

# The Infused Lights of the Biographies of the Righteous *(Lawaqih al-Anwar fi Tabaqat al-Akhyar)*

By Imam ‘Abdul-Wahhab ibn Ahmad al-Sha’rani

Translated by: Christopher ‘Khalil’ Moore

\*\* Unpublished Rough Draft \*\*

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*In the name of God, the Gracious, the Merciful*

May prayers and peace be upon our master Muhammad, his family and companions...

*Our master and our example in the path to God; the Shaykh; the Imam who lived according to his knowledge; the knower of God; the leader of the realizers; the example of the gnostics; the teacher of scholars and spiritual aspirants with the firmest principles of mystic establishment; the opener of the locks of vague meanings and of the indications of the realizers...: Abu al-Mawahib ‘Abdul-Wahhab ibn Ahmad ibn ‘Ali al-Ansari al-Shafi’i al-Misri (commonly known as “al-Sha’rani”), said:*

Praise be to God, who has bestowed upon His saints His immense blessings, for which they praise Him. He has chosen them for His love and has placed them in His service, and thus they guard their prayers. He has called them to His presence and has made their ranks apparent therein, thus “...*the foremost will be the foremost. Such are they that shall be brought near*” [Quran 56:10-11]. He has opened for them the doors of His presence and has lifted from their hearts the veils of His distance, thus they are in His court with perfect demeanor. He has been kind to them with His pure love and has made them safe from His rejection: “*No doubt! Verily, the friends of God, no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve*” [Qur’an 10:62]. He has illuminated their insight through His grace, has purified their inner beings, and has shown them the preserved

secret. He has protected them from the jealous ones, and has shielded them from the eyes of the immoral sinners. For they are the bridegrooms, and the bridegrooms are not to be seen by the wrongdoers.

If one of God's saints passes by such a people (i.e., the sinful) they accuse him of heresy and insanity. *"You will see them looking at you while they see not?"* [Quran 7:198] Among them is the one that denies their miracles, and among them is the one that belittles their spiritual stations. Among them is the one who attacks their honor, calls their spiritual states into question, and delves with ignorance into their utterances, all the while mocking them. *"God does mock at them, leaving them to wander blindly in their rebellion"* [Quran 2:15].

Glory be to the One who has brought near some people, and has chosen them for His service, for which reason they never leave His door! Glory be to the One who has made them stars in the sky of sainthood and has made the people of Earth find guidance through them! Glory be to the One who has permitted them the presence of His closeness, while those who criticize them are far from it! It is the saints who are in the garden of nearness, obtaining bliss, and those who deny are in the fire of exile, with nothing but punishment: *"He cannot be questioned as to what He does, while they will be questioned"* [Qur'an 21:23].

I bear witness that there is no deity but God, Alone—He has no partners—with a witnessing commensurate with the witnessing uttered by those of certainty. And I bear witness that our Master and Prophet, Muhammad, is His Servant and Messenger, who is the light and the preserved secret. Oh God, bless him and grant him peace, as well as the rest of the prophets and messengers, and all of their followers and companions every time the mentioners mention You, and the forgetters forget You!

To proceed:

This is a book in which I have compiled the life histories of a group of saints that have been true examples in the path of God, Mighty and Majestic is He. Starting with the noble companions and their followers, all the way up until the 9th century and part of the 10th century of the *hijrah*. My intention in doing so has been to

cultivate a proper understanding of the path of the people of *tasawwuf* and of the etiquettes of the spiritual stations and states. I have intended nothing other than this.

I have restricted myself to the mention of their most salient statements—their gems—and have excluded anything of a similar nature that others may have mentioned, such as that which is within the books of the doctors of sacred law. Furthermore, I will not address their states from the beginning of their spiritual training, except that which might be encouraging to those who aspire (to their way) [such as hunger, sleeplessness, obscurity, and so on]. I have also omitted that which indicates their great esteem for the sacred law (as such is well-known).

I have proceeded in this fashion in order to refute those who imagine that the Sufis (*al-qawm*) have refused something of the sacred law once they had actual become Sufis, such as what Ibn al-Jawzi blatantly stated about Imam al-Ghazali, and even concerning al-Junayd and al-Shibli themselves! For example, Ibn al-Jawzi said concerning them: “By my life, these ones have rolled up the carpets of the sacred law—and a massive rolling at that!—once they took the way of *tasawwuf*!” A group in my lifetime said similar things to me when I joined the poor ones (*al-fuqara*) and occupied myself with their way.

The methodology that I have taken in this work, as I have said, is to mention only their most salient utterances. To my knowledge, the writers of this genre of (Sufi) biographies have not done something similar, as they tend to mention everything that they find with regards to both their statements and their spiritual states, without differentiating between what they said and did in their spiritual beginnings and what occurred during the middle and the end (of their spiritual training).

