The Battle for Central Europe

The Siege of Szigetvár and the Death of
Süleyman the Magnificent and Nicholas Zrínyi (1566)

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Pál Fodor

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PART 3
The Hungarian Theatre of War in the Age of Süleyman the Magnificent

State and Religion, "Sunnitization" and "Confessionalism" in Süleyman's Time

Tijana Krstić*

Central European University, Budapest

krstict@ceu.edu

Although the era of Sultan Süleyman represents one of the better-researched periods of Ottoman history, the complexities of its religious politics have only recently come into a sharper focus. New research has built on the pioneering work of the scholars such as Gülrü Necipoğlu, Cornell Fleischer, Colin Imber, Haim Gerber, and Ahmed Yaşar Ocak who have peeled off the "classical" label to reveal the ideological innovation and experimentation of the age and significant departures from the practices of the medieval Sunni polities in terms of the state's relations with the *ulema,* the relationship between the sultanic law (*kanun*) and divine law (*şeriat*), and the role of the state in persecuting religious dissent.[1] Following their lead, over the last decade, scholars have gradually come to realize that rather than being unquestioningly and unselfconsciously inherited from the "classical" Islamic period or, for that matter, from the "core Islamic provinces" of Syria and Egypt upon the conquest, Ottoman understanding of Sunnism in the 16th century was in fact the outcome of a complex engagement with the tradition shaped by contingencies of building a state in the post-Mongol Islamic world, with a seat in Constantinople with

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1   Gülrü Necipoğlu, 'Süleyman the Magnificent and the Representation of Power in the Context of Ottoman–Habsburg–Papal Rivalry', *The Art Bulletin* 71:3 (1989) 401–427; Cornell H. Fleischer, 'The Lawgiver as Messiah: The Making of the Imperial Image in the Reign of Süleymân', in Gilles Veinstein (ed.), *Soliman le Magnifique et son temps / Süleymân the Magnificent and His Time. Actes du Colloque de Paris, Galeries Nationales du Grand Palais, 7–10 mars 1990*. Paris, 1992, 159–177; Colin Imber, *Ebu's-su'ud: The Islamic Legal Tradition*. Palo Alto, 1997; Haim Gerber, *State, Society and Law in Islam*. New York, 1994; Ahmed Y. Ocak, *Osmanlı Toplumunda Zındıklar ve Mülhidler (15.–17. Yüzyıllar)*. İstanbul, 1998.

all its symbolic baggage.[2] In this context, researchers' attention has focused especially on the reasons behind the marked shift in Ottoman religious politics in the beginning of the 16th century from one comfortable with "confessional ambiguity" to one increasingly concerned with defining and enforcing a particular understanding of "correct" belief and practice. Some scholars have explained the Ottomans' growing Sunna-mindedness by pointing to the rise of the Shiite Safavid Empire and the religio-political challenge this posed to Ottoman dynastic legitimacy.[3] Others, however, have emphasized processes related to Ottoman state building, particularly urbanization, monetization of the economy, institutionalization and bureaucratization launched in the 1450s that were conducive to the rise of an increasingly self-confident class of Ottoman scholars who sought to assert their vision of what Islam is and where the boundaries of belief began and ended.[4] As the sources to be discussed in this essay suggest, without excluding further possible factors, both dynamics contributed to the fashioning of Ottoman Sunnism in the 16th century. However, this is not the main concern of this essay.

Regardless of which explanations it prioritizes, recent literature shares the analytical vocabulary that features terms such as "confession-building", "confessionalism", "confessionalization", "Sunni orthodoxy" and/or "Sunnitization", revealing its conceptual indebtedness to the historiography of early modern Europe in the age of confessional polarization, which requires careful consideration of each term.[5] What exactly do we mean by "orthodoxy"

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2   On this aspect of recent scholarship see particularly Gülrü Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan*: *Architectural Culture in the Ottoman Empire.* London, 2005; Derin Terzioğlu, 'How to Conceptualize Ottoman Sunnitization: A Historiographical Discussion', *Turcica* 44 (2012–13) 301–333; Guy Burak, 'The Second Formation of Islamic Law: The Post-Mongol Context of the Ottoman Adoption of a School of Law', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 55:3 (2013) 579–602.

