

# Isnād-Criticism by the First Four Caliphs

by GF Haddad – Dhūl-Ḥijja 1425

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The plot to kill our liege-lord ‘Uthmān marked the onset of dissension (*fitna*) in the Community. Together with deadly division, the great sign of this Dissension was the beginning of falsehood. The timeline for the spread of falsehood was foretold by the Prophet ﷺ in the ḥadīth: “I recommend to you my Companions, then those that come after them, then those that come after them. Afterwards, falsehood will spread.”<sup>1</sup> To counter this, the sciences of ḥadīth and ḥadīth criticism were innovated within the half-century which followed ‘Uthmān’s death in order to sift true Prophetic and Companion-reports from false ones. This was done by verifying the authenticity of transmission chains (*isnāds*) embodied in the honesty and competence of transmitters, and by examining the conditions and contents of transmission in their minutest historical, linguistic, and doctrinal details. The principle of authentication was founded by the Prophet ﷺ himself and put into use by each of his four rightly-guided Caliphs followed by the rest of the major Companions and their Successors.

Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn (d. 110) said: “We used to accept as true what we heard, then lies spread and we began to say: Name your transmitters. If they belonged to *Ahl al-Sunna* their ḥadīth would be accepted while *Ahl al-Bida’* were identified and their ḥadīth was rejected.”<sup>2</sup> Confirming this is al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī’s (d. 110) reaction to someone who requested his *isnād*: “O man! I neither lie nor was ever called a liar!”<sup>3</sup> Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161) said: “When certain narrators used lies, we used history against them”<sup>4</sup> and Ibn al-Mubārak (d. 181) declared: “The *isnād* is an integral part of the Religion, otherwise anyone can say anything.”<sup>5</sup> All this is based on the saying of the Companions and Successors: “**Truly, this knowledge is our Religion, therefore let each of you look carefully from whom he takes his Religion.**”<sup>6</sup>

The principle of authentication was founded by the Prophet ﷺ himself and inaugurated by Abū Bakr the Most Truthful after him. Thereafter, it was put into use by the rest of the Companions and the immediate succeeding generations such as the great above-named Imāms of superlative religion and science. This is proven by the Prophet’s ﷺ questioning of the man who said he had seen the new moon of Ramaḍān: “Do you bear witness that there is no God except Allāh and that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh?” When he replied in the affirmative, the Prophet ﷺ accepted his news.<sup>7</sup> The practice of the Companions – followed by the subsequent generations – illustrates the same principle of ḥadīth verification:

When Abū Bakr asked: “How much does the grandmother inherit?” Al-Mughīra ibn Shu‘ba said, “I bear witness that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ gave her one sixth.” Abū Bakr said, “Does anyone else know this?” Then Muḥammad ibn Maslama came forward with the same report.<sup>8</sup> Al-Ḥākim said: “The first to ascertain that no lie be attributed to the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ was Abū Bakr.”<sup>9</sup> Al-Dhahabī said: “Abū Bakr was the first to take precautions before accepting reports.”<sup>10</sup>

When ‘Umar asked the people if they had heard anything concerning the stillborn, the same al-Mughīra ibn Shu‘ba said: “I witnessed the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ order the emancipation of a male or female slave [as payment] for it.” ‘Umar said, “Bring me someone to witness [to the same] with you,” after which Muḥammad ibn Maslama again came forth and witnessed to the same.<sup>11</sup> Even so, ‘Umar seems to have sought further assurance since Tāwūs also narrated that when ‘Umar asked, “I adjure by Allāh any man who heard from the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ something about the foetus?” Ḥamal ibn Mālik ibn al-Nābigha got up and said, “I was between two women of mine – meaning two wives – and one of them hit the other one with a tent-pole killing her and her unborn child, whereupon the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ ordered that she pay one tenth of the blood money or [the emancipation of] a slave for the foetus, and that she be killed for killing the woman.” ‘Umar said, “Had I not heard it I would have ruled something else.”<sup>12</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Narrated from ‘Umar by al-Tirmidhī who graded it *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ gharīb*, Ahmad with a sound chain, and Ibn Mājah, as part of a longer ḥadīth. See al-Tirmidhī’s *al-‘Ilal al-Kabīr* (p. 323 §596) and al-Dāraquṭnī’s *‘Ilal* (2:65-68).

<sup>2</sup>Narrated by Muslim in the introduction to his *Ṣaḥīḥ* and by al-Tirmidhī in his *Sunan* and *‘Ilal*.

<sup>3</sup>Narrated by al-Mizzī in *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl* (1:259).

<sup>4</sup>Cited by al-Sakhāwī in *al-‘Ilān wal-Tawbīkh* (p. 9).

<sup>5</sup>Narrated by Muslim in the introduction to his *Ṣaḥīḥ* and al-Khaṭīb in his *Tārīkh* (6:166). Ibn al-Subkī in *Tabaqāt al-Shāfi‘iyya al-Kubrā* (1:314) mentions this and other similar statements of the *Salaf*: “The *isnād* is the believer’s weapon” (Sufyān al-Thawrī); “Religion does not disappear except with the disappearance of the *isnād*” (al-Awzā‘ī); “Every religion has its knights, and the knights of this Religion are the bearers of *isnāds*” (Yazīd ibn Zuray‘); “Pursuing the highest *isnād* [*i.e.* the shortest chain with the least narrator-links] is part of the Religion” (Ahmad ibn Hanbal).

<sup>6</sup>Narrated *mawqūf* from Abū Hurayra by al-Khaṭīb in *al-Jāmi‘ li-Akhḫāq al-Rāwī* (1991 ed. 1:195 §140), *maqṭū‘* from Ibn Sīrīn by Muslim in the introduction to his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, and al-Tirmidhī at the very end of the *Shamā‘il*, and from Ibn Sīrīn and Ibn ‘Awn by al-Khaṭīb in *al-Faḥīh wal-Mutaḥaqiqh* (2:378 §1133-1134). Also narrated *marfū‘* from Anas by al-Khaṭīb in *al-Jāmi‘ li-Akhḫāq al-Rāwī* (1991 ed. 1:194 §139) and Abū Hurayra by al-Ḥākim, both with weak chains.

<sup>7</sup>Narrated with a fair chain from Ibn ‘Abbās by al-Tirmidhī, Abū Dāwūd, and al-Dārimī.

<sup>8</sup>Narrated in the *Muwatta‘* and *Sunan* cf. ‘Ajāj al-Khaṭīb, *al-Sunna Qabl al-Tadwīn* (p. 112).

<sup>9</sup>Al-Ḥākim, *al-Madkhal ilā Ma‘rifati Kitāb al-Iklīl* (p. 116 §200=p. 46) toward the end.

<sup>10</sup>Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-Huffāz* (1:2-3) cf. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā al-A‘zamī, *Manhaj al-Naqd ‘ind al-Muḥaddīthīn* (p. 50).

<sup>11</sup>Narrated by al-Bukhārī and Muslim cf. al-A‘zamī, *Manhaj al-Naqd* (p. 51) and ‘Ajāj al-Khaṭīb, *al-Sunna Qabl al-Tadwīn* (p. 114).

<sup>12</sup>Narrated from Ḥamal in the *Sunan* and *Musnad* and al-Mughīra ibn Shu‘ba in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* cf. al-A‘zamī, *Manhaj al-Naqd* (p. 54).

‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Amr ibn Umayya al-Ḍamrī narrated from his father that ‘Umar passed the latter as he was haggling over the price of a wool or silk garment. ‘Umar asked, “What is this?” He replied, “I wish to buy it and give it away as a charity.” He bought it and gave it to his wife, saying, “I heard the Messenger of Allāh ρ say, ‘Whatever you give the womenfolk [of your household] it is a *ṣadaqa*.’” ‘Umar said, “Who will witness [to this] with you?” He went to ‘Ā’isha and stood behind the door. She asked, “Who is this?” He replied, “‘Amr.’” She said, “What brings you?” He said, “I heard the Messenger of Allāh ρ say, ‘Whatever you give the womenfolk it is a *ṣadaqa*.’” She said, “Yes.”<sup>13</sup>

Mālik ibn Aws said: “I heard ‘Umar say to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf, Ṭalḥa, al-Zubayr, and Sa‘d: ‘I adjure by Allāh by Whom stand the heaven and the earth! Do you all know for sure that the Messenger of Allāh ρ said, “We [Prophets] do not bequeath inheritance; whatever we leave behind is charity (*ṣadaqa*)?”’ They all said, ‘*Allāhumma!* Yes.’”<sup>14</sup>

“The Two Shaykhs” – Abū Bakr and ‘Umar – went to inordinate lengths in their suspicion of fraud in ḥadīth reports. Abū Bakr had the written record of all the ḥadīths he had in his possession burnt lest a mistake slip into them. It is related that ‘Ā’isha said: “My father gathered the ḥadīth from the Messenger of Allāh ρ and it was five hundred ḥadīths. He spent one night tossing and turning and this worried me. I said, ‘Are you tossing and turning because of some ailment or have you heard some bad news?’” In the morning he said, “Daughter, bring me the ḥadīths you have with you.” I brought them, then he called for fire and burnt them. He said, “I fear lest I die with those [ḥadīths] still in your possession and there might be among them ḥadīths from someone I trusted and believed, but it was not as he said to me, and I would have imitated him [in his error].”<sup>15</sup>

Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī visited ‘Umar one day but the latter was busy with the *Anṣār* so Abū Mūsā left. Later, when ‘Umar asked him why he had left he replied: “I asked permission to enter thrice but was denied so I left, since the Messenger of Allāh ρ said: ‘When one of you asks permission to enter thrice and is denied, let him leave.’” ‘Umar said: “I swear by Allāh that you are going to have to prove this beyond doubt or I shall make you sore! Has anyone among you heard this from the Prophet ρ?” Ubay ibn Ka‘b said, “I swear by Allāh that none but the youngest here shall stand by you!” Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī said: “I was the youngest, so I stood by him and told ‘Umar that the Prophet ρ had indeed said that.” ‘Umar said to Abū Mūsā, “Truly I do not question your truthfulness, but I feared lest people start attributing things to the Messenger of Allāh ρ!”<sup>16</sup>

Sālim Abū al-Naḍr narrated that ‘Umar asked al-‘Abbās to sell or donate his house so the Prophet’s ρ mosque could be expanded and accommodate the large number of the Muslims but al-‘Abbās refused. They went to Ubay ibn Ka‘b for arbitration whereupon the latter narrated that the Prophet ρ said: “Allāh revealed to Dāwūd, ‘O Dāwūd, build for me a house where I shall be remembered and mentioned.’ Dāwūd designed the plan for Bayt al-Maqdis but squarely in the middle was the house of one of the Israelites. Dāwūd asked him to sell it to him but the man refused, after which Dāwūd thought to take it from him. Allāh revealed to him, ‘Dāwūd, I asked you to build for me a house where I shall be remembered and mentioned but you want to enter robbery into my house! Your punishment is that you will not build it.’ Dāwūd said, ‘Lord! One of my offspring then.’ He said, ‘One of your offspring.’” ‘Umar grabbed Ubay by ties of his garments and said, “I brought you something but your brought a greater [problem] by far! You shall take back what you said!” Then he dragged him until he brought him into the mosque and stood him before a circle of the Companions of the Messenger of Allāh ρ, among them Abū Dharr, saying, “I adjure by Allāh any man that heard the Messenger of Allāh ρ say the ḥadīth of Bayt al-Maqdis in which Allāh commanded Dāwūd to build it, to mention that ḥadīth!” Abū Dharr said, “I heard it from the Messenger of Allāh ρ!” Another man said, “So did I!” Another also said, “So did I!” Then ‘Umar let go of Ubay. The latter turned to him and said, “‘Umar, do you suspect me [of lying] about the ḥadīth of the Messenger of Allāh ρ?” He replied, “Abū al-Mundhir, no, I swear by Allāh that I do not suspect you [of lying] about it but I hated that the ḥadīth of the Messenger of Allāh ρ not be exposed in full view.” Then he said to al-‘Abbās, “Go, I shall not pester you about your house.” The latter said, “Now that you do this, then I have given it as a charity to the Muslims by which I shall expand for them their mosque; but as for you challenging me over it, then no!” Then ‘Umar designed for them their present-day edifice and built it out of the Muslim treasury.<sup>17</sup>

Even with two witnesses ‘Umar sometimes did not accept a report. When al-‘Abbās came to him saying, “The Messenger of Allāh ρ gave me al-Baḥrayn [present-day Aḥsā’] as my allotment,” ‘Umar asked, “Who knows this?” He said, “al-Mughīra ibn Shu‘ba.” The latter came and bore witness to it. Even so, ‘Umar did not accede to his demand, as if he were not accepting his testimony, whereupon al-‘Abbās told him some harsh words. ‘Umar said, “‘Abd Allāh, take your father’s hand....”<sup>18</sup>

Yet, the standard for verifying authenticity was often met even without seeking a second witness. ‘Umar received Abū Wāqid al-Laythī’s sole report that in the two *Eids* the Prophet ﷺ used to recite Sūrat Qāf and Surat al-Qamar.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, when he heard ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf’s sole report that there was plague in Syro-Palestine, ‘Umar turned back the entire Muslim army rather than enter it.<sup>20</sup> He also began to take the *jizya* from the Zoroastrians after hearing the same ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf’s sole report from the Prophet ρ to that effect with regard to the Zoroastrians of Hajar.<sup>21</sup> He also

<sup>13</sup> Narrated by al-Bayhaqī in the *Sunan al-Kubrā* (4:178) cf. al-A‘zamī, *Manhaj al-Naqd* (p. 52-53).

<sup>14</sup> Narrated by Ahmad with a sound chain cf. ‘Ajāj al-Khaṭīb, *al-Sunna Qabl al-Tadwīn* (p. 115).

<sup>15</sup> Narrated by al-Hākim as stated by Ibn Kathīr in the *Musnad al-Ṣiddīq* inside his *Jāmi‘ al-Asānīd*.

<sup>16</sup> Narrated by al-Bukhārī and Muslim cf. al-A‘zamī, *Manhaj al-Naqd* (p. 51) and ‘Ajāj al-Khaṭīb’s *Sunna Qabl al-Tadwīn* (p. 113-114).

<sup>17</sup> Narrated by Ibn Sa‘d in his *Ṭabaqāt* (4:13-14, 3:203) cf. al-A‘zamī, *Manhaj* (p. 52) and ‘Ajāj al-Khaṭīb, *Sunna Qabl al-Tadwīn* (p. 115).

<sup>18</sup> Narrated by Ibn Sa‘d (4:14) cf. al-A‘zamī, *Manhaj al-Naqd* (p. 53).

<sup>19</sup> Narrated by Muslim cf. al-A‘zamī, *Manhaj* (p. 56).

<sup>20</sup> Narrated by al-Shāfi‘ī in the *Risāla* (p. 429) cf. al-A‘zamī, *Manhaj al-Naqd* (p. 54).

<sup>21</sup> Narrated by al-Shāfi‘ī in the *Risāla* (p. 431) cf. al-A‘zamī, *Manhaj* (p. 54).

received ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s sole report from the Prophet ﷺ that “If one of you has doubts in his *Ṣalāt* whether he prayed one or two *rak‘as*, let him count it as one; if he does not know whether he prayed two or three, let him count them as two; and if he does not know whether he prayed three or four, let him count them as three. Then, let him prostrate after he has finished his prayer, while he is still sitting and before he gives *salām*, two prostrations.”<sup>22</sup> In another version ‘Umar even adds, “Narrate then, for you are the well-agreed upright one in our view!”<sup>23</sup> ‘Uthmān in his time gave ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf’s a similar commendation (see below). Al-Khaṭīb explained that the attribute “upright” signifies honesty while the attribute “well-agreed” refers to accuracy.

Another time, when ‘Umar used to say that the blood money (*diyya*) all went to the male blood relatives (*‘āqila*) and a woman got nothing from her husband’s blood money, al-Daḥḥāk ibn Sufyān told him that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ wrote him to let the wife of Ushaym al-Ḍabbābī inherit his *diyya*. Hearing this, ‘Umar changed to that position.<sup>24</sup> When a man from Thaḳāfī asked him, “Can a woman who visited the House then entered menses leave before purity?” ‘Umar said no but the Thaḳāfī said, “The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said otherwise than you.” Hearing this, ‘Umar got up and hit him with his birch, saying, “Why do you all ask me about something for which the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ already gave a reply?”<sup>25</sup>

Another time, when ‘Umar heard that Zayd ibn Thābit said no major ablution (*ghusl*) is required if there was mere penetration without ejaculation, he called him and said, “You little foe of himself! Is this what you are telling people?” He protested that he was not making it up but heard it from his uncles Rifā‘a ibn Rāfi‘ al-Zuraqī and Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī. Then ‘Umar asked confirmation from the Companions. When they differed, ‘Alī told him, “Send the question to the wives of the Prophet ﷺ,” whereupon ‘Ā’isha responded, “If one circumcised part (*al-khitān*) goes past another circumcised part (*i.e.* the male and female genitals) then *ghusl* is necessary.” ‘Umar said, “Let me not know anyone that does it now then does not make *ghusl* except I shall make an example of him!”<sup>26</sup>

Another time, when Umm Salama narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, “Of [those I treat today as] my Companions there will be those whom I shall never see nor shall they ever see me after I die.” ‘Umar said, “I adjure you by Allāh! Am I one of them?” She replied, “No, and I shall not ever exonerate anyone else after you.”<sup>27</sup> But he seems to have asked Ḥudhayfa the very same question and gotten the same reply when he remarked to the latter that he sometimes refrained from praying the funeral prayer over one of the deceased; Ḥudhayfa replied that the Prophet ﷺ had revealed to him the names of twelve of the hypocrites, whereupon ‘Umar asked Ḥudhayfa, “I adjure you by Allāh! Tell me, am I one of them?” Ḥudhayfa replied, “No, and I will not tell anyone anything further after this.”<sup>28</sup>

Another time, when ‘Umar was splashed by some blood from chickens that had been slaughtered and had dripped down a spout onto him as he was on his way to Jumu‘a he ordered that the spout be removed. Al-‘Abbās came to him and said, “I swear by Allāh that this was definitely the spot the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ himself placed it,” whereupon ‘Umar said, “I bid you to climb on my back until you place it back in the spot where the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ placed it.” Al-‘Abbās did just that.<sup>29</sup>

‘Umar even ordered his son ‘Abd Allāh: “When Sa‘d [ibn Abī Waqqāṣ] narrates something to you, do not reject it!” But this was prompted by ‘Abd Allāh’s questioning a widely known, mass-transmitted report among the Companions, namely the sunna of wiping on the leather socks.<sup>30</sup> And ‘Umar’s exclusive reliance on Ibn ‘Abbās over the senior veterans of Badr in the explanation of Sūrat al-Naṣr is well-known.<sup>31</sup>

Similarly did our liege-lord ‘Uthmān follow the sole report of al-Furay‘a bint Mālik ibn Sinān on the widow’s home waiting-period (*idda*) after he summoned and asked her, then applied what she had replied in his own rulings.<sup>32</sup> Another time, when al-Zubayr said, “‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf claims that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ allotted him such-and-such a land,” ‘Uthmān replied, “‘Abd al-Raḥmān is an agreeable witness whether for or against himself.”<sup>33</sup> Another time, he performed his ablution in the presence of an assembly of the Companions and said, “Thus did I see the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ make his ablution; all of you here, is it just so?” They all said yes.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, Abū Ayyūb said before Mu‘āwiya and ‘Uqba ibn ‘Āmir: “I heard the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ say, ‘Whoever makes his ablution just as he was commanded and prays just as he was commanded, all his past actions are forgiven.’ Is it just so, ‘Uqba?’” He said yes. And the *Tābi‘* al-

<sup>22</sup> Narrated by al-Tirmidhī (*hasan gharīb ṣaḥīḥ*) and Aḥmad.

<sup>23</sup> Narrated by al-Hākim (1:325), al-Bayhaqī in his *Sunan* (2:332), al-Khaṭīb in the *Kifāya* (p. 108), and Ibn ‘Asākir.

<sup>24</sup> Narrated by al-Shāfi‘ī in the *Risāla* (p. 426) cf. Muḥammad Ḥamīd Allāh, *al-Wathā‘iq al-Siyāsiyya* (§228) in al-‘Azamī, *Manhaj al-Naqd* (p. 53).

<sup>25</sup> Narrated by al-Bayhaqī in his *Madkhal* and al-Khaṭīb in *al-Faḳīh wal-Mutaḳaqqih* (1:207-208) cf. Ibn Ḥazm, *Iḥkām* (6:807), al-Suyūṭī, *Miftāḥ al-Janna* (p. 91 §173), and al-‘Azamī, *Manhaj al-Naqd* (p. 55).

<sup>26</sup> Narrated by al-Ṭahāwī in *Sharḥ Mushkil al-Āthār* (§3965) cf. al-Zarkashī, *al-Ijāba li-Īrād mā Istadrakathu ‘Ā’ishatu ‘alā al-Ṣaḥāba* (2<sup>nd</sup> ḥadīth of 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter) and al-‘Azamī, *Manhaj al-Naqd* (p. 55); and from Sa‘īd ibn al-Musayyab by al-Tirmidhī (*hasan ṣaḥīḥ*), al-Nasā‘ī, Ibn Mājah, and Aḥmad.

<sup>27</sup> Narrated by Ya‘qūb ibn Shayba in his *Musnad ‘Umar* cf. al-‘Azamī, *Manhaj al-Naqd* (p. 55).

<sup>28</sup> Narrated by al-Ṭabarī in his *Tafsīr* (11:11), al-Bazzār through trustworthy narrators according to al-Haythamī (3:42), al-Bayhaqī in his *Sunan al-Kubrā* (8:200), al-Azdī in *Musnad al-Rabī‘* (p. 361 §929), Ibn Abī Shayba (7:481).

<sup>29</sup> Narrated by Ibn Sa‘d (4:12) cf. al-‘Azamī, *Manhaj al-Naqd* (p. 56).

<sup>30</sup> Narrated by Aḥmad cf. al-‘Azamī, *Manhaj al-Naqd* (p. 54).

<sup>31</sup> Narrated by al-Bukhārī, al-Tirmidhī, and Aḥmad.

<sup>32</sup> Narrated by Mālik, al-Tirmidhī, and Abū Dāwūd cf. al-‘Azamī, *Manhaj al-Naqd* (p. 57).

<sup>33</sup> Narrated by Aḥmad with a sound chain, al-Khaṭīb in the *Kifāya* (p. 108), and al-Bayhaqī in the *Sunan al-Kubrā* (10:124).

<sup>34</sup> Narrated by Aḥmad with a sound chain cf. ‘Ajāj al-Khaṭīb, *al-Sunna Qabl al-Tadwīn* (p. 116).

Hakam asked Ibn ‘Abbās which day he should fast ‘Āshūrā’ he replied, “When you see the new moon of Muḥarram, get ready and arise fasting on the ninth.” Al-Ḥakam said, “Is this the way Muḥammad ρ fasted it?” Ibn ‘Abbās said yes.<sup>35</sup>

‘Alī said: “When I heard something from the Messenger of Allāh ε, Allāh would benefit me with it as He wished; but when someone other than him narrated it to me, I would make him swear to it; if he took an oath, I would believe him. And Abū Bakr said to me – and Abū Bakr tells the truth: ‘I heard the Messenger of Allāh ρ say, “None sins but then rises, purifies himself and prays, then asks forgiveness of Allāh except Allāh forgives him. Then he recited this verse, **(Yet whoso does evil or wrongs his own soul, then seeks pardon of Allāh, will find Allāh Forgiving, Merciful)** (4:110).”<sup>36</sup> Al-Bukhārī questioned the veracity of this report because its sole narrator from ‘Alī, the little-known *Tābi ʿī* Asmā’ ibn al-Ḥakam al-Fazārī or al-Sulamī, does not narrate anything else in all ḥadīth literature, nor was the practice of putting narrators under oath current among the Companions. Except for al-Bazzār, neither the earlier nor the later authorities endorsed those objections beginning with al-Bukhārī’s student Imām al-Tirmidhī who declared the ḥadīth fair while Ibn ‘Adī, Ibn Ḥibbān, al-‘Alā’ī, Ḍyā’ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, al-Dhahabī, Ibn Kathīr, and Ibn Ḥajar tend to grade it sound.<sup>37</sup>

Similarly, Ibn ‘Abbās said: “If a trustworthy source tells us of a *fatwā* by ‘Alī, we do not seek any further concerning it.”<sup>38</sup>

All the above evidence shows that the Companions already fully distinguished between reliable and unreliable sources. The double-checking in some cases was a reconfirmation of the element of accuracy (*dabt*) since the uprightness (*ʿadl*) was not being called into question in any of the examples given. All the Companions without exception are trustworthy sources according to the saying of Allāh: **(You are the best community that has been raised up for mankind)** (3:110) and several other verses and ḥadīths to that effect,<sup>39</sup> hence the absolute Consensus to that effect among *Ahl al-Sunna* according to Imām al-Ḥaramayn as cited by al-Shawkānī in *Irshād al-Fuḥūl* and others. Yet it is correct to say that some were more upright than others, and some were definitely more accurate and meticulous in their transmission than others.

Al-Dhahabī mentioned the version of the ḥadīth of *sahū* which ‘Umar prefaces by saying to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf, “Tell us, for you are in our view the well-agreed upright one” and comments:

Therefore, the Companions of the Messenger of Allāh ρ, even if they are upright, nevertheless, some of them are more upright than others and more firmly established (*fa-ba’duhum a’ḍalu min ba’ḍin wa-athbat*). Here, for example, ‘Umar was satisfied with the reporting of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān while, in the report of seeking permission [to enter] he said [to Abū Mūsā], “Bring someone to witness with you.” As for ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib he said, “Whenever someone narrated something to me from the Messenger of Allāh ρ I would make him swear to it; but Abū Bakr narrated to me – and Abū Bakr tells the truth.... So ‘Alī did not need to make the Ṣiddīq swear an oath. And Allāh knows best.”<sup>40</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Narrated by Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī, and Aḥmad.

<sup>36</sup> Narrated by al-Tirmidhī (*hasan*), Abū Dāwūd, al-Nasā’ī in the *Kubrā* and *ʿAmal al-Yawm wal-Layla*, Aḥmad in the *Musnad* and in *Faḍā’il al-Ṣaḥāba* (1:159 §142), Ibn Abī Shayba, Ibn al-Mubārak in *al-Zuhd*, Abū Ya’lā, al-Ḥumaydī, and al-Tayālīsī in their *Musnads*, al-Ṭabarānī in the *Awsaṭ*, Ibn ‘Adī who declared it *hasan* or *ṣaḥīḥ* in the *Kāmil*, Ibn Ḥibbān in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* (2:389-390 §623 *isnād hasan*), al-Ismā’īlī in *Mu’jam al-Shuyūkh*, al-Maqdisī in the *Mukhtāra*, al-‘Alā’ī who declared it *thābit* in *Jāmi’ al-Taḥṣīl*, al-Dhahabī who declared its chain fair (*hasan*) in *Tadhkirat al-Huffāz*, al-Haythamī in *Mawārid al-Zam’ān*, and Ibn Ḥajar who declared its chain “good” (*jayyid*) in *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*. Al-Bayhaqī narrates it in the *Shu’ab* through a completely different chain from ‘Alī. Cited in the books of *Tafsīr* for the verse cited. Ibn Kathīr declares it *ṣaḥīḥ* in his *Tafsīr*.

<sup>37</sup> M.M. al-A’zamī erred in declaring this narration “inauthentic” in his *Manhaj al-Naqd ‘ind al-Muhaddithīn* (p. 57) due to his imitating al-Mu’allimī’s claims in *al-Anwār al-Kāshifa* (p. 68) that the sole narrator of this ḥadīth, the *Tābi ʿī* Asmā’ ibn al-Ḥakam al-Fazārī or al-Sulamī, is unknown – also a claim of al-Bazzār’s but long since rejected by Mūsā ibn Hārūn as cited in *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb* – and that al-Bukhārī questioned this ḥadīth in *al-Tārīkh al-Kabīr* (2:54), but none of the subsequent masters confirmed him. Similarly al-Arna’ūt in *Tahṣīr al-Taqrīb* incorrectly rejects Ibn Ḥajar’s assessment of Asmā’ in the *Taqrīb* as *ṣaḍūq*: “*Bal majhūl*” on the grounds that he could not verify Mūsā ibn Hārūn’s statement that Asmā’ is not unknown because both ‘Alī ibn Rabī’a and al-Rukayn ibn al-Rabī’ narrate from him: “We could not find among the early authors of biography books someone that mentioned that al-Rukayn narrated from him.” Try ‘Abd al-Razzāq (1:434) and Ibn Abī Shayba (2:144). A further inconsistency is that al-Arna’ūt himself grades this ḥadīth fair in his edition of Ibn Ḥibbān’s *Ṣaḥīḥ*; how could that be if he considers Asmā’ unknown and no one else narrates it? As for the objection that “none of the other Companions asked others to swear before accepting their reports” it proves nothing, moreover, swearing or asking others to swear while narrating ḥadīth is part of the practices of ḥadīth Scholars as per *Fath al-Mughīth*.

<sup>38</sup> All three reports are narrated by Ibn Sa’d (2:339), Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr in *al-Istī’āb* (3:39-40), and al-Suyūṭī in *Tārīkh al-Khulafā’*.

<sup>39</sup> This evidence was listed by al-Khatīb in *al-Kifāya* (1358H ed. p. 46-49) and Ibn Ḥajar in *al-Iṣāba* (1:10-11).

<sup>40</sup> *Siyar* (Fikr ed. 3:46= Risāla ed. 1: 72-73).