard concerning the Prophet's prohibition:

مهلا يا ابن عباس، فإن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم نهى عنها يوم خيبر، وعن لحوم الحمر الإنسية

> *Translation: "Take care, Ibn Abbas, for the Messenger of Allah prohibited it on the day of Khaybar, along with the meat of domesticated donkeys."*

> *Reference: Sahih Muslim, no. 1407d, Kitab al-Nikah; see also Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 5115, for the report of Ali's correction in a shorter recension.*

This third example concerns correction of a legal conclusion through an appeal to Prophetic evidence, rather than a demand for an independent corroborating witness such as Umar's request to Abu Musa. The different kinds of scrutiny must not be confused, but they belong within the same early practice of weighing what was transmitted, clarifying its scope and correcting conclusions drawn from it. None required the critic to dismiss the other Companion as a liar or to strip him of religious integrity. These examples demonstrate that the early Muslim community did not understand the acceptance of a Companion's fundamental uprightness as a prohibition on examining individual reports. Corroboration, comparison of wordings, attention to memory and context, and correction of legal interpretation were already practised among the Companions themselves. Sunni *hadith* methodology inherited that distinction. The presumption of the Companion's fundamental integrity is not a presumption that every report attributed to him has been transmitted flawlessly.

1.6.6. The Related Comparison with Quranic Transmission

The generation which conveyed the Prophetic traditions also participated in transmitting the Qur'an. That fact establishes a serious shared historical foundation but should not be overstated: the Quranic text is transmitted through broad communal preservation, while many individual *ahadith* have narrower chains requiring distinct verification. It is not necessary to argue that questioning one Companion report automatically entails questioning the Qur'an. Rather, the point is that al-Qadri must offer a coherent account

of why collective distrust should attach to identified first-generation religious transmitters despite the scriptural testimony concerning them, while avoiding the assumption that the mechanisms and evidentiary requirements of Quranic and individual *hadith* transmission are identical.

1.7. Conclusion: The Question Is Divine Accreditation, Not Companion Infallibility

Al-Qadri's foundational objection rests upon a misunderstanding of both the nature and justification of *adalat al-Sahaba*. The exemption of the Companions from ordinary individual *al-jarh wa'l-ta'dil* is not an arbitrary concession designed to insulate the earliest transmitters from scrutiny, nor does it proceed from an assumption of their moral infallibility. Rather, it reflects the conviction of the classical Sunni traditionists that the believing first generation possessed an exceptional form of accreditation established through divine and Prophetic testimony. The methodological distinction which al-Qadri identifies is therefore genuine, but the theological foundation upon which it rests remains conspicuously underexamined in his argument.

The cumulative Quranic evidence is central to this distinction. Across numerous passages, the Emigrants, Helpers and other identifiable groups of early believers are commended for their truthfulness, sincerity, religious sacrifice and devotion, with explicit declarations of divine pleasure, forgiveness and ultimate reward. These testimonies are neither confined to a single historical event nor reducible to conditional approval of outward conduct. The early exegetical and grammatical traditions further illuminate their scope and significance. Consequently, the Sunni presumption of Companion uprightness cannot be dismissed simply by invoking the existence of subsequent historical disputes. A serious challenge must first confront the scriptural grounds upon which that presumption was established, rather than assume that later controversies necessarily nullified the divine accreditation preceding them.

Nor does the existence of hypocrites within the early Muslim community establish the contradiction al-Qadri alleges. The Qur'an itself distinguishes between the believers whom it expressly commends and those whose concealed unbelief it condemns. Similarly, the narrations of *al-Hawd*, particu-

larly their explicit descriptions of individuals turning back after the Prophet's departure, possess a demonstrable historical referent in the apostasy movements following his death. Their application to the distinguished Companions cannot be presumed merely from the occurrence of a general designation of companionship, particularly when those individuals are not identified among the condemned. The observation attributed to al-Mizzi concerning the absence of recognised transmissions from individuals accused of hypocrisy further exposes the distance between the theoretical objection and the actual composition of the transmitted *hadith* corpus.

The argument from moral misconduct is equally dependent upon an erroneous identification of uprightness with sinlessness. Sunni scholarship has never required the Companions to be incapable of transgression, disagreement or error in judgement. Indeed, al-Khatib al-Baghdadi expressly acknowledges the theoretical circumstances under which moral accreditation could be forfeited, while al-Shafi'i's formulation of *adalah* recognises that moral probity is not negated by every individual failing. Al-Qurtubi's treatment of the first *fitnah* likewise demonstrates that the classical tradition did not regard political error as necessarily equivalent to religious disqualification. More importantly, the Companions themselves practised corroboration and correction in transmitting Prophetic reports. Their presumed integrity as transmitters did not render their recollections infallible, nor did it exempt individual narrations from critical examination.

Al-Qadri's objection therefore establishes considerably less than its conclusion requires. Demonstrating that the Companions were fallible, that hypocrites existed among those outwardly associated with the Prophet, or that the earliest Muslims subsequently experienced political conflict does not invalidate a doctrine which neither denies those realities nor equates moral integrity with absolute perfection. To undermine the Sunni methodology, he must instead demonstrate that its scriptural foundation has been misconstrued, or that the exemption of genuine Companions from ordinary individual accreditation produces identifiable failures of transmission which the remaining procedures of *hadith* criticism cannot adequately address. Absent such a demonstration, his objection mistakes the acknowledged humanity of the Companions for a deficiency in a doctrine whose purpose

was never to establish their infallibility, but to recognise their exceptional religious standing while preserving the critical scrutiny of the reports transmitted through them.

PART II

Political Authority and the Transmission of Sunni Hadith: An Examination of the Alleged Relationship Between Religious Scholarship and State Power

2.1. The Political Patronage Objection

The second major objection advanced by Hassan al-Qadri concerns the historical relationship between Sunni religious scholarship and the political authorities who governed the early Muslim community.

According to al-Qadri, the development of Sunni Islam occurred in close association with successive ruling governments, particularly the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties. He consequently maintains that the transmission of Prophetic traditions was susceptible to the political interests of rulers who possessed both the means and the incentive to promote religious narratives legitimising their authority. Al-Qadri introduces this objection by characterising Sunni Islam as historically the religion of ruling governments. He contrasts this political predominance with the historical experiences of Twelver Shi'a communities, which he presents as having *principally* occupied a position of opposition to political authority.

He subsequently invokes several reports preserved within Sunni historical and *hadith* literature to substantiate his argument. These include al-Zuhri's observation concerning Umayyad partisanship in the attribution of the Treaty of al-Hudaybiyyah, al-Dhahabi's description of Mu'awiyah's cultivation of supporters through patronage, and Mu'awiyah's warning

against transmitting reports unfamiliar during Umar's caliphate. The underlying contention is that Sunni *hadith* transmission developed under governments possessing incentives to influence, suppress or fabricate religious material in support of their political legitimacy. However, the existence of political incentives does not, by itself, demonstrate that the recognised Sunni *hadith* authorities were subordinate to those governments or that their methods of transmission and authentication were systematically compromised. Before examining al-Qadri's individual examples, a fundamental problem with his historical classification must therefore be addressed.

2.2. The Ahl al-Sunnah of the Muhaddithin and the Broadly Sunni Identity of Ruling Governments

Al-Qadri employs the designation *Sunni* loosely when discussing the Umayyad and Abbasid governments, as though their broadly Sunni religious affiliation necessarily established that they espoused the same theological convictions as the early *muhaddithin*.

This assumption is historically and theologically unsustainable. The term *Sunni* may be employed in a broad historical sense to describe those Muslims who recognised the legitimacy of the rightly guided caliphs, revered the Companions collectively and accepted the religious authority of the Sunnah transmitted through them. In this respect, to an extent, the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties may broadly be described as Sunni. They recognised the legitimacy of the early caliphal succession and generally did not reject the collective authority of the Companions, although individual rulers and their supporters could express hostility towards particular Companions. An early illustration of the precedence accorded to the first three caliphs is preserved in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, where Abdallah ibn Umar states:

كنا نخير بين الناس في زمن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم فنخير أبا بكر ثم عمر بن الخطاب ثم عثمان بن عفان

> *Translation: "During the lifetime of the Prophet, we used to distinguish between people concerning their relative excellence, regarding Abu Bakr as the foremost, followed by Umar ibn al-Khattab, and then Uthman ibn Affan."*

> *Reference: Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 3655, Kitab Fada'il Ashab al-Nabi.*

Recognition of the early caliphs and their religious precedence was a defining characteristic of the broader community subsequently identified with Sunni Islam. Nevertheless, this was not the sole criterion through which the early traditionists identified *Ahl al-Sunnah*. Indeed, theological movements such as the Mu'tazilah, Qadariyyah and Jahmiyyah were not necessarily distinguished from the traditionists through their rejection of the caliphates of Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman. Their disagreements concerned other fundamental questions of religious doctrine. The Qadariyyah disputed the established understanding of divine decree. The Jahmiyyah and Mu'tazilah advanced theological positions concerning Allah's names and attributes, divine speech and other matters which the traditionists regarded as incompatible with the transmitted Sunnah.

Consequently, mere recognition of the early caliphal succession could not constitute an exhaustive definition of *Ahl al-Sunnah* within the theological vocabulary of the *muhaddithin*. The distinction is illustrated particularly clearly by Ahmad ibn Hanbal in his *Usul al-Sunnah*. Ahmad begins:

أصول السنة عندنا التمسك بما كان عليه أصحاب رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم والاقتداء بهم وترك البدع وكل بدعة فهي ضلالة

> *Translation: "The foundations of the Sunnah according to us consist of adhering to what the Companions of the Messenger of Allah followed, taking them as examples and abandoning innovations, for every innovation is misguidance."*

> *Reference: Usul al-Sunnah, by Ahmad ibn Hanbal, transmission of Abdus ibn Malik al-Attar; Sharh Usul I'tiqad Ahl al-Sunnah wa'l-Jama'ah, by al-Lalika'i, no. 317.*

Ahmad subsequently declares:

ومن السنة اللازمة التي من ترك منها خصلة لم يقبلها ويؤمن بها لم يكن من أهلها

> *Translation: "Among the indispensable tenets of the Sunnah are those which, if a person abandons one of them, refusing to accept and believe in it, he does not belong to its adherents."*

> *Reference: Usul al-Sunnah by Ahmad ibn Hanbal.*

Among the theological principles subsequently identified by Ahmad are belief in divine decree, the uncreated nature of the Qur'an, the vision of Allah in the Hereafter and other matters established through the transmitted religious tradition. Concerning divine decree, he writes:

الإيمان بالقدر خيره وشره والتصديق بالأحاديث فيه والإيمان بها

> *Translation: "Belief in divine decree, its good and its evil, and acceptance of the traditions concerning it, with faith in them."*
>
> *Reference: Usul al-Sunnah by Ahmad ibn Hanbal.*

Likewise, concerning the Qur'an, Ahmad declares:

والقرآن كلام الله وليس بمخلوق

> *Translation: "The Qur'an is the speech of Allah and is not created."*
>
> *Reference: Usul al-Sunnah by Ahmad ibn Hanbal.*

These statements illustrate that *Ahl al-Sunnah* identified by the early *muhaddithin* was a theological community distinguished by recognisable religious commitments. Those commitments included belief in Allah's names and attributes according to the transmitted revelation, His exaltedness, divine decree, the uncreated nature of the Qur'an, the vision of Allah, resurrection and other matters concerning the Last Day. The traditionists understood these principles to be rooted in the beliefs transmitted from the Prophet, the Companions and their successors. Their theological identity therefore encompassed considerably more than recognition of the legitimacy of the rightly guided caliphs. This distinction is indispensable to the present discussion.

The Umayyad and Abbasid governments may be described as Sunni in a broad historical sense, but this does not mean that their rulers necessarily satisfied the theological criteria by which the early *muhaddithin* identified themselves with *Ahl al-Sunnah*. A ruler's recognition of Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman does not establish his agreement with the traditionists concerning imperative articles of Sunni belief such as; divine decree, Allah's attributes, His exaltedness or the uncreated nature of the Qur'an.

Accordingly, al-Qadri cannot demonstrate that the early Sunni *hadith* scholars belonged to the same theological establishment as their rulers merely by identifying those governments as Sunni. The distinction between broad communal affiliation and specific theological adherence must first be established.

2.3. The Predominance of Sunni Islam and the Distinct Political Interests of the Umayyads and Abbasids

A further difficulty with al-Qadri's argument concerns the significance he attaches to the historical political predominance of Sunni Muslims. If the term *Sunni* is employed broadly to designate Muslims who recognised the legitimacy of the rightly guided caliphs and accepted the transmission of the Sunnah through the Companions, then such communities constituted the predominant religious population across much of Islamic history.

Consequently, it is hardly surprising that the governments exercising authority over these populations frequently consisted of individuals sharing this broad religious affiliation. Indeed, one would ordinarily expect the political and administrative establishments of a predominantly Sunni society to contain substantial numbers of individuals who recognised the same general religious authorities as the wider population. Modern estimates published by the Pew Research Center place Sunni Muslims at approximately 87–90 per cent of the world's Muslim population. (Reference: Pew Research Center, *Mapping the Global Muslim Population* 2009.)

Although modern demographic estimates cannot be projected directly onto the earliest Islamic centuries, they illustrate the wider historical predominance of Sunni Islam. The fact that broadly Sunni Muslims frequently occupied political office therefore does not establish that the theological authorities of *Ahl al-Sunnah* were themselves subordinate to those governments.

More importantly, the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties did not constitute a single political establishment possessing identical religious interests. The Umayyad caliphate emerged from the political circumstances following the assassination of Uthman and the First *Fitnah*. Mu'awiyah's authority developed through his governorship of Syria, his political and military acumen,

and his identification with the demand for justice concerning Uthman's assassination. The Abbasids, by contrast, came to power through a revolution which overthrew the Umayyad establishment in 132 AH/750 CE. Their claim to legitimacy rested substantially upon their relationship to the Prophet's family through Abbas ibn Abd al-Muttalib.

The political interests and dynastic claims of these governments were therefore substantially different. The Abbasids did not merely inherit the Umayyad political programme. They overthrew the Umayyads and advanced a rival claim to legitimate authority. Their theological policies also differed, sometimes considerably, from those of their predecessors and even between successive Abbasid caliphs. This raises an important difficulty for al-Qadri's argument.

If the Sunni *hadith* corpus was systematically shaped to legitimise ruling governments, it becomes necessary to explain how such interference operated under successive dynasties possessing different, and sometimes competing, political and theological interests. A theory of Umayyad interference cannot automatically be extended to Abbasid interference merely because both dynasties may be described as Sunni in the broad historical sense. The critic must identify the particular reports allegedly promoted, suppressed or altered under each establishment, together with the mechanisms through which those interventions affected the transmitted corpus. The existence of successive Muslim governments does not establish the existence of one continuous, coherent and successful programme of state-directed *hadith* revision.

2.4. The Muhaddithin and Their Opposition to the Theological Policies of Ruling Governments

The distinction between the theological identity of the *muhaddithin* and the religious affiliation of ruling governments is not merely terminological. It is demonstrated by the historical conflicts between prominent Sunni scholars and the theological policies of the rulers under whom they lived. The clearest example is the Abbasid *Mihnah*.

During the caliphates of al-Ma'mun, al-Mu'tasim and al-Wathiq, the Abbasid government promoted and enforced the doctrine that the Qur'an was created. This doctrine was associated especially with *Mu'tazili* theology and was explicitly rejected by the traditionists. The theological disagreement was fundamental. The nature of the Qur'an as divine speech concerned the attributes of Allah and the character of divine revelation, rather than a minor disagreement concerning political administration. The government consequently attempted to compel scholars to adopt a theological position which leading representatives of *Ahl al- Sunnah* regarded as an innovation. The consequences were particularly severe for those who refused.

2.4.1. Ahmad ibn Hanbal and the Mihnah

Ahmad ibn Hanbal was among the most prominent scholars persecuted during the *Mihnah*. His refusal to affirm the createdness of the Qur'an resulted in imprisonment and physical punishment during the caliphate of al-Mu'tasim. Al-Dhahabi preserves Ahmad's demand that his opponents establish their position through revelation:

أعطوني شيئا من كتاب الله أو سنة رسول الله أقول به

> *Translation: "Provide me with something from the Book of Allah or the Sunnah of His Messenger upon which I may adopt this position."*

> *Reference: Siyar A'lam al-Nubala, by al-Dhahabi, vol. 11, biography of Ahmad ibn Hanbal, discussion of the Mihnah.*

The significance requires little elaboration. Ahmad ibn Hanbal occupied a central position within the Sunni *hadith* tradition, and his *Musnad* became one of the most substantial surviving collections of Prophetic reports. Yet he was persecuted precisely because he refused to adopt the theological doctrine imposed by his ruling government. This is hardly consistent with the suggestion that the religious commitments of the leading traditionists were simply those of the political establishment.

2.4.2. Abu Ya’qub al-Buwayti

Another notable example is Yusuf ibn Yahya al-Buwayti, the distinguished student and successor of al-Shafi'i. Al-Buwayti similarly refused to affirm the doctrine of the created Qur'an. As a consequence, he was transported from Egypt to Iraq in chains and remained imprisoned until his death. Al-Dhahabi preserves the testimony of al-Rabi ibn Sulayman, who describes seeing al-Buwayti restrained with an iron collar and shackles. Al-Buwayti declared:

ولأموتن في حديدي هذا حتى يأتي قوم يعلمون أنه قد مات في هذا الشأن قوم في حديدهم

> *Translation: "I shall die in these chains of mine, so that people will come to know that there were men who died in chains over this matter."*

> *Reference: Siyar A'lam al-Nubala, by al-Dhahabi, vol. 12, pp. 59–60, biography of al-Buwayti.*

These examples were not isolated disputes concerning the distribution of governmental appointments or political patronage. They concerned fundamental questions of religious belief and the authority of divine revelation. The distinction is particularly important because al-Qadri's argument concerns the reliability of the religious tradition transmitted by these same figures. Yet the figures responsible for preserving that tradition could themselves be subjected to coercion precisely because their theological convictions differed from those of the government.

Not every ruler, however, necessarily opposed the traditionists. The Umayyad caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz was distinguished by his religious learning, adherence to the transmitted Sunnah and opposition to Qadari doctrines. Likewise, the Abbasid caliph al-Mutawakkil reversed the policy of enforcing the created-Qur'an doctrine and brought the *Mihnah* to an end. These examples demonstrate that individual rulers could adhere to or support the creed of the traditionists. However, such adherence must be established through the theological convictions of the ruler concerned, rather than presumed merely from his political office or dynastic affiliation.

2.4.3. The Independence of Hadith Criticism from Dynastic Affiliation

The independence of the *muhaddithin* from the interests of ruling governments is also illustrated by the practical application of *al-jarh wa'l-ta'dil*. The surviving literature of narrator criticism contains numerous assessments in which individuals belonging to politically influential families were subjected to the same rigorous method conferred upon other transmitters. Two examples involving transmitters associated respectively with the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties are especially relevant. Al-Nasa'i, in *al-Du'afa wa'l-Matrukun*, identifies Khalid ibn Amr al-Umawi, a transmitter belonging to the Umayyad clan, and states:

خالد بن عمرو الأموي ليس بثقة

> *Translation: "Khalid ibn Amr al-Umawi is not trustworthy."*
>
> *Reference: al-Du'afah wa'l-Matrukun, by al-Nasa'i, no. 168.*

The judgement is explicit. Khalid's Umayyad ancestry did not exempt him from criticism, and his unreliability was likewise recognised by earlier *hadith* authorities, including Ahmad ibn Hanbal and Abu Hatim al-Razi. An even more direct example involving an individual connected to the Abbasid ruling family is preserved by al-Daraqutni. In *al-Du'afah wa'l- Matrukun*, he identifies Ja'far ibn Abd al-Wahid al-Hashimi, a descendant of the Abbasid family who occupied judicial office, and declares:

جعفر بن عبد الواحد الهاشمي ولى قضاء الثغر يضع

> *Translation: "Ja'far ibn Abd al-Wahid al-Hashimi held judicial office in the frontier region and fabricated hadith."*
>
> *Reference: al-Du'afah wa'l-Matrukun, by al-Daraqutni, no. 142.*

Ja'far's ancestry connected him directly to the Abbasid family through Abbas ibn Abd al-Muttalib. Nevertheless, al-Daraqutni expressly accused him of fabricating Prophetic traditions. Other *hadith* critics, including Ibn Abi Hatim and Ibn Adiy, also documented serious problems concerning his transmissions. These are merely illustrative examples from the much broader literature of narrator criticism. They demonstrate that political connections,

dynastic ancestry and judicial appointments did not necessarily protect transmitters from the impartiality of *hadith* critics. The *muhaddithin* did not regard membership within the ruling family as an independent guarantee of reliability. Rather, their assessment of a transmitter depended upon the critical examination of his narrations and his standing among the recognised authorities of *hadith* criticism.

The implications for al-Qadri's argument are considerable. The early traditionists could oppose the theological doctrines enforced by ruling governments, suffer persecution for refusing to adopt those doctrines, and subject politically connected transmitters to their rigorous method of narrator scrutiny. This does not establish that individual scholars were immune from political influence in every circumstance. It does, however, demonstrate the inadequacy of treating the theological tradition of the *muhaddithin* as though it were merely an extension of the political establishment. If al-Qadri maintains that the Sunni *hadith* corpus was systematically shaped by governmental interests, the burden lies upon him to identify evidence of such interference and demonstrate how it compromised the authentication of particular reports. The broadly Sunni affiliation of the ruling governments is insufficient to establish that conclusion.

2.5. Al-Zuhri and the Treaty of al-Hudaybiyyah: The Problem of Alleged Political Sanitisation

Al-Qadri's first specific example concerns the identity of the individual responsible for writing the agreement concluded between the Prophet Muhammad and Quraysh at al-Hudaybiyyah. He invokes a report preserved in *al-Musannaf* of Abd al-Razzaq al-Sanani, in which Ma'mar ibn Rashid questions Muhammad ibn Shihab al-Zuhri concerning the writer of the agreement. Al-Zuhri reportedly laughed and replied:

عبد الرزاق، قال: أخبرنا معمر قال: سألت عنه الزهري فضحك وقال: هو علي بن أبي طالب، ولو سألت عنه هؤلاء قالوا: عثمان يعني بني أمية

> *Translation: "Abd al-Razzaq reported from Ma'mar, who said: I asked al-Zuhri about it, and he laughed and said: 'It was Ali ibn Abi Talib. But if you asked those people, they would say it was Uthman,' meaning Banu Umayyah."*

> *Reference: al-Musannaf, by Abd al-Razzaq al-Sanani, no. 9722, vol. 5, p. 343.*

The transmission from Abd al-Razzaq through Ma'mar to al-Zuhri is sound. The attribution to al-Zuhri should therefore be accepted as an early testimony concerning the political environment in which he lived. Nevertheless, al-Zuhri's statement must be distinguished from an independently documented instance of *hadith* fabrication. The report does not identify a particular Umayyad official who transmitted a fabricated Prophetic narration attributing the authorship of the document to Uthman. Rather, al-Zuhri employs a hypothetical formulation indicating what he believed members of the Umayyad family would say. The statement consequently provides evidence of al-Zuhri's perception of Umayyad partisanship. It does not independently establish that a fabricated tradition had successfully displaced the authentic historical account. Indeed, the surviving Sunni corpus explicitly preserves Ali's role. In *Sahih al-Bukhari*, al-Bara ibn Azib states:

لما صالح رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم أهل الحديبية كتب علي بينهم كتابا

> *Translation: "When the Messenger of Allah concluded the agreement with the people of al- Hudaybiyyah, Ali wrote the document between them."*

> *Reference: Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 2698, Kitab al-Sulh. See also Sahih Muslim, no. 1783.*

The narration further describes Ali's refusal to erase the words identifying Prophet Muhammad as the Messenger of Allah when the representatives of Quraysh objected to their inclusion. Thus, the same Sunni *hadith* tradition which preserves al-Zuhri's criticism of an anticipated Umayyad attribution also transmits the account explicitly affirming Ali's authorship. The report is not confined to a marginal historical compilation. It is preserved within *Sahih al-Bukhari* itself. There is, however, a more fundamental difficulty with al-Qadri's use of this evidence. If the Umayyad establishment exercised such pervasive control over the transmission of religious material that politically

inconvenient reports were systematically suppressed or removed, how is it that al-Zuhri's explicit criticism of Umayyad partisanship survived within the Sunni transmitted corpus?

Not only was the alleged political preference unsuccessful in displacing Ali's authorship from the authentic tradition, but the testimony accusing members of the Umayyad family of favouring an alternative attribution was itself preserved. Indeed, al-Qadri is able to invoke this statement approximately fourteen centuries later precisely because Sunni *hadith* scholars transmitted, documented and preserved it. The observation does not establish that no Umayyad official ever attempted to influence historical transmission. Nevertheless, it presents a substantial difficulty for any theory of comprehensive or uniformly successful political sanitisation. The particular example chosen to demonstrate Umayyad manipulation simultaneously demonstrates the survival of evidence critical of that manipulation.

2.5.1. Al-Zuhri's Scholarly Independence

The significance of al-Zuhri's statement becomes even more pronounced when his position within the Sunni *hadith* tradition is considered. Muhammad ibn Shihab al-Zuhri was not an obscure historian whose testimony survived outside the principal channels of Sunni religious transmission. He was among the most influential traditionists of the early second Islamic century, and his narrations occupy a central position throughout the canonical Sunni *hadith* collections, including the *Sahihain* and the four *Sunan*. His students included Malik ibn Anas, Ma'mar ibn Rashid, Yunus ibn Yazid, Uqayl ibn Khalid and Sufyan ibn Uyaynah, among numerous others. Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani describes him in *Taqrib al- Tahdhib* as:

الفقيه الحافظ متفق على جلالته وإتقانه

> *Translation: "The jurist and hadith master whose eminent standing and precision are unanimously recognised."*

> *Reference: Taqrib al-Tahdhib, by Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, biography of Muhammad ibn Muslim ibn Shihab al- Zuhri.*

The importance of this observation should not be understated. Al-Zuhri maintained documented relationships with the Umayyad establishment. Yet the very narration adduced by al-Qadri depicts him openly identifying Ali as the writer of the agreement and expressing scepticism concerning the likely historical attribution favoured by members of the ruling family. Rather than demonstrating al-Zuhri's intellectual subordination to Umayyad political preferences, the statement provides a concrete example of his willingness to preserve an account which he believed differed from those preferences.

The fact that this same al-Zuhri became one of the principal authorities upon whom Sunni *hadith* transmission relied upon is especially significant. His political associations did not prevent him from transmitting material unfavourable to the historical claims he associated with the ruling family. His testimony positively illustrates scholarly independence, and its subsequent preservation undermines any simplistic equation between association with the Umayyad court and unquestioning adherence to Umayyad political narratives.

2.5.2. The Internal Tension in al-Qadri's Argument

This brings us to an especially consequential difficulty in al-Qadri's presentation. On the one hand, he argues that Sunni *hadith* transmission was historically exposed to political interference by governments possessing incentives to suppress religious material unfavourable to their legitimacy. On the other hand, he boldly maintains that Twelver Shi'a scholars, and laymen alike, can establish foundational elements of their religious position through the very Sunni *hadith* corpus which he regards as politically compromised.