3   For instance, Nabil Al-Tikriti, '*Kalam* in the Service of the State: Apostasy and the Defining of Ottoman Islamic Identity', in Hakan Karateke and Maurus Reinkowski (eds.), *Legitimizing the Order: The Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power.* (Ottoman Empire and Its Heritage. Politics, Society and Economy, 34.) Leiden, Boston, 2005, 131–150; Markus Dressler, 'Inventing Orthodoxy: Competing Claims for Authority and Legitimacy in the Ottoman–Safavid Conflict', in *ibid.,* 151–176.

4   For instance, Terzioğlu, 'How to Conceptualize'; Guy Burak, 'Faith, Law and Empire in the Ottoman Age of Confessionalization (Fifteenth–Seventeenth Centuries): the Case of Renewal of Faith', *Mediterranean Historical Review* 28:1 (2013) 1–23; Idem, *The Second Formation of Islamic Law: the Hanafi School in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire.* New York, 2015; Abdurrahman Atçıl, *Scholars and Sultans in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire.* Cambridge, UK, 2017.

5   For an overview of the paradigm of confessionalization, see Heinz Schilling, 'Confessionalization: Historical and Scholarly Perspective of a Comparative and Interdisciplinary Paradigm', in John M. Headley, Hans J. Hillerbrandt and Anthony J. Papalas (eds.), *Confessionalization in*

when it comes to the 16th-century Ottoman context? Furthermore, what was the discursive framework and content of Ottoman Sunnism that would serve as the basis of "Sunnitization"? Finally, can we speak of an Ottoman Sunni "confession" that would constitute the basis for confession-building or confessionalism? In the following discussion I seek to offer some tentative answers to these questions based on a particular set of sources.

Research so far has overwhelmingly focused on the opinions of the chief Ottoman jurisprudents (*fetava*) and their religious treatises, or imperial orders recorded in the registers of important imperial affairs (*mühimme defterleri*) regarding the followers of the Safavid shah who were pejoratively called Readheads (*kızılbaş*), to guage the boundaries of Sunni Islam as imagined by the Ottoman establishment, as well as the sanctions for transgressing them.[6] This has left the impression that "Sunnitization" was exclusively the state authorities' attempt at defining Sunnis in contrast to the *kızılbaş* (or *rafizis*,[7] as they are also often called in the sources), and that it entailed only measures of persecution. However, in her recent essay on how to conceptualize "Sunnitization," Derin Terzioğlu has suggested that the phenomenon was not merely reactive (to the Safavid religious and political threat) but also pro-active, entailing "the adoption by the Ottoman religious and political authorities of a series of policies to modify the behavior (and to a lesser extent the beliefs) of all their Muslim subjects in line with the precepts of Sunni Islam, as they were understood at the time".[8] In this essay I build on Terzioğlu's insight about the goals of Sunnitization and seek to cast it as a broader societal phenomenon that transcends the purview of the state but inevitably engages with the

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Europe, 1550–1700. Farnham, UK, 2004, 21–36; for a recent evaluation of its usefulness and status in European historiography, see Marc Forster, Bruce Gordon, Joel Harrington, Thomas Kaufmann and Ute Lotz-Heumann, 'Forum – Religious History Beyond Confessionalization', *German History* 34:4 (2014) 579–598.

6   For instance, Elke Eberhard, *Osmanische Polemik gegen die Safawiden im 16. Jahrhundert nach arabischen Handschriften.* (Islamkundliche Untersuchungen, 3.) Freiburg im Breisgau, 1970; Colin Imber, 'The Persecution of the Ottoman Shi'ites according to the *mühimme defterleri*, 1565–1585', *Der Islam* 56 (1979) 245–273; al-Tikriti, 'Kalam in the Service'; Ayşe Baltacıoğlu-Brammer, 'The Formation of Kızılbaş Communities in Anatolia and Ottoman Responses, 1450s–1630s', *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 20:1–2 (2014) 21–48, etc.

7   E. Kohlberg, 'al-Rāfiḍa', in P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W. P. Heinrichs (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition.* Accessed 08 October 2016. http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573–3912_islam_SIM_6185. The term was used to refer to (a) the proto-Imamiyya (and, subsequently, the Twelver Shia); (b) any of a number of Shiite sects, and thus provided sufficient space for semantic slippage for Ottoman and other authors to make it unclear in many cases as to whether they were referring only to the *kızılbaş,* as a subgroup of the Shia, or to the Shia in general.

