

# *The Reviver of Islam*

Imām Aḥmad Riḍā Khān al-Baraylawī 



BY

Imām ʿAbd al-Ḥayy al-Kattānī

رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى

*Translated by  
Muhammad Saeed*



دار الإمام يوسف النبهاني

لِلنَّشْرِ وَالتَّوْزِيعِ وَالتَّرْجُمَةِ

DAR AL-IMAM YUSUF AL-NABHANI



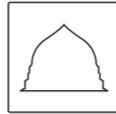
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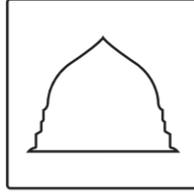
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دار الإمام يوسف النبهاني

— للشر والتوزيع والترجمة —

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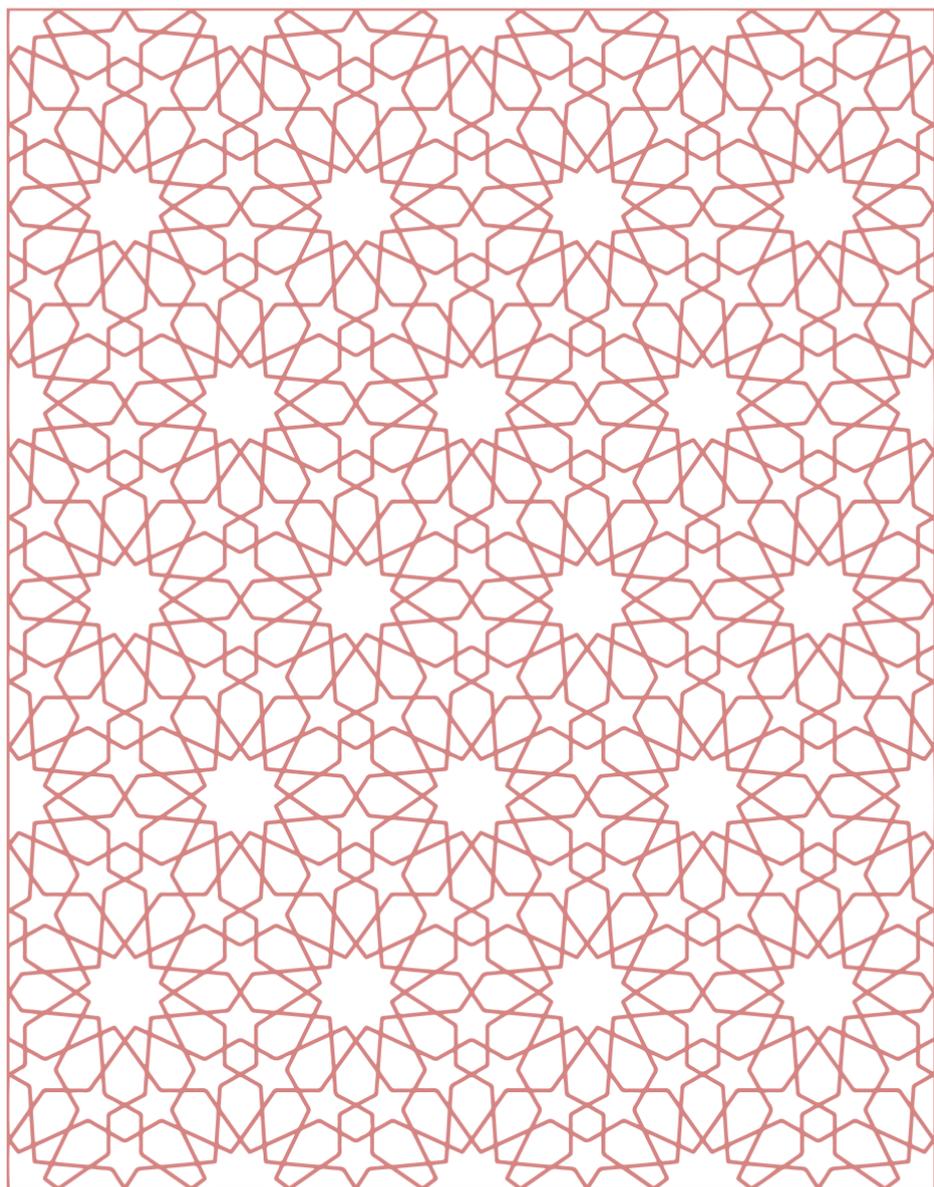
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## F O R E W O R D

