

الكتاب كتابان

The Book is Two Books

Two Basic Categories of Ḥadīth Works

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Translation by Dr Abu Zayd

سلسلة إملاء الخاطر | Imlā al-Khāṭir Series



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جميع الحقوق محفوظة

Imlā al-Khāṭir Series

In this series, which he names *Imlā al-Khāṭir* (literally, “dictation of thoughts”), Dr Mohammad Akram Nadwi follows in the tradition of the Ḥanbalī scholar Ibn al-Jawzī’s *Ṣayd al-Khāṭir* and shares with the world his reflections on a variety of topics ranging from theology to law, history to heart softeners, philosophy, education and more. Composed in a casual, conversational style consisting of questions followed by their brief answers (each portion predicated by *qālū/qultu*, “they said”/“I responded”), he utilizes therein the highest level of Arabic, reflecting his love of the language and his extensive expertise in Arabic grammar and rhetoric. These short but poignant reflections are part of the *balāghah* genre and tradition of Arabic literature. It should be noted that these translations, done by his senior students, serve as a guide and can never fully match the style, tone and eloquence of the original Arabic. Also note that Dr Akram does not necessarily review each translation and is not responsible for any errors, improper word choices, or the likes, that are an inevitable part of the translation process.

Dr. Mohammad Akram Nadwi

Dr. Mohammad Akram Nadwi is a world-renowned scholar of Indian origin who has resided in England for an extensive time. After receiving in-depth training to an advanced level in the traditional Islamic disciplines at the famous Nadwat al-Ulama seminary in Lucknow, India, and receiving a PhD in Arabic literature from Lucknow University, he became a research fellow at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, where he conducted research for a number of years on a variety of topics, including Ḥadīth and Sufi orders in India. He has published widely in Urdu, Persian, Arabic and English, including translations (like his work on Shāh Waliullah, *Bustan al-Muhaddithin*), editions of Arabic texts (such as a renowned critical edition of *Usul al-Shāshī* in Ḥanafī jurisprudence), and original monographs on Islamic law, female ḥadīth narrators and such figures as Abū Ḥanīfah and Sayyid Abul Ḥasan ‘Alī Nadwi. His groundbreaking work, yet to be published, is an encyclopedic 40-volume documentation of the legacy of female scholarship in the Islamic tradition. He co-founded the Al-Salam Institute in 2006 where he continues to serve as Principal and Senior Lecturer.

Introduction

The plethora of ḥadīth books in the library of Islām has intimidated many a student. Among Islamic disciplines, the study of ḥadīth remains for many the most daunting and the most complex. In this monograph, Dr. Akram provides a basic, binary scheme to understand the works of ḥadīth, and provides insight into the two most authoritative, and at the same time, misunderstood works: the Ṣaḥīḥ collections of Bukhārī and Muslim.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الكتاب كتابان

بقلم: محمد أكرم الندوي

أوكسفورد

قالوا: قد كثر الجمع والتأليف في الحديث النبوي الشريف من القرن الأول إلى يومنا هذا من صحف الصحابة والتابعين، إلى جوامع معمر وسفيان الثوري والأوزاعي وابن عيينة ووكيع، والموطآت، ومسانيد أبي داود الطيالسي ومسدد بن مسرهد وأحمد بن حنبل وبقي بن مخلد وأبي يعلى، ومصنفي عبد الرزاق وابن أبي شيبة، وصحیح البخاري ومسلم، وكتب السنن، فهل تتجانس هذه الكتب متوافقة مناهجها ومتماثلة أغراضها؟ أم تتباين تباينا؟

قلت: هي أجناس مختلفة، أصنفها لكم صنفين، غير مستغنين عن تبيينها منعوتين بما يخص كل واحد منها وما يفصل أحدهما عن الآخر، فقد جر عدم التمييز بين الصنفين إلى غلط وتخليط وقع فيها الكبار، بله من دونهم، قالوا: ما هما الصنفان؟ قلت: اسمعوا وعوا:

الأول: المدونات أو الدواوين، وهي ما دون فيه العلماء أحاديثهم أو أحاديث شيوخهم، ولا غرض لهم إلا تدوين تلك الأحاديث مجموعة أو منتقاة، غير مرتبة، أو مرتبة ترتيبا غير مقصود، مجردة من الفقه والدراية، وغير معنية بدقائق أصول التحديث والعلل، ولا متعرضة لتراجم متظاهرة بالأدلة والشواهد، اعتمدها للسمع والقراءة، قد تتخللها تفسيرات من الشيوخ متضمنة استخراج مسائل أو استنباط معان أو بيان علل، يقربونها إلى الآخذين عنهم محادثة أو إملاء، ولم تدون هذه الكتب إلا لزمّن خاص ولأناس معينين، لا ينتفع بها إلا من أخذها من الشيوخ سماعا منهم أو قراءة عليهم.

والثاني: المصنفات، وهي ما صنّفه العلماء من كتب مؤلفة تأليفا، مستقلة عن الزمان والمكان، وضمّنها فقها ودراية وبيان علل، ووضعوا لها تراجم متظاهرة بالأدلة والشواهد، متوخين فيها الترتيب والتفصيل، ومعنيين باستنباط الأحكام واستخراج المسائل، رابطي الجزئيات بكلياتها، والفروع بأصولها، فليست دواوين للحديث محضة، بل مستوفية لأغراض نواها أصحابها، ومطالب تعمدوها ومرام ابتغوا تحقيقها ابتغاء.

قالوا: فبئر لنا النوعين بأمثلة، قلت: فمن النوع الأول كتب الثوري والأوزاعي وابن عيينة ووكيع، دونوا فيها أحاديثهم، سمعها الناس منهم أو قرأوها عليهم، ونسخها أصحابهم لأنفسهم أو انتقوا منها، وصارت هذه الكتب أو منتقياتها أبعاضا وأشطرا للمصنفات في القرون المتأخرة.

وأفضل مثال للنوع الثاني صحيحا البخاري ومسلم، فصحيح البخاري كتاب مصنف مطلقا عن الزمان والمكان، جمع فيه صاحبه الأحاديث الصحيحة على شرط خاص مفسر في ثنايا الكتاب، وترجم لها مستنبطا منها مسائل وأحكاما استنباطا دقيقا يدهش ذوي الألباب والعقول، ويبعث الفقهاء والحكماء على العجب والحيرة في ترتيبه بديع، مقررا أن صحيح الحديث يكفي لديننا، فكتابه يتضمن أمرين: 1- جمع للحديث الصحيح متصديا لما لزمه من بيان علل وقضايا في الأسانيد والمتون، ومعرزا مذهبه واختياره بالمتابعات والتعليقات، 2- وفقه للحديث وشرح معانيه من خلال تبويبات وتراجم محتجا لها بالأدلة والبراهين ومثبتا قواعد في أصول الدين وفروعه أرساها إرساءا، مع تكرار للأحاديث وتفريق للمتون على وجه تُستجد منه الفوائد.

وصحيح مسلم ألفه جامعا للحديث الصحيح، وهو عنده ما رواه رجال الطبقة الأولى من ذوي العدالة والاستقامة والحفظ والإتقان كالك وشعبة وسفيان الثوري وحماد بن زيد وأمثالهم، وتقصى أحاديث هذه الطبقة تقصيا، ثم أتبعها بأحاديث رجال الطبقة الثانية وهم دون الأولين في الحفظ والإتقان مشاركين لهم في الستر والعدالة، ولم يتقصها، بل اختار منها ما اعتمده في بيان المتابعات والشواهد، وإذا كان في حديث من أحاديث الطبقة الأولى علة بينها في آخر الباب، وقد جود في ترتيب الأحاديث وابتكر مناهج لم يسبق إليها، فهو أفضل كتاب طبقت فيه

الصناعات الحديثة وأودعته بدائع الفن على أفضل طريقة وأحسن أسلوب، ففاق من تقدمه من المصنفين وأعجز من تأخر عنه، وخلف كتاباً فريداً في بابه.

