

**AN INSIGHT INTO
THE METHODOLOGY OF
SHEIKH ABU ABD ALLAH IMTIYAZ
DAMIEL
IN LIGHT OF HIS
“PRINCIPLES OF AQIDAH”**

Prepared by:
A Group of Ulamaah

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الحمد لله نحمده و نستعينه و نستغفره و نعوذ بالله من شرور أنفسنا ومن سيئات أعمالنا. من يهده الله فلا مضل له ومن يضلل فلا هادي له، و أشهد أن لا إله إلا الله وحده لا شريك له، و أشهد أن محمداً عبده و رسوله .

قال الله تعالى:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصْحَبُوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نَادِمِينَ

Concerns were raised some time ago about a course on aqidah, *The Foundations of Religion: Principles of Aqidah*, delivered in Manchester by Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel in 2009. Individuals who had attended the course expressed a number of concerns about its contents and drew the attention of the Ulama to them. Yet, since there was nothing concrete to base these claims on except the individual observations of attendees, the Ulama ignored the matter. It was only later that a hard copy of the course notes, prepared by Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel, and obtained directly from an attendee of the course, came to light. An electronic PDF copy of the same began circulating too, bearing Sheikh Imtiyaz's name on the front cover. This gave the Ulama the opportunity to evaluate the contents closely.

On close inspection of the notes (titled *The Foundations of Religion: Principles of Aqidah*), these Ulama discovered that the contents were of a solid Salafi, anti-Ash'ari and anti-Sufi nature. The book consists of numerous positions that are not only contrary to the beliefs of the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah, but renders a huge portion of the Ummah, the Asha'ari and Maturidi Ulama whom the Ulama of Deoband follow, out of the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah. What compounded the confusion was that Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel is known to be working in the heart of the Hanafi Deobandi community in Blackburn, and it is expected that individuals who take up leadership positions within Deobandi communities as *imams*, *khatibs*, *maktab* teachers etc. sincerely adhere to the temperament (*mizaj*) of the Deobandi tradition. Hence, why would a true Deobandi scholar prepare a document of such a scathing nature?

Offended, and rightly so, by the idea that huge swathes of the Ummah had been declared outside Sunni Islam, the Ulama felt that there was a need to address the contents and that the book's compiler also be given an opportunity to state his position and provide suitable clarifications. Allah Ta'ala advises in the Quran the need to verify information (*fa-tabayyanu*), a trait that the Ulama have adhered to for hundreds of years. It was on the basis of this verse that a group of Ulama came together to initiate contact with Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel and ask him questions about his book. It was felt that engaging Sheikh Imtiyaz and providing him with the opportunity to outline his position was an appropriate and scholarly way to address concerns within this book, an approach that would allow the Sheikh to clarify, or reflect and make corrections if necessary.

The Foundations of Religion: Principles of Aqidah contains a number of aberrations that have been discussed in detail within the main critique. It is crucial readers read all of the following pages with a clear mind to properly understand the issue at hand. It is also important to note that this issue is about Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel's views on certain issues and not to do with the operations of any of the several organisations he is affiliated with in different capacities. This is important to understand, as several individuals associated with Abu Hanifa Foundation in Blackburn, the organisation that Sheikh Imtiyaz has founded, have harassed signatories of the critique.

Likewise, this effort has been a collective effort organised and delivered with the best of noble intentions by a group of Ulama, sincerely concerned about the contents of Sheikh Imtiyaz's book. Decisions on what should be done, how contact should be arranged, the mode of delivery of questions, how answers should be received etc. were done jointly, through consultation with the group. The names of these Ulama are listed at the end of the original critique. Other senior scholars, besides the signatories, also agreed that the critique is academic, thorough and fairly presented. It is important that the collective nature of this work and their sincere and honest intentions are properly understood, as this has not been a singular effort led by any one individual or on the basis of any ulterior motive. This point has been spelt out unequivocally, as several of these Ulama, primarily the main point of contact, have been harassed through text messages and missed calls.

Since *The Foundations of Religion: Principles of Aqidah* is in written form, the signatories of the critique decided to communicate with Sheikh Imtiyaz in writing and were opposed to conducting a meeting. This was done to ensure transparency, a high level of scholarly decorum and that discussions remain academic. It was also meant to ensure that there is a record of all statements and claims from Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel, which could otherwise easily be denied or retracted later without any means of verifying. An incidence of this is where Sheikh Damiel told some undiscerning students that Sheikh Ibn Uthaimin did not have a problem with the Ash'aris and Maturidis. This is clearly false, as can be seen from "Principle of Aqidah" (608), and we are sure that those of the Salafi inclination would also be disappointed at such an "enormity" being attributed to Sheikh Ibn Uthaimin.

Furthermore, it was agreed that by corresponding in writing the likelihood of individuals losing composure would be low and that there would be seldom chance of the Ulama being intimidated and disparaged; it is disappointing to say that we did not foresee the response we encountered. The answers were also sought in writing, due to difficulties in amalgamating the signatories from across the country at one venue and date. It should also be remembered that seeking written clarifications has been the norm throughout history within the Ulama fraternity. This approach is also supported by the legacy of the Ulama of Deoband, who themselves were asked to submit written answers in relation to numerous questions sent by Arab Ulama. These written answers were then published in book form called *Al-Muhannad ala al-Mufannad*.

The possibility of holding a recorded meeting was entertained at one stage and suggested by some Ulama. However, due to the abuse and intimidation some of the signatories received from members of the Abu Hanifa Foundation, directly as a result of Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel communicating information instantly to the perpetrators, the signatories realised there was no possibility of academic and civilised dialogue. When the line of communication opted for in the initial critique (i.e. writing) had also been reciprocated with intimidation and harassment, what hope was there in cordial behaviour in person? It should be noted that after sending the initial critique on 5th February, Sheikh Imtiyaz's associates began texting and leaving miss calls on the phone of the primary point of contact. This was brought to Sheikh Imtiyaz's attention who apologised for the harassment and said it would stop. The Sheikh, however, failed to act after he was informed of subsequent abuse on 16th February and breached the agreement he had made to keep his close friends out of the matter and ensure correspondence is kept between Sheikh and the Ulama. It is also worth noting that the barrage of calls and texts would begin within a short period of Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel receiving an email from the signatories, which we then took as an implicit acknowledgment of receiving our email.

In terms of Sheikh Imtiyaz's engagement, it does suffice to say that he has unfortunately failed to fully engage and been rather vague and ambiguous in answering questions. Brief answers that were received were problematic and so further questions were sent at which the sheikh, though initially agreeing to engage, ceased engagement and threatened to contact the police for harassment!

Readers will clearly notice that criticism is supported with evidence. Where Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel has presented weak arguments to defend himself, in particular his series of haphazard hops and retractions regarding the preparation (or dare we say "authorship") of the document, we have admittedly been quite emphatic in highlighting cracks. In our subsequent second set of questions for Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel, we were compelled to present further evidence (i.e. screenshots) as Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel clearly denied involvement with the Islamic Studies website. We can only say this clear denial was a result of Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel underestimating the thoroughness of research behind the critique and how we did not include any point therein which could not be substantiated in any way. It is for this very reason that we stressed correspondence needs to be in written form only to remove the possibility of any "behind the scenes" abrasiveness. Sadly, we learnt with hindsight that our expectations of Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel to conduct this in a dignified manner were a little too high.

Signatories have been incessantly harassed throughout the course of this exchange. One individual was telephoned from a withheld number and sworn at in Gujarati. He was also told that he and his father, a leading UK scholar and one of the signatories, were *badmash* (crooks) and deserved to be hung upside down and beaten. The main point of contact also received messages from an individual associated with Abu Hanifa Foundation and a close friend of Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel, that were rude, lacking decorum and inflammatory. Excerpts of these messages have been reproduced below:

Stop sending silly emails to sheikh imtiyaz you plonker. Will raise with ulema in Blackburn, I tell you what, you come to Blackburn....You coward, don't hide behind emails. Wallah our ummah has bigger problems to deal with than all this deoband non deoband rubbish...As a lay man, I am disgusted at your scholarly behaviour. We feel very very strongly about defending a scholar, when other scholars are ganging up on him...When did you become "god" is this why your father made you an alim, so you can harass people.

The harassment and intimidation is upsetting. The Ulama who have signed this document have maintained the utmost decorum, adab and respect in dealing with Sheikh Imtiyaz, and this will become clear on reading the critique. This consideration has unfortunately not been reciprocated. When this issue was initially brought to Sheikh Imtiyaz's attention, Sheikh Imtiyaz did apologise for what he described himself as harassment. Subsequent harassment, particularly after our follow up questions were sent, was conducted with the Sheikh's knowledge and no apologies were forthcoming. However, we take comfort in the words of Maulana Muhammad Ilyas (rahimahullah) which ironically Sheikh Imtiyaz tweeted: "To be humiliated in the path of God is not everyone's good fortune."

What follows are our findings and details of our exchange with Sheikh Imtiyaz, who prepared *The Foundations of Religion: Principles of Aqidah*, as clearly stated on the cover. Readers are at discretion to reach their own conclusions with respect to our findings and Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel's response, after he was given ample opportunity to engage with us. We are not going to pass any judgment against Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel and his Aqidah nor are we going to force him into a particular camp. We will however say that our primary concern is to defend what our senior scholars and elders worked hard to establish, and highlighting what Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel incorporated into his "Principles of Aqidah", alongside other issues he has publicly disseminated, is our duty and part of this humble effort.

We are no longer hopeful of any substantive response from Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel, besides perhaps further abuse from his friends and flowery tweets, regarding intolerance, jealousy and difference of opinion etc, in an attempt to move focus away from the real issues we have very clearly raised in this document.

May Allah Ta'ala guide one and all, may He protect us from all tribulations in our worldly life and Deen, and may He protect us from disingenuously calling towards unity whilst working to sow the seeds of suspicion and mistrust against our rich heritage and legacy of Ulama and Mashaaikh. Aameen.

Original Signatories:

Maulana Said Ahmad (Preston)
Shaikh Dr. Abul Hasan Hussein Ahmad (London)
Mufti Javed Iqbal (Birmingham)
Maulana Usman Iqbal (Leeds)
Maulana Badrul Islam (Northampton)
Maulana Abdur Raheem Limbada (Bolton)
Maulana Yusuf Lorgat (Leicester)
Maulana Khabbab Raja (Batley)
Mufti Asad Waqas (Brierfield)
Maulana Mohammad Yasir (Bradford)
Shaikh Mumtaz ul Haqq (London)
(Note from Sh. Mumtaz: I have not read the critique but am aware of the issues with Principles of Aqidah and agree to questions being forwarded to Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel to answer)

Along with the original signatories who approved the initial critique, the following Ulama have also attested to this document and they are as follows:

Maulana Muhammad Bilal Bawa Sahib (Bury)	Maulana Muhammad Sindhi (Leicester)
Mufti Usamah Muhammad (Bolton)	Mufti Ashraf Ghani (Walsall)
Maulana Amjad Patel (Preston)	Maulana Ahmad Imran (Birmingham)
Maulana Muhammad Usman (Huddersfield)	Mufti Adam Esmail (Birmingham)
Maulana Abdullah Khan (Nottingham)	

Monday 17th Rabi ul-Awwal 1435 AH – February 2014

Comments from Signatories:

Maulana Said Ahmad: I have read the Critique of the Principles of Aqidah and the rest of the correspondence. I agree with the concerns raised therein and believe the Ulama are fully justified in seeking clarification from Shaikh Imtiyaz Damiyaaal.

Maulana Muhammad Yasir: I have read the document and affirm that this is a joint effort of the scholars, where they have endeavoured to seek clarification from Shaykh Imtiyaz on issues which have created genuine concern.

Mufti Javed Iqbal: It is expected that the respected scholars will read this critique, Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel's response and our further response, and analyse the facts which have been presented with all fairness.

Maulana Khabbaab Raja: I agree with the critique and the questions which followed after Sheikh Damiel's response. It is a collective effort and one or two individuals being targeted for this is unacceptable.

Maulana Yusuf Lorgat: I agree with the issues raised in the critique regarding Sh. Imtiaz's response. This critique has been prepared collectively by a group of scholars. Hence, it is unfair to harass or target one individual who has been appointed to send and receive correspondence on their behalf.

This is the Critique which was sent to Sheikh
Imtiyaz Damiel on Wednesday 5th February

A CRITIQUE OF
SHEIKH ABU ABD ALLAH IMTIYAZ DAMIEL'S
"THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE RELIGION: PRINCIPLES OF AQIDAH"
In Light of the Manhaj of the Ulama of Deoband

FOREWORD

In the past few weeks, a PDF document of “The Foundations of the Religion: Principles of Aqidah”, prepared by Sheikh Abu Abd Allah Imtiyaz Damiel, has surfaced, the contents of which are highly polemical and extremely condemning of many aspects of the belief and practice of the Ulama of Deoband. “Principles of Aqidah” has sent shockwaves of confusion and shock across the wider community, as it seriously maligns the Ulama of Deoband and subsequently discredits the colossal services they have rendered for the Muslims of UK in particular.

The sole purpose of this critique is to highlight how “Principles of Aqidah” not only opposes the manhaj of the Ulama of Deoband but goes to the extent of declaring those who follow them to be misguided among other labels.

The Critique covers the following points:

- A short introduction to “Principles of Aqidah” and details of where it was taught and distributed.
- A brief profile of Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel
- A comparison between the stance of the Ulama of Deoband and that of Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel on core issues of Ash’ari-Maturidi Aqidah; Hayat al-Nabi sallallahu alaihi wasallam (the life of the Prophet sallallahu alaihi wasallam after his demise); seeking dua from Rasulallah (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) at his blessed grave; Tawassul through the medium of Rasulallah (sallallahu alaihi wasallam); Kashf, seeing the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) in wakefulness; and Wahdat al-Wujood.
- Answering Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel’s attempts to deny responsibility for “Principles of Aqidah”, in particular highlighting some of the inconsistencies in his claims.
- A conclusion, comprising a number of important questions to Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel which require written responses.

The following points should also be borne in mind:

- This critique solely seeks to highlight how Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel’s “Principles of Aqidah” vehemently opposes the methodology of the Ulama of Deoband. Hence, readers will notice that a critical analysis of arguments from either side has been totally avoided, as it is beyond the ambit of this work.
- All of the signatories of the critique (besides one) have read and subsequently agreed with the contents (with the exception of a few minor changes but these have also been confirmed with them); it is not representative of the efforts or thoughts of only one individual.
- To maintain academic decorum and transparency, all correspondence to the critique should be in writing to the email address provided. This will protect against any inappropriate nonacademic behavior or dialogue from either side.

Allah knows best.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ، الحمد لله رب العالمين ، والصلاة والسلام على رسوله محمد وعلى آله واصحابه اجمعين ، اما بعد:

INTRODUCTION

This work is a critique of some contentious points contained within Sheikh Abu Abd Allah Imtiyaz Damiel's "The Foundations of the Religion: Principles of Aqidah", in light of the manhaj of the Ulama of Deoband, whose aqidah, fiqh and tasawwuf are all firmly grounded in the Ahl al-Sunna wa'l-Jama'a.¹

ASCRPTION OF THE DOCUMENT

"The Foundations of the Religion: Principles of Aqidah" is a 621 page document which was prepared by Sheikh Abu Abd Allah Imtiyaz Damiel, as clearly stated on the title page. This document was prepared for a two-day aqidah course by the same name and twice delivered by the respected Sheikh at CMA Mosque and Community Centre, Manchester in 2009. Hard copies were made available at a price for those students who requested it and were distributed on the day of the course. Download links to the document were also made available to students who requested so.

The course was organised by Prophetic Guidance, where Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel is one of the teachers, alongside Sheikh Kehlan Al-Jubury and Sheikh Abu Eesa Niamatullah.

Further details are visible on the poster below. An image of the front cover of the course document can also be seen below.

The poster features a dark header with the title "The Foundation of the Religion: Principles of Aqidah" in white serif font, followed by the subtitle "An intensive advanced level course on classical Islamic Theology". Below this, a list of topics is provided, including "Origins and development of Aqidah", "Sources of Aqidah", and "Definition & Characteristics of Ahl al-Sunnah wa'l-Jama'ah". The teacher's name, "ABU 'ABD ALLAH I. DAMIEL (Riyadh)", and the course dates, "SAT 25TH / SUN 26TH JULY & SAT 1ST / SUN 2ND AUGUST 2009", are prominently displayed. The venue, "THE CMA MOSQUE AND COMMUNITY CENTRE", is listed at the bottom. The poster also includes decorative Islamic geometric patterns and a small image of a fountain.

The front cover is minimalist, featuring the title "The Foundations of the Religion: PRINCIPLES OF AQIDAH" in a large, bold, serif font. Below the title, it reads "An intensive advance level course on classical Islamic Theology". At the bottom, it states "Prepared by Abu Abd Allāh I. Damiel". The cover is framed by a thin black border.

¹ In the words of Mufti Taqi Usmani, in answer to the question who were the Elders of Deoband, "The concise answer to this is that they were a reminder of the best of generations, an embodiment of the pious predecessors and a living example of Islamic temperament" (*Akabar-e-Deoband Kya The*, pg.87). Hence, the Ulama of Deoband or "Deobandis" should not be considered a sectarian label, nor should any reference to the Ulama of Deoband be misconstrued as intolerance to other groups.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Here is a brief introduction to Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel, taken verbatim from his profile page on the Al-Kauthar Institute website:

Abu Abd Allah Imtiyaz Damiel was born in Blackburn, England, and is married with two children. He completed five years of an Alim training course as well as his A-levels in Blackburn, and then went on to complete a BA Hons degree in Arabic and Islamic studies at the University of Leeds. His keen thirst for knowledge has taken him to study in San'a and Toronto. His other areas of interest include educational & child psychology, orientalism and comparative religions.

In 2003 he completed a diploma in Arabic and Islamic studies after which he completed another BA Hons degree in Islamic studies, specialising in Hadīth & Tafsīr at King Saud University in Riyadh. He is currently enrolled in the Masters program (Hadīth & Tafsīr) at King Saud University.

Sheikh Imtiyaz has worked as chief editor for a number of organisations and is presently an instructor at Knowledge International University. He has also written over thirty articles and research papers.

In his spare time he likes swimming, football and reading, and is an avid book collector. AlKauthar would like to welcome him to our team of tutors.

Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel is the founder of Abu Hanifah Foundation, Blackburn, Lecturer at K.I. University, Al-Kauthar Institute and Prophetic Guidance. He is also the Operations Manager at the Messengers of Peace Academy. Previously, his twitter account stated him to be Academic Adviser to I.O. University.²

ABERRATIONS IN “PRINCIPLES OF AQIDAH”

“Principles of Aqidah – An intensive advance level course on classical Islamic Theology” is at odds with the manhaj (methodology) of the Ulama of Deoband and, in certain places, strongly critical of the belief and methodology of those affiliated to the “Azhar” of the Indian Subcontinent.

The purpose of this paper is not to provide answers to contentious issues, but establish that the views/aqidah mentioned in this document is not that of the Ash‘ari, Maturidi scholars whom the Ulama of Deoband —along with a great portion of the Ummah—follow.

It is important to bear in mind from the onset that this critique would not have materialised had the issues been treated as peripheral differences, having academic grounding from both sides. The fact of the matter is that in the issues under discussion, those holding an opinion contrary to the understanding of the author have been relegated from the folds of Ahl al-Sunna wa’l-Jama’a and declared misguided.

Thus, the shallow attempts being made to redefine the parameters of the discussion and move focus away from the severe labels of misguidance to “peripheral differences” are laughable.

² It is noteworthy that Al-Kauthar Institute, K.I. University, I.O University and Prophetic Guidance are primarily Salafi based organisations, with some of them hosting staunch anti-Deobandi Salafis such as Bilal Philips and Asim Hakeem.

We shall discuss each of the contentious issues individually, providing references to support the stance of the Ulama of Deoband alongside highlighting how Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel's "Principles of Aqidah" starkly opposes the respective stance. Nothing has been taken out of context, bihamdillah, and those who wish to verify this can refer back to Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel's "Principles of Aqidah" and confirm the same.

ASH'ARI – MATURIDI AQIDAH IN PRINCIPLE

The Ulama of Deoband—as part of the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamaah—are Ash'ari/Maturidi in aqidah.³ Explaining the views and positions of the Ulama of Deoband, Maulana Khalil Ahmad Saharanpuri writes in *Al-Muhannad alal-Mufannad*:

While praising [Allah], and sending prayers and peace [on His Prophet], [I say]: It should be known firstly, before we begin to answer, that we and our *mashayikh* (Allah's pleasure be on them all) and our entire group and congregation are, by Allah's praise, imitators of the guide of creation, the pinnacle of Islam, the valiant Imam, the greatest Imam, Abu Hanifah al-Nu'man (Allah Exalted is He be pleased with him) in the peripherals; and followers of the noble Imam Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari and the noble Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi (Allah be pleased with them) in creed and the fundamentals; and affiliates, from amongst the paths of the Sufis, to the lofty path ascribed to the Naqshbandi masters and to the pure path ascribed to the Chishti masters and to the glorious path ascribed to the Qadiri masters and to the approved path ascribed to the Suhrawardi masters (Allah be pleased with them all).

Maulana Zafar Ahmad Uthmani Thanawi states in *Imdaadul Ahkaam* (Vol 1, pg 169):

Question: What is the intensional (jaami' maani') definition of Ahlus Sunnah wa'l Jamaa'at? Please state with references.

Answer: Ahlus Sunnah wa'l Jamaa'at are those Muslims who in belief and rulings are on the methodology, and who accept the Sunnah as proof alongside the Qur'an, and act accordingly. It states in *Sharh Al-Aqaaid al-Nasafiyya*: "Juba'i was dumbfounded. Ash'ari left his school and he, along with his followers, became engaged in refuting the opinion of the Mutazilites and establishing what the Sunnah mentions. The majority adopted this." This is the meaning of this title. It appertains to those who follow Imam Abu'l Hasan Ash'ari or Abu Mansur Maturidi in belief, and who follow one of the four renowned imams in peripheral matters.

6 Jumada Thaniya, 1345

Khanqah Imdadiya, Thanabawan

³ The Ashari-Maturidi Aqidah is not only representative of the Ulama of Deoband, but rather of traditional mainstream Ahl al-Sunna wa'l Jama'a, across the globe and throughout the centuries. It is no wonder that the greatest of personalities in Islamic sciences, such as Imams Bahyaqi, Nawawi, Ibn Kathir, Qurtubi, Mizzi, Ibn Salah, Ibn Hajar, Suyuti, Nasafi, Qastalani, Shah Waliyullah, among many others, were followers of the Ashari Maturidi methodology. Thus, the word Ashari-Maturidi should not be interpreted as anything but orthodox Sunni Aqidah.

SHEIKH IMTIYAZ DAMIEL'S POSITION ON THE ASH'ARIS

As Sheikh Imtiyaz's criticism of Ash'ari-Maturidi aqidah does not revolve around one particular point but many different points, we have attempted to tackle each point individually whilst ensuring brevity and conciseness.

Criticism of Imam Abu'l Hasan Ash'ari

1. In criticising Imam Abu'l Hasan Ash'ari (rahmatullah alayh) and undermining his colossal work, Sheikh Imtiyaz states (pg.24):

As to why exactly al-Ash'ari left Mu'tazilism remains obscure, but it is noteworthy that by this stage, the Mu'tazilites were rapidly losing ground, and neither did they enjoy the popular support as did the traditionalist. **Perhaps, this could be one of the reasons for al-Ash'ari making a sudden U-turn after forty years, and turning against the rationalist movement. Al-Ash'aris efforts, like that of Ibn Kullab were also destined to go in vain**, at least for a century, for the traditionalist viewed al-Ash'ari with much suspicion, especially for indulging in Kalam.

After the demise of al-Ash'ari, there **remained a few number of scholars** who adhered to the Ash'ari school, yet they, far from being prominent, **were constantly attacked every now and then by the scholars of the four schools**, and often cursed publicly on the pulpits, precisely for employing Kalam in theology. The famous creed authored by the 'Abbasid Caliph al-Qadir was written and publicly read to endorse the traditionalist beliefs and attack the rationalist movement, including the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites. **It was only in the 5th Islamic century** when the Nidham al-Mulk, a vizier who favoured the Shafi'is and the Ash'aris, took control and established a network of colleges that became known after him as Nidhamiyya Colleges, that the Ash'arites **were finally able to breath and propagate their rationalism freely**. A sudden influx of power for the neo-rationalist movement caused many riots in Baghdad between the traditionalist and the rationalists, now being represented by the Ash'arites.

Alongside being a complete misrepresentation of the history of the Ash'ari school, an issue which cannot be elaborated on in this critique, we understand the following from Sheikh Imtiyaz's explanation:

1. The Ash'ari school was something foreign to the four schools
2. They were aligned with the rationalist movement alongside the Mu'talazite school
3. Ash'aris only gained prominence as a school in the 5th century, solely based upon political reasons.

Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel's "Principles of Aqidah" clearly follows the conventional Salafi approach to Ash'aris and Maturidis, and this attitude is far removed from the Deobandi manhaj. He controversially adds (page 26) that:

"...The traditionalists efforts have always been geared at keeping the rationalist Ash'arites out of orthodoxy, whereas the Ash'arite rationalist effort has always focused on gaining acceptance and an entry to orthodoxy."

The “icing on the cake” is that Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel has declared Imam Ash’ari, alongside Bayhaqi and Baqillani, as people of Bid’ah (pg. 610). Another strange point which Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel states on the same page is that Imam Nawawi and Ibn Hajar fall under the category of Ash’aris who were lacking in Aqidah but nonetheless from Ahlus Sunnah. He is also prudent to point out that many students and scholars of ISC (Indian Subcontinent) Madrasahs also fall under the same category.

This would explain why many are confused by Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel, as he is not seen to excommunicate Deobandi scholars and laymen alike, because he considers them among “those who grew up and studied in atmospheres where Aqīdah was not emphasized in general, but the Ash’ari Aqīdah was prevalent and considered to be the truth” (pg.610). But it becomes evident through Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel’s “Principles of Aqidah” why he would consider this first category of Ash’aris his primary ambit to slowly discredit the validity of the Ash’ari-Maturidi Manhaj.

Furthermore, Sheikh Imtiyaz was not wrong in tweeting on 23rd January:

If Imam Ibn Hajr & Imam An-Nawawi (rahimahumullah) are not from Ahl Sunnah, then I don't know who is!

But in response to Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel, we would politely tweak his tweet to read: **If Imam Ibn Hajr and Imam Nawawi (rahimahumullah) did not know Aqidah, then I don’t know who does!**

Attributes of Allah (Sifaat)

With respect to the Attributes (Sifaat) of Allah Azza wa Jalla, the Deobandi position – which is the traditional Ash’ari position throughout history - has been clearly stated by Maulana Khalil Ahmad in Al-Muhannad:

What is your opinion on the likes of His – Exalted is He – statement “The Most Merciful ascended the Throne?” Do you allow the affirmation of direction and place for the Creator – Exalted is He – or what is your opinion regarding it?

Answer

Our opinion regarding the likes of these verses is that we believe in them, and “how?” is not asked, and we believe in Allah – Glorified and Exalted is He – transcendent and pure of the attributes of creatures and from the qualities of imperfection and temporality as is the opinion of our predecessors. As for what the latecomers from our imams said on these verses, interpreting them with sound interpretations, permissible linguistically and legally, in that it is possible that the intent of ascension is domination and of hand is power etc. to make it accessible to the understandings of the deficient, it is also correct according to us.

As for direction and place, we do not allow affirming them for Him – Exalted is He – and we say that He – Exalted is He – is pure and transcendent beyond them and from all qualities of temporality.

Hakim al-Ummah Thanawi has also explicated the same in great detail in his Bawadir al-Nawadir.

Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel’s position on the Ash’aris-Maturidis in his “Principles of Aqidah” is as follows (pg.207):

Examples that are claimed (by the Asha'irah) to be from the muttashābih are the verses pertaining to the Hands (yad) of Allāh (48:10), His Eyes ('ayn) (11:37), His Face (wajh) (55:27), and His Settling (istiwā) over the Throne (20:5). It is claimed by these scholars that the meaning of these verses is known only to Allāh. In addition, they claim that the apparent (Ar. 'dhāhir') meaning of these verses is definitely not the meaning that is desired. After this **bold** claim, these scholars split into two categories with regards to these verses. The first group claimed that the true meaning of these verses can never be known or understood by mankind, but instead the meanings are 'entrusted' (Ar. 'tafwīd') to Allāh, and are not discussed. This group then attributed this philosophy to the salaf, and claimed, "The philosophy of the salaf is tafwīd of the Attributes of Allāh." The second group, on the other hand, claimed that the apparent (dhāhir) meanings of these verses can be 'interpreted' to mean other attributes. So, for example, the 'Hand' of Allāh is, in reality, the 'Capability' of Allāh; the 'istiwā' over the Throne means the 'Conquering' of the Throne, and so forth.

He qualifies his explanation of the Ash'ari methodology by the following critique and damning insinuations (pg.207):

Firstly, their claim that the 'apparent' meaning of the verses is not intended has a number of implications, amongst them: 1) That Allāh has revealed in His Book verses which, apparently, sīm to mislead and deceive mankind, instead of guiding them. 2) That Allāh did not reveal the truth concerning His Attributes, but rather hinted at them in such couched and vague language that the truth cannot be arrived at except by claiming that the verses pertaining to this topic are not to be understood except after great effort and distortion of their meanings. 3) That Allāh required His servants not to believe in the apparent meanings of what He revealed, but instead believe the exact opposite of what the verses clearly state. 4) That Allāh is always revealing verses concerning His Attributes whose apparent meanings oppose the truth. 5) That the best of this ummah, the salaf, from the first of them to the last of them, did not understand this important concept properly, for no quotes are found from them that agree with what the Ash'arīs say. This implies that, either the salaf were ignorant of these concepts (in which case the scholars of these Ash'arīs are more knowledgeable than the salaf), or that they knew the truth but did not explain it (in which case the salaf were not sincere in spreading the religion of Islām). Both of these possibilities cannot be true, as the salaf are the most knowledgeable and sincere generations of this ummah, by testimony of the Prophet sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam. 6) That the salaf were ignorant, illiterate people, reading these verses pertaining to the Attributes of Allāh, and not understanding anything from them, nor caring to understand them. 7) That, it would have been more beneficial and wiser not to reveal these verses, since the revelation of these verses has caused nothing but deception and doubts!

To summarise further, Shaykh Imtiyaz has accused the Ash'aris of believing (1) Allah has revealed verses to misguide people; (2) Allah did not reveal the full truth regarding his attributes; (3) Allah asks us to believe the exact opposite of what he stated; (4) Allah is revealing verses whose apparent meanings are wrong; (5) the Salaf were misguided on the issue of Attributes or economical in explaining the truth; (6) the Salaf were ignorant and illiterate; (7) Allah shouldn't have revealed these deceptive verses.

Any fair-minded reader will realise these are not pedantic or trivial points he has raised, but monstrous accusations against the Ash'aris and consequently the Deobandi elders.

He further states (page 211):

The proper methodology with regards to these Attributes is to affirm their linguistic meaning in a manner that befits Allāh, and not to delve into the actuality or 'how-ness' of them, since these are concepts that cannot be grasped by the human mind.

He also mentions (page 212):

Why do not the Ash'arīs take the meanings of both of these verses, and Attribute to Allāh what Allāh has Attributed to Himself (in this example, that His two Hands (yad) are outstretched), while at the same time negating what He has negated (in this example, that these two Hands (yad) are not similar in any manner to the hands of the creation)?

Commenting on the Ahl al-Sunnah Ash'ari/Maturidi approach to the *sifat* of Allah Most High, Sheikh Imtiyaz writes (page 212):

This presumption of theirs led them to **deny** many Divine Attributes...

In a section (page 456)—titled “Dangers of Deviating in Allah’s Names and Attributes (Ilhad)—Shaikh Imtiyaz says that tafwid of the sifat of Allah is denial and ilhad (heresy) he writes:

Examples of ilhad include to deny or distort their meanings, or to claim that they have no meaning (tafwid).

Hence, Deobandis – who as Ash'aris accept tafwid - are guilty of heresy. It is noteworthy that tafwid has been incorrectly translated as having “no meaning”.

Shaikh Imtiyaz elaborates on this further (page 461):

This (*ta'til*) means to abandon. Every act of tahrif is ta'til, but not vice versa. It is like saying that the words have no meanings, for example, to say that Allāh has a Yadd (hand) but that we don't really know what —yadd is, it is just like Alif Lām Mīm. This is in clear contradiction to the principles established for approaching the Qur'ān and Sunnah.

Although tafwid was the way of the Salaf, as mentioned by many great imams, Sheikh Imtiyaz suggests it was introduced much later (pg.492):

Tafwid: For the scholars of *kalam* it means to relegate the meanings of the Attributes of Allāh without explaining them or discussing them. This was unknown to the early scholars and doesn't seem to have appeared until the time of al-Shahrastani, Ghazali, and Razi.

He then makes an unsupported claim to deride the Asha'irah. He writes (page 493):

This led them to say that the earlier generations had no knowledge of the *Sifāt* and that they were —too pious and holy to understand them, and thus made *tafwid*, whereas the refined and 'sophisticated' scholars of *kalam* came to make it more academic.

Sheikh Imtiyaz also carries out a lengthy discussion (page 511) in which he claims that “they used their intellection as the criterion to understand Allah’s Names and Attributes.”

Further statements of Sheikh Imtiyaz regarding Tafwid, a firmly established aspect of Ash'ari aqidah, are as follows:

To say we need to make *ta''wil* **implies that Allāh spoke incorrectly regarding the most noble matters.**” (pg.489)

They made *tafwid* because of the **false conviction** that the Attributes could not be understood in a literal manner or it would lead to anthropomorphism.” (pg.492)

From the dangers of *tafwid* is first impugning Allāh’s Wisdom. This is because they say Allāh actually meant something else, i.e. He is speaking in a language everyone understand couldn’t mean what He said. *Tafwid* is also a form of pure *ta''til* (negation or denial) because it strips Allāh (swt) of all of His Attributes. It also necessitates saying **that the Prophet (sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) did not know the meanings and fell short in delivering the message.**” (pg.494)

Regarding affirming a physical direction for Allah, Maulana Khalil Ahmad Saharanpuri stated (as previously quoted):

As for direction and place, we do not allow affirming them for Him – Exalted is He – and we say that He – Exalted is He – is pure and transcendent beyond them and from all qualities of temporality.

Sheikh Imtiyaz, however, has declared the above to be an aberration. He writes (pg.528):

The third incorrect opinion is what is held by people of kalam that Allāh cannot be described with a direction.”

In a section, entitled “The Attributes of Istiwa”, Shaikh Imtiyaz writes (page 530):

It should also be noted that the *early* Ash‘aris actually affirmed *istiwa* (e.g. Bayhaqi, Abul-Hasan, Baqilanī) **and the later ones rejected it**. This is yet another indication that their creed has changed over time.”

Regarding the kalam (speech) of Allah, Sheikh Imtiyaz Daniel boldly claims against the Ash‘aris (pg.520):

In other words, the Ash‘arīs were forced to admit that the Arabic Qur‘ān is not the actual kalām of Allāh, and that it is created. This is due to the fact that they differentiated between what they called an 'internal kalām' of Allāh, which is without language, sound and words, and between the actual Qur‘ān, which is in Arabic, recited and heard, and composed of words. This 'internal kalām' of Allāh, according to them, is not created, but the Qur‘ān, since it is only an 'expression' of the 'internal kalām', and not the actual kalām of Allāh, must be created.

To conclude with an understanding of where Sheikh Imtiyaz is heading with the numerous points he has raised, we will let Sheikh Imtiyaz’s own document speak. He writes (pg.604):

The Ash‘arīs do not enter into it (Ahl us Sunnah) at all. Rather they are outside it.

He reiterates this point on (page 608):

The *Ash‘arīs* and the *Māturīdīs* are not considered from *Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamā‘ah* in this particular matter (i.e. concerning the Names and Attributes of Allāh). Rather, they oppose what the Prophet (*sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) and his Companions were upon with regards to accepting the Attributes of Allāh - the Most Perfect - upon their *haqīqah* (real meaning). This is why, whoever says that *Ahlus-Sunnah* are thrī groups: the *Salafīs*,

the *Ash'arīs* and the *Māturīdīs* - then such a person is indīd mistaken.”⁴

In a chapter entitled “Attitude of Ahl al-Sunnah towards the Matridiyyah” (page 613), Shaikh Imtiyaz mentions the following hadith:

It was narrated from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) that this ummah would split into seventy-three sects, all of which would be in the Fire apart from one. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) explained that the saved group is the Jamaa'ah, which is the group that follows the same path as the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and his Companions.

Shaikh Imtiyaz Damiel then continues:

Undoubtedly Ahl al-Sunnah wa'l-Jamaa'ah, who adhere to the Qur'aan and Sunnah in terms of both knowledge and actions, are the saved group, and this description applies to them...The Maatreediyyah are one of the groups whose opinions include true and false views, and some things that go against the Sunnah. It is known that these groups vary with regard to the truth, how near or far they are; the closer they are to the Sunnah, the closer they are to the truth and the right way. Among them are some who went against the Sunnah with regard to basic principles, and some who went against the Sunnah with regard to more subtle issues. There are some who refuted other groups who are farther away from the Sunnah, so they are to be praised with regard to their refutation of falsehood and what they have said of truth, but they have overstepped the mark in so far as they have rejected part of the truth and gone along with some falsehood. So they have refuted a serious bid'ah by means of a lesser bid'ah, and refuted falsehood with a lesser form of falsehood. This is the case with most of the philosophers (ahl al-kalaam) who claim to belong to Ahl al-Sunnah wa'l-Jamaa'ah...” (From the words of Shaikh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah, al-Fataawa, 1/348).⁵

Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel has even gone to the trouble of mentioning – may Allah reward him - how a person of sound aqidah (ie. Salafi) should deal with deviant groups (eg. Ash'aris-Maturidis). He writes (pages 619-620):

⁴ It is interesting to note that Sheikh Abu Eesa is a Salafi sheikh who lives in Manchester and is the original founder of Prophetic Guidance, a Salafi organisation that hosted Sheikh Imtiyaz's course in 2009. Prophetic Guidance lists among its teachers Sheikh Imtiyaz. In a YouTube video clip excerpt of a lecture that Sheikh Abu Eesa delivered on Imam al-Bukhari's Al-Adab al-Mufrad, Sheikh Abu Eesa speaks about the Sunnah-Salafi belief in the *sifat* of Allah. In there he mentions the Asha'irah among the various sects that arose in *aqidah*. He also does not count them among the Ahl al-Sunnah though he acknowledges that “they were a lot closer to Ahl al-Sunnah”. Ironically, Sheikh Abu Eesa is a signatory of the 2007 “Pledge of Mutual Respect and Cooperation”, an initiative to unify Muslims who follow the Ash'ari, Maturidi and Salafi aqidah, and muqallids and non-muqallids. Sheikh Abu Eesa's comments while teaching Al-Adab al-Mufrad and support of Sheikh Imtiyaz's course is at odds with several elements of the “Pledge of Mutual Respect and Cooperation”.

⁵ What is important to highlight at this juncture is that the section on “Attitude of Ahl al-Sunnah towards the Matridiyyah”, which Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel has included in his “Principles of Aqidah” is found verbatim in an online fatwa of Sheikh Muhammad Salih al-Munajjid (<http://www.islam-qa.com/en/22473>). More surprising is the title of this fatwa which Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel aptly chose to source content for his “Principles of Aqidah” from: **Are Deobandis part of Ahlus Sunnah? Are they within the folds of Islam?**

We add that all the references within Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel's “Principles of Aqidah” are from Salafi shuyookh who do not mince their words when it comes to criticising the Ash'aris-Maturidis and declaring them to be out of Ahl al-Sunnah: Sheikh Muhammad ibn Salih Uthaymeen, Sheikh Albani, Sheikh Ibn Baz and Sheikh Safar Hawali, who has written a whole book in refutation of Ash'aris. Why all references are of anti-Ash'ari shuyookh if Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel himself does not share the same stance, only Sheikh Imtiyaz can explain.

As for sects, groups and parties that adopt beliefs other than the belief (ʿaqīdah) of the Salaf, or a way that is other than the way of Ahl al-Sunnah waʿl-Jamāʿah, there is nothing good in them, and a Muslim should not cooperate with them in anything that will support their beliefs and ways. As for groups which call people to Islam, but they have some things that go against sharīʿah, the Muslim may cooperate with them in matters that are in accordance with sharīʿah.”

Important Note: We have provided selected quotes from the document prepared by Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel to highlight his categorical refutation of the Ashʿaris-Maturidis and, by default, those who are aligned to the Deobandi maslak. In no way have any of the statements in Sheikh Imtiyaz’s document been taken out of context or misconstrued for the sake of maligning him.

HAYAT AL-NABI

This refers to the life of the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) after his demise.

Deobandi Position

Maulana Khalil Ahmad Saharanpuri writes in *Al-Muhannad ʿala al-Mufannad*:

According to us and according to our elders, the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) is alive in his grave. His life is a material life free from any responsibility, and it is exclusive to him (Allah bless him and grant him peace) and all the Prophets (Allah’s blessings be upon them) and the martyrs, not an intermediary life, as is the case with the remainder of the believers, rather for all of mankind; as explicated by ʿAllamah al-Suyuti in his treatise *Inbaʿ al-Adhkiyaʿ bi Hayat al-Anbiyaʿ* (*Enlightening the Intelligent About the Lives of the Prophets*), where he said: ‘Shaikh Taqi al-Din al-Subki said, “The life of the prophets and martyrs in their grave is like their life in this world. The prayer of the prophet Musa (upon him be peace) in his grave testifies to this, as prayer requires a living body...’

Subsequently, it is established through this that his life is [both] material and intermediary, due to its being in the intermediary realm (*ʿalam al-barzakh*). An entire treatise, scrupulously referenced, articulately expressed and unparalleled, has been written in relation to this topic by our *Shaikh*, the sun of Islam and religion, Muhammad [Qasim al-Nanotwi] the distributor of the sciences to those who sought benefit [from him]—Allah sanctify his mighty secret. It has been printed and is currently widely-available amongst the people, whose title is *Abe Hayat (The Water of Life)*.

Maulana Yusuf Ludhyanwi also mentions regarding Hayat al-Nabi in his *Ikhtilaf-i-Ummah awr Sirat-i-Mustaqim*:

At this juncture, I would like to clarify a certain point—this entire discussion is regarding the non-prophets. Regarding the *anbiya* (peace be upon them), especially, our Prophet (PBUH) my belief is that he is alive (in his grave). It (permissibility) has been recorded in our books regarding going to the blessed grave of the Prophet (PBUH) and making *durud* and *salam* there and also to request for intercession. So, whoever that has the excellent fortune of presenting himself at the graveside of our Prophet (PBUH) and making *dua* and seeking his intercession, I regard this not merely as being permissible, in fact, it is commendable and most virtuous. And Allah Taala knows best.

The Darul Uloom Deoband *ifta* website also contains a *fatwa*⁶ regarding requesting the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) to make *dua* at his grave:

(1) Yes, it is allowed to supplicate Allah with the wasilah of the holy Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) for oneself, for one's parents etc for forgiveness or whatsoever. Rather it is mustahab to supplicate there, because it is a place where supplications are accepted. The scholars of Fiqh have mentioned it in the etiquettes of ziyarah.

(2) One may request the holy Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) for *dua* at his holy grave, rather it is also mustahab. The scholars have mentioned it as well. But one cannot request the holy Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) for *dua* while he is away from the holy grave, because the holy Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) is not omnipresent, it is only Almighty Allah who is Omnipresent.

Maulana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi also writes in *Fatawa Rashidiyyah*:

The third is to go close to a grave and say, 'Oh such a such person, pray for me that the Most High fulfils my work.' There is a difference among the *'ulama* regarding this. Those who consider it permissible to believe that the dead can hear consider this permissible and those who do not believe that the dead can hear forbid this ... However, there is no difference in the hearing of the Prophets (peace be upon them), on account of this they are exempt."

It is, hence, established from this that according to the Ulama of Deoband, the Prophet (PBUH) is alive in his grave, and that it is permissible to visit his grave, offer durud and salam there, request for his intercession and also request *dua*.

Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel's Position

Contrary to what has been stated as the position of the Elders of Deoband, Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel writes in "Principles of Aqidah" (pg.346):

It is not allowed to ask the Prophet (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) to make *dua* to Allāh. None of the companions ever came to his grave and asked for anything, despite the fitnah they faced like the civil war. This means assuming saints exude physical barkah. No one exudes barakah except the Prophet (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam).⁷

Shaikh Imtiyaz (page 382) writes:

Imām al-Bayhaqi, ibn Fawrak, as-Subki, Qatallani, and others said that the prophets are alive in the sense of the worldly life but the belief of Ahle Sunnah is that they are alive in the sense of barzakh.

This is the result of one of their three facets which Ibn al-Jawzi ridicules them with. **As always, the basis for their argument is Aristotle's categorisation of reality into substance and accidents.**

⁶ Fatwa: 54/45/N=1433

⁷ This is contrary to the opinion of the Ulama of Deoband. Maulana Khalil Ahmad Saharanpuri writes in *Al-Muhammad alal-Mufannad*: "As for taking benefit from the spirituality of the great masters and acquiring internal effusions from their breasts and their graves, it is valid according to the known path amongst its people and its elite, not as it is widespread amongst the commoners."

When they were asked to classify the soul, whether it is a substance which exists by itself, or an accident which subsists in a substance and does not exist by itself; they opted for the soul being an accident, just as life is also an accident in a human body. They said that the qualities of a living being depend on the soul, which is an accident. Hence, when this accident, i.e. the soul, disappears, all the qualities of life also disappear.

What this belief necessitated is that the Prophet, after his death, is no longer a prophet, because prophethood is an accident, and an accident cannot endure two instances of time. Meaning, Allāh regenerates the accidents that subsist in substances, and thereby the entire creation, every moment of time. Therefore, when the substance, i.e. the Prophet, dies, the accidents subsisting in that substance (life, soul, prophethūd, etc.) also vanish.

This belief, regardless of al-Subki's vigorous denial, led to Ibn Furak's death at the hands of the Sunni Seljuki Sultan Mahmud Subuktakin.

Al-Qushayri and al-Bayhaqi fleeing to the other extreme and affirming that the Prophets are alive, like any of us are and **fell short of denying that the Prophets really died**. This is so that they can remain faithful to their Aristotelian's faith that soul is an accident as well as prophethood, and both of these accidents still exist in the Prophet, because he is alive in his grave like we are.

Ahl al-Sunnah said in reply, that if the Prophet did not die, why did Allāh tell him that: —Indeed you will die, and so will they?! If the Prophet (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) is alive in his grave like we are, then why the need to keep him buried underground?

As for Ahl al-Sunnah, we believe he is alive, just as we believe the martyrs are alive, for Allāh has stated that clearly in the Qur'ān. Do we say that martyrs are alive as we are? And if they are alive as we are, then by which Shari'a it becomes lawful to marry their widows, and usurp their wealth by calling it inheritance?

Brought Back to Life to hear the Salam?

Some argue that since salam is continuously sent on the Prophet (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) then his soul must be connected to the body. **The souls do not exist in the Prophet's body. Rather, it is returned each time someone sends Salat and Salam upon the Prophet.**

This return of the soul to the body is not like the return of the soul to the body in worldly life. Rather, it is in accordance with the nature of Barzakh. Just like the person who is rewarded or punished in the grave, his soul is returned to his body in accordance with the laws of Barzakh, and not as we know it in this life.

Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel incorrectly suggests that the concept of Hayat al-Nabi is based upon Greek philosophy, that Bayhaqi and others went to the extreme of denying the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) actually passed away and that the soul of the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) is not connected to his body.

It is interesting to note that Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel retweeted the following quote of Sheikh Ibn Uthaymeen, which is tacit approval of its theme:



The saying of some to a person travelling to Madina "Give salam on my behalf to the Messenger" is incorrect. The Messenger is not alive that the salam of a living person be conveyed to him. The angels convey the salam, and they are more able and reliable (Ibn Uthaymeen)

TAWASSUL

Deobandi position

Maulana Khalil Ahmad Saharanpuri writes in *Al-Muhannad alal-Mufannad*:

According to us and according to our *mashayikh* taking a means (*tawassala*) in supplications through Prophets and the righteous, from the Friends, martyrs and truthful saints, is permissible during their lifetime and after their death in that one says: ‘O Allah! I take so-and-so as a means to You that you accept my supplication and You accomplish my need,’ etc. as stated by our *Shaikh* and our master Shah Muhammad Ishaq al-Dehlawi thumma al-Muhajir al-Makki; and then our *Shaikh* and our master Rashid Ahmad al-Gangohi—Allah’s mercy on them—clarified it in his Fatawa which is in this time widespread and abundant in the hands of people, and this issue is mentioned on page 93 of the first volume of it, so whoever wishes may refer to it.”

Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanawi said in *Imdad al-Fatawa* (4:372):

Indeed *tawassul* through those accepted by Allah in *du’a*, whether they are living or dead, is permissible. The *tawassul* of ‘Umar (Allah be pleased with him) through al-‘Abbas (Allah be pleased with him) in seeking rain has been established and so has the *tawassul* through the Messenger (Allah bless him and grant him peace) in the story of the blind man after the death of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace). There is therefore no doubt in the permissibility. Yes, when extremism in this matter becomes apparent in the laity of the people, and they were prohibited for that reason, the prohibition in this case is also correct. However, the belief that Allah (Most High) must respond to the *tawassul*, or aid is hoped [directly] from those brought close (to Allah) through whom a means is taken, or their names come to be like the names of Allah (Most High), all of that is an increase in the Shari’ah.

Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel’s Position

Sheikh Imtiyaz (page 372) embarks on a lengthy discussion on Tawassul. What can be understood from this lengthy discussion is that Sheikh Imtiyaz muddies the differences between Istighatha and Tawassul, concepts the rulings of which are different. He mentions:

3) To call upon other than Allāh, asking them to intercede for us with Allāh is also Shirk. For example: O Prophet! Intercede for us with Allāh!

4) To call upon the Prophet, asking him to make *du’a* for us is Shirk. For example: O Prophet! Ask Allāh to grant us rain!

Sheikh Imtiyaz here mentions in a general fashion (regardless of whether it is at the grave) that asking the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) for *dua* and intercession (*shifa’a*) is *shirk*.

The Ulama of Deoband, however, accept requests for *dua* and intercession at the Prophet’s grave to be permissible. According to what Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel has mentioned in “Principles of Aqidah”, the Ulama of Deoband would hence be considered to be guilty of *shirk* and disbelief.

With respect to supplicating Allah through the *wasila* of the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam), Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel has conflated the issues in his “Principles of Aqidah”.

He states (pg. 376):

To call upon Allāh alone, asking Him by His Prophet is a **valid difference of opinion in Fiqh where none is censured**. For example: O Allāh! I ask you alone by Your noble Prophet!

However, he then categorically states under a specific heading “Tawassul by Status of the Prophet (sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam)” on Page 379:

Innovation occurs when asking Allāh through his status, body, or honor. Many ulemma have differed about this issue. Therefore, it is important to preserve proper adāb when discussing this issue. No scholar has called this type of tawassul to be shirk.

Since there is no authentic or explicit evidence regarding this, **it is an innovation**. For someone to claim it is legitimate, they must bring proof from the Sunnah.

In light of the above, although we give credit to Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel for not stating Tawassul bi'l Nabi (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) to be shirk, he has nonetheless declared it an innovation, which goes against what the erudite Elders of Deoband have clearly stated in their works. Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel has then concluded the discussion by refuting all the evidences used to prove this type of Tawassul.

KASHF

Deobandi Position

Mufti Taqi Usmani states in *Fatawa Usmani* (Vol 1, pg. 280):

It is possible Allah makes one of His servants experience Kashf of graves and witness lights and manifestations, and there is nothing contrary to the Shariah in this. However, this is not the objective in Shari'ah and Tariqa.

Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanawi has discussed Kashf in detail, as mentioned in *Shariat wa Tariqat* (Pg.329)

Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel's Position

Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel states in his “Principles of Aqidah” (pg. 175):

With regard to what happens to the Sufis, it is not spiritual kashf, rather it is either psychological kashf which is something that they have in common with the kuffār, or it is of satanic origin, which is usually the case.

Spiritual kashf only happens to the close friends (awliya‘) of Allāh who establish shari‘ah and venerate it. It is known that the Sufis do not do that. What happened to Umar, although it is correct to describe it as kashf, was spiritual kashf.

Although Sheikh Imtiyaz has not outright refuted the concept of Kashf, his reference to the Kashf of the Sufis is clearly derogatory to all Sufis and a grave accusation that the Sufis do not establish and venerate Shari'ah. A copious list of Deobandi Sufi sheikhs can be listed, whose Kashf according to Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel's “Principles of Aqidah”, would be similar to that of non-Muslims or Satanic in nature.

SEEING THE PROPHET (SALLALLAHU ALAIHI WASALLAM) IN WAKEFULNESS

Deobandi Position

It is possible to see the Noble Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) in the realm of wakefulness. Allamah Jalaluddeen Suyuti (rahimahullah) has discussed this in detail in his treatise “Tanweer al-Halak fee Imkaan Ru’yat al-Nabiyy wa’l-Malak” and has established this. Furthermore, he has written incidents alongside narrations...From this it is understood that not only is it possible to see the Noble Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) in the realm of wakefulness, but rather it is established through narrations and incidents. Furthermore, the hadith: “Whoever sees me in a dream shall see me in wakefulness” has been left upon its literal wording, and the abovementioned incidents also support this. For further details see the treatise “Tanweer al-Halak fee Imkaan Ru’yat al-Nabiyy wa’l-Malak”. Allah knows best. (Abridged from Fatawa Darul Uloom Zakariyya, Vol 1 pg. 51-52)

Mufti Mahmood states in *Fatawa Mufti Mahmood* (Vol. 1, Pg. 402):

Ibn Abideen also said in *Sall Al-Husaam al-Hindi (Rasaail Ibn Abideen pg.300)*: He was asked if it is possible to see the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) in wakefulness? He answered by saying: A group of them denied this whilst others allowed it, and it [i.e the latter] is correct. Many of the righteous who are not mistrusted have informed of this.”

Sheikh Yusuf Motala relates, as stated in a transcript of his lecture “*The Leader of Both Worlds and the Month of Ramadan*” (Pg.24):

Ibn al-Qayyim (rahimahullah) writes in the *Madarij al-Salikin*, the commentary to *Manazil us-Sa’irin*, that when someone takes up Tasawwuf and begins to reach its different stages, he will arrive at a stage known as Wisali Muhammadi. His words are that when he reaches that stage, then regarding the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) his condition is “كأنه معه” - as if though he is always with the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam). If we as Deobandis and Barelwis were to make such a statement, then we would be accused of heresy and innovation; however, these are the words of Ibn al-Qayyim (rahimahullah). Shaykh Ubaydullah Balyawi (rahimahullah) presented himself in the service of Shaykh Ilyas (rahimahullah). When the latter asked whether or not there was anybody else around, Shaykh Ubaydullah (rahimahullah) replied in the negative. He further relates that Shaykh Ilyas (rahimahullah) stated, “All thanks to Allah that when my heart longs for the beauty of the Noble Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) I close my eyes, meditate for a short while and permission is granted (to me) to be in the Prophet’s (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) presence.”

Ibn Hajar Haytami Makki in *Al-Fatawa Al-Hadithiyyah* also writes it is possible to see the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) when awake and that Al-Ghazali, al-Barazi, al-Taj as-Subki, al-Afif al-Yafi’, al-Qurtubi and Ibn Abi Jamarah have explained this is from the miracles (*karamat*) of the walis.

Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel’s Position

Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel states in his “Principles of Aqidah” (Pg.191):

With regard to seeing the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) when one is awake, this is akin to Sufi myths, and there is no basis for that in shari’ah or in real life.

He concludes on Page 193:

It is not permissible for anyone to claim to have seen the Prophet (sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) when he was awake. Perhaps these illusions came from some of those who do not have any Islamic knowledge or maturity, so they imagine things that are not there.

Although there is a scholarly difference of opinion regarding this point, as understood from the work of Ibn Abideen (rahimahullah), Sheikh Imtiyaz’s tone is characteristic of his condescending attitude towards the Sufis; this is a point which will become more lucid when discussing the concept of kashf.

Numerous righteous scholars and pious individuals have reported seeing the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) in an awakening state. Sheikh al-Hadith Maulana Muhammad Zakariyya Kandhalwi has narrated several such instances in his autobiography Aap Biti. In fact, a separate treatise entitled “*Bahjat al-Quloob*” was written during Sheikh al-Hadith’s lifetime by his disciple Sufi Muhammad Iqbal, in which over forty glad tidings to Sheikh al-Hadith from the Prophet sallallahu alaihi wasallam were compiled.

It states in *Bahjat al-Quloob* (pg.22):

Mukhasafa of Hazrat Shaykh: On the afternoon of 10th Safar 1400 AH, the Holy Prophet sallallahu alaihi wasallam entered the room of Madrasa Uloom Shar’iyya (Hazrat Sheikh’s residence) and said I have come to lead him (ie. Sheikh) in Zuhr Salah.

According to what Sheikh Imtiyaz has written in his “Principles of Aqidah”, Hadhrat Sheikh, the author of the Fazail-e-Amal and someone who was an ardent supporter of the Tablighi Jamat, alongside his uncle Maulana Ilyas, the founder of the Tablighi Jamaat, would be guilty of spreading Sufi myths, do not have any Islamic knowledge or lack of maturity. Whether just one of the above reasons or all of them apply to Hazrat Sheikh and Maulana Ilyas, only Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel is in a position to answer.

We would humbly advise Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel to take into consideration the fact that he has tweeted many of the highly beneficial words of advice of Sheikh Maulana Ilyas recently and previously too. Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel should stop for some introspection and reconsider his position on posting the advice of an unknowledgeable or immature person.

WAHDAT AL-WUJOOD

Deobandi Position

It states in *Ahsan al-Fatawa* of Mufti Rasheed Ahmad Ludhianwi (Vol 1. Pg 553):

Question: Some ignorant Sufis say *huma aust*, what does this mean? Explain with clarity. Explain, may you be rewarded.

Answer: *Huma aust* is one of the names of *wahdat al-wujud* in the way that, in the nomenclature of the Sufis, *tawhid*, ‘*ayniyyat* and *mazhariyyat* etc are different names for this issue. What it means is that the existence of Allah Almighty is complete while the existence of everything else, on the contrary, is so deficient that they are like non-existent. In common speech, the one who is deficient in comparison to the one who is accomplished is described as being nothing. This is like when it is said regarding an ordinary educated individual in comparison to an extremely erudite scholar or a common man in comparison to a famous strongman that “he is nothing in front of him.” This is

even though his being and qualities are existent. However, in front of the one who is accomplished they are considered non-existent. Likewise, the respected Sufis consider the existence of the entire creation in front of the perfect existence of Allah Almighty as nothing. Shaykh Sa‘di has explained this well using two examples...

... from the above it can be understood that *wahdat al-wujud* does not mean that the existence of all things are in union (*ittihad*) with the existence of Allah Almighty. What it rather means is that there is only One who possesses perfect existence and that the rest of what exists is like nothing. *Huma aust* means this. It is like when a person makes a request in the court of a king and the king advises him to consult a junior administrator and so the person says: “My lord, you are everything”. He does not mean that all of the administrators are in union (*ittihad*) with the king. Rather, its meaning is that in comparison to the king all administrators are similar to being non-existent...

Mufti Taqi Usmani has also explained the meaning of Wahdat al-Wujud in *Fatawa Usmani* (Vol 1, Pg. 71) and in *Takmila Fath al-Mulhim* (Vol 4, Pg.372-377).

Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel’s Position

In relation to this, Shaikh Imtiyaz writes (page 466) that Sufis who believed in *Wahdat al-Wujud* are *mujassimah* (anthropomorphists):

“The classical *mujassimah* (anthropomorphic) groups of Islam were, for the most part, *Rafidah* groups. The non-Shia groups were primarily some Sufis who believed that there was no existence except Allāh (*wahdatul wajūd*).”

These are the major contentious issues we have highlighted in Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel’s “Principles of Aqidah”, and we have qualified each issue with substantive proof from the Ulama of Deoband and their works.

APPENDIX

IS SHEIKH IMTIYAZ DAMIEL REALLY THE AUTHOR OF “PRINCIPLES OF AQIDAH”?

Sheikh Imtiyaz has attempted to exonerate himself from the contents of his “Principles of Aqidah” and thus evade providing substantial answers to the polemical issues he has stated, in particular his strong condemnation of Ash’ari-Maturidi/Deobandi Aqidah. In a further attempt to move the goal posts, Sheikh’s recent tweets indicate that he is lamenting intolerance to valid difference of opinion and narrow-mindedness, especially among the scholarly fraternity.

On the 19th of January, Sheikh tweeted:

For the benefit of those asking, I have not published any works on Aqidah. ‘Sajid Patel’ if you are interested please speak to me directly.



For some unknown reason, which only Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel can explain, it is no longer available to view.

More importantly, he clearly writes that he has not published any works on aqidah. The use of the word “published” should be noted. “Publish” means “to prepare and issue (a book, journal, or piece of music) for public sale” something that is different to the process of writing and authoring. Though it may be true that Sheikh Damiel has not published any works on aqidah in the commonly understood sense of making available for public sale or distribution, the truth of the matter is that **spiral-bound hard copies of “Principles of Aqidah” were prepared and sold to students who attended the course Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel delivered in 2009. Download links were also provided to students who requested them.** Moreover, Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel’s name is clearly on the title page of the document. Hence, merely stating that he has not “published” any works on Aqidah has no credible bearing in exonerating him from the contents of this highly polemical piece of work.

A few days later, Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel tweeted:

For those asking, the book on Aqeedah that is being circulated by some attributed to me contains errors and has never been endorsed by me. 7:35 PM - 22 Jan 2014

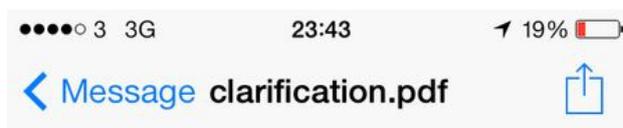
Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel mentions that the work is attributed to him, in the passive voice, but tactfully fails to affirm or negate being the author. It is obvious that the word “attribute” carries the connotation that something has been assumed and it may possibly not be true. **Is Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel trying to impress upon readers that this book has been ascribed to Sheikh Damiel wrongly?**

Likewise, by writing that the act of circulating this book is being carried out by “some”, is Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel impressing upon readers that he has nothing to do with it? We would like to remind Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel that he initiated the act of circulating in 2009 when, having authored or compiled “Principles of Aqidah”, he distributed it to attendees at a course that he delivered twice in Manchester.

He then mentions that it contains errors and has never been endorsed by him. This is again interesting. A blanket comment saying it contains errors but failing to elaborate on what they are does not address the monstrous disparaging of the Ash’aris-Maturidis which Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel has written.

Elsewhere, Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel has clearly stated that the document was not available for circulation. We respectfully ask Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel **what constitutes circulation if publishing hard copies and providing links to soft copies don’t fall under the definition of circulation?**

The most recent episode in this series of statements is the following “official” clarification which has been circulating. Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel has confirmed it is his statement:



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الحمد لله رب العالمين، والصلاة والسلام على سيدنا محمد وعلى آله وصحبه أجمعين، وعلى التابعين لهم
ياحسان إلى يوم الدين

This letter is written in response to queries and allegations that have been made against me and my *Aqidah*.

A document titled: "Principles of *Aqidah*" has also been circulated by some individuals claiming that I have authored and published the work. The 621 page document they are referring to was supplementary notes to a 30 hours course on *Aqidah* that I had delivered many years ago. The notes were hurriedly put together last minute at the request of the students as additional reading. The document was not authored by myself and was primarily a cut and paste of existing websites. This is why the document is littered with spelling mistakes and other errors. Furthermore there is no foreword or anything which indicates first hand authorship. The front cover also demonstrates this point with the words "Prepared by" and not "written by".

Several sections from the notes were deliberately not covered in the course due to the fact it still required major editing and in other places I provided further commentary where I disagreed with some sections of the document or its wording. The latter sections of the material especially pages 600 onwards (which has been highlighted as the primary cause of concern) was specifically NOT covered in the course for that very same reason, and this can be verified with any of the attendees or the organisers.

In summary, these were unedited supplementary notes which were not authored by myself. It is for this reason the document is not available in bookshops or accessible from the organisation.

My *Aqidah* is in agreement with the four Imams as represented in *Al-Aqidah At-Tahawiyah*. I am of the view that *Ahl Sunnah* comprises of the *Athari*, *Maturidi*, and *Ash'aris* schools and that the differences between them is on peripheral matters. Most of these peripheral differences arose due to specific challenges in their time and are no longer relevant for our time.

Claims that I do not believe that Imam Ibn Hajr, Imam an-Nawawi and the other great Imams (*rahimahumullah*) are from *Ahl Sunnah* or that our Deoband scholars do not have spiritual *Kashf*, is clearly false and untrue. I do not recall ever making such statements.

Furthermore, I am also not in the business of making *Tafsir*, *Tabdi'* and *Takfir* of scholars. My main concern after having studied with scholars from around the world, is how to use that experience to unite the *ummah* rather than divide further.

If I have an opinion which contradicts the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*, as understood by the early *Imams*, then I am willing to review my opinion.

Your Brother in Islam

Imtiyaz Damiel

Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel's has also stated he did not endorse the document. Let us remind Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel that the very presence of his name on the front cover is an endorsement in itself. That he distributed it among attendees at a course that he delivered twice in Manchester is also an endorsement.

Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel says:

The front cover also demonstrates this point with the words “Prepared by” and not “written by”.

We humbly ask Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel that does the fact that he only “prepared” and did not write the document first-hand exonerate him from the contents? If, for arguments sake, a person were to “hurriedly” compile a work consisting of statements of kufr, shirk and heresy, would the compiler be considered blameless because he only “prepared” and not actually authored it?

Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel says in his clarification:

The notes were hurriedly put together last minute at the request of the students as additional reading. The document was not authored by myself but was primarily a cut and paste of existing websites.

Again, we ask Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel with utmost respect: **Does the fact that it was a cut and paste job and the fact that it was “hurriedly put together last minute” absolve the Sheikh of his academic and Islamic responsibility to ensure the contents are accurate and reliable? Is Aqidah so trivial that 621 pages of notes were prepared last minute and given to students who had come to seek authentic knowledge? Once the “Principles of Aqidah” was disseminated and Sheikh Imtiyaz’s name is on the title page, who is to be held responsible for the contents? Why is it that all the references in the document, which Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel copied and pasted from are anti-Ash’ari shuyookh and fatwas such as “Are Deobandis Muslim”? Does haphazardly copying and pasting not fall under the warning of the hadith: “It is enough for a person to be a liar that he repeats everything that he hears” [Muslim]?**

Furthermore, Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel has stated that there are some sections where he provided further commentary as he disagreed with the content or which were not covered as there was a need for major editing, but that there were also several sections which were not covered at all, in particular the latter sections. Those who have read the whole document will agree that the latter sections are perhaps the most problematic.

In light of this, we ask Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel, **is providing students with polemical anti-Ash’ari-Maturidi without commenting on it anything but tacit approval? Can the fact that it was strictly prohibited from circulation and meant to be kept away from the masses possibly be interpreted to mean Sheikh Imtiyaz disapproved of the content which was distributed in his name, or was it to protect against the predicament which Sheikh Imtiyaz did not foresee from naïve ISC scholars and which he is now desperately trying to fumble out of?**

Moreover, we are puzzled why there was a need to clarify which sections were or were not covered and where further commentary was provided if these were only supplementary notes or for additional reading. Surely, Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel’s comments clearly indicate that this document was an integral part of the course.

It is conclusively clear that Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel is clearly responsible for the content of his “Principles of Aqidah” and all attempts to exonerate himself from this are in vain. Hence, prudence demands that Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel accepts responsibility and clarifies his stance on the issues we have raised.

CONCLUSION

It is evident from the contents of this critique that there are a number of seriously contentious and polemical issues which Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel authored/compiled/prepared in his “Principles of Aqidah”. It is also clear that they are beyond the ambit of what can be referred to as peripheral differences and hence relegated to issues which should be buried for the sake of maintaining unity and harmony. Furthermore, the need to write this critique, as previously stated, has only arisen due to the fact that this polemical work was authored/compiled/prepared by Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel. Thus, although he has previously lamented what he refers to as “Salafi vs Deobandi bashing” (as can be seen below), if Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel is fair and true to himself, he will be compelled to admit that this 600+ page document he is directly responsible for is at the root of the problem in this instance.



The fact that this document has been well-hidden until now does not distract from the fact that it is inherently polemic and stirs sentiments against the Ashari-Maturidi-Deobandi methodology, a very uncanny move indeed for a person seeking to work in the heart of an orthodox Deobandi stronghold and that also under the name of the illustrious Imam Abu Hanifah.

By the simplest of academic standards, Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel needs to answer the following questions with respect to his “Principles of Aqidah”, so that all parties can rest assured that Sheikh is not a component in the Taqiyyah-based concealment of one’s true manhaj which we are currently being plagued by, and so that we can all move on to the “bigger concerns”.

1. Elaborate on what you exactly disagree with in this book.
2. Do you believe that the first and second category of Ashaairah and Maturidiyyah (ie as expounded by yourself: “Those who consciously adopt the Ash’ari way including the principles which sets it a part from the way of the Salaf”, and the “deviant heretics who adopt the Ash’ari way as means of attacking true Islamic beliefs”) are from the Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jamaah in its specific meaning, ie. which is used for those in opposition to the innovators and the people of the innovated sects (as stated on pg. 604)?
3. Do you believe that those who do Tafwid and Ta’weel are from Ahlus Sunnah in its specific meaning?
4. Do you believe that the Salafi allegations that the Ash’aris’ Tafwid and Tawil are Ta’til and Tahrif, respectively, founded or baseless?
5. Do you believe that Imam Bayhaqi, Imam Ash’ari and Imam Baqillani were from Ahlul Bida?
6. Do you believe that many of the contemporary Ulama of the Indian Sub-Continent have erred in their aqidah?
7. Do you believe it is not permissible to ask the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) at his Blessed Grave to make du’a?
8. Do you believe Rasulullah sallallahu alaihi wasallam is alive in his grave, as explained by Sheikh Khalil Ahmad Saharanpuri and is the way of the Ulama of Deoband?

9. Do you agree with the belief of Sheikh Ibn Uthaymeen that it is incorrect to convey one's salam to Rasulullah sallallahu alaihi wasallam via a person travelling to Madina, as he is not alive? If not, why did you retweet it without any comment?
10. What do you believe regarding Tawassul bi'l Nabi (ie through his status, honour or body, as opposed to one's love for him)? Is it akin to Istighatha or an innovation, as stated in "Principles of Aqidah"?
11. Do you negate that the Sufi shuyukh emanate fayz? If yes, can you explain why this is inferred from the statement in your book (p.346): "This means assuming saints exude physical barakah. No one exudes barakah except the Prophet (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam)."
12. Do you deny the kashf of the Sufis and believe it to be like that of the kuffar or Satanic in nature, as mentioned in your book?
13. Do you consider Sufis to be a group which does not practice Shariah and venerate it?
14. Do you consider Ulama who believe in Wahdatul Wujud, as understood by the Ulama of Deoband, to be mujassimah?
15. Why is it that the suggested background reading for the "Foundations of Faith" course as suggested by Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel is as seen below, books such as Sheikh Ibn Uthaymeen's "Exemplary Principles" which condemns the Asharis, and Muhammad al-Khumaiyis's "Creed of the Four Imams" where in is a section in refutation on Sheikh Zahid Kawthari, the author has quoted Sheikh Ibn Uthaymeen's declaring Asharis and Maturidis as out of the Ahl al-Sunnah (the same quote is found verbatim on page 608 of "Principles of Aqidah")? Is this not an endorsement of the contents of these books?



(We note that Sheikh Imtiyaz's post and the subsequent reply by Umm Maymoonah are no longer online on the above forum)

16. Why does Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel's website www.islamicstudies.islammessage.com provide material which is strongly anti-Ashari, alongside material which strongly condemns some of the issues which the Ulama of Deoband unanimously accept?

Answers to these questions and other points in this critique must be in writing to the email address provided below. This document is in written form and was disseminated in hard and print format. It is only correct if clarifications are done in the same way.

Scholars seeking mutual clarification on controversial or disputed issues is not something new or unheard of. There are many records of written correspondence between the scholars, and which have served beneficial for the coming generations. A relatively recent example is *Al-Muhannad alal Mufannad*, which was written as a response to a number of questions posed to the Ulama of Deoband regarding their belief and practices. Sheikh Khalil Ahmad Saharanpuri explicitly clarified the misconceptions. Hence, it is in line with scholarly adab and the way of our Ulama to seek clarification in writing.

With the grace of Allah, we have solely focused on the issues within the document. We are not seeking to force Sheikh Imtiyaz into a particular camp of belief or creed, but we do expect that he is outright in expressing his methodology and in particular the answers to the important questions we have raised.

Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel's response to the questions or other issues he wishes to raise concerning this critique should be sent to poaclarification@outlook.com.

We are hopeful Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel will respond promptly and satisfactorily to this critique.

Allah knows best.

وصلى الله على نبينا محمد وعلى آله واصحابه اجمعين

Signatories:

Maulana Said Ahmad
Shaikh Dr. Abul Hasan Hussein Ahmad
Mufti Javed Iqbal
Maulana Usman Iqbal
Maulana Badrul Islam
Maulana Abdur Raheem Limbada
Maulana Yusuf Lorgat
Maulana Khabbab Raja
Mufti Asad Waqas
Maulana Mohammad Yasir

Shaikh Mumtaz ul Haqq (Note from Sh. Mumtaz: I have not read the critique but am aware of the issues with Principles of Aqidah and agree to questions being forwarded to Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel to answer)

Wednesday 5th Rabi al-Thani 1435 AH - February 2014

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الحمد لله رب العالمين، والصلاة والسلام على سيدنا محمد وعلى آله وصحبه أجمعين، وعلى التابعين لهم بإحسان إلى يوم الدين

As-salāmu 'alaykum wa rahmatullāhi wabarakātuahu Dear scholars,

This is a response to your queries regarding the document "Principles of Aqīdah". I have had the opportunity to discuss this matter with several senior local and national scholars. Though I received various advices, I have gone with the guidance of some of the senior local scholars and decided to provide a brief response to a document I did not author!

I believe that the *Ash`ari* and *Maturidi* schools, are part of *Ahl Sunnah wa'l Jamā'ah* in the general and specific sense. This includes the scholars of *Deoband*, and scholars who do *tafwīd* and *ta'wīl*. Scholars like Imām Al-Bayhaqī, Imām Al-Ash`arī and Imām al-Bāqillānī (*rahimahullah*) are not from *Ahl al-Bid`ah*. The differences among these scholars is in secondary matters and based on *ijtihād*.

As for your queries regarding my stance on *tawassul*, the Prophet (*ṣallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam*) being alive in his grave, *wahdatul wujūd*, *barakah* etc. then the following writings of Mufti Taqi Uthmānī (*hafidhahullah*) are a summary of my limited understanding.

See:

<http://www.deoband.org/2010/05/hadith/hadith-commentary/is-tawassul-established-from-the-sunnah/>

Takmilah Fath al-Mulhim, 5:477-481

<http://www.deoband.org/2010/04/hadith/hadith-on-the-life-of-the-prophets/>

(Takmilah Fath al-Mulhim, vol. 5 pp. 23-7)

<http://www.deoband.org/2010/05/hadith/hadith-commentary/wahdat-al-wujud-wahdat-al-shuhud-and-the-safest-position/>

(Takmilah Fath al-Mulhim 4:372-77)

<http://www.deoband.org/2010/04/hadith/hadith-commentary/seeking-blessing-through-the-relics-of-the-prophets-and-the-pious/>

(Takmilah Fath al-Mulhim vol 3 pp. 301-5)

Sufism comes in many forms. Not all Sufis are deviants and there are many who practice the *Shari`ah* and venerate it. Likewise, *kashf* comes in many forms, and those who are righteous slaves of Allah, whether *sufi* or otherwise, may experience spiritual *kashf*.

As for the background reading list provided for one of my courses, there are two responses. Firstly, this was a few years after the Manchester course: if I had authored my own book on Aqīdah, a document more than 600 pages (!) why did I not mention it here? Secondly, since

when does one have to agree with every single word in a book before you can recommend it?

I recommend Bart Ehrman's books for my Comparative Religions course and in fact make it compulsory reading, but does that mean I have to agree with every single word? If you were to ask the students who attended this second course, they would have told you how I openly defended the Deoband school, and responded to those who claim Imam as-Suyūṭī, Imam an-Nawawī and other are not from *Ahl-Sunnah wa'l Jamā'ah*. And Allah is my witness.

Finally, a correction, the Islamic Studies website is not my website nor do I contribute towards that website.

I hope the above clarifies my position.

I conclude by standing firm to my original clarification that this document was not written by me, that in the course I did not cover the key disputed issues and that I had made the students aware of the mistakes in the document. Since the document was not circulated further, I had fulfilled my responsibility regarding what was provided to a handful of students. Yes the students did pay for the printing cost, since the course was for free.

There is much more I can say regarding this whole incident, the critique, the context of local Blackburn politics, and the mannerism in which this whole episode started and developed, but for any further discussions to take place, it would be only fair that it happens in person.

Was salāmu `alaykum warah̄matullahi wabarakātuhu

Imtiyaz Damiel

Wa alaikumus salam wa rahmatullaahi wa barakaatuh

Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel (hafizahullah)

This was the response we sent to Sheikh Imtiyaz on Thursday 13th February.

JazakAllah khayran for your response. BarakAllahu feekum.

From the onset, we would like to set the record straight with regard to what you have indicated in the closing statement of your response:

There is much more I can say regarding this whole incident, the critique, the context of local Blackburn politics, and the mannerism in which this whole episode started and developed, but for any further discussions to take place, it would be only fair that it happens in person.

The political landscape of Blackburn is not relevant in this critique. This critique focuses on the “Principles of Aqidah” document you prepared and disseminated. Hence, your indicating towards “Blackburn politics” is neither pertinent nor do we feel there is any need to even touch upon the issue. Likewise, we are also in a strong position to lament the unjustified abuse and intimidation from a certain member of Abu Hanifah Foundation on merely emailing this critique to Sheikh. However, since Sheikh apologised on their behalf (although rightfully they should personally apologise), we will leave that aside, with a view to maintain a high level of decorum and to keep the discussion academic.

There are a number of glaring discrepancies with the response and the whole style in which this issue has been addressed.

We will tackle each issue separately to keep the matter as clear and succinct as possible, bi idhnillah.

Contending “Authorship”

Sheikh Imtiyaz, you emphatically say:

Though I received various advices, I have gone with the guidance of some of the senior local scholars and decided to provide a brief response to a document I did not author!

This point has been clearly dealt with in a whole section in the critique. We humbly remind you of what we wrote, just in case it has somehow slipped you (Page 22 of Critique):

“...Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel says:

The front cover also demonstrates this point with the words “Prepared by” and not “written by”.

We humbly ask Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel that does the fact that he only “prepared” and did not write the document first-hand exonerate him from the contents? If, for arguments sake, a person were to “hurriedly” compile a work consisting of statements of kufr, shirk and heresy, would the compiler be considered blameless because he only “prepared” and not actually authored it?

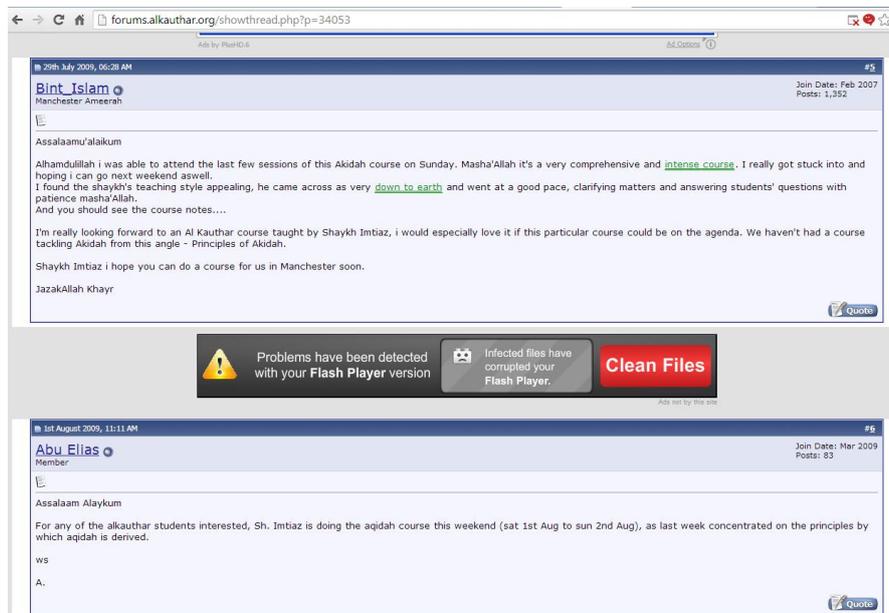
Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel says in his clarification:

The notes were hurriedly put together last minute at the request of the students as additional reading. The document was not authored by myself but was primarily a cut and paste of existing websites.

Again, we ask Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel with utmost respect: **Does the fact that it was a cut and paste job and the fact that it was “hurriedly put together last minute” absolve the Sheikh of his academic and Islamic responsibility to ensure the contents are accurate and reliable?....”**

It is clear in light of what we initially wrote that we have accepted you “prepared” and did not “author” the document. Hence, we are left with little choice but to say that laboriously stressing that you did not “author” the document is being pedantic and unnecessary. You are just as responsible for the document and its contents by preparing it as you would have been had you “authored” it, hence it is incorrect to suggest that there is no onus upon you to provide clear answers to the issues we have raised. We don’t think this point can be simplified any further.

On a side note, we note one of the testimonials for the course you delivered. Unfortunately, it does not seem the sister understood that there were many errors in “Principles of Aqidah” course notes and that you disagreed with large sections of it. Wallahu’l Musta’an.



Belief Regarding Ash'ari and Maturidi Schools

Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel, you have stated:

I believe that the Ash`arī and Maturīdī schools, are part of Ahl Sunnah wa`l Jamā`ah in the general and specific sense. This includes the scholars of Deoband, and scholars who do tafwīd and ta`wīl. Scholars like Imām Al-Bayhaqī, Imām Al-Ash`arī and Imām al-Bāqillānī (rahimahullah) are not from Ahl al-Bid`ah. The differences among these scholars is in secondary matters and based on ijtihād.

We appreciate your clarity and straightforwardness in your statement above, thereby providing satisfactory answers to questions 2-5. But we still reserve the right to ask why was the exact opposite of these points clearly included in the notes you had “prepared”? We know you have already stated how these notes were “hurriedly prepared last minute” and that they were a “cut and paste job” but, in

the frankest of terms, the list of reasons you stated are totally unbecoming of a person of your academic calibre and do not detract from your responsibility for the contents. We do not want to repeat ourselves unnecessarily; our objection, which still stands, is clearly stated in the critique.

Moreover, we understand that you will have no objection to the above answer being made public, as it will serve the interest of clearing your name of affiliation to the Salafi group, who openly malign the Ashari-Maturidi school, and to affirm that you do accept yourself to be among the Deobandi scholars, as you clearly stated in the term “our Deoband scholars” in your previous clarification which was circulating on WhatsApp.

Other Issues and Mufti Taqi Usmani’s Writings

Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel, you said:

As for your queries regarding my stance on tawassul, the Prophet (ṣallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam) being alive in his grave, waḥdatul wujūd, barakah etc. then the following writings of Mufti Taqi Uthmānī (ḥafidhahullah) are a summary of my limited understanding.

Thereafter, you provided some links to some translated works of Mufti Taqi Usmani on www.deoband.org.

Firstly, we are struggling to grasp what you mean by **“the following writings of Mufti Taqi Uthmani (ḥafidhahullah) are a summary of my limited understanding”**. We asked very clear questions regarding certain aspects of your belief, and all in light of the contentious points mentioned in the “Principles of Aqidah” course notes you had prepared. It was only right to answer the questions in an unequivocal manner; referring us to links on a website does not really qualify as a proper answer, especially in conjunction with an abstruse and ambiguous statement highlighted above. Were we asking too much? Please correct us if we are wrong and, if so, how our thought pattern is flawed.

Whatever the case, we would appreciate very decisive answers to the following questions without leaving any room for ambiguity:

On the issues of the Prophet (ṣallallahu alaihi wasallam) being alive in his grave, tawassul, waḥdatul wujud, barakah etc. do you agree with what Mufti Taqi Usmani has expounded in all the above issues as the correct view, in light of the teachings of the Ulama of Deoband?

To be more precise, on the issue of being alive in his grave, do you accept the following statement of Mufti Taqi Usmani to be your belief?

Hence, complete and real bodily life is designated for a number of degrees in the connection of the soul to the body, some of them [stronger](#)  than others. What is established for the Prophets and martyrs after their death is a real bodily life due to the presence of many of the features of the previous life upon death, although it parts with this worldly life, which was established for them before their death, in many [physical] laws. The outcome of this real bodily life is a strong connection of the soul to the body which goes beyond the connection which the rest of the dead acquire.

Do you accept the following concluding statements of Mufti Taqi Usmani to be your belief?

It would be best for me to end this short study with beneficial and comprehensive words from the teacher of our teachers Imam Ashraf ‘Ali al-Thanawi (Allah have mercy on him), translated into Arabic. He (Allah have mercy on him) said in *Imdad al-*

Fatawa (4:372), “Indeed *tawassul* through those accepted by Allah in *du’a*, whether they are living or dead, is permissible. The *tawassul* of ‘Umar (Allah be pleased with him) through al-’Abbas (Allah be pleased with him) in seeking rain has been established and so has the *tawassul* through the Messenger (Allah bless him and grant him peace) in the story of the blind man after the death of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace). There is therefore no doubt in the permissibility. Yes, when extremism in this matter becomes apparent in the laity of the people, and they were prohibited for that reason, the prohibition in this case is also correct. However, the belief that Allah (Most High) must respond to the *tawassul*, or aid is hoped [directly] from those brought close (to Allah) through whom a means is taken, or their names come to be like the names of Allah (Most High), all of that is an increase in the Shari’ah.” Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) knows best.

With respect to the last link you provided on seeking blessings through the relics of the prophets and the pious, there is nothing in there to verify your belief with respect to the *fuyuz* of the *Mashaaikh*. You will note that our question was a direct result of what you included in the “Principles of *Aqidah*” you “prepared” on Page 346:

This means assuming saints exude physical *barkah*. No one exudes *barakah* except the Prophet (*sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*).

Hence, Question 7 of the critique is outstanding.

Background Reading and Islamic Studies Website

With respect to your answer on the background reading material, we concede to the fact that recommending a book does not necessarily mean it is tacit approval of all its contents – *barakAllahu feekum* for drawing our attention to this. Nonetheless, it is still troubling to see the vast majority of books to be of Salafi scholars, some of which contain content you directly incorporated in the “Principles of *Aqidah*” you “prepared”. Moreover, our contention is further strengthened by the fact that the books uploaded on **your** website www.islamicstudies.islammessage.com are also of the same nature, as stated in Question 16 which remains unanswered.

We cannot unfortunately accept your correction (on the issue of the Islamic Studies website) to be correct, as you clearly stated this to be your website on the *Al-Kauthar* forum, which we cited previously with respect to additional reading material for your course. In case you have forgotten again or you have lost record of the posts you had deleted from the *Al-Kauthar* forum, please see the screenshot below. (Please note that the screenshot finishing on the verse of *Surah Baqarah* was purely coincidental):

http://forums.alkauthar.org/showthread.php?t=... www.islamicstudies.net - Al...

Alkauthar and Mercy Mission Forums > Welcome to Alkauthar > Announcements
www.islamicstudies.net

Register FAQ Members List Calendar Today's Posts Search

User Name User Name Remember Me?
 Password

Post Reply

Thread Tools Display Modes

22nd June 2010, 05:23 AM #1

Abu Abd Allah I. Daniel 
 Alkauthar Instructor Join Date: May 2009
 Posts: 54

www.islamicstudies.net

Alhamdulillah, with the help and *fadl* of Allāh, I am glad to announce the launch of our second website: www.islamicstudies.net

The website is primarily for students of knowledge and researchers. *Inshā-Allah*, I hope to in the near future add tons of quality research papers, classical works and articles. The *Fatāwa*, audio and E-Library will be developed soon with hundreds of additional files.

If you could in any way contribute towards the website, please do let me know. It will be greatly appreciated.

22nd June 2010, 08:14 AM #2

aiia01 
 Member Join Date: Feb 2009
 Posts: 85

Ma shah allah excellent work May Allah SWT reward all who are behind this noble work.

وَمَا اللَّهُ بِعَافٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ

If not “contributing” towards the website is a pedantic use of words again, we cannot say. Or perhaps Sheikh is referring to a different Islamic Studies website. Nonetheless, we can confidently say that your articles are on the website we provided a link to in Question 16, which is no surprise seeing it is evident that it is in fact your website. Please see below:

THE MESSAGE OF ISLAM

Home About us Ask a Question Contact us Guestbook

Articles
 Fatawa Archive
 Research Papers
 High of Muslim Minorities
 E-Library
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 Muslims Around The World
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رسالة الإسلام
 THE MESSAGE OF ISLAM

Home > Research Papers > The Significance of the Night of the Middle of Sha'ban
 The Significance of the Night of the Middle of Sha'ban: Abu'Abd Allah I. Daniel

The merit of the night of the middle of Sha'ban is strongly debated among Muslims. Some celebrating the night and fasting the following day, whilst others declaring it an innovation.

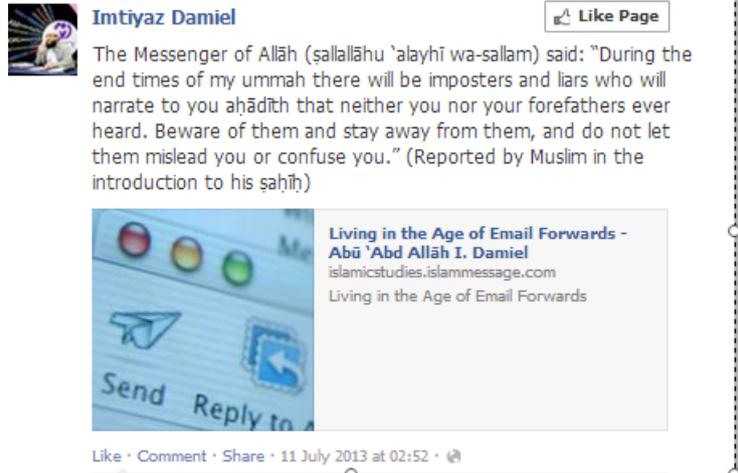
If this night is truly a blessed night then to dismiss it, is a great loss. However, if it does not hold any significance then to glorify it is an innovation and a deviation from the *sunnah* of the Messenger of Allāh (*ṣallāllāhu 'alayhi wa-sallam*).

 **Imtiyaz Daniel**

A paper on moon-sighting and calculations.