A L L P R A I S E I S due unto Allāh ﷻ, Lord of the worlds, He who guided us towards faith and servitude. May there be countless prayers and salutations upon the Master of the two abodes, Muḥammad ﷺ, and upon his family, companions and those who followed them with excellence.

The late 19<sup>TH</sup> century and early 20<sup>TH</sup> century was a time of great trials and tribulations for Muslims around the globe. As colonising Western militant forces advanced into middle eastern territories, the great Ottoman Empire was fading away resulting in a vacuum in leadership. The French, Spanish and Italians set their eyes on Syria, Morocco and Libya, while the British had long been at work depleting the vast Indian subcontinent of its rich resources. Meanwhile, Britain was busy funding and fuelling the Zionists to take the Muslim holy land of *al-Quds*<sup>1</sup> from the Ottoman Sultanate. Nationalism was being promoted in the Arab lands causing rebellion against the Ottomans and division amongst the Muslims. It truly was a time of great turmoil and confusion. Industrialisation was crippling the economies of Muslim countries and mass production of gun powder arms meant that many Muslim military ex-

<sup>1</sup> *Al-Quds* is the Arabic name for the city of Jerusalem, Palestine. It literally means, 'the Holy Land.'

peditions were served a great blow in battles. But where Muslim leaders and generals were being defeated on the battlefields, the Muslim scholars were ever-victorious in subduing the endeavours of Christian Missionary convoys attempting to convert Muslims to Christianity. This was unacceptable to the colonisers and soon they came to the realisation that the only way to truly defeat Muslims was to take the faith they carried so dearly in their hearts away from them by creating divisions.

So it transpired that Aligarh Muslim University was setup to instil orientalist ideas in the minds of its students, while Dār al-‘Ulūm Deoband, on the other hand, managed the distortion of orthodox Islam from its foundations.

Allah, Most High, states in the Quran:

﴿ إِنَّهُمْ يَكِيدُونَ كَيْدًا ﴿١٥﴾ وَأَكِيدُ كَيْدًا ﴿١٦﴾ فَمَهْلُ الْكَافِرِينَ أَمَلُهُمْ رُؤِينَا ﴿١٧﴾ ﴾

﴿ Indeed the disbelievers carry out their evil schemes. And I secretly plan. Therefore give them some respite—give them some time. ﴾ [Ṭāriq: 15 - 17]

As the storm of hypocrisy and falsehood swept through India, Muslim scholars were burdened with the task of refuting the new heretical beliefs being fermented among Muslims. From Wahhabism, which declared almost any Muslim that opposed it as polytheists, to Naturism, which called for a religion as per the desire of man; new sects were being formed continuously. Yet in this atmosphere of confusion and deceit, Allāh gave relief to the Muslims by granting them a reviver just as the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ

had foretold: “Indeed, Allāh will send to this nation at the head of every century the one who will revive the matters of this religion.”<sup>2</sup>

In the summer of 1856, in the city of Bareilly, Imām Aḥmad Riḍā Khān was born into a well-educated and highly respected family of scholars. Spending his early life in pursuit of knowledge, he excelled in every branch of the Islamic sciences and disciplines surpassing his contemporaries. Although most of his time was spent giving legal edicts and answering questions on Islam which came from all over the subcontinent and Africa, his foremost work was to refute the heresies that were accumulating in the Muslim population of India causing division and discord. Core beliefs central to Islam were being diluted and, in some cases, completely rejected. Beliefs such as Allāh can lie, Allāh has a physical body, equating the knowledge of the Messenger of Allāh to that of a layman, that another prophet can come after the prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and many other heinous and corrupt views were being perpetuated. Yet Imām Aḥmad Riḍā Khān with his swift pen, sharp insight and zealous nature refuted these erroneous beliefs; presenting the pure form Islam that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ had given his nation, and which had been followed by Muslims for the 1300 years preceding his time.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century was an era in which poetry was common amongst the masses. From the poor to the ruling class, poetry was a subject passionately spoken about and many

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<sup>2</sup> *Sunan* by Abū Dawūd, §4291.

were busy compiling the best verse they could. This passion for poetry was woven into the very fabric of society to such an extent that the last Muslim ruler of the Mughal empire—albeit only symbolically as the East India Trading Company had stripped him of any real power and his importance was limited to Delhi—Sirāj al-Dīn Bahādur Shāh Zafar was himself a notable poet and often took the company of prominent poets such as Dagh Dehlavi and Zawq. Whilst theological debates and refutations raged in India, Imām Aḥmad Riḍā Khān armed the common folk with the rebuttals and refutations necessary to protect their faith from the deviant sects in a medium more familiar to them. Thus, if a Christian missionary taunted a Muslim by claiming that the resurrecting of the dead back to life was a miracle unique to Jesus ﷺ, Imām Aḥmad Riḍā Khān replied:

لب زلال چشمہ کن میں کندھے وقت خمیر  
مردے زندہ کرنا لے جاں تم کو کیا دشوار ہے

*Those lips that were immersed in the  
crystal-clear water of 'be' [kun] at the time of creation  
Then bringing to life the dead,  
O Beloved!—what difficulty is there in this for you?*

Never in the history of Islam did anyone dare to question the vast knowledge of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ. Yet the Deobandi seminary had the audacity to claim that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ “does not even have unseen knowledge of what is behind a wall.” Imām Aḥmad Riḍā Khān

scorned such scholars of vice, and eloquently displayed the vastness of the knowledge of the Prophet ﷺ by stating:

اور کوئی غیب کیا تم سے نہیں ہو بھلا  
جب نہ خدا ہی چھپا تم پر کروڑوں درود

*What other unseen knowledge  
would be kept from you  
Even God has revealed Himself to you;  
upon you be millions of salutations*

Devotees who had been on the *Hajj* journey would often go on to visit the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ in Madina, the Illumined; however, they were often discouraged by the Wahhabiyya to do so. The notorious father of Wahhabism, Ibn Taymiyya went to such an extent that he penned works and treatises against visiting the blessed grave of the Prophet ﷺ. Even to this day—as the Holy Sanctuaries are in their control—they are often seen dissuading Muslims from visiting the blessed tomb of the Prophet ﷺ by saying that it is not necessary to visit him. Yet Imām Aḥmad Riḍā Khān reminded the believers of the importance of paying respect to the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ by stating:

ہوتے کہاں خلیل و بنا کعبہ و منیٰ  
لولاک و لے صاحبی سب تیرے گھر کی ہے  
*Where would the friend  
(Khalīl, i.e. Prophet Ibrahīm ؑ)*

*be, the Ka<sup>c</sup>ba or Minā*  
*If not for the house of law lāk<sup>3</sup>*

Whilst defending the religion from the attacks of internal foes, Imām Aḥmad Riḍā Khān never forgot to keep the spirits of the believers high and to remind them that they are valued and that their faith in Allah ﷻ and servitude of His Messenger ﷺ are the most important elements of their existence. Hence, Imām Aḥmad Riḍā Khān stated:

ابر نیساں مومنوں کو تیغ عربیاں کفر پر  
جمع ہیں شان جمالی و جلالی ہاتھ میں  
*Clouds of mercy for the believers and  
an unsheathed sword on disbelief  
Gathered are the qualities of beauty  
and awe in his hands*

