

CONTENTS

THE EXCELLENT INNOVATION IN THE QUR'ĀN & HADĪTH

Abbreviations	9
Introduction	11
Part One: The Meaning of Sunna and <i>Bid' a</i> & the New Sunnas of the <i>Salaf</i> in the Religion	17
The meaning of Sunna and <i>Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jamā'a</i>	19
“The Common Person’s Imitation of the Learned One” from al-Bayhaqī’s <i>al-Madkhal ilā al-Sunan al-Kubrā</i>	27
The Prophetic Recommendation of the Companions’ Excellent New Sunnas	30
Companion-Reports on the Exemplariness of the Companions in the Religion	47
Successor-Reports on the Exemplariness of the Companions and Successors in the Religion	57
Ibn Rajab’s Commentary on the Ḥadīth: “You Must Follow My Sunna and the Sunna of the Well- Guided Successors”	60
The Meaning of <i>Bid' a</i>	71
The Sunna Character of the Companions’ Innovations	80
Companions’ Innovations after the Time of the Prophet ﷺ or in His Absence	91
Sunna Innovations of the <i>Ṣaḥāba</i> in Worship	94
Sunna Innovations of the <i>Ṭabi'in</i> in Worship	103
Sunna Innovations of the Later <i>Salaf</i> in Worship	109
The Misconstrued Ḥadīth “Every Innovation is Misguidance”	114

All-Inclusive Expressions Implying Exceptions	116
The Universal Understood in Terms of the Specific	118
The “Good New Sunna” and the “Innovation of Misguidance”	121
Al-Shāfi‘ī’s Definition of Innovation as Either “Good” or “Bad”	129
Division of <i>Bid‘a</i> into Good and Bad among <i>Ahl al-Sunna</i> and <i>Zāhirīs</i>	132
Conclusion: The Prophet ﷺ Distinguished between Good <i>Bid‘a</i> and Bad <i>Bid‘a</i>	139
Part Two: Case Studies	141
Collective Supplication (<i>al-Du‘ā’u Jamā‘atan</i>)	143
Collective Loud Recitation of the Qur’ān	157
Partitions for Women in Mosques	160
The <i>Duḥā</i> Prayer	166
Saying “ <i>Sayyidinā Muḥammad</i> ” in <i>Tashahhud</i>	180
Proofs for Visitation of the Graves by Women	184
The Ḥadīth: “Do not make my Grave an ‘ <i>Īd</i> ”	200
Rajab and Mid-Sha‘bān Supererogatory Prayers	206
Epilogue – An Innovation of Misguidance: Unenlightened Feminism	214
Indexes	231
Index of Qur’ānic Verses	233
Index of Narrations	235
Bibliography	251
Works by Gibril Haddad	273



Introduction

In the Name of Allah All-Beneficent Most Merciful

Glory belongs to Allah with a glorification that gives His favors their full right and matches His increase. O our Lord! To You belongs praise as is just and right for the majesty of Your Face and the magnificence of Your dominion. Glory to You, O our Lord! I cannot praise You enough, You are as You have praised Yourself. I bear witness that there is no god but Allah alone, without partner, and I bear witness that our liege-lord and Prophet Muḥammad is His servant and Messenger, His elect and most intimate friend, the best Prophet He has ever sent. Allah has sent him to the entire world as a bearer of glad tidings and a warner.

The Greatest *Mujtahid* Imām and *Mujaddid* from the House of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi‘ī ؒ, said:

May Allah bless and give peace to our Prophet whenever his name is mentioned by those who mention him and whenever his name is unheeded by those who are heedless of him! May Allah bless him among the first and the last generation, with the most favorable, most abundant and purest blessing that He has bestowed upon any of His creatures! May He purify you and us through the invocation of blessings upon him more than He granted to any of his nation through their blessings and peace. May His peace, mercy, and blessings be upon Muḥammad! May Allah reward him on our behalf with the most abundant reward ever bestowed on any messenger sent on behalf of those to whom he was sent. For Allah has delivered

us from falsehood through him and made us members of the best community ever established for people by following his Religion with which He was well-pleased, which He chose for us, and by virtue of which [Religion] He made pure His angels and those of His creatures He favored with it. Hence, no blessing – hidden or visible – has ever descended upon us through which we obtained spiritual or temporal gain or by which spiritual or temporal hurt was dispelled, but Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace, was the cause of its dispatch, the leader to its benefit, and the guide to its right way, keeping [us] away from destruction and the sources of evil which oppose righteousness, warning [us] against whatever causes destruction, ever ready with advice for right guidance and warning [against evil]. May the blessings of Allah be upon him and his family as His blessings were upon Ibrāhīm and his family! You [Allah] are praiseworthy and glorious!¹

The most neglected name of the Religion of Islam today is probably *al-Ḥanīfiyyat al-Samḥa* – “The Natural, Easy Religion.” The Last Prophet ﷺ described this *Ḥanīfiyyat al-Samḥa* as “the most beloved Religion of all to Allah” (*aḥabbu al-dīni ilā Allah*).² This natural and easy Religion brings nothing new but the same goodness proclaimed by the Prophets of old. {*Say: I am no new thing (bid’an) among the messengers of Allah nor know I what will be done with me or you. I do but follow that which is inspired in me, and I am but a plain warner*} (46:9).

Thus it is nothing new that Religion is ease (*yusr*), not puritanism; that it is good news (*bushr*), not fire and brimstone; and that it invites all with glad tidings and drives none away (*bashshirū wa-lā tunaffirū*).