These propositions are not necessarily logically contradictory. A body of literature may have been subject to selective distortion while still preserving material contrary to the interests of those who attempted to influence it. Nevertheless, the combination of these claims imposes a substantial evidentiary burden upon al-Qadri. If the Sunni corpus was sufficiently compromised by governmental manipulation to undermine confidence in its general transmission, upon what independent criteria does he determine that the particular narrations invoked in support of Twelver beliefs escaped the same process? Conversely, if the Sunni corpus preserves enough authenticated

material for Twelver scholars to advance what they regard as compelling arguments from those sources, this substantially qualifies the claim that the corpus was sanitised to eliminate evidence contrary to Sunni theological positions.

Indeed, there is an evident irony in the fact that al-Qadri can construct a considerable portion of his criticism of Sunni transmission by appealing directly to the works of Sunni traditionists. His access to the reports is possible because those reports were preserved and circulated through the very scholarly tradition whose integrity he questions. Nevertheless, their survival challenges the proposition that the Sunni *hadith* corpus was comprehensively and successfully purged of material inconvenient to the interests of ruling governments.

Al-Qadri must therefore distinguish documented acts of political interference from the considerably broader claim that the transmitted Sunni corpus was fundamentally reconstructed in accordance with the interests of ruling governments. His report from al-Zuhri establishes an early scholar's awareness of political partisanship. It does not establish the successful corruption of the authenticated historical account. More significantly, its very preservation demonstrates that the Sunni transmission tradition was capable of transmitting evidence inconsistent with the preferences attributed to particular ruling establishments. The central distinction remains between attempted political influence and demonstrably successful corruption of religious transmission. The existence of the former cannot, without further evidence, establish the latter.

2.6. Al-Dhahabi on Mu'awiyah: Political Patronage, Sectarian Fabrication and the Limits of the Inference

Al-Qadri's second example is drawn from *Siyar A'lam al-Nubala* by Shams al-Din al-Dhahabi. In his biography of Mu'awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan, al-Dhahabi discusses the development of political loyalties among those who supported Mu'awiyah, particularly in Syria. He advances the notion that Mu'awiyah acquired a considerable following through generosity, forbearance and material patronage, while other supporters inherited their attachment to him through their upbringing. Al-Dhahabi writes:

وخلف معاوية خلق كثير يحبونه ويتغالون فيه ويفضلونه، إما قد ملكهم بالكرم والحلم والعطاء

> *Translation: "Mu'awiyah left behind many people who loved him, exaggerated concerning him and preferred him, whether because he had won them over through generosity, forbearance and gifts..."*

> *Reference: Siyar A'lam al-Nubala, by al-Dhahabi, vol. 3, p. 128, biography of Mu'awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan.*

Al-Dhahabi subsequently explains that some supporters were raised in Syria upon affection for Mu'awiyah and that hostility towards Ali emerged among certain segments of this community. He expressly condemns the development of *nasb*, or hostility towards Ali, invoking divine protection against the influence of partisan desires. The observation is historically significant. It demonstrates that a major Sunni biographer recognised the relationship between political patronage, regional identity and the development of religiously charged loyalties. Nevertheless, the immediate implications of the passage must be distinguished from the conclusion al-Qadri draws. Al-Dhahabi is describing the development of political loyalties and partisan attitudes among the populations associated with competing factions. He is not identifying a particular fabricated Prophetic narration, establishing its chain of transmission, or demonstrating that financial patronage caused a recognised traditionist to manufacture a report.

Political favouritism and the fabrication of Prophetic traditions are related but distinct historical phenomena. The former may create conditions conducive to the latter. It cannot automatically substitute for evidence establishing that the latter occurred. Al-Dhahabi's discussion also considers the development of exaggerated partisanship among supporters of Ali in Iraq. His concern is therefore not restricted to one faction. Rather, he identifies the broader difficulty of preserving historical impartiality when individuals have been reared and socialised within environments characterised by exaggerated attachment to one leader and hostility towards another. More importantly, al-Dhahabi does not indiscriminately defend every tradition praising Mu'awiyah. Within the same biographical treatment, he expressly identifies purported Prophetic reports exaggerating Mu'awiyah's virtues as fabrications. (Reference: Al-Dhahabi, *Siyar A'lam al-Nubala*, vol. 3, pp. 128–129.)

The same figure invoked by al-Qadri to demonstrate that Mu'awiyah acquired supporters through material patronage also recognises the existence of fabricated traditions in Mu'awiyah's favour. He therefore distinguishes historical reputation from the reliability of particular Prophetic attributions. This *hadith* critical approach is also reflected in an especially pertinent statement by Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, in the introduction to his *Lisan al- Mizan*. After citing Ahmad ibn Hanbal's observation concerning the abundance of unreliable reports in the literature of military campaigns, exegesis and eschatological events, Ibn Hajar argues that another category should be added to the discussion: reports concerning the virtues of historical and religious figures. He writes:

قلت: ينبغي أن يضاف إليها الفضائل. فهذه أودية الأحاديث الضعيفة والموضوعة. إذ كانت العمدة في المغازي على مثل الواقدي، وفي التفسير على مثل مقاتل والكلبي، وفي الملاحم على الإسرائيليات. وأما الفضائل فلا يحصى كم وضع الرافضة في فضل أهل البيت، وعارضهم جهلة أهل السنة بفضائل معاوية، بل وبفضائل الشيخين، وقد أغناهما الله وأعلى مرتبتهما عنها.

> *Translation: "I say: Reports concerning virtues should also be added to these categories, for they are repositories of weak and fabricated traditions. In the literature of military campaigns, reliance was placed upon figures such as al-Waqidi; in exegesis, upon individuals such as Muqatil and al-Kalbi; and in the literature of eschatological events, upon Israelite traditions. As for reports concerning virtues, it is impossible to enumerate how many traditions the Rafidah fabricated concerning the merits of Ahl al-Bait. In response, ignorant members of Ahl al-Sunnah fabricated reports concerning the virtues of Mu'awiyah, and even concerning the virtues of the two Shaikhs, Abu Bakr and Umar, although Allah had already bestowed upon the latter two such distinction and elevated their standing that they had no need of these fabrications."*

> *Reference: Lisan al-Mizan, by Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, vol. 1, p. 207.*

The significance of Ibn Hajar's statement is considerable. He expressly acknowledges the fabrication of traditions by individuals associated with opposing sectarian commitments. On the one hand, he condemns the activities of *Rafidi* partisans who fabricated reports exaggerating the merits of

Ahl al-Bait. On the other hand, he acknowledges that certain ignorant individuals associated with *Ahl al-Sunnah* responded by fabricating reports concerning Mu'awiyah, and even Abu Bakr and Umar.

The latter observation is especially noteworthy. Abu Bakr and Umar occupy an exceptionally distinguished position within Sunni theology, and Ibn Hajar himself recognises their religious excellence. Nevertheless, their standing does not cause him to excuse fabricated traditions transmitted in their favour. Rather, he expressly maintains that their established merits render such fabrications unnecessary. This illustrates an important methodological principle: the authenticity of a Prophetic tradition is not determined by whether its contents affirm an individual whose virtues the critic already accepts.

A report may express a sentiment consistent with the critic's theological commitments while nevertheless being rejected as fabricated. Conversely, a tradition concerning an individual associated with a competing theological or political position cannot automatically be rejected merely because its contents are favourable to that individual. Ibn Hajar's statement must also be read with appropriate precision. Its importance lies in the explicit identification of politically and theologically motivated fabrication among individuals associated with more than one religious faction. Furthermore, Ibn Hajar does not attribute such misconduct indiscriminately to *Ahl al-Sunnah* as a whole. His expression *jahalat Ahl al- Sunnah* specifically identifies ignorant partisans whose conduct he condemns. The distinction is essential. The presence of individuals willing to fabricate traditions in defence of a religious position does not establish that the recognised *hadith* critics endorsed their activities.

Indeed, Ibn Hajar's own condemnation demonstrates precisely the opposite in this instance. When considered alongside al-Dhahabi's assessment of Mu'awiyah, the passage illustrates the willingness of prominent Sunni *hadith* critics to acknowledge exaggeration and fabrication even when the material concerned figures traditionally accorded considerable respect.

2.6.1. Political and Sectarian Incentives: The Problem of Selective Scrutiny

There is, however, a further methodological difficulty with al-Qadri's argument which warrants particular attention. His objection assumes that the political interests of ruling governments created incentives to influence the transmission of Prophetic traditions. Yet the possibility of ideologically motivated fabrication is not peculiar only to those who possess political authority.

Religious movements opposed to ruling governments possess equally compelling incentives to promote reports legitimising their own theological commitments, exaggerating the virtues of their preferred historical figures or undermining the religious standing of their opponents. Indeed, this is precisely the phenomenon identified by Ibn Hajar in his discussion of fabricated reports concerning religious virtues. He does not restrict his criticism to individuals who fabricated traditions in support of Mu'awiyah, Abu Bakr or Umar. Rather, he expressly identifies *Rafidi* partisans who fabricated reports concerning the virtues of *Ahl al- Bait*. The implication is fundamental. If the political interests of the Umayyad and Abbasid establishments constitute grounds for scrutinising reports favourable to their legitimacy, the theological and political interests of those who opposed these governments must be subjected to the same scrutiny.

The mere fact that a particular religious movement occupied a position of opposition to political authority does not establish that its transmitters were inherently more truthful or less susceptible to ideological motivations. An instructive example is furnished by the early Shi'a transmitters of Kufa. Kufa was a significant centre of political and theological attachment to Ali and his descendants. It was also an important centre of *hadith* transmission, in which scholars encountered individuals belonging to different religious and political factions.

The early traditionists were therefore required to distinguish reliable transmitters from individuals whose theological commitments were accompanied by demonstrable problems in their transmission. One

particularly revealing example is Jabir ibn Yazid al-Ju'fi, the Kufan transmitter associated with exaggerated Shi'a doctrines. In the Introduction to *Sahih Muslim*, Imam Muslim preserves the statement of Jarir ibn Abd al-Hamid:

لقيت جابر بن يزيد الجعفي فلم أكتب عنه كان يؤمن بالرجعة

> *Translation: "I encountered Jabir ibn Yazid al-Ju'fi, but I did not record traditions from him because he believed in the doctrine of return."*

> *Reference: Sahih Muslim, Introduction, narration 52, chapter concerning the identification of defects in transmitters.*

The doctrine of *al-raja*, as associated with certain early Shi'a movements, concerned the return of particular individuals before the final resurrection. Muslim also preserves the testimony of Sufyan ibn Uyaynah concerning the growing suspicion surrounding Jabir's narrations:

كان الناس يحملون عن جابر قبل أن يظهر ما أظهر فلما أظهر ما أظهر اتهمه الناس في حديثه وتركه بعض الناس فقيل له وما أظهر قال الإيمان بالرجعة

> *Translation: "People used to transmit from Jabir before he openly manifested what he subsequently manifested. However, when he made it apparent, people became suspicious of his traditions, and some abandoned his reports. He was asked: 'What did he manifest?' He replied: 'Belief in the doctrine of return.'"*

> *Reference: Sahih Muslim, Introduction, narration 54.*

The criticism of Jabir was not confined to his theological affiliation. Ibn Adiy, in *al-Kamil fi Du'afah al-Rijal*, preserves the following judgement attributed to Abu Hanifa:

ما رأيت فيمن رأيت أفضل من عطاء ولا لقيت فيمن لقيت أكذب من جابر الجعفي

> *Translation: "Among those whom I encountered, I saw no one more excellent than Ata, nor did I encounter anyone more given to falsehood than Jabir al-Ju'fi."*

> *Reference: al-Kamil fi Du'afah al-Rijal, by ibn Adiy, biography of Jabir ibn Yazid al-Ju'fi.*

These testimonies demonstrate that the concerns of the early scholars extended beyond abstract disagreements over theology. Jabir was expressly accused of dishonesty in transmission. A particularly revealing example of this phenomenon is preserved by al-Uqayli in *al-Du'afah al-Kabir*, in his biographical entry concerning al-Mu'alla ibn Abd al-Rahman al-Wasiti, a transmitter accused of fabricating Prophetic traditions and of *Rafidi* sympathies. Al-Uqayli transmits the following testimony through Abu Usamah al-Basri, from Abu Dawud al-Sijistani, who heard Yahya ibn Ma'in questioned concerning al-Mu'alla:

حدثني أبو أسامة البصري قال سمعت أبا داود السجستاني يقول سمعت يحيى بن معين وسئل عن المعلى بن عبد الرحمن فقال أحسن أحواله عندي أنه قيل له عند موته ألا تستغفر الله فقال ألا أرجو أن يغفر لي وقد وضعت في فضل علي بن أبي طالب رضي الله تعالى عنه سبعين حديثا

> *Translation: "Abu Usamah al-Basri narrated to me, saying: I heard Abu Dawud al-Sijistani say: I heard Yahya ibn Ma'in, when he was asked concerning al-Mu'alla ibn Abd al-Rahman, say: The best that can be said concerning him, in my estimation, is that when he was asked at the time of his death, Will you not seek Allah's forgiveness? He replied: Should I not hope that He will forgive me, when I have fabricated seventy traditions concerning the virtues of Ali ibn Abi Talib?"*

> *Reference: al-Du'afah al-Kabir, by Abu Ja'far al-Uqayli, vol. 4, p. 215, biography no. 1802. See also Tahdhib al-Kamal, by al-Mizzi, vol. 28, biography of al-Mualla; Mizan al-I'tidal, by al-Dhahabi, vol. 4, p. 149.*

The reported admission is particularly striking because it portrays the fabrication of Prophetic traditions concerning Ali's virtues as a meritorious religious activity for which the individual anticipated divine forgiveness. The allegation thus illustrates the very phenomenon under consideration: the possibility that sectarian commitment could provide a religious, rather than merely political or material, incentive for fabricating traditions. The underlying accusation of fabrication is supported by the adverse assessments of other recognised critics. Ali ibn al-Madini considered al-Mu'alla to have fabricated traditions, Abu Hatim al-Razi declared his reports abandoned, while al-Daraqutni described him as a liar. The significance of these

observations is not that authentic traditions concerning Ali's virtues should be regarded with suspicion merely because of their subject matter. Rather, they demonstrate that early *hadith* critics identified individuals willing to attribute false statements to the Prophet in furtherance of their particular religious commitments.