فينبغي لمن طالع الكتابين أن يعرف غرضها ومزاياها وخصائصها، وأن لا يسلك بهما مسلك المدونات.

قالوا: فأين تضع الموطأ من النوعين؟ قلت: هو من النوع الأول.

قالوا: أليس طعننا في الموطأ أن أحلته محل المدونات؟ قلت: لا، وأي طعن في هذا؟ بل هو من محاسن مالك وأمثاله، إذ لم يقيدوا الناس بكتبهم ولم يفرضوها على الأمة، وهو منهج مضى عليه العلماء في الإسلام وغيره، فكتب أرسطاطاليس وكثير من الفلاسفة ليست إلا دروساً ومحاضرات قرروها على تلاميذهم الذين قيدوها تقييداً.

قالوا: فما هي فائدة المدونات؟ قلت: هي جمع لمرويات صاحبها محصاة مضبوطة، يسمعها عليه تلاميذه، غير مقيدين بفقهه ومنهجه في الاستخراج والاستنباط مع استفادتهم منه في الأمرين جميعاً، ثم يتناقلونها إلى من بعدهم مدرّبين على الفقه والاستنباط، ومن ثم ذهب أرسطاطاليس المذهب نفسه، وتبعه أذكاء الناس.

قالوا: فما الغلط والتخليط اللذان وقع فيهما الناس من عدم الانتباه إلى الفرق بين النوعين؟

قلت: عامل كثير من الناس المصنفات معاملة المدونات، يطالعونها ويشرحونها كمجموعات حديثية محضة غير متبينين لما فيها من المزايا والخصائص التي أودعها أصحابها، فمثلاً شروح الصحيحين ليست إلا شروحا لأحاديثها، مثل شرح السنة للبغوي، ومعالم السنن للخطابي، ولا يحدث كبير فرق إذا جعلت شرح هذا الكتاب شرح كتاب آخر يتضمن الأحاديث نفسها.

قالوا: هل تستثني منها شرحاً؟ قلت: أئيدُّ أن أستثني إلا فتح الباري، فإنه شرح لصحيح البخاري بجميع مزاياه وخصائصه، قالوا: وهل لك عليه مأخذ؟ قلت: وأي كتاب يخلو من الخطأ والسهو؟ وإذا كان صحيح البخاري أصح الكتب بعد كتاب الله تعالى فإن فتح الباري أفضل الشروح وأعلاها درجة وأشرفها رتبة، ولقد صدق من قال: لا هجرة بعد الفتح.

The Book is Actually Two Books . . .¹

Two Basic Categories of Ḥadīth Works

By Dr Mohammed Akram Nadwi
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They asked: The compilations and works of the noble Prophetic ḥadīth from the first century to our day have become numerous, including the Ṣaḥīfah collections of the Companions and Followers²; the Jāmi'³ collections of

¹ The literal phrase of the title: “The book is actually two books,” is used as an eloquent reference to the notion that ḥadīth works are actually two basic types. In that sense, it would mean, “The basic ḥadīth work is actually two types of works.” Its usage is taken from the commentary of the following verse:

تَقْوِ اللَّهَ مَا يَتَشَاءُ وَيُثَبِّتْ وَعِنْدَهُ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ

Allah eliminates what He wills or confirms what He wills, and with Him is the Mother of the Book.

[Qur'ān al-Ra'd 13:39]

Ṭabarī relates from 'Ikrimah as well as from his teacher Ibn 'Abbās that this verse means that the Book of God's decree is actually two different Books (*al-kitābu kitābān*): one that He changes as He pleases and one “source” Book that is unchanging.

² Many Companions and Successors were known to have kept written compilations known as Ṣaḥīfah collections, which survived for many years but were mostly absorbed into later compilations. These early ad hoc collections, written on papyrus, parchment and early materials, followed no uniform pattern or methodology, and were primarily memory aids for their writers, containing skeletons of ḥadīth, often mixed with supplications and notes. The emphasis on this stage was mostly oral transmission. At least 50 Companions were known to have possessed such collections. —Dr. Jonathan AC Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World*. Oneworld Publications. 2009.

³ The Jāmi' is a comprehensive ḥadīth compilation inclusive of not only legal rulings, but also additional topics such as tafsīr, aqīdah and heart softeners.

Ma'mar⁴, Sufyān al-Thawrī⁵, Awzā'ī⁶, Ibn 'Uyaynah⁷ and Wakī'⁸; the Muwaṭṭa'⁹ collections; the Musnad¹⁰ compilations of Abū Dāwūd al-Ṭayālīsī¹¹, Musaddad b. Musarhad¹², Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal¹³, Baqīyy b.

⁴ Ma'mar b. Rāshid (d. 153/770) was an early ḥadīth scholar from Baṣrah whose most famous student was 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan'ānī.

⁵ He was the renowned ḥadīth and fiqh scholar of Kūfah who died in 161/778.

⁶ 'Abd al-Raḥmān Awzā'ī (d. 157/774) was a great jurist of the Levant (born in Syria, settled in present-day Lebanon) and founder of a legal school that did not ultimately survive.

⁷ Sufyān b. 'Uyaynah (d. 198/815) was the great jurist and ḥadīth scholar of Makkah, and originator of the *first ḥadīth tradition*—which continues to this day—of narrating to students the ḥadīth of mercy before any other.

⁸ Wakī' b. al-Jarrāh (d. 197/813) was a renowned scholar of Iraq known for his great piety, prodigal memory, and aloofness from the rulers, who was a student of Abū Ḥanīfah and Sufyān al-Thawrī, and, later, the teacher of Shāfi'ī and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal among others.

⁹ The Muwaṭṭa' was famously compiled by Imām Mālik of Madīnah (d. 179/795)—with others following him—and represented a subclass of the Muṣannaf genre of ḥadīth works, which were basically topically arranged fiqh-oriented ḥadīth works that represented the first organized works of Islamic scholarship.

¹⁰ These ḥadīth works were organized by the isnād, usually grouped by Companions, and occurred in the backdrop of greater attention on the isnād in the 3rd century. These musnad works were storehouses and comprehensive collections of narrations, sometimes with little regard for authenticity. —Dr. Jonathan AC Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World*. OneWorld Publications. 2009.

¹¹ Abū Dāwūd al-Ṭayālīsī (d. 203/819) was a Persian-origin ḥadīth expert of Baṣrah who authored a Musnad work, not to be confused with the more famous Abū Dāwūd, author of one of the Six Canonical Works.

¹² Musaddad b. Musarhad (d. 228/843) was a great ḥadīth expert of Baṣrah who compiled a Musnad collection. Apart from Muslim and Ibn Mājah, the rest of the six authors of the ḥadīth canon related from him.

¹³ Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) is the author of the most famous Musnad collection.

Makhlad¹⁴, and Abū Ya'la¹⁵; the two Muṣannaf¹⁶ compilations of 'Abd al-Razzāq¹⁷ and Ibn Abī Shaybah¹⁸; the Ṣaḥīḥ compilations of Bukhārī¹⁹ and Muslim²⁰; and the Books of the Sunan²¹. Are all of these books related to one another, similar in their methodologies and alike in their aims, or do they differ plainly?

I replied: They actually represent many kinds of works, but I will divide them for you into two basic classifications. Recognizing their distinction, with

¹⁴ Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān Baqīyy b. Makhlad (d. 276/889) was a ḥadīth scholar of Cordoba, Spain, who famously traveled the width of the Muslim world to learn ḥadīth from Imām Aḥmad. He compiled a 24-volume Musnad work—now lost—which was thought to possibly be the largest book of ḥadīth ever compiled.

¹⁵ Abū Ya'la al-Mauṣilī (d. 307/919) was a ḥadīth expert of Mauṣil, Iraq.

¹⁶ See footnote 8 above.

¹⁷ 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan'ānī (d. 211/826) was an early ḥadīth scholar of Yemen and author of many works, of which only the Muṣannaf survived.

