

THE MADHHAB OF MADINA

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Ibn Taymiyya

*The Soundness of the Basic Principles
of the School of the People of Madina*

Translated by
Aisha Bewley

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Author: Ibn Taymiyya

Translated by: Aisha Abdurrahman Bewley

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
وَكُلِّ اللَّهُ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ
وَكَرِيمِهِ وَسَلَّمَ تَسْلِيمًا

The Question

The Shaykh of Islam, Ibn Taymiyya رحمہ اللہ was asked about the soundness of the basic premises of the school of the people of Madina, the position of Malik to whom their school in the Imamate and the *deen* is ascribed, and his precision in the sciences of the *Shari'a* in the opinion of the scholars of all the cities of the Muslims and the people of reliability and experience of all ages.

His reply was as follows:

Praise belongs to Allah. It is the school of the people of the City of the Prophet, the Abode of the *Sunna*, the Abode of the Hijra, and the Abode of Victory. It was in Madina that Allah fashioned the *Sunna* and the *Shari'a* of Islam for His Messenger Muhammad ﷺ. It was to Madina that the Muhajirun emigrated to Allah and His Messenger, and it was in Madina that the Ansar were located (*'Those who were already settled in the abode and in faith'* (59:9)). In the time of the Companions, the Followers and their Followers, their school was the soundest of the schools of the people in all the cities of Islam, east and west, both in respect of its fundamental principles and its secondary rulings.

The excellence of Madina and its people according to hadith

These three periods – those of the Companions, those of the Followers and those of their Followers – comprise the period of the most excellent generations whom the Prophet ﷺ mentioned in a *hadith* which is sound in every respect:

‘The best of generations is the generation among whom I was sent, and then those who follow them and then those who follow them.’

Ibn Hibban mentioned the two generations after his generation which are undisputed. In certain *hadiths* there is some uncertainty about the third generation after the Prophet’s generation. It is definitely stated in some of them that the third generation after his generation is confirmed, and thus there are four generations mentioned in total.

Ibn Hibban al-Busti and *hadith* scholars like him throughout the generations of this community have authoritatively stated that to be true. So this additional generation is confirmed in the *Sahih* Collections.

As regards the *hadith* about the three generations, we read in the two *Sahih* Collections that ‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ud reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, ‘The best of my community is the generation who follow me and then those who follow them and then those who follow them. Then there will come a people who will be such that the testimony of one of them will precede his oath and his oath will precede his testimony.’ In the *Sahih Muslim*, ‘A’isha ؓ said, ‘A man asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ “Which people are the best?” He said, “The generation among whom I was sent, and then the second, and then the third.”’

As for the uncertainty regarding the fourth generation, we

find in the two *Sahih* collections that ‘Imran ibn Husayn reports that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, ‘The best of you is my generation and then those who follow them and then those who follow them.’ ‘Imran said, ‘I do not know whether the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said it two or three times after his generation.’ He then said, ‘Then after them there will come a people who testify when they are not asked to testify, who betray and are not trustworthy, and who make vows and do not keep them. Plumpness will appear among them.’ One version has: ‘The best of this community is the generation among whom I was sent, and then those who follow them and then those who follow them.’ He is also reported as stating in the *hadith*, ‘They swear an oath when they are not asked to swear.’

In the *Sahih Muslim*, Abu Hurayra said, ‘The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “The best of my community are those among whom I was sent, and then those who follow them.” Allah knows best whether he mentioned the third or not. “Then will come a people who love plumpness. They will testify before they are asked to testify.”’

His words in these *hadiths*, ‘they will testify before they are asked to testify’, have been understood by a group of scholars to mean testifying to the truth before being asked for it by the person on whose behalf the testimony is made. They apply that to something about which the witness has knowledge, joining this to the words of the Prophet, ‘Shall I inform you of the best of witnesses? The one who brings his testimony before he is asked for it.’ They say that the second refers to a situation where the evidence to which he is asked to testify is produced and he acknowledges it.

The sound position is that the censure in these *hadiths* is regarding those who bear false witness, as has come in various

texts of the *hadith*: ‘then lying spreads among them to such an extent that a man will testify when he is not asked to testify.’ This is why it is connected to treachery and failing to fulfil vows. These three qualities are the signs of a hypocrite, as is confirmed in the agreed-upon *hadith* in which the Prophet ﷺ said, ‘There are three signs of a hypocrite: when he speaks, he lies; when he makes a promise, he breaks it; and when he is trusted, he betrays his trust.’ The text of Muslim has, ‘even if he fasts and prays and claims that he is a Muslim.’ So the Prophet censured them for the qualities of hypocrisy which were going to spread among them. He made it clear that they would rush to lie, to the point that a man would testify to a lie even before he was asked to do so and therefore be worse than someone who does not lie until he is asked to lie.

As far as the fourth generation is concerned, it is similar to what we find in the two *Sahih* collections related from Abu Sa‘id al-Khudri. The Prophet ﷺ stated, ‘A time will come upon people when groups of people go out to raid and will be asked, “Are there among you any who saw the Messenger of Allah ﷺ?” and they will say, “Yes,” and will be given victory. Then groups of people will go out to raid and will be asked, “Are there among you any who saw the Companions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ?” and they will say, “Yes,” and will be given victory. Then groups of people will go out to raid and will be asked, “Are there among you any who saw the companions of the Companions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ?” and they will say, “Yes,” and will be given victory. Then groups of people will go out to raid and will be asked, “Are there among you any who saw the companions of the companions of the Companions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ?” and they will say, “Yes,” and will be given victory.’ The text of al-Bukhari has, ‘Then a time will come upon people

when groups of people go out to raid.’ That is what he said in the second and third, and in all of them he said, ‘kept the company’ and did not say ‘saw’.