8   Terzioğlu, 'How to Conceptualize', 313.

religious and political authorities' views on belief and worship in a complex, and sometimes competitive dialogue. I will do so by exploring how religious primers or catechisms (*ilmihal*) authored during Süleyman's reign by various authors with or without ties to the state sought to define the boundaries of the "people of the Sunna and the Community" (*ehl-i sünnet ve cemaat*).

Sultan Süleyman's reign witnessed the production of more religious primers in Turkish than any of his predecessors'. During the 15th century many different texts were written in Turkish with the purpose of educating common people in the basics of faith and practice, with Kutbeddin İzniki's *Mukaddime,* Yazıcızade Mehmed's *Muhammediye,* and Yazıcızade Ahmed's *Envarü'l-Aşıkin* becoming most popular, along with numerous hagiographies and works on ethics translated from Persian.[9] What is characteristic of these works is that they tapped into and drew upon all hermeneutic resources traditionally available to Muslims, combining insights from Sufi, legal (*fıkıh*)*,* morally edifying (*ahlak, edeb*)*,* theological (*kelam*) and, to a lesser degree, philosophical (*felsefe*) literature, sometimes explicitly privileging the Sufi path and sometimes without committing to a particular hermeneutic system.[10] In contrast, as I will argue, one of the key features of the *ilmihal* literature that emerged in the Süleymanic era, which left a lasting imprint on Ottoman religious primers for time to come, is prioritization of *fıkıh* over all other paths for reaching the Truth in Islam.

The key texts under consideration here will be:

1. *İmadü'l-İslam* by Abdürrahman b. Yusuf Aksarayi, written most likely in 950/1543–1544. It is a translation/adaptation of a text on the five pillars of Islam entitled *Umdat al-Islam,* written in Persian by a certain Mevlana Abdulaziz; however, the Ottoman translation contains considerable additions by the translator. Nothing is known about Abdürrahman b. Yusuf Aksarayi. Given his good knowledge of Persian and Arabic, as well as detailed references to the works of *fıkıh* and hadith, it is possible that he received a formal *medrese* education; however, there are no indications that he held an official post or was otherwise affiliated with the Ottoman

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9   On these and other 15th-century texts in Turkish used for religious instruction of Ottoman Muslims, see Hatice K. Arpaguş, *Osmanlı Halkının Geleneksel İslam Anlayışı ve Kaynakları.* İstanbul, 2001; Tijana Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam – Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire.* Palo Alto, 2011, 26–50; Tobias Heinzelmann, *Populäre religiöse Literatur und Buchkultur im Osmanischen Reich – Eine Studie zur Nutzung der Werke der Brüder Yazıcıoğlı.* Würzburg, 2015.

10 For a detailed discussion of the variety of hermeneutical paths in Islam by which my discussion in this essay is inspired, see Shahab Ahmed, *What is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic.* Princeton, NJ, 2015.

establishment.[11] The text itself became widely read within decades of being written, as numerous copies of it survive already from the 1570s, copied anywhere from Aksaray in Anatolia to Sofia and Sarajevo in Rumeli. It is a long work, reaching over 300 folios in most versions.

2. Mehmed b. Pir Ali Birgili's (1523–1573) *Vasiyetname* or *Risale-i Birgili* from 970/1562–1563.[12] This is a short text on the basics of belief and practice that seems not to have been very popular in the 16th century, but rather reached its fame and became the epitome of an Ottoman catechism in the 17th and 18th centuries, similarly to Birgili's other popular didactic and moralistic treatise, *al-Tariqa al-Muhammadiyya,* written in Arabic just before his death. Recently, much has been written on Birgili who was one of the most prolific authors of catechetical and moralistic literature in the 16th century and an inspiration for various 17th-century Sunna-minded authors.[13] For the purposes of this essay it is important to emphasize that Birgili did not belong to the top echelons of the Ottoman *ulema,* although he was certainly well connected to the Ottoman establishement through his most prominent patron, Ata Allah Ahmed Efendi (d. 1571), the teacher of Prince Selim (future Sultan Selim II, 1566–1574), in whose hadith school (*darülhadis*) in Birgili Mehmed reached his fame as the hadith teacher.[14]