¹⁸ Abū Bakr 'Abdullah b. Muḥammad b. Abī Shaybah (d. 235/849) was great ḥadīth scholar of Kūfah. He inherited the teaching position of 'Abdullah b. Mas'ūd in the maṣjid. After Ibn Mas'ūd, it was occupied by 'Alqamah, followed by Ibrāhīm, followed by Maṣṣūr, followed by Sufyān al-Thawrī, followed by Wakī' and then Ibn Abī Shaybah.

¹⁹ Compiled over 16 years through extensive research and travel and from over 1,000 teachers and from 600,000 narrations, the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870) is the single-most authoritative ḥadīth collection in Sunni Islam, containing 9,082 ḥadīth (2,602 discounting repetitions) arranged in 106 books and 3,450 chapters. This collection stands out for the in-depth knowledge and insight it provides concerning ḥadīth. One thousand students listened to the collection from the Imām and transmitted it to posterity, though some figures put the number at 90,000.

²⁰ Containing 10,000 ḥadīth (3,030 without repetitions) and having took 15 years to complete, the Ṣaḥīḥ of Imām Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj (d. 261/875) is considered the second most authoritative work (or ranked first by some) and described as better consolidated, with superior thematic arrangement, and easier to use than Bukhārī's work. However, it lacks al-Bukhārī's legal commentary and insights, as well as his use of reports from Companions and early scholars to supplement the primary material.

²¹ Representing the pinnacle of ḥadīth scholarship, these later works (Ṣaḥīḥ and Sunan) combined the two earlier genres (Muṣannaf and Musnad) to produce topically arranged works with full isnāds and greater regard for authenticity. Sunan compilations are topically arranged, legal ḥadīth works. Unlike the Muṣannaf genre, they only contain Prophetic ḥadīth, reflecting their aim to collate ḥadīth rather than fiqh.

respect to what is unique to each type and distinguishes it from the other, is indispensable. Not doing so drags one into error and confusion, afflicting even great people, not to mention other than them.

They asked: What are these two types?

I replied: Listen and understand.

1. Ḥadīth Registers

These are compilations in which scholars simply recorded their ḥadīth narrations and those of their teachers. Their only goal was to record these ḥadīth, either in their entirety or by way of selection. These were compiled without any particular arrangement, or with an arrangement without any specific intent. They were devoid of practical application or comprehension, without any regard for the subtleties of the principles of ḥadīth study or analysis, and without presenting any section introductions inclusive of proofs or supports.

The authors relied on these records for the purposes of audition and recital.²² These were often intermingled with the commentaries of their teachers, which included their deriving specific benefits, extracting specific meanings or clarifying potential defects in narrations. The teachers then presented these works to those taking ḥadīth from them, through narration or dictation. These books were recorded for a specific time and for specified individuals. The only ones who were able to benefit from these works are those who took them from their teachers, hearing from them directly or reading the texts back to them.

2. Ḥadīth Works Proper

These were written by scholars as fully authored books, independent from time and space, and inclusive of practical application, comprehension and clarification of potential defects. They placed therein prefaces and headings containing proofs and supporting evidences, aimed to have clear order, and

²² The traditional method of ḥadīth transmission was primarily two-fold: though audition (*ṣamāʿ*), which consisted of passively hearing ḥadīth directly from the mouths of the teachers; or recital (*qirāʾah*), in which the ḥadīth are actively read by the students to the teacher.

elaborated on many matters. They observed due consideration for deriving rulings and extracting benefits, and linked subsidiary matters with their foundational principles. These are not merely records of ḥadīth but rather, designed to fulfill the goals and pursue the aims and objectives intended by their authors.

They asked: Elaborate for us what these two types are, with examples.

I replied:

The first type includes the books of al-Thawrī, Awzā'ī, Ibn 'Uyaynah and Wakī', in which they recorded their ḥadīth narrations, which their students in turn heard from them or read back to them. Their companions in turn recorded personal copies for themselves or made selections therefrom, and over time, these books eventually became parts of subsequent works in later generations.

The best examples of the second type are the Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī and Muslim. Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī is a work separated from time and space, whose author gathered within it ḥadīth narrations upon specific conditions, which are explained within the book. He divided the book with division headings that included the extrapolation of benefits and rulings, extracted in such intricate ways that astonished scholars and thinkers alike. Its astounding arrangement leaves jurists and scholars in wonder and amazement, reinforcing the notion that sound ḥadīth are sufficient for our religion.

His book encompasses two aims:

1. Collecting sound ḥadīth and clarifying what is necessary regarding their [potential] defects or other issues relating to their chain or text, as well as reinforcing his own views and choices with supporting narrations.²³

²³ Mutāba'āt are those secondary narrations that represent a lower degree of authenticity and are used only as supporting evidences for the primary, more authentic ḥadīth material. Similarly, mu'allaqāt are those narrations, also of lesser authenticity, which Bukhārī quotes—often without isnād—in his chapter headings to achieve the same purpose. Lack of awareness of this secondary, lesser-tier material in Bukhārī has led to much confusion among critics.

2. Demonstrating the applications of ḥadīth and elaborating on their meanings through their arrangement, division and chapter headings, relying on proofs and evidences, as well as affirming and laying out basic principles in the fundamentals and peripherals of religion, along with repeating ḥadīth and distinguishing various textual wordings in order to bring new benefits.²⁴

The author of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim compiled it to gather sound ḥadīth, which, according to him, are those that were narrated by the transmitters of the first rank who possessed moral uprightness, steadfastness, strong memories and expertise of the likes of Imām Mālik, Shu'bah²⁵, Sufyān al-Thawrī, Ḥammād b. Zayd²⁶ and others. The ḥadīth of this generation are exhausted comprehensively.²⁷ The author then follows up these ḥadīth with those of the second rank, who are lesser than the first in memory and expertise while being similar in moral uprightness. This material was not exhausted entirely, but he chose from them what he needed for supporting evidences. And if there were some potential defects in the primary-tier ḥadīth²⁸, he would

²⁴ The well-known saying about Bukhārī is quite apt here:

فقه البخاري في تراجمه

“The real genius of Bukhārī is found in his arrangement and chapter headings.”

The real contributions of Bukhārī are therefore manifold: providing evidences of the highest-tier of authenticity possible, providing ample secondary evidences to bolster the primary proofs, demonstrating applications of ḥadīth through their arrangements in various chapters, spelling out his views in the chapter headings, quoting other non-ḥadīth material therein, repeating the same ḥadīth throughout the work in various chapters to support multiple applications of the same texts, and bringing out multiple textual variations of ḥadīth to support more nuanced applications.

²⁵ Shu'bah b. al-Ḥajjāj (d. 160/777) was a prominent ḥadīth scholar of Iraq who was one of the first to earn the title the “King of Ḥadīth” (*amīr al-mu'minīn fil ḥadīth*). When he died, Sufyān al-Thawrī remarked that ḥadīth itself died.

²⁶ Ḥammād b. Zayd (d. 179/795) was a Persian-origin ḥadīth expert of Baṣrah, Iraq.

²⁷ i.e. All of this primary-tier ḥadīth material is produced in the Ṣaḥīḥ in a comprehensive and all-inclusive manner.

²⁸ A deeper and more nuanced study of ḥadīth shows that is quite possible, and even common, for the bulk of a ḥadīth narration to be authentic, while the narration still suffers from some hidden defect in a smaller portion that does not affect the overall authenticity. Scholars like Bukhārī and Muslim fulfilled their responsibility diligently to point these out in their works. Muslim does this at the ends of the chapters whereas Bukhārī often utilizes the chapter headings for this purpose.

clarify that at the ends of the chapters. Muslim highly excelled in the arrangement of ḥadīth and originated methodologies not used previously, making it the single best work of ḥadīth craftsmanship. He demonstrated the wonders of this discipline in the best way and manner possible. He surpassed those who preceded him and frustrated those who came after him, leaving behind a singular, unique book in its field.

Those who examine these two works should really understand their aims, features and distinctions, and not treat them like the ḥadīth registers.