We owe everything to this great Imām who equipped us with the tools to save our faith whilst encouraging us to adopt the Prophetic way [*sunna*] in every aspect of our lives. We owe him for showing us the straight path in a time when misguided scholars were preying on the faith of believers like vultures. Truly, he planted the seed of love of Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ into the hearts of millions of Muslims and it is for this reason that over a hundred

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<sup>3</sup> The literal meaning of *law lāk* is ‘if it were not for you.’ Here, the poet refers to the Divine narration [*ḥadīth qudsī*] in which it was mentioned by Allah ﷻ on the authority of the Prophet ﷺ: “If it were not for you, I would not have created the cosmos.”

years later till this day it is common practice among Muslims of South Asian descent to recite the salutations and prayers on the Prophet ﷺ which was penned by him. He left the luxuries of this world and spent his time in gaining gnosis [*maʿrifa*] of Allāh and His Beloved ﷺ and then emanating it into the hearts of millions of Muslims around the globe. It is no wonder, then, that he wrote:

انہیں جانا انہیں مانا نہ رکھا غیر سے کام

نہ الحمد! میں دنیا سے مسلمان گیا

*In him I trusted, and only him I followed  
and kept no business with others*

*All praise to Allāh! I leave this world as a Muslim*

May Allāh have mercy on you—O leader of the lovers of the Prophet ﷺ—and may He forgive us for your sake.

M. S. B. Sadiq

23<sup>RD</sup> October 2018



## T H E B I O G R A P H Y

T H E I M Ā M A N D *Hāfiz*<sup>4</sup>, al-Sayyid ‘Abd al-Ḥayy al-Kattānī ﷺ mentioned in his work ‘Offering the Necessary Duty [*Adā’ al-Ḥaqq al-Fard*] whilst discussing the biographies of his teachers:

‘And from amongst them is the erudite scholar, the proficient author of many volumes, the possessor of a swift pen, the paragon of religion, Aḥmad Riḍā ‘Alī<sup>5</sup> Khān al-Baraylawī al-Barakātī al-Hindī.

I met him in Makka, the Venerated, whilst performing the rites of the Greater Pilgrimage [*Hajj*].

He was an individual of great character and an author of many books. The number of books authored by him exceeded 200 volumes, and from them is his collection of legal edicts titled ‘The Muḥammadan Bestowal in the Edicts of Riḍā’ [*al-‘Aṭāyā al-Muḥammadiyya min al-Fatāwa al-Riḍawiyya*] which has reached 7 volumes in size<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> The word *Hāfiz* refers to a scholar who has memorised 100,000 Prophetic traditions; both chain of narration [*sanad*] and wording [*matn*] of the report.

<sup>5</sup> The author added the name ‘Alī which refers to the name of the father of the Imām, the theologian, Shaykh Naqī ‘Alī Khān ﷺ [D. 1297 AH].

<sup>6</sup> The correct title of the work is ‘The Prophetic Bestowal in the Edicts of Riḍā’ [*al-‘Aṭāyā al-Nabawiyya fī al-Fatāwa al-Riḍawiyya*]. New editions of this blessed work comprise of 30 volumes, containing edicts in Arabic, Urdu and Persian, and discussing a plethora of Islamic sciences.

His works include:

—The Establishment of Doomsday upon those who Scorn Standing in Honour for the Prophet ﷺ [*Iqāma al-Qiyāma ʿan al-Ṭāʿin fī al-Qiyām li Nabīyy Tihāma*].

—A Taste of Retribution for the Denier of Celebrating the Blessed Birth and Standing in Honour of the Prophet ﷺ [*Idhāqa al-Athām li Munkar ʿAmal al-Mawlid wa al-Qiyām*].

—The Sultanate of the Elect ﷺ upon the Kingdom of all of Creation [*Salṭana al-Muṣṭafā fī Malakūt Kull al-Warā*].

—The Bliss in Response to Queries concerning Sufism [*al-Talaṭṭuf bi Jawāb Masāʾil al-Taṣawwuf*].

He has immense support for the Folk [*al-qawm* (i.e. the scholars of the Ṣūfī paths)] and their ways, and a deep-rooted love for the Prophet ﷺ, his family and companions. Such that he ascribed the epithet ‘Slave of the Elect ﷺ’ [*ʿAbd al-Muṣṭafā*] to himself.

He received his knowledge in India, as well as Hijaz<sup>7</sup>;

<sup>7</sup> In India, Imām Aḥmad Rida Khān studied the sciences of Islam under:

- Shaykh Mirzā Ghulām Qādir al-Baraylawī: He studied primers and introductory books under his tutorship. This is not the imposter, Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad al-Qādiyānī—may Allah curse him.
- His father, Shaykh Naqī ʿAlī Khān: He studied most of the Islamic sciences under his tutorship.
- Shaykh al-Sayyid Āl al-Rasūl al-Mārahrawī: He received the Qādiriyya order from him.

As for the Hijaz:

- The Grand Shāfiʿī Jurist of Makka, al-Sayyid Aḥmad b. Zaynī Daḥlān: He attained licences in Ḥadīth from him.
- The Grand Ḥanafī Jurist of Makka, Shaykh Abd al-Raḥmān Sirāj.
- Lecturer of the Holy Mosque, Shaykh Ḥusayn Jamal al-Layl.

many of whom he named in his collection of authorisations [*ijazāt*]<sup>8</sup>. I attained from him (authorisation in) the Qādiriyya Barākatiyya Order, the Suhurwardiyya Order, and the Naqshbandiyya ‘Alā’iyya Order.

He also blessed my hand with the four handshakes; *Khaḍiriyya*, *Jinniyya*, *Ma‘mariyya* and *Manāmiyya*<sup>9</sup>.



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<sup>8</sup> His eldest son, Imām Ḥāmid Riḍā Khān, compiled his father’s authorisations in a work titled ‘The Sound Authorisations for the Scholars of Makka and Madīna’ [*al-Ijāzāt al-Matina li ‘Ulamā’ Bakka wa al-Madīna*].

<sup>9</sup> Referring to the handshakes of the Prophet ﷺ which were reported by his companions and, throughout the generations, by scholars. These handshakes are reported in the uniformly-linked Ḥadīth reports [*musalsalāt*].

T H E   S P I R I T U A L   C H A I N  
O F   T H E   Q Ā D I R I Y Y A   O R D E R

H E R E I N ,   I   H A V E limited myself to mentioning one chain of narrations in the Qādiriyya order; its authorisation blessed to us by Imām Aḥmad Riḍā Khān.

He reports from:

- His Shaykh, the Master, al-Sayyid Āl al-Rasūl al-Aḥmadī al-Mārahrawī<sup>10</sup>, who reported from his uncle:



- Abū al-Faḍl al-Sayyid Āl Aḥmad<sup>11</sup>, more commonly known as ‘*Ache Miyān*’, who reported from his father:



- Al-Sayyid Ḥamza<sup>12</sup>, who reported from his father:



- Āl Muḥammad<sup>13</sup>, who reported from his father:

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<sup>10</sup> **Al-Sayyid Āl al-Rasūl**, son of Āl al-Barakāt al-Mārahrawi (D. 1296 AH). He studied under the leading scholars of his time, such as; Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Dihlawī and Shaykh ‘Abd al-Mājid al-Badāyūnī.

<sup>11</sup> **Al-Sayyid Āl Aḥmad** (D. 1235 AH). He penned many treatises and books, such as ‘The Etiquettes of the Wayfarers’ [*Ādāb al-Sālikīn*].

<sup>12</sup> **Al-Sayyid Ḥamza** (D. 1198 AH). His literary works include ‘The Unveiling of the Veiled’ [*Kāshif al-Astār*].

<sup>13</sup> **Āl Muḥammad** (D. 1164 AH).

- The possessor of blessings, Barakat Allāh<sup>14</sup>, who reported from:



- Al-Sayyid Faḍl Allāh al-Kālpawī<sup>15</sup>, who reported from:



- Al-Sayyid Aḥmad<sup>16</sup>, who reported from:



- Shaykh Jamāl al-Awliyā' al-Bahāna Nādar<sup>17</sup>, who reported from:



- The jurist, Shaykh Ḍiyā' al-Dīn<sup>18</sup>, who reported from:



- The recitor of the Qur'ān, Shaykh Muḥammad Niẓām al-Dīn Bikhārī<sup>19</sup>, who reported from:



- Shaykh Ibrāhīm al-Irjī<sup>20</sup>, who reported from:

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<sup>14</sup> **Barakat Allāh** (D. 1142 AH).

<sup>15</sup> **Faḍl Allāh al-Kālpawī** (D. 1111 AH).

<sup>16</sup> **Al-Sayyid Aḥmad al-Kālpawī** (D. 1084 AH). He studied under the tutelage of Shaykh Afḍal al-Ilāhabādī. His literary works include 'A Commentary on the Beautiful Names of Allāh' [*Sharḥ Asmā' Allāh al-Ḥusnā*].

<sup>17</sup> **Jamāl al-Awliyā'** (D. 1047 AH).

<sup>18</sup> **Ḍiyā' al-Dīn** (D. 989 AH), son of Sulaymān al-ʿUthmānī.

<sup>19</sup> **Niẓām al-Dīn** (D. 981 AH). He was a master recitor of seven recitations of the Qur'ān. He studied exegesis [*tafsīr*], Arabic phonology [*tajwīd*] and the sciences of Quran [*ʿulūm al-Qur'ān*] under the tutelage of his father.

<sup>20</sup> **Ibrāhīm al-Irjī al-Ḥasanī** (D. 953 AH).

- Bahā' al-Milla wa al-Dīn<sup>21</sup>, who reported from:  
❦
- Al-Sayyid Aḥmad al-Jilānī<sup>22</sup>, who reported from:  
❦
- Al-Sayyid Mūsā<sup>23</sup>, who reported from:  
❦
- Al-Sayyid ʿAlī<sup>24</sup>, who reported from:  
❦
- Al-Sayyid Muḥy al-Dīn Abū al-Naṣr<sup>25</sup>, who reported from:  
❦
- The Master, the Judge, Ibn Ṣāliḥ Hiba Allāh<sup>26</sup>, who reported from his father:  
❦
- Abū Bakr ʿAbd al-Razzāq<sup>27</sup>, who reported from his father:  
❦
- Imām Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jilānī<sup>28</sup>, who reported from:

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21 **Bahā' al-Dīn al-Anṣārī al-Shāṭiri** (D. 921 AH).

22 **Al-Sayyid Aḥmad al-Jilānī** (D. 853 AH).

23 **Al-Sayyid Mūsā** (D. 763 AH).

24 **Al-Sayyid ʿAlī** (D. 739 AH).

25 **Al-Sayyid Muḥy al-Dīn Abū al-Naṣr** (D. 656 AH).

26 **Abū Ṣāliḥ**, not Ibn Ṣāliḥ; rather, Abū Ṣāliḥ (D. 632 AH). He was known as *ʿImād al-Dīn*, meaning, 'pillar of the religion.'

27 **Abū Bakr ʿAbd al-Razzāq** (D. 603 AH). Scion of the great *Ghawth* and leading jurist in the Ḥanbalī school of thought.

28 **Al-Ghawth al-ʿẓam** (D. 561 AH). The great succour, and leader of all gnostics. His works include: 'Revelations of the Unseen' [*Futūḥ al-Ghayb*].

- Abū Saʿīd al-Makhzūmī<sup>29</sup>, who reported from:  
❦
- Abū al-Ḥasan al-Hikārī<sup>30</sup>, who reported from:  
❦
- Abū al-Farj al-Ṭartūsī<sup>31</sup>, who reported from:  
❦
- Abū al-Faḍl ʿAbd al-Wāḥid<sup>32</sup>, who reported from:  
❦
- Al-Shiblī<sup>33</sup>, who reported from:  
❦
- Al-Junayd<sup>34</sup>, who reported from:  
❦
- Al-Sirrī<sup>35</sup>, who reported from:  
❦
- Maʿrūf al-Karkhī<sup>36</sup>, who reported from:

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**29 Abū Saʿīd** (D. 513 AH). The chief justice of Baghdad and the leading Ḥanbalī jurist of his era.

**30 Abū al-Ḥasan al-Hikārī** (D. 486 AH). ʿAbd al-Ghaffār al-Karjī said, “I have not seen anyone similar to Shaykh al-Islām al-Hikārī in asceticism [*zuhd*] and virtue [*faḍl*].”

**31 Abū al-Farj al-Ṭartūsī** (D. 440 AH).

**32 Abū al-Faḍl ʿAbd al-Wāḥid** (D. 410 AH). His most notable work is: “The Creed of the Ennobled Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal رحمته” [*Iʿtiqād al-Imām al-Munabbal Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal*].

**33 Al-Shiblī** (D. 334 AH). A jurist in the school of Imām Mālik b. Anas رحمته.

**34 Al-Junayd**, more commonly known Junayd al-Baghdādī (D. 297 AH).

**35 Al-Sirrī** (D. 251 AH). Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī said, “Al-Sirrī was the first to bring monotheism [*tawḥīd*] to Baghdad and he spoke of the sciences of the realities [*ḥaqāʾiq*].”

**36 Maʿrūf** (D. 200 AH).

- Imām ʿAlī al-Riḍā<sup>37</sup>, who reported from his father:



- Mūsā al-Kāẓim<sup>38</sup>, who reported from his father:



- Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq<sup>39</sup>, who reported from:



- Muḥammad al-Bāqir<sup>40</sup>, who reported from:



- ʿAlī Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn<sup>41</sup>, who reported from:



- Imām al-Ḥasan<sup>42</sup>, who reported from:



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**37 ʿAlī al-Riḍā** (D. 203 AH). He was issuing legal edicts [*fatāwā*] in his youth during the days of Imām Mālik b. Anas . He also reported Ḥadīth on the authority of Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal .

**38 Mūsā al-Kāẓim** (D. 183 AH). He reported from Mālik b. Dīnār and ʿAbd al-Malik b. Qudāma . Abū Hātim mentioned, “Trustworthy and truthful; a leader amongst the leaders of the Muslims.”

**39 Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq** (D. 148 AH). He was from the predecessors [*tābiʿūn*] as he saw Anas b. Mālik and Sahl b. Saʿd .

**40 Muḥammad al-Bāqir** (D. 114 AH). He reported from his grandfathers al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, as well as other companions such as, Abū Hurayra and Saʿīd b. al-Musayyib .

**41 ʿAlī Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn** (D. 95 AH). Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī said, “Al-Sirrī was the first to bring monotheism [*tawḥīd*] to Baghdad and he spoke of the sciences of the realities [*ḥaqāʾiq*].”

**42 Al-Ḥasan** (D. 50 AH). The author mistakenly mentioned Imām al-Ḥasan; however, the scholars agree that ʿAlī Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn took from his father Imam al-Ḥusayn, as opposed to his uncle Imām al-Ḥasan.

- His father (i.e. our Master, <sup>ؑ</sup>Alī b. Abī Ṭālib) and his mother (i.e. our Lady, Fāṭima), who reported from her father:



- The Master of all creation ﷺ—may salutations be upon him.