3. In addition to these, the discussion also rests upon several didactic and catechetical works authored by one of Sultan Süleyman's grand viziers and sons-in-law, Lütfi Pasha (grand vizier 1539–1541; d. 1563), which were produced immediately after his forced retirement and in quick succession in the early 1540s. Although these works generally remained little known, in terms of productivity in the sphere of moralistic and didactic literature in Süleyman's era Lütfi Pasha appears to have been second only

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11   For a discussion of this text, see Hatice K. Arpaguş, 'İlk İlmihal Örneklerinden *İmâdü'l-İslâm*', in Eadem *Osmanlı ve Geleneksel İslâm.* İstanbul, 2014, 65–109. See also her article on 'İmâdü'l-İslâm' in *Türk Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi. Vol. 22.* İstanbul, 2000, 172–173. A version in simplified Turkish with certain parts of the text edited out or changed was published by Mehmet Rahmi as *Büyük İslam İlmihali.* İstanbul, 1990. In this paper I will be using the manuscript of the work from İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi (Atatürk) Kitaplığı (İBB), Osman Ergin koleksiyonu (OE), Ms. No. 9 (from 979/1571–72).

12   In this paper I will be referring to the following edition of *Vasiyetname*: Birgili Muhammed Efendi, *Vasiyyetname – Dil İncelemesi, Metin, Sözlük, Ekler İndeksi ve Tıpkıbasım.* Ed. by Musa Duman. İstanbul, 2000.

13   See especially Ahmet Kaylı, *A Critical Study of Birgivi Mehmed Efendi's (d. 981/1573) Works and Their Dissemination in Manuscript Form.* Unpublished MA thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2010; Katharina Anna Ivanyi, *Virtue, Piety and the Law: A Study of Birgivī Mehmed Efendi's Al-Tarīqa al-Muhammediyya.* Unpublished PhD thesis, Princeton University, 2012.

14   Ivanyi, *Virtue, Piety and the Law*, 20–23.

to Birgili.[15] Furthermore, his works add an important dimension to the discussion of communal and individual beliefs of the period due to his close relationship to the political establishment.

4.   A short anonymous text in question-and-answer format, entitled *Cevahirü'l-İslam* (which is also known under the title of *Eğer Sorsalar*). It is not clear when it was first written, but the earliest copy I was able to track down so far dates from 955/1548–1549, with further copies proliferating in the second half of the 16th century, which would suggest that it also hails from Süleyman's era.[16] By the mid-17th century this text was so widespread and popular that it can rightfully be considered one of the most popular Ottoman *ilmihal*s of all time, along with Birgili's *Vasiyetname*.

Ehl-i Sünnet ve Cemaat – Defining the Community of Believers

To what extent do these texts project a particular definition of Sunnism, or definition of who belongs to the *ehl-i sünnet ve cemaat* and who does not? The phrase *ehl-i sünnet ve cemaat* appears in some of the earliest Hanafi creeds (*akaid*), yet it does not come with a set definition. Rather, the boundaries of this group were defined and redefined through the creeds (and later other genres) expounded by various individuals throughout early Islamic history, giving voice to a communal consensus at a given time and place. In his seminal study on the development of Muslim creed, Wensinck states that unlike personal confession of faith (shahada; Tr. *şehadet*), which represents a summary of belief for individual purposes, creeds arose out of the need of the community to formulate its position vis-à-vis dissenting elements.[17] He writes: "Although the creed fixes the position of the community in face of the sects, it refrains from open polemics… Nevertheless the separate forms of the Muslim creed are full of hidden polemics. It is their contents and the sequence of their articles that show which were the heresies deemed to be most dangerous at the

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15   Lütfi Pasha authored twenty two works, out of which five were dedicated to the explication of elements of faith and practice in Islam: *Zübdetü'l-Mesayil fi'l-İtikad ve'l-İbadat* (in Arabic), as well as *Tenbih al-Akilin ve Tekid al-Gafilin*; *Tuhfetü't-Talibin*; *Hayat-i Ebedi*, and *Risale-i Sual ve Cevab* (in Turkish).

16   The oldest copy of this text that I was able to find thus far is located in the collection of Oriental manscripts at the University Library in Bologna, No. 3324.