Muslim has in another variant: ‘A time will come upon people when missions will be sent from among them and they will say, “See if you find any of the Companions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ” and a man will be found and they will be given victory on his account. Then a second mission will be sent and they will say, “Are there any among you who saw the Companions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ?” and they will say, “Yes, and they will be given victory. Then a third mission will be sent and they will say, “See if you can find among you anyone who saw someone who saw the Companions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.” Then the fourth mission will take place and it will be said, “See if you can find among you anyone who saw anyone who saw anyone who saw the Companions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ” and a man will be found and they will be given victory on his account.’

The *hadith* of Abu Sa‘id indicates two things. It indicates that a Companion of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is anyone who saw him and believed in him, even if this was only for a short time, as Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal and other Imams have stated. Malik said, ‘Anyone who kept the company of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ for a year, a month, or a day, or just saw him, and believed in him, is one of his Companions. He has his status of Companionship accordingly.’ The expression ‘Companionship’ is generic and contains different categories. One says that his Companionship was for a month or an hour. So it is clear in this *hadith* that the principle of Companionship is connected to those who saw him and believed in him. That must be the case.

In Muslim’s second path of transmission, four generations are mentioned. Those who affirm this additional generation say that

this is reliable and the fact that the other *hadiths* do not mention it does not negate its existence. Similarly, there is uncertainty in the *hadith* of Abu Hurayra about whether the third generation is mentioned, but this does not detract from the rest of the sound *hadiths* which affirm the third generation. Those who do not acknowledge it say that in the sound *hadith* of Ibn Mas'ud he reported that after the three generations there will come a people whose testimony precedes their oath and whose oath precedes their testimony. So there is censure mentioned after the third generation. It can also be said that there is in fact no contradiction between the two reports. Lying may well appear in the fourth generation and yet, in spite of this, there could be someone on whose account victory would be given because of the connection of direct vision.

The consensus of the people of Madina is considered to be evidence, as opposed to other Muslim cities

During the time of those generations which the Messenger of Allah ﷺ praised, the school of the people of Madina was the soundest of the schools of the people of all the Muslim cities. The people of Madina confined themselves to following in the footsteps of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ more than the people of any other city. In addition to this, the people of other cities had less knowledge of the Prophetic *Sunna* and followed it less completely. Thus the people of Madina were not in need of any sort of administration from rulers above them. The needs of other scholars and the requisites of those who worship was greater than the need of the people of Madina since the Madinans were richer than other people in all these matters because of the extensive living record of

the Prophet which they possessed and about which everyone needs knowledge and must follow.

This is why none of the Muslim scholars believed that the consensus of any of the cities except Madina was a proof which must be followed – not in those times nor after them; not the consensus of the people of Makka or Syria or Iraq or any other of the cities of the Muslims. Anyone who relates from Abu Hanifa or any of his companions that the consensus of the people of Kufa is a proof which every Muslim must follow, has, by that statement, accused Abu Hanifa and his companions of going astray. As far as Madina is concerned, people have discussed the consensus of its people and it is well-known from Malik and his companions that the consensus of its people is a proof, even if the rest of the Imams vie with them about that.

The discussion is confined to their consensus during that first excellent period. After that period, everyone agrees that the consensus of its people is no longer a proof since at that time there were great scholars elsewhere who were not in Madina, especially after the Rafidites¹ made their appearance there. The people of Madina continued to adhere to their ancient school, ascribing themselves to the school of Malik, up until the beginning of 600 AH or thereabouts, when some of the Rafidites

¹ The Rafidites were one of the major Islamic sects. Their name derives from the fact that Zayd ibn ‘Ali ibn al-Husayn ibn ‘Ali refused to curse Abu Bakr and ‘Umar. He said, ‘They were the *wazirs* of my ancestor, Muhammad,’ and so they rejected (*rafada*) his opinion. It is said that it is because they rejected the opinion of the Companions because they had offered allegiance to Abu Bakr and ‘Umar. They were the ones who maintained that ‘Ali should have been caliph after the Messenger.

of the east from the people of Qashan and others of the most corrupt schools arrived there and became numerous, especially those who designated themselves members of the family of the Prophet. Books of the people of innovation which are not in harmony with the Book and *Sunna* reached them and provided them with many erroneous ideas and, for that reason, innovation has been frequent there from that time on.

**Innovations, like the Shi'a and the Qadariyya,
issued from almost all cities except Madina**

During the time of the three excellent generations, there was no evident innovation in Madina at all and no innovation issued from it at all regarding the basic premises of the *deen*, such as emerged in all the other cities. The major places in which the Companions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ lived and from which knowledge and belief spread out were five: Makka and Madina, Iraq and further east, and Syria. From them went forth the Qur'an, *hadith*, *fiqh*, and worship and all matters of Islam which are followed.

Fundamental innovations emerged from all these cities except the city of the Prophet. From Kufa emerged the Shi'a and Murji'ites, who later spread elsewhere. From Basra emerged the Qadariyya, the Mu'tazilites and other unsound religious practices which later spread elsewhere. Syria had the Nasibiyya and the Qadariyya. The Jahmiyya emerged from a region of Khorasan, and this is the worst innovation of them all.

The appearance of innovations was in proportion to the distance of their place of origin from the Abode of the Prophet. When the split occurred after the murder of 'Uthman, the innovation of the Haruriyya [Kharijites] made its appearance. As regards their punishment, they fall into three categories: