

REVIVING CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION THROUGH THE STRENGTHENING AND UNITY OF AKIDAH

Dr. Azmin bin Yusof
Pusat Pengkajian Kefahaman
Ahli Sunnah Waljama'ah
Kolej Universiti Perguruan Agama Seri Begawan
avalawae@rocketmail.com

Introduction

Indeed there are innumerable challenges and tribulations facing the Muslim ummah of today. The biggest hurdle of them all is the constant strife, enmity and bickering permeating through the community. In other words, there is a serious lack of brotherly goodwill and solidarity between one Muslim brother and the other. This in itself is an irony of sorts because Islam accords greater prominence and sanctity to ties of brotherhood over those of family and hereditary relationships.

And nowhere is this more pronounced than in the civil war currently unfolding in Syria where tens of thousands of our Muslim brothers are being massacred by their own fellow Muslim brothers; with untold bloodletting as well as homes displaced. What is painfully gut-wrenching is the fact that the Muslim ummah have become sitting ducks of the conspiracy plans orchestrated by the non-Muslims; with our sisters and brothers paying for it with their blood and honour.

The major contributory factor to this modern day debacle of Muslim disunity is the spectre of differentiation of akidah or belief, in spite of the fact that they all originated from the same Islamic faith. We have the Muslim Sunni on one hand and the Muslim Shi'at on the other. How then do we unite the Muslim worlds when they do not see eye to eye on fundamental matters related to akidah? This invariably is among the factors that has brought about the decline of contemporary Islamic civilization.

Muslims today really need to stay united in their akidah first before even seeking to stand united among themselves. Only when they are able to do so, they will be in a better position to resuscitate and revive the glory of our civilization akin to the golden age of Islam in the past. The question now is how to unite the Muslim worlds whose akidah is fragmented and disunited? How to manifest this religion in our present day reality where the souls are devoid of akidah? How do we even proceed to work towards the revival of our civilization in this sorry state of affairs?

Muslims more than ever now need to close ranks and further solidify and cement the unity among themselves so as to enable them to take on the challenges and realities of today and what lies ahead through the strength of unity of akidah. Interestingly, this was the approach used by all the Prophets and messengers when they made dakwah to their ummah. Regarding this, Allah s.w.t. said in surah al-Nahlu verse 36 meaning:

Verily, we have sent among every Ummah (community, nation) a Messenger (proclaiming): "Worship Allâh (Alone), and avoid (or keep away from) Tâghûât (all false deities, etc. i.e. do not worship Tâghûât besides Allâh)." Then of them were some whom Allâh guided and of them were some upon whom the straying was justified. So travel through the land and see what was the end of those who denied (the truth).

The verse above clearly outlines that akidah is the most important element for someone to be deemed a true worshipper of Allah s.w.t.

The tragic reality of the Muslim situation nowadays in terms of conflict of akidah, differences of methods of belief, lack of trust in knowledge and practical religious obligations are symptomatic of a weak, ailing Islamic civilization.

This paper thus aims to discuss the significance of akidah in life as well as address its effectiveness in human life. Additionally it will highlight the ways or mechanism possible towards achieving unity of akidah among the ummah; as the ultimate tool for reviving Islamic civilization.

1- The Importance of Akidah in life

Actually akidah and syariah are elements which has linkages to each other, as fruit has connection with its tree, as sabab with its musabbab as well as conclusion with its introduction.¹

Human being is in dire need of akidah or belief in oneness of God in their lives. This is because through it they will be able to conduct and resolve all their routine affairs of life easily and comfortably. However, on the other hand if they were to go about their lives devoid of akidah, they will invariably suffer loss of dignity and respect in every sphere of their lives. Chaos and anarchy will be the order of the day. Consequently they would not be able to regulate their lives in tranquility and calm; in addition to a lack of vision for future progress as well as a lack of a distinctive identity to set them apart from one other. All these could result in the severing of ties and relationships among members of society in the future².

In addition to that, it gives rise to problems of a loss of social cohesion and feelings of brotherhood among society members. They tend to lead isolated lives, alienated from each other and neither caring nor showing appreciation about the importance of family ties or the society at large.

In relation to this Prof. Muhammad Syamat has said³: “Akidah is the most important one. It forms the meat in the life of some societies or it forms the main pillar which could gather and unite all races of people on this planet”. Thus, akidah represents the center and introduction to all affairs in human’s lives. It is capable of uniting people across all borders such as the Arabs, Romans, Persians as well as other races of different skin colour under the power of Allah Almighty.

Verily, human beings are the servants of Allah s.w.t.. However, they cannot be the best worshipper of Allah s.w.t. unless they have fully comprehended the word ‘akidah’ or grasped the meaning of LA ILAHA ILLALLAH which means: There is no God to worship but Allah s.w.t. only. In other words, there is no judge except Allah s.w.t., no law or syariat except that which came from Him, and there is no absolute power than His Power. Therefore, Allah s.w.t. is the All Powerful.

¹ Al-Syed Sabiq, 1983, al-Aqa'id al-Islamiyyah, Beirut: Darul Fikri, p.7

² Prof. Muhammad Syamat, 1988, al-Islam Din wa al-Dunya, Cairo: tp.p.128

³ Ibid

By analogy, life without akidah is likened to the life of an animal which acts and reacts to satisfy and satiate its instinctive need for food in order to survive. But the presence of akidah in humankind will clearly distinguish between the two forms of lives. Thus, Allah s.w.t. has sent His prophets to the people to correct and reform what has gone awry in the performance of religious teachings or worship to Allah s.w.t. The prophets were successful in educating them with religious knowledge through discussion and dialogue till they had a better understanding and knowledge in carrying out their ibadat to Allah s.w.t. by avoiding the sin of syirik or association of deities to Allah as well as going astray from His way⁴. Moreover, Allah s.w.t. has informed Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. and his other prophets that there is no God to worship except Allah s.w.t. alone as revealed below⁵:

We never sent a messenger before you without inspiring him that: “There is no god but I, so worship Me.”

In translating this verse al-Qurtubi explained⁶: “Allah s.w.t. did not send the prophet to this ummat except to unify and declare the Oneness of Allah s.w.t. through all His syariat whether in the Book of Torah, Bible or al-Qur’an al Kareem ”.

While on the subject of akidah or belief, let us turn to Japan as a case in point. The Japanese civilization was established based on the strong belief known as “Kaizen”. They were their own masters; they did not blindly follow any charismatic leader’s bidding or mould. Rather they held on steadfast to their own principles, their own precepts and beliefs to preserve, sustain and keep their civilization alive. In fact since the last decade, they strove hard to overcome the issue of illiteracy which was one of the pressing concerns of their nation⁷. Their Kaizen belief rallied them together as one united nation in the bid to collectively move forward and succeed in every human endeavour especially in the domain of science and technology. It is therefore not surprising that today Japan is the leading economic powerhouse in Asia, particularly in terms of scientific and technological advancements.

That is a true shining example of the superiority and excellence of strong belief, conviction and attitude which could bind together a nation and help preserve their civilization as well as drive them to move forward as one whole on their own terms and plan. How then do we Muslims propose to move forward? Or how do developed or developing Muslim countries with weak akidah and always following the recipes of others plan to preserve our Islamic civilization? Is the apartment that we have built going to be any stronger and solid without a strong foundation to place it on? Truly, the main basic foundation of human being is his akidah. Akidah is without question the most crucial factor in human lives.

2- The effectiveness of akidah in human life

A human being infused with strong akidah Islamiyyah would behave in the most righteous manner, always refraining from what Allah s.w.t. has prohibited and complying by what is made permissible by Him. In doing so, he will achieve tranquility, inner peace, harmony as well as serenity in the conduct of his daily life pursuits. Among the effectiveness of akidah in human life are as follows:

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Surah al-Ambiya’, verse.25.

⁶ Al-Qurthubi: Abu al-Walid, 1966, al-Jami’ Li Ahkam al-Qur’an al- karim, vol.6, Beirut: Dar Ihya’ al-Thurath al-Arabi, p.286

⁷ Prof. Mahdi al-Munjarah, 1991, al-Harb al-Hadhariyyah al-‘Ula, Casablanca: Mansyurat Uyun al-Maqalat, p.38

2.1- Good morals

Actually, Allah's objective of sending His prophet to the people, besides calling his people to worship Allah s.w.t., was to enhance the moral character of his people. It was evident from the saying of the Prophet s.a.w. when he said which means: Truly I was sent to perfect the moral conduct of this ummah⁸.

Thus, it is clear that the quality and worth of a nation's moral integrity is a most significant aspect contributing to the rise and fall of nations and its civilization.

The prophet Muhammad s.a.w. was an epitome of high virtuous conduct. Thus, Allah s.w.t. praised him in Al-Qur'an al-Karim, surah al-Qalam, verse 4 which means:

And you are of a great moral character.

Al-Thobari in this respect said: Allah s.w.t. praised the highest moral conduct of prophet Muhammad s.a.w.

Actually high morality is also formed as the "secret treasure of religion". This was corroborated by the prophet s.a.w. when he said⁹: "Morality is the secret treasure of religion".

By this, it is clear that morals is the secret treasure of religion. Thus, a person of high moral conduct will always understand religion and keep following its teaching closely.

Moral is a basic foundation to improve the morality of a person, build his personality and characteristics as well as a sign that a person has been granted hidayah and guidance from Allah s.w.t. and leant towards the teachings of al-Qur'an.

In addition to this, Prof. WahbahZuhayli highlighted the signs of a person of high morals as follows:

- a- Truthfulness
- b- Trustworthy
- c- Ambitious and high-spirited
- d- Guarding of the tongue
- e- Refrain from envy and ill-feelings towards others

It is no doubt that akidah is the most important element for making a person with high morals, good attitude and a good worshipper of Allah s.w.t. as well.

2.2- Gentleness and sympathy

The positive effects of akidah in human life could drive a person to do good deeds towards others regardless of whether they are related to him or not, his neighbours and so on. In conjunction with this Allah s.w.t. has said in Surah al-Nisa' verse 36: "Worship God, and ascribe

⁸ Hadith has been narrated by Abu Daud.

⁹ Hadith narrated by al-Hakim.

no partners to Him, and be good to the parents, and the relatives, and the orphans, and the poor, and the neighbor next door, and the distant neighbor, and the close associate, and the traveler, and your servants.”

The first one who is need of the gentleness of treatment and sympathy when interacting with him, after his parents and children, is his wife. This is because the wife is his companion who always accompanies him in his family life and all his life affairs.

Al-Syaikh Ali al-Sobuni refers to this as follows¹⁰: Among the signs of the Mighty and perfection of the creation of Allah s.w.t. is creating women for men from the same creation which is human being and not from another types of creation such as jin and so on. If Allah s.w.t. has created women from another type such as jin and the like it would not match to each other and there would always be disputes and fighting among themselves.

2.3- Speaking the truth and performing good deeds

Indeed truthfulness is a hallmark of good behavior encouraged by Islam. It is considered as a manifestation of good morals towards others. Thus, a person who speaks the truth and carry out good deeds is surely a person who moves and contributes to the building of a perfect human society. This is because being truthful at all times helps fill life with wisdom and barakah including facilitates towards improving and strengthening the relationship among society members.

Islam encourages one to be truthful as a person who behaves as such will be invited by Allah s.w.t. to enter His paradise. Allah s.w.t. has said in surah al-Maidah verse 119 that:

“This is a Day when the truthful will benefit from their truthfulness.” They will have Gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they will remain forever. God is pleased with them, and they are pleased with Him. That is the great attainment.”

In relation to this al-SyaikhZamakhshari remarked ¹¹: “Really, even Iblis is obedient and believed in Allah s.w.t. on the day of resurrection but because they do not believed in Allah s.w.t. in this world, thus they will not reap the rewards of their belief in Allah s.w.t. on the day of resurrection at all.”

The virtue of good deeds or amalsolih was mentioned many times in al-Qur’an al-Karim. Among them Allah s.w.t. commanded a person to conduct good deeds and in return promised to reward him on the day resurrection as He has said in surah al-Baqarah verse 277 which means:

“Those who believe, and do good deeds, and pray regularly, and give charity—they will have their reward with their Lord; they will have no fear, nor shall they grieve.”

While translating this verse al-Syaikh Ali al Sobuni has said¹²: That’s the believer who believe in Allah s.w.t. and conducting good deeds such prayer and pilgrimage and so on surely for them is special reward in Paradise and they do not suffered even feared and faced any difficulties on the day of judgment.

¹⁰ Al-Syaikh Ali al-Sabuni,1997,Safwat al-Tafasir,vol.2,Cairo:Dar al-Sobuni,p.

¹¹ Abu al-Qasim al-Zamakhshari,1972,Tafsir al-Kasyaf,vol.1,Cairo,Maktabah al-Halabi,p.659

¹² Al-Syaikh Ali al-Sobuni,Op.cit,p.23

Allah s.w.t. also mentioned about good deeds on a number of occasions in the Al-Qur'an al-Karim. Therefore good deeds or amalsolih is the most important one and plays a significant role in helping us to attain a good life whether in this world and the hereafter.

2.4- Logical thinking

Islam places a high premium on the importance of the brain and thinking faculty. Both are crucial as they assist humanity to maintain and guide them to deliver good deeds in this planet as well as engage in research in many fields of knowledge to unlock the secrets of His Creations. By this, a person who goes on a quest searching for this secret will ultimately lead him on the path to know his God, the creator of this world. There are 17 verses in the al-Qur'an which exhort humankind to study and think deep about themselves, as well as His creations. These divine commands reaffirmed the true function of a logical brain which is to think till one arrives at a comprehension of one's God, the Creator and Lord of the Universe. Among those verses which invite people to think can be found in surah al-Baqarah verse 219 which means:

“Thus God explains the revelations to you, so that you may think.”

Moreover, akidah or belief is capable of transforming and elevating the animalistic tendencies or instincts present in humans to the ranks of angels; apart from the fact that akidah is a powerful beacon of inner energy to steer and navigate us when we have to face the challenges and adversities of life. Akidah also pushes a person to continuously do good deeds for the sake of the general well-being and betterment of others in society as well as to move forward in achieving successful life in this world and hereafter.

2.5-Brotherhood and helping one another

If a person is familiar and understands with what is preached by the al-Qur'an and dutifully applies its teaching, along with possessing a correct akidah in managing his daily life, he will display high virtuous conduct when dealing with other members of society. He will exhibit qualities of gentleness when interacting with others, always give due respect to them as well as avoid causing troubles to his colleagues and so on. In fact he will regard them all as a brotherhood of Islam, loving one other, being lenient and empathetic to the sadness of others and the like. In relation to this Allah s.w.t. has said in surah al-Hujurat, verse 10 which means:

“The believers are brothers, so reconcile between your brothers, and remain conscious of God, so that you may receive mercy.”

IbnuKathir himself mentioned¹³: “All human beings are of one brotherhood, from the religious perspective.”

Al- Syaikh Ali Sobuni also said¹⁴: “One is not considered a believer or mukmin unless the sense of brotherhood among them could bind them closely with iman, and there is not to be quarrel or disputes or anger and killing of one another.”

¹³Ibnu Kathir, 1992, Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim, vol.4, Beirut, Dar:al-Fikri.

¹⁴ Al-Syaikh Ali al-Sobuni, Op.cit.p.216

The initial feelings of brotherhood will gradually blossom into a deep desire of wanting to help each other, sharing of happiness and sadness as well as avoid making trouble to one other, restoring the rights of those who are entitled to it as well as showing gentleness and love and compassion for one another. This situation confirms the words of the Prophet s.a.w. who once said: "A common shared feeling of brotherhood among the true believers in terms of their love, their leniency and mercy towards each other, is like that of a person who if he complains of agony and discomfort in his body; the other members of his family would likewise feel for his agony and discomfort, too."

It is thus clear to us how important the element of brotherhood is from the Islamic point of view. This sense of brotherhood is surely emerged from correct akidah or faith of someone.

3- The ways or mechanism possible towards achieving unity of akidah among Muslims

There are ways or mechanism possible to achieve the unity of akidah or faith among Muslims as follows:

1- Learn profoundly about akidah

Every Muslim people has to well-versed about the knowledge of akidah. This is the compulsory testament in our religion. When every person knows well about akidah, they will get close to each other through the notion and sense of brotherhood and function as one community. About learning akidah, Abu Hanifahrahimahullah has mentioned¹⁵:

Learning the religion is more superior than learning the knowledge itself.

Surely, akidah is something related to the religion and by akidah Allah s.w.t. would reward as to whether His worshipper would enter paradise or dwell as a permanent denizen of Hell. About the superiority of akidah, Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. has mentioned in his hadith which is narrated on the authority of Abdullah b.Mas`ud that Waki` told him that the Messenger of Allah had said and asserted by IbnNumair: I heard the Messenger of Allah s.w.t. saying:

He who dies associating anything with Allah s.w.t. would enter the Fire (of Hell). Abdullah bin Mas`ud said: I say that he who died without associating anything with Allah s.w.t. will enter paradise.

In another hadith reported by Abu Tharr: I came to the Apostle s.a.w. and he was asleep with a white mantle over him. I again came, he was still asleep, I came again and he had awakened. I sat by his side and he said: There is none among the bondsmen who affirmed his faith with (there is no God but Allah) and died in this state and did not enter paradise. I (Abu Tharr) said: Even if he committed adultery and theft? He (the Holy Prophet) replied: (Yes) even though he committed adultery and theft. I (again said): Even if he committed adultery and theft? He replied: (Yes) even though he committed adultery and theft. (the Holy Prophet s.a.w. repeated it three times) and said for the fourth time in defiance of Abu Tharr. Abu Tharr then went out and he repeated (these words):

¹⁵ Al-Imam Abu Hanifah r.a.,Tauhid al-Akidah,www.ajurry.com

Based on the hadith mentioned above, we observed that the most treasured and priceless gift in our lives is akidah. The words of the Holy Prophet in this hadith “Even though he committed adultery and theft” too clearly indicated that the Holy Prophet held these two acts to be grave offences in Islam. The point which he wanted to stress was that, although these are very serious crimes, yet they are not as serious as that of polytheism or syirk. That is to say Allah may pardon the adulterers or thieves with due punishment, but association with the Lord or syirk is an unpardonable crime and those who commit it is doomed to the Hellfire.

If we observed from the al-Fatihah verses, we can see that there are three kinds of Tauhid; acknowledgement and testimony of worship of Allah s.w.t., His Divine Names, His Attributes as well as His Power, His Godship, reassurance of life after death, reciprocation and the day of resurrection.

Al-Syaikh Ibnu Taymiyyah has said:¹⁶” He who learns what was brought by Prophet Muhammad s.a.w., believes in it in detail as well as practise it, he is considered as the one with the most perfect iman”.

The most valuable thing brought by the Prophet to this ummah is akidah or tauhid. It is no wonder that Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. spent 13 years at Makkah al-Mukarramah to teach his ummah about akidah.

2-Teach correct akidah to others

The duty of every Muslim is to spread correct akidah to others after learning it. As I pointed out earlier, the Prophet s.a.w. spent 13 years in Makkah to teach the people about akidah or tauhid and to correct their akidah. Why was this necessary? This was because the Islamic way of life is not yet on the right straight path until one has possessed the correct akidah since all Muslim affairs revolve around and is based on the akidah.

If we looked back to the reality of life in the Jahiliyyah period, it was full of evil mischief, disasters and pagan behaviours and practices because they were so distanced from Allah’s religion, far away from the true akidah.

Sad to say, we are still facing this situation in today’s world, something quite similar to the Jahiliyyah situation of the past - but with a difference. In this respect, al-Syaikh al-Albanirahimahullah said, “There is no doubt that the reality of life during the Jahiliyyah period is identical to the lifestyle rampantly practiced by Muslims today. So we can say that the cure for it will be the same too; and so will be its medication. Meaning, the cure or antidote will be the same as that was used by the Prophet s.a.w. to cure the Jahiliyyah situation. Hence Islamic preachers (Du`at Islamiyyeen) will have to take on the huge task and responsibility of correcting and curing the misunderstanding or misperception people have about akidah and to educate them well about all matters related to akidah.

To demonstrate a point on this issue, Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. sent Mu`az bin Jabal to Yemen to call people to acknowledge and testify to the Oneness of God or Tauhid beforehand, and to this effect the Prophet said:

¹⁶ Al-Imam Ibnu Taymiyyah, Tauhid al-Akidah, www.ajurry.com

“Make sure that the first thing you call them to is to bear witness that there is no God but Allah s.w.t. and me the messenger of Allah s.w.t.”¹⁷

That clearly shows the importance of akidah. Thus, every relationship which is not based on akidah will invite many calamities and misfortunes resulting in enmity and chaos between Muslims themselves.

In addition to that, al-Syaikh al-Albani also said¹⁸:” There is no benefit at all to gather Muslim as one community but let them astray without understanding the meaning of the word “ LA ILAHA IL LAL LAH “. It does not benefit them at all, whether in this world or on the day of resurrection.

A corrected akidah present in his soul and mind is the only way to secure a Muslim from waging atrocities and civil wars with one another. It is indeed the first step necessary towards the goal of uniting all Muslims in this world and realizing the brotherhood of Islam.

The youth of today need to correct their akidah; and for this we need to give them a detailed explanation about what akidah really means, without decreasing or contrasting its meaning. It is not enough just to provide the general definition but we certainly need to explain the notion of akidah in full to help our youth liberate their minds from negative ideas and philosophies which are in direct opposition to the basic tenets of Islam.

Ibnu bin Baz further said¹⁹: “It is necessary for scholars everywhere to teach the people about their religion, to explain the reality of Tauhid as well as the reality of Syirk. The scholars also have to explain to the people the ways of Syirk, kinds of Bid`ah which occur in their society till they could eradicate them all.”

3- Back to the original akidah

Akidah is the way to unite the Muslim people and the Muslim world as well as to gain victory for the people. History has proven that Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. achieved great victory from the pagan people during his lifetime due to the strength and unity of the Muslims derived from their unshakeable akidah.

It is necessary for every Muslim to revert back to the original akidah which is based on the method of the salafussalih as followed by the Rightly Guided Companions and their followers till the day of resurrection. This is truly the most important and compulsory tool and weapon in religion.

In relation to this, Ibnu bin Baz pointed out²⁰: “It is necessary for all Muslims, government or population to steer clear of polytheism and Bid`ah and to follow the methodology of salafUmmah.”

SalafUmmah is also known as AhliSunnahWaljama`ah [FirqahNajiyah]. They are the group of people who followed in the footsteps of Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. and his Companions. They

¹⁷ Hadith Mattafaqun `Alaih

¹⁸ Al-SyaikhNasir al-Albani,Tauhid al-Akidah,www.ajury.com

¹⁹ Al- Syaikh Abdul Aziz bin Baz,Tauhid al-Akidah,www.ajurry.com

²⁰ Ibid

never created and brought into the religion what was never brought or relayed by the Prophet Muhammad s.a.w..

In light of this, Imam Abdullah Ibn Alawi al-Haddad said²¹: “The People of the Sunnah and Jama'ah” (Ahl as-Sunnah walJama'ah) : They are those who firmly adhere to the way of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him), and of his Companions (may Allah be pleased with them all) ”.

The AhliSunnahWaljama`ahalwayskeptwhat was brought by the Prophetandhis Companions.

This group has the largest communityof followers dispersed throughout theworld.

The history ofthe emergence of the AhliSunnahWaljama`ah began after the descent of the al-Qur'an to ProphetMuhammadintheCave of Hira. They are namedas"AhliSunnahWaljama`ah "based on theirbelieveto thehadithof the Holy Prophets.a.w. and sayings or his family's guidanceas well as those of his Companions later. This isto distinguish them fromthebid`ah group who alwaysdoes what the prophet s.a.w. does not about the religion matter.

However, we cannot hope to go back to the ways of our eminent scholars or salafussalih if we do not, first and foremost, fill our hearts and mind with tauhid or akidah.

Conclusion

Akidah is the most important tool in *strengthening* the structure of human existence and life. The correct akidah will have a positive balming effect on human's life where ultimately people will lead a life of peace, serenity and comfort. Thus, akidah is the important pillar that must be upheld for human life, especially for the goal of reviving human civilization in today's society.

To this end, we have to show more concern and put in greater effort to study and understand about akidah first in order to enable us to disseminate it to others from every walk of life. This method runs parallel to the message that Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. had given to his ummah: “Acknowledge Allah s.w.t. first before you go about your daily routine affairs in this world.” WallahuA`alawaA`alam.

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²¹ Al-Albani,Who are the Ahli as-SunnahWalJama`ah?

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