17   Arent J. Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed – Its Genesis and Historical Development.* New York, 1932, 102.

time they were composed."[18] It is, therefore, in comparison with other credal statements that a creed's polemical overtones come into relief, and what may appear as a random list of items pertaining to belief and practice given in an arbitrary order gains a new meaning.[19]

Wensinck's comments provide a critical insight for approaching Ottoman *ilmihal* literature from Süleyman's era. For instance, *İmadü'l-İslam* opens the relevant section on this topic with a question supposedly posed to Abu Hanifa: What are the signs of *ehl-i sünnet ve cemaat*?[20] He responds that such people respect Abu Bakr and Umar as well as Uthman and Ali, and that they perform the wiping of the socks (*al-mash ala'l-khuffayn*). The first part of that answer is not surprising, as it aims to establish, contrary to the Shiite practice of cursing of Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman, that all four caliphs following Muhammad are worthy of respect. The issue became particularly poignant in the 16th century as the reports reached the Ottomans of ritual cursing of the first three caliphs enforced by the so-called *tabarraiyan* (ritual disavowers) who were implicitly or explicitly supported by the Safavid court.[21] The second part of the statement is less obvious: The wiping of the socks was rejected as a substitute for the washing of the feet by the Shia and Kharijites, which suggests that both parts of the statement are essentially aimed at the Shia.[22] We know from other contemporary sources that the issue of *al-mash ala'l-khuffayn* gained particular prominence during Süleyman's era and was much debated by the *ulema*.[23] For comparison's sake, the issue is not featured at all in the earliest creed (likely from the 2nd/8th century) attributed to Abu Hanifa, *al-Fiqh al-*

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18   *Ibid.,* 103.

19   On this issue, see also Norman Calder, 'The Limits of Islamic Orthodoxy', in Andrew Rippin (ed.), *Defining Islam – A Reader*. New York, 2014 (originally published in Farhad Daftary [ed.], *Intellectual Traditions in Islam*. London, 2000, 66– 86).

20   İBB OE Ms. No. 9, 20b; see also Rahmi, *Büyük İslam İlmihali,* 39.

21   On the issue of ritual cursing in the Safavid realm during the 16th century, see Rosemary Stanfield, 'The Tabarra'iyan and the Early Safavids', *Iranian Studies* 37:1 (2004) 47–71. On the Ottoman perceptions of the issue, see Eberhardt, *Osmanische Polemik*.

22   For a detailed discussion of this article, see Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed,* 158–162.

23   For instance, one of the reasons why Şeyhülislam Çivizade (in office 1539–1542) was eventually dismissed from his post was his *fatva* which declared that *mash ala'l-khuffayn* (wiping of the socks) was not permissible. According to Lütfi Pasha's account of the episode, Sultan Süleyman was familiar with the issue, and understanding that the *fetva* was incorrect, he ordered the viziers to gather the *ulema* in order to look into it. The *ulema* of the time got together and seeing that it was invalid, said that it was contrary to the correct books and views of the earlier *müfti*s. The sultan then asked them to sign this opinion and make their decision public. See Lütfi Paşa, *Tevarih-i Al-i Osman*. Ed. by Kayhan Atik. Ankara, 2001, 295.

Akbar.[24] In another Hanafi creed attributed to Abu Hanifa, a text most likely from the 3rd/9th century entitled *Wasiyya* (Testament), the wiping of the socks comes only in the sixteenth place (out of twenty seven items) on the list of beliefs associated with *ehl-i sünnet ve cemaat,*[25] while it appears as the twelfth item (out of twenty-nine) in the so-called *al-Fiqh al-Akbar II,* a text from the 10th or 11th century also traditionally attributed to Abu Hanifa.[26]

As the second distinguishing feature of the *ehl-i sünnet ve cemaat, İmadü'l-İslam* states that they are allowed to follow anyone as an *imam,* whether he is a good or bad person, since "in our school of law (*mezheb*)" *imam*s are not expected to be infallible or without sin (*masum*). This is also an argument from the earlier creeds directed against puritanism of the Kharijites; however, here it is clearly aimed at the Shiite belief in the infallibility of the *imam*s.[27] Aksarayi further[28] specifies that an *imam,* however, should have a sufficient knowledge of the Quran and be able to lead the community in prayer according to the precepts of the scriptures.[29] The article is not featured in the *Wasiyya* or *al-Fiqh al-Akbar I,* but it appears in *al-Fiqh al-Akbar II* as the thirteenth article.