¹ Adapted from Majed Khadduri’s translation, *Al-Shāfi‘ī’s Risāla*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1987, p. 63-64).

² Cited by al-Bukhārī *tarjimat* and narrated from Ibn ‘Abbās by Aḥmad with a fair chain cf. *Fath*.

Yet certain groups among Muslims and non-Muslims alike work hard to construct a pseudo-Islam that appears to be more rigid than a straitjacket. They promote a racist, sexist, nationalist, tribalist, sectarian, judgmental, intolerant, culturally distorted, humorless, zealous, frightening cult – “an Islamic order reduced to a penal code, stripped of its humanism, aesthetics, intellectual quests, and spiritual devotion.”³ This nightmare religion is not about God and doing good but is obsessed with power and theological justifications for the discourse of power. It promises hell to most. In short, it is an immoral and wicked anti-religion.

One of the most common means used to create this anti-Islam is *tahrīf* or the Orwellian manipulation of language to make the Qur’ān and ḥadīth mean the opposite of their actual meanings. As predicted by the Prophet ﷺ in his famous ḥadīth, the culprits are people “of our complexion and our [Arabic] language” standing at the gates of error, inviting ordinary Muslims to perdition.⁴ They do this, not with foreign words and slogans, but with the words of the Book of Guidance and the ḥadīth of the Best of creation ﷺ.

In the field of the principles of jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), nowhere is this tampering with the truth felt more than in the redefinition of “Sunna” and “*bid’a*” in which the understanding of the pious *Salaf* such as Imām al-Shāfi‘ī for these two terms is cast aside. Al-Shāfi‘ī ؒ had said: “***Bid’a* is of two kinds (*al-bid’atu bid’atān*): praiseworthy innovation (*bid’atun maḥmūda*) and blameworthy innovation (*bid’atun madhmūma*).**” This crystal-clear distinction has been abandoned and, in its place, later, controversial figures are invoked as “more representative of the *Salaf*” and a great historical hoax develops and grows like a snowball.

³ Eqbal Ahmad, *Dawn* Pakistan periodical (January-March 1999).

⁴ Narrated from Ḥudhayfa ibn al-Yamān by al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

Newfangled theories worm their way into the discourse on right and wrong. Those new theories say that (1) “absolutely everything new is a *bid‘a*,” (2) “every *bid‘a* is without exception misguidance (*ḍalāla*),” and – the crowning conclusion and actual purpose of this hoax – (3) “there is no such thing as a good *bid‘a*.” Nothing could be further from the truth.

What is worse, entire generations of Muslims have been weaned on these perversions of the truth and go into the world mechanically parroting the words “Sunna” and “*bid‘a*” without ever understanding them. Following a slew of uneducated and semi-educated Muslim Arabs, Africans and Central, South and Southeast Asians indoctrinated by the modernist “Salafi” movements in Egypt, North Africa and the Gulf, the choice victims for this campaign of disinformation have been English-speaking Muslims, especially new Muslims. These victims learn a few phrases then, coiffed with their new hat of condemnatory phrases like Torquemada’s sergeants-at-arms, go out and blast away at other Muslims.⁵

The purpose of the following discussion is to do away once and for all with those misconceptions for the English-speaking reader and to present over 160 proofs for the Sunni understanding of Sunna and *bid‘a* as it was – and continues to be – set forth in classical, moderate, mainstream Sunni terms according to the Sunni *Salaf* and *Khalaf* including the Four Schools of *Fiqh*.

The treatise is divided into two parts. The first part lists the textual and analogical proofs for the agreed upon, paradigmatic meaning of Sunna and *bid‘a* in straightforward, untechnical language.

⁵ Tomás de Torquemada (1420-1498 CE) was the first Grand Inquisitor of the Spanish Inquisition.

The conclusion shows that there are three divisions to the terminology of the Prophet ﷺ in matters of innovation. Namely, the Prophet ﷺ (a) generally condemned all innovations; (b) explicitly condemned bad innovations; and (c) explicitly praised good innovations. Therefore, the famous ḥadīth of general terminology, *kullu bid'atin ḍalāla*, must be understood in the light of the ḥadīths of specific terminology in (b) and (c) and not in any other way.

The second part of this treatise consists in case studies covering some of what qualifies as good innovations or good new Sunnas in Islam. The epilogue warns against one of the more notorious innovations of our times.

The sinful pauper in hope of the forgiveness of his Lord, the author, Gibrīl Fouād Ḥaddād, was blessed and honored with a narrative link to the Master of all creatures ﷺ and to the best of centuries after his ﷺ for the narrations contained in this book, through over forty of the inheritors of the Prophet ﷺ who are protected with the light of both communal and special Friendship as well as the nobility of narration and ḥadīth science, among them the distinguished two descendants of the Messenger of the Lord of the two Wests ﷺ, the late Shaykh al-Islām fil-Balad al-Ḥarām Shaykh Muḥammad ibn al-Sayyid 'Alawī al-Mālikī al-Makkī and Shaykh Abū al-Hudā Muḥammad ibn al-Sayyid Ibrāhīm al-Ya'qūbī al-Dimashqī.

May Allah Most High forgive the author's mistakes, make this work beneficial in the way of truth, and use it to remove misrepresentation in His Religion. *Wa-ṣallā Allahu 'alā Sayyidinā Muḥammadin wa-'alā Ālihi wa-Ṣaḥbihi wa-sallam.*

Mount Qāsyūn, Damascus, Syria

Original draft completed Ṣafar al-Khayr 1423/April 2002

Final version completed Jumādā al-Awwal 1426/June 2005.