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The Life and the Scientific Activity of Nuriddin Al-Sabuni

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Annotation:

The purpose of the study will be the scientific activity of Nuriddin Al-Sabuni, his lifestyle, researchs and the role they play in framing the teaching of Maturidiyya. This article also considers to familiarize the reader with the context of some of the research works carries in that time. It is important to point out that most of manuscripts of his books saved in Turkey exist within the libraries that are specifically oriented in kalam studies, but tend to give a general religious higher education, especially, aqeedah teachings.

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The full name of Nuriddin Al-Sabuni, who is considered one of the famous scholars of the teaching of Maturidiyya is Nuriddin Abu Muhammad Ahmad ibn Mahmud ibn Abu Bakr Al-Sabuni al-Bukhari. The date of birth of this scholar is indicated as approximately 500/1107. Al-Sabuni is also a scholar who, together with Ibrahim al-Saffar, played a vital role in the establishment of the Maturidiyya kalam school in Bukhara. Abu al-Mu'in considered al-Nasafi as his teacher and learned the science of the word from him. In Bukhara, he met with Fakhriddin ar-Razi, a representative of the Ash'ari school. The scientist first created a reading book called "al-bidaya fi usul ad-din". This manual was published for the first time in Istanbul in 1978 by the late Turkish scientist Bektash Topaloğlu. After that, this important work was published seven more times. There is another work of Al-Sabuni called "al-Kifaya fi al-hidaya", a manuscript copy of which is stored in the Laleli section of the Süleymaniye Library in Istanbul with the number 2271.

There is no information about cities to which Nuriddin Al-Sabuni had been for education purposes and nothing about his teacher. However, it is known from the discussions he had with Fakhriddin Razi that at the end of his life Nuriddin Al-Sabuni traveled to Mecca for the Hajj pilgrimage. Besides, participated in scientific meetings in the cities of Khorāsān and Iraq. Also, after discussing with Fakhriddin Razi, he said that he learned the knowledge of the Kalām from the book “Tabsirat al-adilla” by Abu al-Muin Nasafi and believed in the information in it.

The brilliance of Nuriddin Al-Sabuni’s intelligence is obvious from the books he wrote and discussions he had with scholars. Only two of his discussions have survived to our time. One of them is a discussion with Fakhriddin Razi, a prominent scholar of theology of the Ash’ariya school. This debate is mentioned only by Fakhriddin Razi, other sources say nothing about this discussion. According to Fakhriddin Razi, they discussed three issues. The first is the question of seeing God and proof of His existence, the second is the question of takwin and mukawwan, and the third is the question of whether or not the Eternal-existence is an attribute of God.

The second discussion that has come down to this period from Nuriddin Al-Sabuni took place between Sheikh Rashiddin and him. Their discussions were held in Persian, especially on the issue of "whether the madum is visible or not". This debate was mentioned in Arabic by Abu al-Barakat An-Nasafi in the book "Al-Umda fil I’tiqad". At the end of the debate, Nuriddin Al-Sabuni won and Sheikh Rashiddin agreed with him.

In the sources he is also mentioned as the “owner of Bidaya” and “owner of Kifaya”. He was called Al-Sabuni y due to the fact that he was engaged in making soap or selling it and Bukhrari, because he lived in that area. Scholars have said that very little information has been preserved about Nuriddin Al-Sabuni 's life and activities. He lived and worked at the same time as Shamsul Aimmah Kardari, a famous scholar of the Hanafi school. Kardari was from the village of Kardar in Khorezm, he is known as author of such books as "Usul al-fiqh", "Sharh tajrid", "Sharh jami’ as-sagir" and “Sharh jami’ al-kabir”. Kardari died in 562/1167. However, there is a dispute about whether Nuriddin Al-Sabuni was Kardari’s teacher or student. Also, the scholars who mention about the life of Nuriddin Al-Sabuni, will certainly make some notices on the scientific debates between him and Fakhriddin Razi, one of the famous scholars of the teaching of Ash’ari. However, neither Nuriddin Al-Sabuni nor his students didn’t mention anything about these disputes. According to this, some scholars expressed different opinions on these messages.

There are several works of Nuriddin Al-Sabuni on the science of aqeeda, which are mainly based on the works of Imam Moturidi and Imam Abul Muin Nasafi.

Al-Sabuni 's famous works are the following:

"Al-Kifaya fil khidaya" ("the sufficient word about directing to guidance"). This book is considered one of the most respected works in the Maturidiyya school.

“Al- Bidaya minal kifaya fil hidaya fi usul ad-din” (introduction to the kifaya about directing “usul ad-din”). This book is the summary to the “Kifaya fi al-hidaya”.

Apart from those the book named “Muntaqa min ismat al-anbiya” (the selected messages about the innocence of Prophets) is also said to be Al-Sabuni’s work.

Scientific heritage of the scholar

Al-Muntaqah min ismat al-anbiya. In the sources of about the life of Nuriddin Al-Sabuni, nothing is said about the fact that he wrote this book. But Nuriddin Al-Sabuni himself referred to the book “al-Muntaqa min ismat al-anbiya” in the prophetic matters of his work “al-Kifaya fi al-hidaya”.

So, the book “al-Muntaqa min ismat al-anbiya” was written before the work “al-Kifaya fi al-hidaya”. From the introduction of this book, it is known that the work “al-Muntaqa” is not the book of Nuriddin Al-Sabuni. It was written under the title “Kashf al-ghawamiz li ahwal al-anbiya” by Abul Husayn Muhammad ibn Yahya al-Bashaghiri (died in the 4th century of the Hijra/10th century), and Nuriddin Al-Sabuni summarized this book.

As for the reason for the writing of the book “Kashf al-ghawamiz li ahwal al-anbiya”, a person wrote a book during the time of Abu Mansur Moturidi and named it “Ma’osi al-anbiya”. Imam Moturidi says about this author: “If the author wrote a book for this purpose, he is a kafir (disbeliever).” Because whoever sets out to write a book will find most of the things relevant to that goal, and may not find a few part of it. Whoever seeks for the believer’s sins, he is feared to become a disbeliever. What will happen to the person who wants to search for the shortcoming of the Prophet and publish it!”

After hearing this from Abu al-Hasan Aly ar-Rustaghfani, Abul Husayn Yahya al-Bashaghiri began to write the book “Kashf al-ghawamiz li ahwal al-anbiya”. His purpose was to prove that the prophets lived a pure life, avoiding immorality during their lifetime. This information means that the book “al-Muntaqa min ismat al-anbiyya” is a summary of the book “Kashf al-ghawamiz li ahwal al-anbiya”.

Four manuscripts of this book have survived. Three of them are kept in Turkey and one in Cairo. They are as follows: Suleymaniye school, LALELI 2426; Suleymaniye Library, LALELI 2425; Manisa city library, 2/6584; “Dar al-kutub al-Misriya” in Cairo (date, AD 134). This work was researched by the Turkish researcher Muhammad Bu-lut after studying the existing manuscripts in Turkey and published it as a book in 2000-2001 in Izmir. It was later published in Beirut by “Dar Ibn Hazm” publishing house.

There is also a work of the scholar called “al-Muntaqa min ismat al-anbiya”, a manuscript copy of which is stored in the Laleli section of the Suleymaniye Library with the number 2426.

Nuriddin Al-Sabuni died in the year of 580/1184 in Bukhara.

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