They asked: Which of the two types does the Muwaṭṭa' fall into?

I replied: Into the first type.

They asked: Is this not an insult to the Muwaṭṭa' that it be placed among the ḥadīth registers?

I replied: Of course not. What kind of insult would this be? Rather, it is from the merits of Mālik—and those who were like him—that he did not restrict people to his book nor compel the ummah to it. This was the way of the scholars of Islām as well as those of other traditions. Even the books of Aristotle and other philosophers were nothing but lessons and lectures delivered to their pupils, who in turn restricted them [to specific works].

They asked: So what then is the benefit of the ḥadīth registers?

I replied: They are compilations of the narrations of their authors, clear and precise, which the students heard and read upon their teachers. They did so without necessarily confining themselves to their teachers' understandings and manners of extrapolation and derivation, but at the same time benefiting from them in the two matters (simple narration as well as comprehension).²⁹ Later, the students compiled for those after them the lessons of their teachers in the application and extrapolation of ḥadīth

²⁹ To reiterate, these “register-works” were basic, skeletal compilations of ḥadīth texts, used by students to learn from their teachers face-to-face, in live instruction. They were never intended to provide the principles or methodologies of these teachers. Those principles and methodologies (i.e. comprehension) was taught in the live instruction sessions, utilizing the raw material, if you will, of these skeletal texts.

texts.³⁰ And it was from this same starting point that even Aristotle began his own philosophical school, and some of the most intelligent people followed him.³¹

They asked: What is the confusion and error that results from not being aware of the difference between these two types?

I replied: Many people treated ḥadīth works like the ḥadīth registers, studying them and commenting upon them as mere collections of ḥadīth, without pointing to the special features and characteristics that were placed therein by their authors. For example, the commentaries of the two Ṣaḥīḥ collections are merely explanations of their individual ḥadīth narrations, as are texts like Baghawī's *Sharḥ al-Sunnah*³² and Khaṭṭābī's *Ma'ālim al-Sunan*³³. There would be no real difference if one were to replace the commentary in these works with commentaries from other works concerning the same ḥadīth.

They asked: Is there any commentary that is an exception to this?

I replied: I refuse to accept any exception to this other than *Fatḥ al-Bārī*,³⁴ for it is a commentary of the entirety of Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī, inclusive of all of its features and characteristics.

³⁰ It was later on that students added to these works, or compiled separate ones, in which they added the principles, approaches and methodologies of these great teachers.

³¹ Dr. Akram is pointing out that even the Hellenistic tradition had a similar origin, in that the Aristotelian school was born from initial correspondences and instructions between Aristotle and his students, and later evolving into a more coherent and systematic school.

³² Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn b. Mas'ūd al-Baghawī (d. 510/1117) was a prolific scholar from the village of Bagh near Herāt who authored a number of famous works, including a tafsīr work and the above work, which is a commentary of the most widely accepted ḥadīth narrations from the various works of ḥadīth.

³³ Abū Sulaymān Hamd b. Muḥammad al-Khaṭṭābī (d. 388/988) was a great Shāfi'ī scholar hailing from the Halmand province of present-day Afghanistan who wrote, among other works, *Ma'ālim al-Sunan* as a commentary of the *Sunan* of Abū Dāwūd.

³⁴ The monumental commentary to the Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī authored by the renowned ḥadīth expert Ibn Ḥajar of Aschelon (d. 852/1449).

They asked: Do you find in it any faults at all?

I replied: Which single book is free of errors and mistakes? If the Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī is the soundest book after the Book of Allah, then Faṭḥ al-Bārī is the best commentary, with the highest and noblest rank. Truthful was the one who said, “There is no migration after the Faṭḥ.”³⁵

³⁵ This is a well-known ḥadīth of the Prophet referring to the “Opening” (Faṭḥ) of Makkah, whose words were borrowed to describe this commentary, also aptly named the “Opening” (Faṭḥ):

لَا هِجْرَةَ بَعْدَ الْفَتْحِ

There is no migration after the Opening.