Among the benefits of specifying their most salient statements is that it brings the way closer to those who believe in them and have taken their statements with a spirit of acceptance. For indeed, the true aspirant (*al-murid al-sadiq*) is the one who hears a statement from his teacher and then acts in accordance with it in a state of firm resolution and certainty, thereafter proceeding to match the spiritual rank of his teacher. After which, the teacher remains above him solely in the fact that it was he who poured this knowledge upon him (the aspirant). In this regard, they have said: “The beginning of the aspirant’s path is the end of his master’s (path).” For indeed,

whatever the teacher says and does at the end of his life is the quintessence of all the spiritual training and effort he has experienced throughout it.

In this work, I have taken a methodology similar to the methodology of the Scholars of Hadith (*Ahl al-Hadith*). Namely, the narrations that appear in works that contain documented chains of transmission, such as the *Epistle* of al-Qushayri and the *Hilyah* of Abu Nu‘aym, in which the author has explicitly stated their knowledge of an authentic chain of transmission, I mention them in an emphatic, confident manner. Such is also the case when one of the eminent Shaykhs (of the path) has mentioned something about the deduction of guidelines for the spiritual path. In such a case, I will relate it in an emphatic manner as well. This is because his deduction, which would be through the use of a given narration, is evidence itself of the narration’s authenticity in his eyes.

Whatever does not fall within the aforementioned two categories, I mention in a more uncertain manner, by saying something like, “It has been narrated that...” and so forth. It is obvious that a guideline in the books of the Sufis, such as *‘Awarif Al-Ma‘arif* (by al-Suhrawardi), and the likes, is a guidelines that has an authentic chain of transmission, hence, I mention it in an emphatic manner in accordance with the way of the scholars when they say: “He said such and such in (the juridical manual) *Sharh al-Muhadhdhab*,” and “He said such and such in *Sharh al-Rawdah*,” and so forth.

I have concluded this work with a brief, but sufficient, mention of the spiritual states of my teachers, those whom I have met in the 10th century of the *hijrah*, or those whom I have visited at other times in order to receive their blessings, hear their wisdom, and witness their manners. I have do so in a way similar to what we have already mentioned concerning the shaykhs of the *Salaf* (the early generations). All of these said teachers are from Egypt, may God protect it and its surrounding villages, and may God be pleased with them all.

My brother, you must know that anyone who reads this book in a positive mindset, and has taken heed to what it contains, will feel as though he has lived with and heard the statements of all the saints that have been mentioned therein. This is the case because one’s inability to meet a given Shaykh does not diminish one’s love for him and his companionship. For indeed, we love the Messenger of God, prayers

and peace be upon him, the Companions, their followers and the great Imams of the sacred law, yet we have not seen them, nor have we lived amongst them. Yet we have benefited from their sayings and have followed in their footsteps. When the representation of a belief has become apparent, it is not necessary to see the actual visage of the person. Lastly, whoever reads the likes of this book, yet finds neither an awakening, nor a yearning for the path of God, Mighty and Majestic is He, then he is to be equated with the dead... Peace unto you!

I have entitled this work: *The Infused Lights of the Biographies of the Righteous*. I have prefaced this work with an introduction about the Sufis that will increase the faith of those who examine it. It will also allude, from a subtler angle, to the fact that condemnation of this group (i.e., the Sufis) has persisted with them in every age. The reason for this is because the majority of minds cannot grasp the loftiness of their superior stations. Nevertheless, due to their wholeness, they are not affected, nor will they change, just as the mountain changes not from the ineffectual puff of the mosquito.

Indeed, noble is a book, even though its size may be small, that has gathered the greater part of the insights of the masters of the path. The narrations of the masters of the Path, and their followers, that are to be found in this book, are like the legal citations of the *Ramdab* with regards to the school of Imam al-Shafi'i, may God be pleased with him. May God make the purpose of this book purely for His sake, and may He benefit its author, as well as those who scribe it, listen to it, or read it. Verily, He is near and answers prayers...

If you have understood this, then I say, and with God is all success:

(MORE TO COME, IN SHA ALLAH)

### **About the Translator:**

Christopher 'Khalil' Moore was born in the United States into a practicing Christian family. He came to the path of Islam in the summer of 1994 at the age of 19. Since then he has studied Arabic and Islamic knowledge in the blessed city of Madinah (1996 - 1999), the

deserts of West Africa, the Atlas Mountains of southern Morocco, and the Hadramawt Valley of Yemen. He holds a Bachelor's degree in English, with a minor in Religious Studies (George Mason University), and hopes to complete his Master's and PhD in the fields of translation, interpreting, and Oriental Studies.

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