The possibility of ideologically motivated fabrication was therefore not confined to the ruling establishment. It also extended to individuals associated with movements which opposed those establishments and regarded the promotion of their own theological doctrines as a religious obligation. Another example is Amr ibn Shamir al-Ju'fi, a Kufan transmitter whose narrations were severely criticised. Ibn Adiy preserves the judgement of al-Juzajani concerning him:

عمرو بن شمر زائغ كذاب

> *Translation: "Amr ibn Shamir is doctrinally deviant and a liar."*
>
> *Reference: al-Kamil fi Du'afah al-Rijal, by ibn Adiy,, biography of Amr ibn Shamir al-Ju'fi.*

Al-Nasa'i likewise states:

عمرو بن شمر كوفي متروك الحديث

> *Translation: "Amr ibn Shamir is a Kufan whose hadith are abandoned."*
>
> *Reference: al-Kamil fi Du'afah al-Rijal, by ibn Adiy, biography of Amr ibn Shamir, transmitting al-Nasa'i's judgement.*

These reports are significant because they demonstrate that early *hadith* critics identified and investigated unreliable transmitters associated with Shi'a religious movements of Kufa, just as they scrutinised transmitters whose affiliations were favourable to the ruling dynasties. The testimony concerning Jabir al-Ju'fi and Amr ibn Shamir establishes that the early critics encountered individuals associated with Shi'a movements whose transmissions they considered unreliable, and in some instances explicitly dishonest.

This returns to the fundamental difficulty with al-Qadri's argument. If political or theological interests are sufficient to generate suspicion concerning the integrity of Sunni *hadith* transmission, then those same interests must be

recognised as potential sources of distortion among transmitters affiliated with rival sectarian movements. An individual who seeks to legitimise a ruling dynasty and an individual who seeks to establish the religious authority of an opposing theological movement may possess different political objectives, but both can have incentives to promote traditions favourable to their respective positions. The possibility of ideological influence is therefore reciprocal. Indeed, the early Sunni *hadith* critics expressly recognised that danger and subjected transmitters from different theological and political backgrounds to scrutiny.

Consequently, al-Qadri cannot invoke the political interests of Sunni rulers as grounds for questioning Sunni transmission while assuming that the historical opposition or minority status of Shi'a movements independently establishes the reliability of their own transmitted material. Neither political power nor political persecution constitutes an independent criterion of *hadith* authenticity. In both cases, the burden remains upon the individual advancing a particular narration to establish its authenticity through the evaluation of its transmitters, chains, textual variants and corroborating evidence. To apply this standard to one religious tradition while exempting another would not constitute consistent historical criticism, but a selective application of the very methodological suspicion upon which al-Qadri's argument depends.

2.6.2. The Implications for Sunni Hadith Criticism

The methodological significance is not that Sunni critics were wholly immune from personal or theological leanings, but that their critical literature explicitly recognised politically and sectarian-motivated fabrication on opposing sides and did not regard a report's agreement with Sunni theological commitments as sufficient proof of authenticity.

This considerably qualifies al-Qadri's implication that the Sunni *hadith* tradition was institutionally incapable of scrutinising reports favourable to figures associated with the ruling establishment. The existence of political incentives to fabricate traditions was not necessarily concealed by Sunni scholars; it could itself become an object of their historical and *hadith*-critical investigation.

Equally, the recognition of unreliable transmitters within particular sectarian movements demonstrates that political opposition to a ruling dynasty did not automatically render an individual trustworthy. This does not establish that every fabricated report was identified.

Nevertheless, it demonstrates that the Sunni critical tradition possessed conceptual and methodological resources for recognising fabricated political and sectarian virtues, including those attributed to figures traditionally regarded with respect.

2.7. Mu'awiyah's Warning Concerning Prophetic Reports: Restriction in the Aftermath of Civil Discord

Al-Qadri's third example concerns an authentic statement attributed to Mu'awiyah, preserved in *Musnad Ahmad* and *Sahih Muslim*, in which he cautions against transmitting Prophetic traditions other than those known during Umar's lifetime. The recension preserved in *Sahih Muslim* transmits through Zayd ibn al-Hubab, Mu'awiyah ibn Salih, Rabi'ah ibn Yazid al-Dimashqi and Abdallah ibn Amir al-Yahsubi, who explicitly states that he heard Mu'awiyah speaking. Mu'awiyah declares:

إياكم وأحاديث إلا حديثا كان في عهد عمر فإن عمر كان يخيف الناس في الله عز وجل

> *Translation: "Beware of reports, except those known during the lifetime of Umar, for Umar caused people to fear Allah, the Mighty and Majestic."*

> *Reference: Sahih Muslim, no. 1037, Kitab al-Zakat. See also Musnad Ahmad, no. 16467.*

The question concerns the meaning and historical implications of the statement. Al-Qadri interprets it as evidence that Mu'awiyah attempted to restrict the circulation of Prophetic traditions and thus exercise political control over religious transmission. The statement undoubtedly reflects a restrictive attitude towards the acceptance or circulation of reports.

Nevertheless, its historical context must be considered. Mu'awiyah lived through the first major civil conflicts within the Muslim community, including the confrontation between Ali and the Syrian faction that supported him. The aftermath of these conflicts witnessed the development of increasingly pronounced political and sectarian loyalties. Such circumstances created opportunities for individuals to exaggerate the virtues of their preferred leaders, denigrate their opponents and circulate traditions supporting competing political claims.

In that environment, an instruction to exercise caution concerning reports which had not been known during Umar's lifetime could reasonably be understood as an appeal to an earlier period of transmission, before the later political divisions had become entrenched. The interpretation is highly plausible, although the wording does not explicitly identify the *fitnah* as Mu'awiyah's motive.

Consequently, it should be presented as a contextual explanation rather than an authenticated statement of his inward intention. Nevertheless, the explanation possesses an important methodological foundation in the testimony of early traditionists who expressly connected the increasing scrutiny of *hadith* with the emergence of civil discord.

2.7.1. Ibn Sirin and the Emergence of Isnad Scrutiny

In the Introduction to *Sahih Muslim*, Muhammad ibn Sirin states:

لم يكونوا يسألون عن الإسناد فلما وقعت الفتنة قالوا سموا لنا رجالكم فينظر إلى أهل السنة فيؤخذ حديثهم وينظر إلى أهل البدع فلا يؤخذ حديثهم

> *Translation: "They did not previously ask about the chains of transmission, but when the civil discord occurred, they began saying: 'Name your transmitters to us.' The people of the Sunnah would then be examined and their reports accepted, while the people of innovation would be examined and their reports rejected."*

> *Reference: Sahih Muslim, Introduction, narration 27.*

The report is transmitted through Muhammad ibn al-Sabbah, Isma'il ibn Zakariyyah and Asim al-Ahwal, from Ibn Sirin. The chain is sound. The statement is particularly significant because it expressly identifies the emergence of civil discord as the circumstance in which the identity and religious orientation of individual transmitters became matters requiring closer investigation.

The *fitnah* referred to by Ibn Sirin has been discussed by later historians, and the statement should not be treated as an exact chronological declaration that no one ever examined a chain before a particular political event. Nevertheless, its methodological significance is clear. The early critics recognised that the proliferation of competing religious and political factions could affect the reliability of transmitted reports. Accordingly, the identification of individual transmitters became an increasingly important element of *hadith* criticism.

The development of systematic *isnad* scrutiny therefore cannot adequately be characterised as an enterprise undertaken in ignorance of politically motivated religious transmission. Rather, the recognition that such transmission had become possible was among the historical circumstances encouraging greater scrutiny.

2.7.2. Ibn Abbas on the Increasing Necessity of Scrutiny

A closely related observation is preserved from Abdallah ibn Abbas. In the Introduction to *Sahih Muslim*, Mujahid ibn Jabr relates that Bushayr al-Adawi approached Ibn Abbas and repeatedly attributed statements to the Prophet. Ibn Abbas did not respond with the attention Bushayr expected. When questioned, Ibn Abbas explained:

إنا كنا مرة إذا سمعنا رجلا يقول قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ابتدرته أبصارنا وأصغينا إليه بآذاننا فلما ركب الناس الصعب والذلول لم نأخذ من الناس إلا ما نعرف

> *Translation: "There was a time when, upon hearing someone say, 'The Messenger of Allah said,' we would immediately turn our eyes towards him and listen attentively. But when people began venturing into every manner of report, we no longer accepted from them except what we recognised."*

> *Reference: Sahih Muslim, Introduction, narration 21.*

The report is transmitted through Abu Amir al-Aqadi, Ribah ibn Abi Maruf, Qays ibn Sa'd and Mujahid ibn Jabr. A second, particularly strong transmission appears in the preceding narration. Muslim transmits through Muhammad ibn Rafi, Abd al-Razzaq, Ma'mar, Abdallah ibn Tawus and Tawus, from Ibn Abbas:

إنما كنا نحفظ الحديث والحديث يحفظ عن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم فأما إذ ركبتم كل صعب وذلول فهيهات

> *Translation: "We used to preserve hadith, and hadith was preserved from the Messenger of Allah. But now that you have ventured into every manner of report, that is another matter entirely."*

> *Reference: Sahih Muslim, Introduction, narration 20.*

The latter chain is sound and particularly important because it directly connects Ibn Abbas with the earliest preserved concerns regarding the uncontrolled circulation of reports. The precise expression *rakiba al-nas al-sab wa-l-dhalul* is idiomatic, conveying the idea of venturing into all manner of things without appropriate restraint. It should not be interpreted as an assertion that every later narrator was necessarily dishonest.

The context instead concerns Ibn Abbas's growing insistence upon recognising and evaluating the individuals from whom he accepted reports. These statements are especially consequential when considered alongside al-Qadri's criticism. The concern that politically or religiously motivated individuals might circulate unreliable material was not a discovery made by later opponents of Sunni *hadith* scholarship. It had already been articulated by senior members of the earliest Muslim generations.

Furthermore, the statements of Ibn Abbas and Ibn Sirin were preserved by Imam Muslim within the methodological introduction to his *Sahih*. Thus, awareness of the problem of unreliable transmission was incorporated into the intellectual foundations of the Sunni *hadith*-critical tradition itself. The existence of sectarian fabrication therefore constitutes an explanation for the development of greater transmission scrutiny, rather than necessarily establishing the futility of that scrutiny.

2.7.3. The Meaning of Mu’awiyah's Warning in This Context

When Mu'awiyah's statement is considered alongside these early testimonies, its reference to reports known during Umar's lifetime admits a coherent historical explanation. Umar's caliphate preceded the major civil conflicts following the assassination of Uthman. It was therefore a period comparatively removed from the later political factions that developed around the competing claims of Ali and Mu'awiyah.

Consequently, Muawiyah's invocation of reports known during Umar's lifetime may reasonably be understood as appealing to an earlier standard of recognised transmission. His accompanying praise of Umar's religious caution is consistent with that interpretation. Nevertheless, the statement does not itself establish that he ordered the fabrication of traditions or that the Sunni *hadith* corpus subsequently became an instrument of Umayyad political policy. Indeed, the narration immediately proceeds to preserve Mu'awiyah's own transmission of Prophetic statements concerning religious understanding and the ethical reception of wealth. Among them is the declaration:

من يرد الله به خيرا يفقهه في الدين

> *Translation: "Whoever Allah intends good for, He grants him understanding of the religion."*
>
> *Reference: Sahih Muslim, no. 1037.*

The statement therefore cannot reasonably be interpreted as a categorical prohibition upon transmitting Prophetic traditions. At most, it establishes an early ruler's restrictive preference concerning the circulation of reports in a turbulent period, which had not been recognised during an earlier, stable period. The historical motivation and practical consequences of that preference remain matters requiring independent evidence.

2.8. The Allegation That Umar Prohibited the Writing of Hadith

Al-Qadri further alleges that Umar ibn al-Khattab prohibited the writing of Prophetic traditions and suppressed the broader culture of *hadith* transmission. This assertion requires particular scrutiny because it encompasses several distinct historical questions. One concerns Umar's attitude towards the proliferation of Prophetic reports. Another concerns his willingness to authorise an official written compilation of the Sunnah. A third concerns whether he enacted a universal prohibition preventing Muslims from recording or transmitting Prophetic traditions. These propositions should not be conflated. The surviving evidence does not justify treating every report concerning Umar's caution as proof of a universal legal prohibition upon *hadith* transmission.

2.8.1. Umar's Written Instruction to Judge According to the Sunnah

An especially pertinent counterexample is preserved in *Sunan al-Nasa'i*. The report concerns Shurayh al-Qadi, who wrote to Umar requesting guidance concerning judicial procedure. Umar responded:

أن اقض بما في كتاب الله فإن لم يكن في كتاب الله فبسنة رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم

> *Translation: "Judge according to what is in the Book of Allah; if the matter is not found in the Book of Allah, then judge according to the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah."*

> *Reference: Sunan al-Nasa'i, by al-Nasa'i, no. 5399, Kitab Adab al-Qudah. See also al-Sunan al-Kubra, no. 6122; Sunan al-Darimi, no. 169; al-Musannaf ibn Abi Shaybah, no. 23444.*

The complete transmission proceeds through Muhammad ibn Bashshar, Abu Amir al-Aqadi, Sufyan al-Thawri, Abu Ishaq al-Shaybani and al-Sha'bi, from Shurayh. The chain is sound as an attribution to Umar. Its significance is direct. Umar's instruction formally recognised the Sunnah as an authoritative source of law. This evidence is difficult to reconcile with an unqualified assertion that Umar sought to eliminate reliance upon the same Prophetic tradition whose dissemination he purportedly prohibited. Nevertheless, a

distinction must be preserved. A directive to apply the Sunnah in judicial decisions does not, by itself, prove that Umar encouraged the unrestricted writing of every Prophetic report. The matter of legal authority must be distinguished from the specific methods through which Prophetic traditions were preserved and disseminated. The report establishes Umar's recognition of the Sunnah as an indispensable judicial authority, not the existence of a comprehensive state programme of *hadith* compilation.

2.8.2. The Report That Umar Considered Compiling the Sunnah

An early report directly concerns Umar's attitude towards the written compilation of Prophetic traditions. Al-Bayhaqi preserves a report through Abd al-Razzaq, Ma'mar, al-Zuhri and Urwah ibn al-Zubayr, according to which Umar considered compiling the Sunnah into a written collection. He consulted the Companions, who reportedly favoured the proposal. However, Umar subsequently declined to proceed. The report attributes to him the following explanation:

إني كنت أردت أن أكتب السنن وإني ذكرت قوما كانوا قبلكم كتبوا كتبا فأكبوا عليها وتركوا كتاب الله وإني والله لا ألبس كتاب الله بشيء أبدا

> *Translation: "I had intended to write down the Sunnah, but I remembered a people before you who wrote books and devoted themselves to them while neglecting the Book of Allah. By Allah, I shall never allow anything to become confused with the Book of Allah."*

> *Reference: al-Madkhal ila al-Sunan al-Kubra, by al-Bayhaqi, no. 1822. See also Jami Bayan al-Ilm wa-Fadlih, by Ibn Abd al-Barr, no. 343.*

The route through Abd al-Razzaq and Ma'mar to al-Zuhri is well known. Nevertheless, the report proceeds through Urwah ibn al-Zubayr without an established direct transmission from Umar concerning this incident. Its attribution to Umar is therefore disconnected.

It should consequently be cited as an early transmitted explanation of Umar's reported reluctance to compile the Sunnah, not as an independently authenticated contemporary statement establishing a universal policy. Even if its substance were accepted, the report would not establish the conclusion

advanced by al-Qadri. The narration does not describe a prohibition upon the religious authority of the Sunnah. Nor does it establish a universal prohibition upon Muslims writing down Prophetic statements.

Rather, it describes Umar declining to undertake an official compilation because of his concern that an additional written religious collection might divert attention from the Qur'an. The distinction is substantial. Refusing to sponsor a particular form of official compilation is not identical to forbidding the transmission or documentation of the material itself. Moreover, the reported reason concerns preservation of the Qur'an's religious primacy, not an intention to replace the Sunnah with an alternative body of governmental doctrine.

2.8.3. The Prophetic Precedent for Writing Hadith

The allegation of an absolute prohibition against writing Prophetic traditions must also be considered alongside authenticated reports establishing that their documentation was permitted during the Prophet's lifetime. In *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Abu Hurairah recounts that a man requested a written copy of a sermon delivered by the Prophet following the conquest of Makkah. The Prophet instructed:

اكتبوا لأبي فلان

> *Translation: "Write it down for Abu Fulan."*
>
> *Reference: Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 112, Kitab al-Ilm, chapter concerning the writing of knowledge.*

A corresponding recension identifies the recipient as Abu Shah:

اكتبوا لأبي شاه

> *Translation: "Write it down for Abu Shah."*
>
> *Reference: Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 2434.*

These narrations establish that the Prophet authorised the writing of his statements on a number of identifiable historical circumstances. Another important example concerns the written instructions regulating obligatory

almsgiving. In *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Anas ibn Malik reports that Abu Bakr wrote to him concerning the regulations of zakat which the Messenger of Allah had established. The document begins:

هذه فريضة الصدقة التي فرض رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم على المسلمين

> *Translation: "These are the regulations of obligatory charity which the Messenger of Allah prescribed for the Muslims."*
>
> *Reference: Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 1454, Kitab al-Zakat.*

The report demonstrates that written documentation of Prophetic guidance existed and was employed within the administration of the earliest caliphate. It does not independently establish Umar's personal policy concerning the unrestricted compilation of *hadith*. Nevertheless, it demonstrates that written Prophetic legal material was not inherently alien to the religious and administrative practices of the early Muslim community. Accordingly, any claim that Umar instituted a comprehensive prohibition upon the recording of *hadith* must be supported by direct evidence identifying the scope, circumstances and implementation of that prohibition. It cannot be established merely by citing an account in which Umar reportedly declined to compile the Sunnah himself.

2.8.4. Ibn Mas'ud's Testimony Concerning Umar's Knowledge

A further consideration concerns Umar's reputation for religious learning among the senior Companions. An authentic statement from Abdallah ibn Mas'ud is preserved by Abu Khaythamah Zuhayr ibn Harb in *al-Ilm*. The transmission proceeds through Jarir ibn Abd al-Hamid, from al-A'mash, from Abu Wa'il Shaqiq ibn Salamah, from Ibn Mas'ud. Ibn Masud declares:

لو أن علم عمر بن الخطاب وضع في كفة الميزان ووضع علم أهل الأرض في كفة لرجح علم عمر بن الخطاب

> *Translation: "If the knowledge of Umar ibn al-Khattab were placed upon one side of a balance, and the knowledge of the people of the earth upon the other, Umar's knowledge would outweigh theirs."*

> *Reference: al-Ilm, by Abu Khaythamah, no. 60. See also al-Musannaf ibn Abi Shaybah, no. 32003, and al-Mu'jam al-Kabir, by al-Tabarani, no. 8809.*

The chain is sound. Ibn Mas'ud's statement concerns Umar's exceptional religious knowledge generally. Nevertheless, its significance is relevant. It demonstrates the extraordinary esteem in which Umar's religious knowledge was held by one of the foremost early authorities in Quranic learning. When considered alongside Umar's written instruction to Shurayh, the statement provides further context for understanding Umar's concern with the careful application and preservation of revealed guidance. The evidence therefore supports a distinction between religious caution and hostility towards the Prophetic Sunnah.

2.8.5. The Report Alleging Umar's Detention of Companions: An Examination of Its Isnad and Textual Defects

A further report occasionally invoked in connection with Umar's alleged suppression of *hadith* claims that he detained several senior Companions in Madinah because of their frequent transmission of Prophetic traditions. The narration is preserved in Ibn Abi Shaybah's *al-Musannaf*, al-Hakim's *al-Mustadrak*, and through related routes in al-Tabarani's *al-Mujam al-Awsat*. The version preserved by al-Hakim states:

عن شعبة عن سعد بن إبراهيم عن أبيه أن عمر بن الخطاب قال لابن مسعود ولأبي الدرداء ولأبي ذر ما هذا الحديث عن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم وأحسبه حبسهم بالمدينة حتى أصيب

> *Translation: "Shu'bah narrated from Sa'd ibn Ibrahim, from his father, that Umar ibn al- Khattab said to Ibn Masud, Abu al-Darda and Abu Dharr: 'What are these reports you are transmitting from the Messenger of Allah?' And I think that he detained them in Madinah until he was killed."*

> *Reference: al-Mustadrak ala al-Sahihayn, by al-Hakim, no. 374, Kitab al-Ilm. See also al-Musannaf ibn Abi Shaybah, no. 26753.*

Al-Hakim graded the narration authentic according to the conditions of al-Bukhari and Muslim. Nevertheless, his judgement was not universally accepted, and the report was explicitly criticised by other *hadith* scholars. The primary defect concerns the connection between Ibrahim ibn Abd al-

Rahman ibn Awf and Umar ibn al-Khattab. The principal chain proceeds through Shu'bah ibn al-Hajjaj, from Sa'd ibn Ibrahim, from his father Ibrahim ibn Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf, who attributes the incident to Umar.

Although the transmitters appearing in the chain possess recognised standing, the reliability of individual transmitters does not, by itself, establish that every link in the chain is connected. Ibrahim ibn Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf is generally reported to have been born around 20AH, whereas Umar was assassinated in 23AH. Ibrahim would therefore have been approximately three years old when Umar died. Consequently, an attribution describing Umar's conduct towards senior Companions requires evidence that Ibrahim actually heard or witnessed the incident. Al-Bayhaqi expressly addresses this difficulty in *al-Sunan al-Kubra*, observing:

وإبراهيم بن عبد الرحمن لم يثبت له سماع من عمر بن الخطاب رضي الله عنه وإنما يقال إنه رآه

> *Translation: "It has not been established that Ibrahim ibn Abd al-Rahman heard from Umar ibn al-Khattab. It is merely said that he saw him."*

> *Reference: al-Sunan al-Kubra, by al-Bayhaqi, discussion concerning the transmission of Ibrahim ibn Abd al- Rahman ibn Awf.*

The distinction is important. The possibility that Ibrahim saw Umar as a child is not equivalent to establishing that he heard the particular account under discussion. Indeed, a claimed childhood sighting does not independently demonstrate that Ibrahim was capable of understanding and transmitting the details of the incident. Some biographical authorities have been cited as recognising a connection or hearing between Ibrahim and Umar. Nevertheless, the chronological difficulty led other *hadith* critics to reject the direct attribution. Among the most explicit assessments is that of Nur al-Din al-Haythami, who examines the version preserved by al-Tabarani. He states:

هذا أثر منقطع وإبراهيم ولد سنة عشرين ولم يدرك من حياة عمر إلا ثلاث سنين وابن مسعود كان بالكوفة ولا يصح هذا عن عمر

> *Translation: "This report is disconnected. Ibrahim was born in the year 20 AH and experienced only three years of Umar's lifetime. Ibn Masud was in Kufah, and this report is not authentic from Umar."*

> *Reference: Majma al-Zawa'id wa-Manba al-Fawa'id, by al-Haythami, vol. 1, p. 149, chapter concerning restraint in transmitting certain reports.*

Al-Haythami thus identifies two difficulties. The first concerns the chronological and transmission problem affecting Ibrahim's attribution to Umar. The second concerns the historical circumstances of Ibn Mas'ud, whose presence in Kufa raises difficulties for a report describing him as detained in Madinah until Umar's death. These objections concern the actual connection and historical plausibility of the transmission, rather than the theological desirability of its contents. The report was also rejected by Ibn Hazm al-Zahiri, who expressly states in *al-Ihkam fi Usul al-Ahkam*:

هذا مرسل ومشكوك فيه من شعبة فلا يصح ولا يجوز الاحتجاج به

> *Translation: "This report is disconnected and contains uncertainty in its transmission from Shu'bah. It is therefore not authentic and cannot be employed as evidence."*

> *Reference: al-Ihkam fi Usul al-Ahkam, by Ibn Hazm, vol. 2, p. 139, discussion concerning the transmission of Prophetic traditions.*

Ibn Hazm's criticism is especially pertinent because it identifies both a defect in the continuity of the attribution and uncertainty concerning the alleged event. A further difficulty emerges from the differences between the surviving recensions. In Ibn Abi Shaybah's *al- Musannaf*, the individuals identified include Ibn Mas'ud, Abu al-Darda and Abu Mas'ud al-Ansari. By contrast, al-Hakim's recension identifies Ibn Mas'ud, Abu al-Darda and Abu Dharr. Thus, even the identity of one of the individuals supposedly subjected to detention is not consistently preserved. This variation does not automatically invalidate every element of the narrative, but it becomes relevant when evaluating a report whose alleged detention is already affected by uncertainty. More importantly, the wording of al-Hakim's recension does not unequivocally establish that detention actually occurred. It employs the expression:

وأحسبه حبسهم بالمدينة حتى أصيب

> *Translation: "And I think that he detained them in Madinah until he was killed."*

The expression *wa-ahsabuhu* denotes uncertainty or supposition. Consequently, even if the attribution concerning Umar's initial questioning were accepted, the additional claim that he detained the Companions is not presented with the same degree of certainty. This distinction must be preserved. A narration indicating that Umar questioned or cautioned particular Companions concerning their transmission of Prophetic reports does not independently establish that he imprisoned them, prohibited them from narrating or introduced a universal policy suppressing the Sunnah.

Furthermore, the different recensions do not provide the sort of independent corroboration necessary to resolve the underlying difficulty, since the principal routes ultimately converge upon the same earlier transmitters. The presence of several later transmitters preserving variants of the account therefore does not necessarily establish multiple independent witnesses to the alleged incident. These considerations explain why the narration cannot confidently be treated as an authenticated historical account of Umar imprisoning senior Companions for transmitting Prophetic traditions. The criticism does not rest merely upon an assumption concerning Umar's personal character. It rests upon identifiable problems of transmission: the disputed connection between Ibrahim ibn Abd al-Rahman and Umar, the chronological difficulty identified by al-Haythami, variations concerning the individuals named, and the express uncertainty attached to the alleged detention.

The existence of al-Hakim's favourable judgement can be acknowledged. Nevertheless, his authentication does not eliminate the defects identified by Ibn Hazm, al-Bayhaqi and al-Haythami. The most that can be concluded is that a report alleging Umar's questioning and possible detention of certain Companions circulated within the early *hadith* literature. Its transmission, however, is disputed, and it cannot be cited as unequivocal proof that Umar imprisoned senior Companions or prohibited the transmission of Prophetic traditions.

Even if one were to accept that Umar occasionally restricted or questioned excessive transmission, such caution must be distinguished from a universal prohibition upon the Sunnah or its documentation. Indeed, as already established, an authenticated report in *Sunan al-Nasa'i* preserves Umar's explicit instruction directing Shurayh to judge according to the Prophetic Sunnah whenever the relevant ruling was not found in the Qur'an. The historical evidence therefore requires a distinction between scrutiny of individual reports and an alleged governmental programme of suppressing the authority or transmission of the Prophetic Sunnah. The report concerning the detention of Ibn Mas'ud and other Companions does not establish the latter proposition.

2.9. Final Synthesis: Political Authority, Theological Independence and the Limits of al-Qadri's Objection

Al-Qadri's second objection ultimately depends upon a movement from political context to textual unreliability which his evidence does not establish. That rulers possessed interests capable of influencing religious discourse is uncontroversial. What requires demonstration is the further proposition that those interests governed the principles by which Sunni *hadith* critics received, scrutinised and authenticated Prophetic reports. The distinction is decisive: evidence of an incentive to manipulate transmission is not, without more, evidence that the mechanisms of transmission were successfully subordinated to that incentive.

The difficulty begins with the historical category upon which his argument rests. The broadly Sunni identity of the Umayyad and Abbasid states cannot be treated as synonymous with the creed and scholarly commitments of the *muhaddithin*. These dynasties pursued different claims to legitimacy and, at times, enforced theological doctrines which the traditionists expressly rejected. The *Mihnah*, in which Ahmad ibn Hanbal suffered punishment for refusing an official doctrine, is particularly difficult to reconcile with a picture of the *hadith* scholars as the obedient intellectual arm of political authority. Nor did proximity to power guarantee favourable treatment in *al-jarh wa'l-ta'dil*: the critical evaluation of narrators was not suspended simply because a transmitter possessed dynastic connections or governmental office.

The narrations invoked by al-Qadri do not bridge this evidentiary gap. Reports indicating political partisanship, the cultivation of loyalties or anxiety about the proliferation of certain genres of reports may illuminate the pressures surrounding transmission; they do not establish that the resulting corpus was systematically sanitised. Indeed, the preservation within Sunni sources of reports exposing those very pressures creates a problem for any theory of comprehensive sanitisation. Likewise, the evidence adduced to portray Umar as having suppressed Prophetic transmission cannot sustain the sweeping conclusion assigned to it when its differing wordings, interrupted chains and disputed attributions are considered. What emerges is a historically complex environment, not proof of an institutional policy that rendered the Sunnah inaccessible or irretrievably corrupted.

There is a further inconsistency in treating political allegiance as an explanation for unreliable narration only when it favoured a ruling dynasty. Sectarian movements opposing those rulers also possessed ideological commitments and incentives to advance particular versions of history. Neither possession of governmental power nor experience of political persecution independently determines whether a transmitted report is true. That is precisely why the traditionists developed methods for examining transmitters, comparing variants and identifying fabrication irrespective of the claims or affiliations of those who circulated the material.

The central question, therefore, is not whether politics attempted to enter the history of *hadith*; it plainly did. It is whether al-Qadri has shown that such political pressures compromised the Sunni criteria of authentication in a manner sufficient to invalidate the corpus as a whole. That requires more than an account of rulers' motives or isolated instances of partisan narration. It requires identifiable reports, evidence of their alteration or fabrication, and an explanation of why the critical apparatus of the *muhaddithin* failed to detect or correct the interference. Without that demonstration, the historical reality of political influence cannot bear the weight of al-Qadri's much larger methodological conclusion.

PART III

The Allegation of Concealment: The Companions' Historical Disputes and the Integrity of Sunni Hadith Transmission

3.1. The Allegation That Sunni Traditionists Concealed the Companions' Shortcomings

The third and fourth objections advanced by Hassan al-Qadri are closely related and may consequently be examined together. Both concern the treatment of historical reports describing the misconduct, disagreements and political conflicts of the Prophet's Companions within the classical Sunni tradition. Al-Qadri argues that prominent Sunni traditionists deliberately discouraged the transmission of reports which portrayed the Companions unfavourably. He maintains that this tendency extended beyond the personal reluctance of individual scholars to discuss controversial historical events and amounted, in some instances, to the deliberate omission or suppression of transmitted material.

In support of his contention, he invokes statements attributed to Ahmad ibn Hanbal, preserved by Abu Bakr al-Khallal in *al-Sunnah*, in which Ahmad discourages the collection and public circulation of traditions concerning the alleged shortcomings of the Companions. Al-Qadri subsequently invokes a statement by al-Dhahabi in *Siyar A'lam al-Nubala*, where the latter recommends withholding material concerning the early Muslim civil conflicts from general circulation.

The essential allegation is that the Sunni traditionists' theological commitment to the uprightness of the Companions influenced their decisions concerning which historical reports should be preserved, transmitted or made publicly accessible. This objection must be distinguished from the preceding argument concerning political patronage. Here, al-Qadri is questioning not merely the influence of ruling governments, but the possibility that the traditionists' own theological commitments affected their transmission practices.

The distinction is important. An individual may possess theological reasons for discouraging the circulation of particular reports without necessarily altering their wording, fabricating alternative narrations or declaring an unreliable report authentic. Accordingly, the deliberate avoidance of certain historical traditions, the rejection of unreliable reports, editorial abbreviation and the falsification of transmitted material constitute different practices, each requiring independent examination. The existence of one cannot automatically establish the occurrence of another. The decisive question is therefore not whether the traditionists exercised judgement over what ought to be circulated in their public gatherings, but whether the statements cited by al-Qadri prove his much stronger allegation of systematic suppression or falsification. Their own explanations, and the surviving literature of their students, furnish the relevant answer.

3.2. Ahmad ibn Hanbal, the Reliability of Polemical Reports, and the Religious Purpose of Hadith Transmission

Al-Qadri's citation of Ahmad ibn Hanbal is especially revealing, not because it demonstrates the corruption of Sunni *hadith* transmission, but because it illustrates a distinction which his argument consistently overlooks: the distinction between preserving a report as a matter of historical or *hadith*-critical enquiry and promoting its public circulation as a form of beneficial religious instruction. The preference of the *muhaddithin* not to make the *mathalib al-sahaba*—reports concerning the alleged shortcomings of the

Companions—a regular subject of the *majalis al-hadith* cannot simply be equated with an undertaking to eradicate such material from the transmitted corpus. Abu Bakr al-Khallal, in his *al-Sunnah*, preserves a chapter entitled:

التغليظ على من كتب الأحاديث التي فيها طعن على أصحاب رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم

> *Translation: "Severe condemnation of those who recorded traditions containing attacks upon the Companions of the Messenger of Allah."*

Al-Khallal's reports do establish that Ahmad disapproved of the deliberate collection and public dissemination of certain narrations in this genre. The crucial question, however, is *why*. His response should be examined within the circumstances of the early *fitnah*, the transmission problems associated with partisan historical accounts, and, above all, Ahmad's own explanation of the religious utility of such material.

3.2.1. The Susceptibility of Reports Concerning the Companions to Sectarian Fabrication

Reports concerning the political and personal conflicts of the earliest Muslims offered considerable polemical utility to rival sectarian movements. A relatively trivial accusation against a particular Companion could be transformed into an argument against his authority, against the legitimacy of a political faction, or ultimately against the body of Prophetic transmission associated with him. This gave narrations of the *mathalib* an obvious polemical attraction, quite apart from whether the allegations themselves possessed reliable chains of transmission. The early *hadith* critics were neither oblivious to this phenomenon nor dependent upon later historians to recognise its consequences. Muhammad ibn Sirin famously observed, as recorded by Muslim in the introduction to his *Sahih*:

لم يكونوا يسألون عن الإسناد، فلما وقعت الفتنة قالوا: سموا لنا رجالكم

> *Translation: "They did not formerly ask about the chains of transmission; but when the fitnah occurred, they said: 'Name to us your transmitters.'"*

> *Reference: Sahih Muslim, Introduction, chapter on the isnad being part of the religion, no. 27*

Ibn Sirin goes on to explain that the narrators were subsequently examined and distinguished according to their religious affiliations and reliability. This statement does not assert that every controversial historical report was fabricated. Rather, it establishes a much more important historical fact: the onset of sectarian division made the provenance of transmitted material an increasingly urgent question for the early *hadith* critics. The response of the traditionists was to investigate the identities of transmitters, not to assume that every circulating narrative was equally reliable. Al-Khallal preserves a more direct illustration of the problem. In report no. 814, Ahmad transmits a statement of al-A'mash concerning controversial reports he had narrated. Al-A'mash complained:

كنت أحدثهم بأحاديث يقولها الرجل لأخيه في الغضب، فاتخذوها دينا

> *Translation: "I used to narrate to them statements that one man says to his brother in anger, but they took them as religion."*

> *Reference: Al-Sunnah, by Abu Bakr al-Khallal, no.814.*

The significance of this observation is difficult to overstate. Statements uttered in moments of anger during interpersonal or political conflict were capable of being detached from their circumstances and subsequently elevated into enduring religious judgements concerning the individuals involved. The concern was not merely whether an isolated statement had been accurately remembered, but how it would be interpreted, circulated, and weaponised once transformed into sectarian doctrine. The same compilation records Ahmad's awareness of mistakes in the circulation of such material. In report no. 815, he recounts Yahya ibn Sa'id's objection to the transmission of one of these accounts, including the possibility that a narrator had simply erred:

لعل رجلا قد غلط في شيء فحدث به

> *Translation: "Perhaps a man made a mistake concerning something and then narrated it."*

Reference: Al-Sunnah, by Abu Bakr al-Khallal, no.815.

Here the concern is recognisably *hadith*-critical: material could be circulated and invested with significance despite the possibility of error in its transmission. The subsequent criticism of particular historians reinforces the point. Yahya ibn Ma'in described the well-known transmitter of early political history, Abu Mikhnaf (Lut ibn Yahya), as *laysa bi-thiqah*—"not trustworthy"—while Abu Hatim al-Razi regarded him as *matruk al-hadith*, or abandoned in *hadith* transmission. These evaluations are preserved by Ibn Abi Hatim in *al-Jarh wa-l- Ta'dil* (vol. 7, p. 182, biography of Lut ibn Yahya). Such judgements did not automatically decide the truth of every historical incident described by Abu Mikhnaf. They did, however, warn that the prominence of a narrator in accounts of the *fitnah* was no substitute for demonstrable reliability. Historians, including Al-Dhahabi and Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, would later articulate the resulting evidentiary problem with particular directness, observing that much of the circulating material concerning the Companions' disputes was disconnected, weak, or even fabricated. These statements will be examined below. The broader conclusion, already evident in the early evidence, is that the traditionists had ample reason not to treat a large and politically charged genre of reports as though it consisted of authenticated Prophetic guidance.

3.2.2. Ahmad's Own Explanation: What Religious Benefit Is Gained?

The more decisive evidence, however, is Ahmad's explicit explanation of his reluctance. In al-Khallal's report no. 811, Ahmad recalls attending the transmission of Muhammad ibn Ja'far, known as Ghundar, whose books contained reports transmitted from Shu'bah. While another participant, Khalaf ibn Salim, transcribed the controversial narrations in full, Ahmad explains his own practice:

كنت أكتب الأسانيد وأدع الكلام

Translation: "I would record the chains of transmission and leave aside the wording."

When asked why, Ahmad explains that he wished to know which reports Shu'bah had transmitted. He therefore retained what was relevant to his examination of transmission while declining to reproduce every contentious *matn*. This hardly resembles the practice of a man determined to make the existence of these reports unknowable. More importantly, Ahmad proceeds to state the reason for his objection, describing the accounts as reports which contain neither legal instruction nor the Sunnah. When asked whether they should be written down, he responds:

وأي شيء في تلك من العلم، عليكم بالسنن والفقه، وما ينفعكم

> *Translation: "And what knowledge is there in those reports? Concern yourselves with the Sunnah, jurisprudence and that which benefits you."*
>
> *Reference: al-Sunnah, by Abu Bakr al-Khallal, no. 811.*

Earlier in that same exchange, Ahmad also identifies the category of narrations whose collection he discourages:

لا أحب لأحد أن يكتب هذه الأحاديث التي فيها ذكر أصحاب النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم، لا حلال ولا حرام ولا سنن

> *Translation: "I do not wish anyone to record these narrations concerning the Companions of the Prophet. They concern neither what is lawful nor what is unlawful, nor [matters of] the Sunnah."*
>
> *Reference: al-Sunnah, by Abu Bakr al-Khallal, no. 811.*

This is the centre of Ahmad's argument. He is not presenting a programme to falsify transmitted history; he is distinguishing the religious function of different categories of narration. The public dissemination of Prophetic instruction concerning belief, worship, lawful and unlawful conduct, and the obligations of the believer is not equivalent to repeatedly recounting the private disputes, personal shortcomings, or hostile statements exchanged by an earlier generation. The latter may furnish material for historical investigation, but its indiscriminate circulation does not thereby become an act of religious instruction.

Ahmad's own words should not be displaced by an assumed motive assigned to him centuries later. When directly asked, his answer concerns beneficial knowledge, the Sunnah and jurisprudence—not the manufacture of alternative texts, the manipulation of isnads, or the concealment of every unfavourable report. His decision to preserve the *asanid* while leaving aside the wording demonstrates an identifiable preference concerning what he himself wished to record. It does not establish a systematic alteration of the *hadith* corpus.

The same point becomes even more difficult to evade once the conduct of his students and later transmitters is considered. If the earlier traditionists understood Ahmad's advice as an absolute prohibition on preserving every report concerning the Companions' shortcomings, why did al-Khallal himself preserve the very statements under discussion and, in the immediately succeeding chapter of the same book, narrate contentious material concerning the early civil wars and prominent political figures? The surviving contents of *al- Sunnah* provide an answer more compelling than speculation about an imagined policy of universal erasure: the distinction between discouraging unnecessary dissemination and allowing historical material to remain accessible was a practicable one within the tradition itself.