<http://islamicstudies.islammessage.com/ResearchPaper.aspx?aid=193>
 islamicstudies.islammessage.com

Like · Comment · Share · 25 June 2013 at 01:09



We note the “About Us” page of your website states:

The organization’s mission is to make readily accessible the teachings of Islam based on the Qur’ān and Sunnah, free from blameworthy blind-following and ignorant fanaticism.

We do not have any more to say on the issue of the website.

Sufis

Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel, regarding Sufis, you clarified thus:

Sufism comes in many forms. Not all Sufis are deviants and there are many who practice the Sharī`ah and venerate it. Likewise, kashf comes in many forms, and those who are righteous slaves of Allah, whether sufi or otherwise, may experience spiritual kashf.

We are pleased you make this distinction, as the “Principles of Aqidah” document you “prepared” made a blanket statement against Sufis, as evident on Page 175. However, it is problematic to see your Islamic Studies website has an audio file by the title “Evaluation of Sufism” which condemns Sufism as a whole and declares it all to fall under the scope of innovation, as well as severely criticising Imam Ghazali (rahimahullah).

Thus, we would like you to reconcile between what you state is your position and what you have uploaded on your website. Also, it would be interesting to know your opinion on the Chishti Tariqa, as practiced by the Mashaaikh of Deoband through the chain of Imam Rashid Ahmad Gangohi and Sheikh Ashraf Ali Thanawi, as well as the Naqshbandi and Qadiri chains through other prominent Deobandi shuyookh. We’re sure you will not hesitate to affirm your commendation of the Tasawwuf these giants practiced and preached.

Conveying Salam to the Blessed Grave of the Prophet (ṣallallahu alaihi wasallam)

Question 9 is still outstanding. We will reiterate the question with the same wording, as we cannot make it any clearer, and we also provide a screenshot of the tweet once again.

Do you agree with the belief of Sheikh Ibn Uthaymeen that is incorrect to convey one’s salam to Rasulullah ṣallallahu alaihi wasallam via a person travelling to Madina, as he is not alive? If not, why did you retweet it without any comment?



Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel, we do not want to underestimate your intelligence by insinuating your response to our critique was a hurried last minute job, where your choice of words was inadvertently imprecise. We are puzzled by the convoluted language in most places and totally shocked at the blatant inaccuracies in others.

The amicable way forward is for you to be clear on the issues we have raised and alleviate some of the misgivings we may have in an explicit and transparent manner. Indeterminate language will only compound the issues at hand.

Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel, you are now asking us to other scholars if we have any further queries.

We all due respect, how are our questions regarding your statements and the content you disseminate going to be answered by other scholars? It is obvious any scholar, regardless of their knowledge and seniority, will only be able to provide answers on certain issues. Furthermore, their answers will be based upon what and how much information they have been provided with, which we cannot truly gauge, even if we do discuss with them. Furthermore, where is the logic in speaking to other scholars when we are receiving vague and also meaningless answers from you yourself?

After the first shock of being at the receiving end of abuse for raising this matter in a purely academic manner, we are now surprised at how critical aspects of the issue are being either totally side-tracked or presented contrary to the proven facts, and how there is an attempt to now defer us to other scholars who have no direct involvement in the “Principles of Aqidah” you prepared.

Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel, we clearly have no objection in you presenting the critique, your response and this subsequent response to the senior local scholars and, to your other non-Deobandi colleagues with whom you share a platform such as Sheikh Bilal Phillips, Sheikh Asim Hakeem, Sheikh Abu Eesa Niamatullah and others. However, we do expect that all the documents are presented to them in full, for them to reach their own judgment regarding the contents.

We have been as fair as possible in accepting your answers and are further awaiting a positive response.

Jazakumullahu khairan wa barakAllahu feekum

Dear Sheikh Imtiyaz,

Among the many roles you play, we list some of them as below:

1. Lecturer at Knowledge International University
2. Lecturer at Al-Kauthar Institute
3. Lecturer at Prophetic Guidance
4. Operations Manager at the Messengers of Peace Academy
5. Academic adviser to Islamic Open University

Along with a request to respond by Sunday evening, the following questions were sent to Sheikh Imtiyaz on Saturday 15th February, to which certain signatories began receiving abuse once again and to which a message was communicated by Sheikh Imtiyaz's friend: You are NOT going to get answers from Sheikh Imtiyaz.

We would like to point out that Al Kauthar Institute, Knowledge International University, Islamic Online University and Prophetic Guidance are primarily Salafi organizations with some of them hosting staunch anti-Deobandi and anti-Ash'ari scholars such as Bilal Philips, Asim Hakeem and Abu Eesa Niamatullah.

Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips

Islamic Online University is, as mentioned on its website, "the brainchild of Dr Bilal Philips" who is also the organisation's founder and dean. Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips - a staunch Salafi - has been on record to say that Hakimul-Ummah Moulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi's *Beheshti Zewar* should be burnt.⁸ On his own website, Dr Bilal Philips has a list of deviant websites, where he does not shy away from expressing his disapproval of Tasawwuf and Tariqas:⁹

Also those sites have long articles which try to prove that Kashf, Tariqah, etc are all Islaamically valid.

*Among the false teachings of this site is the following example:
Sharî`ah, Tariqah And Haqîqah*

The Tariqah or Spiritual Path which is usually known as Tasawwuf or Sufism is the inner and esoteric dimension of Islam and like the Sharî`ah has its roots in the Quran and prophetic practice.

Dr Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips writes:

For example, the following is a quote from my book "The Moral Foundations of Islamic Civilization" currently being studied by students in my Islamic Online University course ISE 101A and taught in a number of intensive courses given in Ireland, Montreal and the UK as well as at the American University in Dubai.

He goes on to quote the following from his own book:

Another movement arose in India during this period which prided itself in being totally apolitical. Maulana Muhammad Ilyas founded what came to be known as the Tabligh Movement. Its main focus was on bringing Muslims back to the mosques which had become empty over the years of Colonial rule. In order to appeal to the general masses,

⁸ <http://theauthenticbase.wordpress.com/2010/01/05/ashraf-ali-thanvis-book-behishti-zawar-should-be-burned/>

⁹ www.bilalphilips.com

its founder combined the practices of the major sufi sects of the continent in its inner teachings. Travel to different locations to invite Muslims was added to its outer practices. However, those traveling to give the “da’wah” are mostly ignorant people, while the Prophet (s) used to send out scholars to teach the people and call them to Islaam. And when he sent them, he did not instruct them to spend a few days, weeks, or months in a masjid, nor did he instruct them to call people to come to the masjid then invite them to go out and give da’wah with the group. Rather, he instructed that they live among the people until they learned their religion, and ordered them to call to the correct ‘aqeedah first and foremost. And they were not to call to anything else until the people understood laa ilaaha illallaah, as is evident in the hadeeth of his sending Mu’aath ibn Jabal as well as others. And the Tabligh’s fixed numbers of days and months to travel have no basis in the Sunnah or the practice of the Sahaabah. Yet its apolitical stance has enabled it to spread to all corners of the Muslim world without resistance from Muslim or non-Muslim governments. However, very little effort is made to correct the beliefs and practices of its members and its main text, Tablighi Nisab, is filled with inauthentic material. The tradition of Taqleed remained alive in all of these movements as avoiding it facilitated recruitment of followers.

With reference to the four madhabs, he says:

In modern times they have become rallying points for the defenders of cultural Islaam.

Regarding Tasawwuf, already established as an institution which the elders of Deoband uphold, Dr Bilal Philips says among other things:

A multiplicity of systems evolved, and orders, similar to those among Christian monks, appeared named after their founders, like the Qaadiri, Chishti, Nakhshabandi, and Teejaani orders. Along with that, volumes of legends and fairy tales were spun around the founders and the outstanding personalities of these orders. And, just as Christian and Hindu monks chose special isolated structures (i.e. monasteries) in which to house their communities, the Sufi orders developed similar housing schemes called Zaawiyahs (lit. corners).

Knowledge International University (KIU)

Likewise, the KIU website boasts a number of leading lecturers many of whom are also Salafis, including Dr Bilal Philips and Shaikh Assim Al-Hakeem, who has reproduced a problematic *fatwa* by Shaikh Saalih al-Munajjid entitled “**Are Deobandis part of Ahlus Sunnah? Are they within the folds of Islam?**”¹⁰ (and which Sheikh Imtiyaz “hurriedly” copied and pasted from to include in “Principles of Aqidah”!!!). In this *fatwa* the author considers the ‘ulama of Deoband to be innovators and out of the fold of Ahl al-Sunnah due to their following the Ash‘ari school. In another *fatwa*, Shaikh Assim is asked: “In the country that I live, the salafis are classed as deviant and misguided people, the scholars of deoband mock us and challenge us, what should we do?” Shaikh Assim

¹⁰ <http://www.assimalhakeem.net/node/3170>

responds by saying: “You should remain with the people who follow them Quran and Sunnah and abandon those who mock them as they are the deviant ones.”¹¹

Likewise, in another link Sheikh Assim is asked: “Is it permissible to donate money to masjid which practices bidah such as tabligh jamaat. They teach a book called fazal e amal some of its teachings are shirk.” In response, he writes: “One shouldn’t help innovative sects or support them financially.”¹²

Likewise, in another link he is asked: “What is your opinion about the book “fazail e amal” which is often read by our brothers of tabligh jamaat.” In response, he writes: “It contains a lot of weak and fabricated hadeeths. One shouldn’t read it and read Riyadul Saliheen instead.”¹³

In a further link Sheikh Assim is asked whether it is permissible to divorce a man who goes out in Tabligh. Sheikh Assim responded that this would be permissible.¹⁴ In another link, Sheikh Assim is asked: Sheikh are the Ashari and Maturidi from ahlul sunnah if not why? In response he wrote: They are not considered to be from Ahlu Sunnah but they are not kafir the same time. This means that Allah will hold them accountable for their wrong beliefs but they are Muslims at the end of the day.¹⁵

Abu Eesa Niamatullah

Respected Sheikh Imtiyaz also enjoys close relations to Sheikh Abu Eesa Niamatullah, a sheikh who lives in Manchester and is the original founder of Prophetic Guidance, the organisation that hosted Sheikh Imtiyaz’s course in 2009. Prophetic Guidance lists among its teachers Sheikh Imtiyaz.

In a YouTube video clip excerpt of a lecture that Sheikh Abu Eesa delivered on Imam al-Bukhari’s Al-Adab al-Mufrad, Sheikh Abu Eesa speaks about the Sunnah-Salafi belief in the *sifat* of Allah. In there he mentions the Asha’irah among the various sects that arose in *aqidah*. He also does not count them among the Ahl al-Sunnah though he acknowledges that “they were a lot closer to Ahl al-Sunnah”. Ironically, Sheikh Abu Eesa is a signatory of the 2007 “Pledge of Mutual Respect and Cooperation”, an initiative to unify Muslims who follow the Ash’ari, Maturidi and Salafi *aqidah*, and muqallids and non-muqallids. Sheikh Abu Eesa’s comments while teaching Al-Adab al-Mufrad and support of Sheikh Imtiyaz’s course is at odds with several elements of the “Pledge of Mutual Respect and Cooperation”.

Questions:

In light of Dr Philips, Assim Hakeem and Abu Eesa’s unequivocal criticism of salient features of the Deobandi methodology, the Tabligh Jamat and the Ash’ari schools, we ask the following:

1. Do the above-mentioned scholars explicitly know Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel accepts the Ash’ari-Maturidi schools in general and the Deobandi schools in particular to be part of Ahl al-Sunnah wa’l Jama’ah?
2. Has Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel engaged them on these issues to make them acknowledge their mistakes in considering the Ash’aris and Maturidis out of the fold of Ahl al-Sunna wa’l Jama’ah, among the other issues highlighted such as their severe criticism of the Tablighi Jamaat movement? Does Sheikh Imtiyaz not consider it important to engage with them on these issues, considering that their anti-Ashari sentiments are a cause of dissension in the

¹¹ <http://www.assimalhakeem.net/node/3686>

¹² <http://www.assimalhakeem.net/node/932>

¹³ <http://www.assimalhakeem.net/node/4925>

¹⁴ <http://www.assimalhakeem.net/node/7544>

¹⁵ <http://www.assimalhakeem.net/node/3323>

Ummah and also considering that your main concern is to unite the Ummah not divide it further?

3. On what basis did Sheikh Bilal Phillips accept you as an academic advisor to the Islamic Open University considering he is staunchly opposed to Deobandis?

We appreciate you will not consider these questions as a personal attack or an attempt to deem you guilty by association, but it is clear that any fair-minded person will be somewhat intrigued if not puzzled by your sharing platform and working so closely with such anti-Ash'ari-Deobandi scholars.

Jazakumullah khaira

The above is an accurate copy of the original correspondence between Sheikh Imtiyaz Damiel and the Ulama. It is unfortunate that despite the scholarly and academic nature of the queries – under the premise of the Qur'anic verse “fa tabayyanu” – Sheikh Imtiyaz decided to disengage and not provide any answers that could clear his name from the inference of being covertly Salafi. Allah knows best.

وما علينا الا البلاغ المبين

اللهم ارنا الحق حقا وارزقنا اتباعه وارنا الباطل باطلا وارزقنا اجتنابه