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Introduction

Indeed, all praise is for Allah; we praise Him, repent to Him, and seek His forgiveness and help. We seek refuge in Allah from the evil of our own selves and of our wicked deeds. Whomsoever Allah guides, none can lead astray; and whomsoever Allah leads astray, none can guide. And I bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped except Allah alone, and He has no partner; and I bear witness that our Prophet Muhammad is His slave and Messenger.

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ وَلَا تَمُوتُوا إِلَّا وَأَنتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ﴾

“O you who believe! Fear Allah as He should be feared. And die not except in the state of Islam (as Muslims) with complete submission to Allah.” (Qur’an 3: 102)

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا﴾

“O mankind be dutiful to your Lord, Who created you from a single person (Adam), and from him He created his wife, and from them both He created many men and women, and fear Allah through Whom you demand your mutual (rights), and (do not cut the relations of) the wombs (kinship). Surely, Allah is Ever an All-Watcher over you.” (Qur’an 4: 1)

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَفُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا ۝ يُصْلِحْ لَكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ ۝ وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا﴾

“O you who believe! Keep your duty to Allah and fear Him, and speak (always) the truth. He will direct you to do righteous good deeds and will forgive you your sins. And whosoever obeys Allah and His Messenger, he has indeed achieved a great achievement (i.e., he will be saved from the Hellfire and made to enter Paradise).” (Qur’an 33: 70, 71)

Indeed, the most truthful speech is Allah’s Book, and the best guidance is that of Muhammad ﷺ. The most evil of affairs are newly invented ones (in the religion), for every newly invented practice is an innovation (*Bid’ah*), every innovation is misguidance, and every misguidance is in the Fire.

This is the first in a series of books on the biographies of Muslim scholars. I hope to focus not just on their contributions to the vast wealth of Islamic knowledge with which Allah ﷻ has blessed this nation, but also on the more private and personal aspects of their lives: their manners, their piety, and their worship. These are issues we need to learn about, for the people of this nation cannot hope to achieve a return to their past glory and honor unless they assume the qualities that, in effect, defined the Muslims of the first few generations of Islam.

Sadly, many Muslims are today ignorant of even the names of our past scholars, never mind their biographies or contributions to Islam. Thus cut off from the past, many Muslims are in a state of ignorance and confusion, and seem to be waiting for someone to light up the way for them. Most people are tired of listening to speeches, and everyone wants to see people who represent, through their demeanor and deeds, a practical manifestation of the religion of Islam. One has to look far and wide to find people who fit these criteria – though we still have scholars who are noble in speech and in deed (and all praise is for Allah). But in reality, one

does not have to go far to find such people, for their lives are recorded for us in history books; and here I am referring to the scholars of the early generations of Islam in particular, as well as to later scholars who followed the way of their pious predecessors.

As for the scholars to whom I am referring, faith reached the deepest depths of their minds and hearts and flowed freely through their veins. One senses that every breath they took as well as every movement they made was for the sake of Allah. If they spoke, they spoke for the sake of Allah; and if they remained silent, that too was for the sake of Allah ﷻ. They illuminated the world with their piety, worship, and deeds. If one were to study their manners and deeds, one would feel that theirs were the manners and deeds of Prophets. And if one were to read about their dealings with people, one would feel that one had come across practical demonstrations of the teachings of the Noble Qur’an and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet ﷺ.

Some of my noble brothers have asked me to write a series of books in order to acquaint the general population of Muslims with their scholars. I sought help from Allah ﷻ and resolved to begin that monumental task. At first, I wanted to exhaustively write about the lives of scholars, covering every aspect of their lives, and giving a detailed account of all of their scholarly activities and contributions to the Muslim nation. But the brothers who commissioned me to complete this project wanted me to present works that would be easy to read and accessible not just to students of knowledge, but also to the general population of Muslims. So I have tried, to the best of my ability, and seeking help from Allah ﷻ, to be as brief and concise as possible.

I would like to point out that, in writing the biographies of past scholars, I have not adhered to the principles of narrator

scrutiny that are applied in the sciences of *Hadeeth*. What I found to be famously known about past scholars, I included in this work, so long as there was no cause to doubt a particular narration. If a particular narration about a scholar was dubious in nature – it was not historically plausible, it was not widely accepted, its authenticity was challenged by learned scholars, etc. – I did not include it in any of these biographies. I thus applied the principles that were adhered to by eminent biographers of the past – the likes of Al-Haafiz Adh-Dhahabee, Al-Haafiz Ibn Katheer, and Al-Haafiz Ibn Hajr (may Allah have mercy on them all).

I begin this series with a biography of a true mountain of knowledge, a scholar who, during his lifetime, illuminated the world with his knowledge and his deeds, and who revived certain aspects of the Prophet's *Sunnah* that would otherwise have been forgotten. In the hearts of Muslims, he is a revered and noble scholar, a status he earned despite the fact that he fled from all forms of fame and popularity. He (may Allah have mercy on him) was the type of man who ran away from fame as if he were running on a treadmill: As much as he ran, he could go nowhere, for the hearts of men – and especially of students of knowledge – yearned for him and sought him out. Everyone wanted to see him and to be near him. I am referring here to none other than Sufyaan ibn Sa'eed ibn Masrooq Ath-Thauree – may Allah have mercy on him.

After I finished writing his biography, I saw a dream that I took to be a good sign: I saw in it that I gave this book to Shaikh Abu Ishaq Al-Huwainee (may Allah have mercy on him) and that he read it; shortly thereafter, he called me and said, "The book is good, but how could you have neglected to mention the status of Sufyaan as an Islamic jurist and the fact that he was the founder of one of the largest schools of jurisprudential thought in all of the lands of earth and that

his views and opinions are worthy of being studied."

When I woke up, I felt the trueness of what Shaikh Al-Huwainee had said to me in the dream, and I immediately got up and added an additional section that focused on Imam Sufyaan's contributions to the field of Islamic jurisprudence – and all praise is for Allah ﷻ. Had I not known how truly busy Shaikh Al-Huwainee always is in his scholarly pursuits, I would have sent a copy of this work to him before it reached the printing press, but that was not meant to be.

I ask Allah to accept this work, to benefit me by it, and to benefit all of its readers. And all praise is for Allah, the Lord of all that exists. I end this introduction with a saying of Imam Sufyaan Ath-Thauree:

"As for scholars, when they learn, they practice; when they practice (and apply the knowledge they acquired), they become occupied; when they become occupied, they are missed (by the people); when they are missed (by the people), they are sought out (by them); and when they are sought out, they flee."

Salaahud-Deen ibn 'Alee ibn 'Abdul-Maujood
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His Wives and Children

We know very little about his wives; we do know for certain, however, that he was married. It is related from Al-Hasan ibn 'Alee ibn Al-Hilwaanee that, when Imam Sufyaan died, he was married to a woman to whom he still owed a part of her dowry.

'Abdur-Rahmaan ibn Ishaq Al-Kinaanee said, "I was at 'Abbaadaan (a place in Iraq) at a time when Sufyaan was in hiding in the city of Basrah. He sent a message to me, and I went to him. When I reached him, death was overtaking him. He reached with his hand underneath his head, and he took out a bag (of money); he threw it to me, and, meanwhile, a woman was talking behind the curtain. He said, "This is a woman whom I have married, and I still owe her thirty dirhams from her dowry (so pay her that amount from the money that is in this bag)."

Imam Sufyaan had only one child, a son who died when he was very young. Since Imam Sufyaan had no other immediate relatives that were still alive, his sister and her son, 'Ammaar ibn Muhammad, inherited his entire estate.

His Brothers and Sister

Imam Sufyaan had three brothers: Al-Mubaarak, Habeeb, and 'Umar. And he had one sister. She loved him a great deal, was always very kind towards him, and even tried to find out about his well being in the period during which he went into hiding. Other than that, we do not know much about her. But history books do make mention of her son, 'Ammaar ibn Muhammad, for he grew up to become a truthful and righteous worshipper. As I mentioned earlier, it was these two – Sufyaan's sister and her son – who inherited Imam Sufyaan's estate.

His Teachers and Students

The era during which Imam Sufyaan lived was a golden age of Islamic knowledge. Political upheavals had a relatively small impact on scholars: some suffered imprisonment at the hands of the ruling government, but on the whole, the caliphates of the era encouraged scholars and tried to gain favor with them, or, at the very least, did not prevent them from acquiring and disseminating knowledge. As a result, scholars and students abounded throughout Muslim lands. These prevailing circumstances had a great impact on Sufyaan's scholarly development. He had many teachers, and even more students – so many that it is near impossible for a researcher to list them all; at best, a researcher can only estimate their numbers.

Imam Sufyaan was a traveling scholar. Whenever he heard about a scholar, it did not matter how far away that scholar lived; Imam Sufyaan would make the journey to visit him and acquire knowledge from him. Having few familial obligations enabled him to become a prolific traveler. Humaid ibn Al-Aswad said, "One day, Sufyaan said to me, 'Come and let us set out on a journey in order to visit Younus ibn Yazeed Al-Ailee.' I said to him, 'You are free (of worldly duties and obligations); meanwhile, I have dependants (to take care of).'"

Adh-Dhahabee listed some of Sufyaan's teachers and ordered their names alphabetically (alphabetically in Arabic); here are some of them:

- 1) Al-Aswad ibn Qais.
- 2) Ash'ath ibn Abee Ash-Sha'thaa.
- 3) Ayyoob As-Sikhtayaanee.
- 4) Bahz ibn Hakeem.