3.2.3. Beneficial Knowledge, Divine Praise, and Accountability Before Allah

There is also a deeper theological rationale to Ahmad's advice. For the Muslim, the pursuit of knowledge is not an exercise in accumulating historical controversies for their own sake. Its foremost objects include knowledge of Allah, His names and attributes, the Qur'an, the guidance of His Messenger, and the obligations through which the believer seeks salvation and prepares for accountability before Allah on the Day of Judgement. The believer's concern is not merely to know more about those who preceded him, but to acquire knowledge that brings him nearer to his Lord and allows him to discharge his own responsibilities. One of the objectives of the *muhadithin* was to facilitate this through the critical assessment, transcription and dissemination of Prophetic *ahadith*.

Against those priorities, an excessive preoccupation with the minute disputes and shortcomings of the Companions possesses little intrinsic religious benefit, particularly when those disputes have become vehicles for attacking individuals whom Allah repeatedly praised in revelation. The Qur'an declares concerning the earliest Emigrants and Helpers and those who followed them in goodness:

والسابقون الأولون من المهاجرين والأنصار والذين اتبعوهم بإحسان رضي الله عنهم ورضوا عنه

> *Translation: "The foremost of the Emigrants and the Helpers, and those who followed them in goodness—Allah is pleased with them, and they are pleased with Him."*
>
> *Reference: Qur'an 9:100.*

Concerning those who pledged allegiance beneath the tree, Allah likewise states:

لقد رضي الله عن المؤمنين إذ يبايعونك تحت الشجرة

> *Translation: "Allah was certainly pleased with the believers when they pledged allegiance to you beneath the tree."*
>
> *Reference: Qur'an 48:18.*

The significance of these verses is not that the Companions were rendered incapable of error. Sunni theology does not attribute *ismah* to the Companions. Rather, Allah's praise was bestowed with complete knowledge of their humanity and susceptibility to error. Their divine commendation is not invalidated merely by demonstrating that an individual could fall short of perfection. Consequently, the assumption that a believer ought constantly to revisit every alleged shortcoming of those whom Allah praised mistakes the purpose of religious knowledge and overlooks the difference between fallibility and a standing of religious merit. The Qur'an also declares:

تلك أمة قد خلت لها ما كسبت ولكم ما كسبتم ولا تسألون عما كانوا يعملون

> *Translation: "That was a nation which has passed away. It will have what it earned, and you will have what you have earned. And you will not be questioned about what they used to do."*

> *Reference: Qur'an 2:134; repeated at 2:141.*

Although the immediate context concerns earlier religious communities, the early *tabi'in* themselves applied its lesson concerning individual accountability to questions about the Companions' disputes. Al-Tabarani records that men from Basrah approached the esteemed *tabi'i* Ubayd ibn Umayr and said that their brethren wished to question him about Ali and Uthman. When he learned that they had come for no other purpose, Ubayd responded by reciting precisely this verse:

إن إخوانك من أهل البصرة يسألونك عن علي وعثمان، فقال: وما أقدمكم شيء غير هذا؟ قالوا: نعم. قال: تلك أمة قد خلت

> *Translation: "Your brethren from Basrah wish to ask you about Ali and Uthman." He asked, "Have you come for no other reason?" They replied, "Yes." He then recited: "That was a nation which has passed away...", continuing with Qur'an 2:134 as quoted above.*

> *Reference: al-Mu'jam al-Kabir, by Al-Tabarani, vol. 1, no. 170. Transmitted through Abu Rashid from Ubayd ibn Umayr, its isnad is sound.*

The response is as instructive as it is concise. Ubayd ibn Umayr did not answer their enquiry by constructing an exhaustive case against either Companion. He invoked the Qur'an to redirect them towards their own responsibilities before Allah. His example illustrates that an aversion to unnecessary preoccupation with the disputes of the Companions did not arise as a defensive invention of later Sunni critics. It was an attitude already visible among the earliest generations of Muslims.

This does not require every question concerning the first *fitnah* to be declared illegitimate. It establishes something more directly relevant to the issue under discussion: the decision not to transform such disputes into an enduring preoccupation is itself a recognisable expression of early Islamic religious priorities. It is in that light that Ahmad's preference for beneficial knowledge should be understood.

3.2.4. Abstention from the Fitnah: The Prophetic Precedent

The example of Ubayd ibn Umayr gains additional force when placed alongside the authentic Prophetic instructions concerning the civil discord and the conduct of those Companions who chose not to participate in it. Restraint was not merely an attitude cultivated retrospectively by the *hadith* scholars. In these particular circumstances, withdrawal from fighting was expressly counselled on the authority of the Messenger of Allah. The Prophet did not merely warn against the dangers of destructive discord; in an authentic narration from Abu Hurairah, he positively ranks those less involved in the *fitnah* above those who participated, or even hastened to it:

القاعد فيها خير من القائم، والقائم فيها خير من الماشي، والماشي فيها خير من الساعي

> *Translation: "The one seated during it is better than the one standing, the one standing is better than the one walking, and the one walking is better than the one hastening towards it."*

> *Reference: Sahih al-Bukhari, nos. 7081-7082; Sahih Muslim, no. 2886.*

The Prophet then counsels whoever can find refuge from such a *fitnah* to seek it. This is an explicit Prophetic commendation of keeping one's distance from the civil strife described in the *hadith*. The preference for abstention in such circumstances is therefore not a later pious sentiment: it is expressed in the authenticated Sunnah itself. A particularly striking report appears in *Sahih al-Bukhari*. Al-Ahnaf ibn Qays, an eminent *tabi'i*, relates that during the nights of the first *fitnah* he went out carrying his weapons, intending to support Ali ibn Abi Talib. The Companion Abu Bakrah encountered him and asked where he was going. Al-Ahnaf replied:

أريد نصرة ابن عم رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم

> *Translation: "I intend to support the cousin of the Messenger of Allah."*

Rather than encouraging him to join the fighting, Abu Bakrah cited the Prophet's warning:

إذا تواجه المسلمان بسيفيهما فكلاهما من أهل النار

> *Translation: "When two Muslims confront one another with their swords, both are among the people of the Fire."*
>
> *Reference: Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 7083, Kitab al-Fitan.*

When the Prophet was asked why the person killed should share this warning with the killer, he explained that the former had likewise intended to kill his opponent. The importance of this episode cannot be overstated. Al-Ahnaf was not proposing to fight against Ali; he was on his way to assist him. Yet Abu Bakrah invoked a Prophetic instruction to deter him from entering the conflict. Thus, even in circumstances where Ali's greater claim to the truth is recognised by the Sunni tradition, the possibility of abstaining from the fighting was supported by a Prophetic text and expressed by the Companions addressing those who wished to participate on Ali's side. The report is not evidence that every participant in those conflicts carried the same degree of responsibility; rather, it is direct evidence that avoiding armed participation was a religiously intelligible position within the earliest community.

A further narration concerns Muhammad ibn Maslamah. He relates that the Prophet foretold a period of tribulation, division and disagreement, and instructed him to break his sword and remain at home. When the anticipated discord arose, he acted in accordance with that instruction. The relevant account is transmitted by Ibn Majah in his *Sunan* and by Ahmad in his *Musnad*. The report reinforces that abstention from fighting could proceed from fidelity to the Prophet's guidance rather than indifference to the affairs of the Muslims. Muhammad ibn Maslamah relates the Prophet's words:

إنها ستكون فتنة وفرقة واختلاف، فإذا كان كذلك فأت بسيفك أحدا فاضربه حتى ينقطع، ثم اجلس في بيتك

> *Translation: "There will be tribulation, division and disagreement. When that happens, take your sword to Uhud and strike it until it breaks, then remain in your home."*
>
> *Reference: Sunan Ibn Majah, no. 3962; Musnad Ahmad, no. 16029.*

Muhammad ibn Maslamah added that the foretold discord had occurred and that he had acted as the Messenger of Allah instructed. The narration of Hudhayfah ibn al-Yaman, preserved in *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*, likewise records the Prophet's instruction to adhere to the community of

Muslims and their leader during discord, and—if neither a unified community nor a leader existed—to withdraw from the competing factions. In the circumstances described, withdrawal is presented not as an abandonment of religious duty but as the prescribed response to destructive factionalism. Hudhayfah relates the following exchange with the Prophet:

قلت: فما تأمرني إن أدركني ذلك؟ قال: تلزم جماعة المسلمين وإمامهم.
قلت: فإن لم يكن لهم جماعة ولا إمام؟ قال: فاعتزل تلك الفرق كلها

> *Translation: "I asked: 'What do you command me to do if that overtakes me?' He replied: 'Adhere to the community of the Muslims and their leader.' I asked: 'And if they have neither a community nor a leader?' He replied: 'Then withdraw from all those factions.'"*

Reference: Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 3606 and Sahih Muslim, no. 1847

The Prophet continued by instructing him to persist in that withdrawal even under the severest circumstances, until death overtook him. Abdullah ibn Umar's position provides another especially clear illustration. In *Sahih al-Bukhari*, a man challenges his reluctance to fight by invoking the Quranic injunction concerning two groups of believers who fight one another. Ibn Umar responds by referring to the grave warning against intentionally killing a believer (Qur'an 4:93). When the questioner then appeals to the command to fight until there is no *fitnah*, Ibn Umar distinguishes the struggle against religious persecution during the Prophet's lifetime from the later contests among Muslims. His answer demonstrates that abstention could rest upon a reasoned interpretation of revelation, rather than a refusal to acknowledge that genuine political and moral disagreements had occurred. Ibn Umar's own reply, when challenged with Qur'an 49:9, is especially instructive:

أغتر بهذه الآية ولا أقاتل أحب إلي من أن أغتر بهذه الآية التي يقول الله تعالى: ومن يقتل مؤمنا متعمدا

> *Translation: "I would rather risk being mistaken concerning this verse and refrain from fighting than risk being mistaken concerning the verse in which Allah says: 'And whoever intentionally kills a believer...'"*

Reference: Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 4650.

He then explained that the command to fight until there was no *fitnah* had been acted upon in the Prophet's lifetime when Muslims were persecuted for their religion. Ibn Taymiyyah later summarises this plurality of positions in *Majmu al-Fatawa* (20/394). He explains that during the *fitnah* the Companions fell into three groups: those who fought on one side, those who fought on the other, and those who abstained. He subsequently observes that Sunni jurists differed as well, with some defending participation alongside Ali against the rebellious party and others preferring *imsak*, or refraining from the fighting. Of particular relevance is his observation that abstention was a well-known position among the scholars of Madinah and the *Ahl al-Hadith*, and that the established authentic Prophetic narrations concerning this *fitnah* supported that view:

والأحاديث الثابتة الصحيحة عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم في أمر هذه الفتنة توافق قول هؤلاء

> *Translation: "The established authentic traditions from the Prophet concerning this tribulation accord with the position of these scholars."*
>
> *Reference: Majmu al-Fatawa, vol. 20, p. 394.*

Ibn Taymiyyah immediately connects the issue to the formulation of Sunni doctrine, explaining that authors of Sunni creedal works commonly mention both abstention from fighting during the *fitnah* and restraint concerning the disputes that occurred among the Companions. The distinction is illuminating. The jurists' position concerning the proper response to armed conflict and the traditionists' position concerning the unnecessary public circulation of the Companions' alleged shortcomings are not identical questions. Yet they arise from a common religious disposition: an insistence that a believer should adhere to the Prophetic guidance and not enter controversies involving other Muslims merely because such controversies can be prolonged, intensified or exploited. Early Sunni restraint therefore possessed a substantive scriptural and historical rationale.

Ahmad's counsel to concern oneself with the Sunnah, jurisprudence and beneficial knowledge stands within this wider tradition. It need not be reconstrued as a clandestine programme for suppressing history when its religious rationale is expressly stated by Ahmad himself, supported by the

conduct of early Muslim authorities and reflected in authentic Prophetic guidance concerning the *fitnah*. The question now becomes whether al-Qadri's understanding of Ahmad's statements can account for the material actually preserved by Ahmad's own followers. The very next chapter of al-Khallal's *al-Sunnah* provides a particularly instructive test.

3.3. Al-Khallal's Own Preservation of Historically Inconvenient Material

An especially important consideration is that al-Khallal did not restrict his *al-Sunnah* to reports praising the Companions or defending the religious legitimacy of early Muslim rulers. Indeed, the chapter immediately following his discussion of objectionable reports concerning the Companions is entitled:

ذكر الفتن من بني أمية وغيرهم

> *Translation: "An account of the civil disturbances involving the Umayyads and others."*

> *Reference: al-Sunnah, by Abu Bakr al-Khallal, part 3, chapter following report no. 835.*

Within this chapter, al-Khallal preserves material concerning the involvement of politically influential individuals in the conflicts of the first Islamic century. One particularly revealing example concerns the death of Talhah ibn Ubaydallah during the Battle of the Camel. Al-Khallal records a question addressed to Ahmad ibn Hanbal concerning the identity of Talhah's killer. Ahmad responds:

يقولون مروان

> *Translation: "They say it was Marwan."*

> *Reference: al-Sunnah, by Abu Bakr al-Khallal, no. 839.*

The accompanying report attributes the shooting of Talhah to Marwan ibn al-Hakam and preserves details concerning the alleged circumstances. Ahmad reports the attribution rather than claiming eyewitness certainty. For the present argument, the important point is that the attribution was preserved

through him at all. An even more direct example concerns Yazid ibn Mu'awiyah. In report no. 845, al-Khallal preserves Ahmad's condemnation of Yazid's conduct in Madinah.

This is particularly significant because the criticism concerns an Umayyad ruler rather than an obscure participant in the early political conflicts. The same Ahmad ibn Hanbal whose statements al-Qadri invokes as evidence of historical concealment is recorded condemning the conduct of a prominent Umayyad caliph. The same al-Khallal who preserves Ahmad's reluctance to circulate reports concerning the Companions also documents these historically *inconvenient* allegations.

There is a further and more direct difficulty for the allegation of systematic erasure: al-Qadri and other Twelver polemicists repeatedly cite the alleged *mathalib* of the Companions from extant Sunni sources. The sources they rely upon are the clearest evidence that the material was not, as a class, expelled from the Sunni historical record. A critic who claims otherwise must explain why his own historical case remains dependent upon the works of the very traditionists accused of suppressing it. Thus, the surviving source itself establishes that the traditionists' preference for avoiding inflammatory narratives did not produce the comprehensive exclusion of politically inconvenient historical material. The point is straightforward: the very literature documenting the scholars' reluctance to circulate such material simultaneously preserves their critical assessments of politically influential individuals and controversial historical events.

3.4. Al-Dhahabi on Concealing the Companions' Historical Disputes

Al-Qadri's fourth objection develops the same concern through a statement by Shams al-Din al-Dhahabi, preserved in *Siyar A'lam al-Nubala*. The statement occurs in al-Dhahabi's discussion of the remarks exchanged between scholars and contemporaries, particularly where personal rivalry or partisanship may have influenced their judgements. Al-Dhahabi draws a comparison with the historical conflicts of the Companions and argues that

much of the material concerning those disputes should not be indiscriminately circulated. Importantly, he expressly acknowledges that many of the relevant reports suffer from significant defects of transmission. He states:

ولكن أكثر ذلك منقطع وضعيف، وبعضه كذب

> *Translation: "However, most of that material is disconnected or weak, and some of it is false."*

> *Reference: Siyar A'lam al-Nubala, by al-Dhahabi, vol. 10, p. 92, biography of al-Shafi'i.*

Al-Dhahabi subsequently recommends that such material be withheld from general circulation, employing language that extends even to its removal or destruction. He explains that its widespread dissemination could generate hostility towards the Companions among audiences incapable of assessing the relevant historical evidence impartially. (Reference: Al-Dhahabi, *Siyar A'lam al-Nubala*, vol. 10, pp. 92–93.)

The passage joins two considerations which al-Qadri's interpretation separates from their context: al-Dhahabi's awareness of widespread defects in the transmitted material and his concern that its indiscriminate circulation would turn the purported disagreements of earlier Muslims into a source of enduring sectarian animosity. The distinction between these considerations remains important.

First, al-Dhahabi expressly identifies disconnection, weakness and fabrication as prevalent problems within the relevant genre of material. The historical accounts to which he refers do not all possess the same evidentiary standing. Consequently, their exclusion from a particular scholarly work would not necessarily constitute the suppression of an authentic historical fact. Second, al-Dhahabi's concern is directed substantially towards the public circulation and polemical exploitation of such accounts. He explicitly recognises that an impartial scholar free from partisan motivations may examine the material privately. His position therefore presupposes the continued existence and scholarly accessibility of at least some of the very reports he recommends withholding from general circulation. Third, al-Dhahabi was not describing an established programme through which the earliest Sunni *hadith* critics had systematically altered the contents of Prophetic traditions. He was expressing

his own judgement concerning the treatment of contentious historical material several centuries after the events themselves. His statement may legitimately be examined as evidence of a particular scholarly attitude towards the dissemination of controversial history. It does not independently establish that the authenticated Sunni *hadith* corpus was retrospectively rewritten to eliminate every report reflecting unfavourably upon the Companions.

Al-Dhahabi's strong language, including his recommendation that some material be removed or destroyed, reflects his insistence on protecting believers from the indiscriminate consumption of polemical narratives. It remains a statement about his preferred treatment of a genre of reports whose attribution is often dubious, not evidence that he or earlier *hadith* critics sanitised the historical record. The continued survival of contentious accounts across major Sunni compilations is itself incompatible with the suggestion of a comprehensively executed programme of erasure.

The proper historical question is whether al-Qadri can identify particular authentic reports which were demonstrably removed or altered in accordance with such a policy. Without that additional evidence, the statement establishes an attitude towards dissemination rather than the successful corruption of the transmitted corpus. The distinction becomes clearer when the actual contents of the Sunni *hadith* collections are examined.

3.5. The Anonymisation of Samurah ibn Jundub in the Report Concerning the Sale of Wine

A further example particularly relevant to this objection concerns a difference in wording between narrations preserved by al-Bukhari and other *hadith* authorities. The report relates that Umar ibn al-Khattab learned that Samurah ibn Jundub had sold wine and condemned his conduct. In *Sahih Muslim* (no. 1582), Ibn Abbas relates:

بلغ عمر أن سمرة باع خمرا فقال قاتل الله سمرة

> *Translation: "It reached Umar that Samurah had sold wine, whereupon he said: 'May Allah condemn Samurah.'"*
>
> *Reference: Sahih Muslim, no. 1582a, Kitab al-Musaqah.*

The report subsequently invokes the Prophetic prohibition concerning the sale of commodities whose consumption Allah had forbidden. The narration is transmitted through Sufyan ibn Uyaynah, Amr ibn Dinar, Tawus and Ibn Abbas. Significantly, the corresponding narration preserved by al-Bukhari employs an anonymised expression. Al-Bukhari transmits through al-Humaydi, from Sufyan ibn Uyaynah, from Amr ibn Dinar, from Tawus, from Ibn Abbas. However, his recension identifies the individual simply as an unnamed person rather than explicitly naming Samurah. (Reference: *Sahih al-Bukhari*, no. 2223, Kitab al-Buyu.)

The distinction between the two versions is genuine. The narration preserved by Muslim identifies Samurah ibn Jundub, whereas the recension preserved by al-Bukhari substitutes an indefinite designation. Furthermore, the version attributed to al-Humaydi in his own *Musnad* preserves Samurah's name, even though al-Humaydi is the immediate authority from whom al-Bukhari transmits this report. (Reference: Al-Humaydi, *al-Musnad*, vol. 1, p. 154, narration concerning the sale of wine; see also *Sunan Ibn Majah*, no. 3383, and *Musnad Ahmad*, no. 170.)

The suggestion that al-Bukhari's omission of Samurah's name constitutes an attempt to suppress historical evidence overlooks a well-established feature of his compilation methodology. Al-Bukhari frequently abbreviated reports, retaining those portions relevant to the subject of a particular chapter rather than reproducing every accompanying historical detail. Ibn Hajar explicitly discusses this practice in the third chapter of *Hady al-Sari*, explaining that al-Bukhari sometimes transmitted a narration in full and elsewhere confined himself to the portion required by the chapter heading. An instructive example appears in *Sahih al-Bukhari* (no. 6753), where he reproduces Ibn Mas'ud's legal statement concerning the *sa'ibah* while omitting the surrounding historical exchange preserved by other transmitters. Likewise, Abu Hurairah's encounter with Satan is presented at considerably different lengths across *Sahih al-Bukhari* (nos. 2311, 3275 and 5010), according to the jurisprudential or theological subject under discussion.

The same editorial rationale offers a natural explanation for the narration concerning Samurah ibn Jundub. Al-Bukhari cites the report in *Kitab al-Buyu'* to establish the prohibition of selling commodities whose consumption Allah has forbidden. The legal evidence consists of Umar's objection to the

transaction and the accompanying Prophetic statement concerning the Jewish practice of selling prohibited fat. The identity of the person criticised by Umar contributes nothing indispensable to that ruling. Consequently, the use of an indefinite designation does not detract from the evidentiary purpose for which the narration was included. Indeed, al-Qastallani, commenting upon this very report in *Irshad al-Sari*, offers an explanation grounded in *adab*, observing:

والظاهر أن الراوي لم يصرح بسمرة تأدبا

> *Translation: "It would appear that the narrator refrained from explicitly naming Samurah out of consideration for propriety."*
>
> *Reference: Irshad al-Sari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari, by al-Qastallani, vol. 4, p. 106.*

This explanation is entirely consonant with the principle of *husn al-dhann*: where the identification of an individual serves no necessary jurisprudential purpose, there is no obligation to reproduce an otherwise unnecessary detail concerning his apparent shortcoming. Nor does al-Qastallani establish that al-Bukhari himself originated the anonymity, as opposed to preserving a recension in which the transmitter had already refrained from naming Samurah.

Most importantly, Samurah's identity remained explicitly preserved in the transmissions of Muslim, Ahmad, Ibn Majah and al-Humaydi, the very teacher from whom al-Bukhari transmits the report. The suggestion that al-Bukhari intended to erase Samurah's identity from the historical record is therefore difficult to reconcile with the continued preservation of that identification through the established channels of Sunni *hadith* transmission. What al-Qadri presents as evidence of systematic concealment is more reasonably understood in light of an independently documented editorial methodology and a scholarly preference for avoiding the unnecessary public attribution of shortcomings to individuals whose identity bears no relevance to the ruling under consideration.

3.5.1. Ibn Hajar's Examination of the Samurah Report

The commentary of Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani provides further evidence that the identification was neither unknown nor systematically excluded from Sunni scholarship. In *Fath al-Bari* (4/484–485), commenting upon al-Bukhari's anonymised wording, Ibn Hajar expressly cites the versions in Muslim and Ibn Majah which name Samurah, and additionally notes al-Bayhaqi's explicit identification of Samurah ibn Jundub.

He then discusses earlier explanations of the incident, drawing upon Ibn al-Jawzi, al-Qurtubi, al-Khattabi and al-Isma'ili. The first suggested that Samurah had received wine from the People of the Book in connection with the payment of *jizyah* and had sold it believing such a transaction permissible. Ibn Hajar notes that the property might alternatively have been obtained through spoils or another means; he does not claim to possess independent evidence establishing the exact commercial circumstances.

A second explanation, attributed to al-Khattabi, is that Samurah sold grape juice to someone who would convert it into wine, with the report using the term *wine* in anticipation of the product's later condition. A third supposes that the wine had been transformed into vinegar before its sale, Samurah considering the transformation sufficient to render the transaction permissible, while Umar disagreed.

Finally, Ibn Hajar cites al-Isma'ili's suggestion that Samurah knew wine was prohibited to consume but had not understood that its sale was also prohibited. Ibn Hajar observes that Umar rebuked him without recording a legal punishment, although this observation cannot by itself establish Samurah's state of knowledge or precisely what occurred. (Reference: Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-Bari*, vol. 4, pp. 484–485, commentary on *Sahih al-Bukhari*, no. 2223.)

These are competing scholarly possibilities, not established reconstructions of the event. It would therefore be methodologically unsound either to adopt one of them as certain or to assume, from Umar's rebuke alone, that Samurah knowingly violated a prohibition of whose application he was fully aware.

Nevertheless, the allegedly concealed identification is recoverable through the very Sunni *hadith* literature which al-Qadri maintains was subjected to systematic sanitisation.

3.6. Historical Restraint, Transmission Integrity and the Evidentiary Burden

Al-Qadri's third and fourth objections rest upon a fundamental conflation between the deliberate corruption of transmitted material and the scholarly preference against unnecessarily disseminating reports concerning the shortcomings of the Companions. The distinction is consequential. That a traditionist discouraged the circulation of a particular category of historical reports does not establish that he outright prohibited their preservation, much less that he falsified their contents. Yet it is precisely this progression, from restraint in dissemination to systematic corruption of transmission, upon which al-Qadri's argument ultimately depends.

The statements of Ahmad ibn Hanbal and al-Dhahabi are considerably more intelligible when examined within the methodological and religious framework of the early traditionists. Reports concerning the Companions' historical disputes were particularly susceptible to sectarian exploitation, exaggeration and fabrication, a danger explicitly recognised by the *hadith* critics themselves. Moreover, Ahmad did not leave the rationale for his reluctance unexplained. When questioned, he directed his interlocutors towards the Sunnah, jurisprudence and beneficial knowledge, distinguishing religious instruction from the indiscriminate circulation of historical controversies. His position reflected an understanding of religious scholarship in which the believer's foremost concern was knowledge that benefited his faith, worship and ultimate accountability before Allah. This disposition towards restraint was neither peculiar to Ahmad nor without precedent in the conduct of the earliest Muslims and the Prophetic guidance concerning the *fitnah*.

More importantly, the surviving literary record directly qualifies al-Qadri's interpretation. Al-Khallal preserves historically contentious material within the very compilation documenting Ahmad's objections to its unnecessary dissemination. Similarly, reports concerning the Companions' alleged shortcomings remain accessible throughout the Sunni historical and *hadith*

literature, including the sources repeatedly invoked by Twelver polemicists themselves. A tradition that preserves the material through which its own authorities are criticised cannot reasonably be characterised as having prohibited or eradicated that material. The distinction between discouraging its indiscriminate circulation and permitting its scholarly transmission was evidently neither theoretical nor impracticable.

The example of al-Bukhari's omission of Samurah ibn Jundub's name likewise fails to establish the conclusion assigned to it. The compiler's recognised practice of thematic abbreviation provides an intelligible explanation for omitting an identification irrelevant to the legal ruling under discussion, while al-Qastallani explicitly interprets the anonymity through the consideration of *adab*. Crucially, Samurah's identity remained preserved in other authoritative Sunni collections, including the *Musnad* of al-Humaydi, al-Bukhari's own teacher. Whatever explanation one adopts for the textual variation, the preservation of the supposedly concealed information through these established channels is difficult to reconcile with an allegation of systematic historical erasure.

The evidentiary burden therefore remains unresolved. To establish deliberate falsification, al-Qadri must demonstrate more than the existence of scholarly preferences concerning dissemination or variations between transmitted recensions. He must establish that authentic material was knowingly altered or suppressed in a manner that compromised the integrity of the transmitted Sunnah. The evidence considered in this chapter does not sustain that conclusion. Rather, it reveals a scholarly tradition that distinguished between the religious utility of historical reports, their reliability as transmitted evidence and their appropriate circulation. Al-Qadri's objections mistake these distinctions for evidence of corruption, thereby attributing to the Sunni *hadith* method a deficiency which his own examples fail to demonstrate.