Next on *İmadü'l-İslam*'s list is the precept of "not drawing the sword and rebelling against the ruler, no matter how unjust he is". Although it is not featured in the earliest Hanafi creeds mentioned above, this notion appears in the creed of al-Tahawi (d. 933), a Hanafi scholar from Egypt, as the twenty-seventh (out of forty-five) item on his list of beliefs associated with the *ehl-i sünnet ve cemaat,* and in the extremely popular creed of Najm al-Din Abu

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24   For the English translation of the text, see Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed,* 103–104; for the commentary, see 104–124; on the issue of authenticity, see 122–124.

25   For the English translation of the *Wasiyya,* see *ibid.,* 125–131, for the commentary, see 131–187; on the issue of authenticity, see 185–187.

26   For the translation of this text into English, see *ibid.,* 188–197; for the commentary, see 187–247. More recently, a number of scholars have suggested that this text was authored by Abu al-Layth al-Samarqandi (d. 373/983), a Transoxanian Hanafi jurisprudent. For this argument as well as a discussion of manuscript transmission and distribution, and a critical edition of the text in Arabic, see Hans Daiber, *The Islamic Concept of Belief in the 4th/10th Century.* Tokyo, 1995. In contrast, Ulrich Rudolph argues that Abu al-Layth's authorship cannot be proven beyond doubt, especially in light of some significant departures in the text from Abu al-Layth's teachings. Instead, he points to the similarities with the teachings of Ali Pazdawi and dates the text to the 11th century; see his *Al-Māturīdī and the Development of Sunnī Theology in Samarqand.* Translated by Rodrigo Adem. Leiden, 2015, 325–328.

27   Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed,* 192.

28   *Ibid.,* 192.

29   İBB OE Ms. No. 9, 20b; see also Rahmi, *Büyük İslam İlmihali,* 39.

Hafs al-Nasafi (d. 1142) as the twenty-eighth item (out of forty).[30] Its singling out in *İmadü'l-İslam* as the fourth out of six items suggests that the issue of political dissent, exemplified at the time by the *kızılbaş* loyal to the shah, was of paramount importance for the community's self-definition.

The following, fifth item on the list is the correct order of the righteous caliphs (Abu Bakr, Umar, Utman, Ali) and the claim that each one of them had the right to the caliphate and that altogether their caliphate lasted for thirty years. The text then states: "If one prefers Ali over others for the caliphate, he is called a *rafizi*."[31] However, he explicitly says that those who hate Ali are called *havaric* (Kharijites). In the *Wasiyya,* the order of caliphs appears as the tenth item, with a stipulation that anyone who accepts them is God-fearing and anyone who hates them is a hypocrite (*munafik*). However, in the *Wasiyya,* there is no further discussion focusing specifically on Ali.[32] The same is true of *al-Fiqh al-Akbar II,* where the item is also listed as tenth on the list.[33]

The final sign of the *ehl-i sünnet ve cemaat* according to *İmadü'l-İslam* is also polemical and seeks to circumscribe the veneration of the House of the Prophet (*ehl-i beyt*). It states that among women, Aisha is the most excellent one, above Fatima and all others.[34] This statement speaks to the Shiite aversion to Aisha (due to her role in the Battle of the Camel) and claim that Fatima is the most excellent one among women. This article is also featured in the *Wasiyya,* where it appears as the twenty-sixth, second-to-last attribute.[35]

As the preceding discussion suggests, all the articles listed in *İmadü'l-İslam* also appear in older Hanafi creeds, but are not foregrounded, listed in the same order or grouped together in the same way. What this list does, therefore, is define *ehl-i sünnet ve cemaat* in a way that privileges the burning polemical

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30   For the English translation of al-Tahawi's and al-Nasafi's creeds, see W. Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Creeds – A Selection*. Edinburgh, 1994, 48–56 and 80–85, respectively.

31   It seems that some later copies of the text may have had a further explanation here, adding that some people may prefer Ali not in the sense of the outward caliphate but of the esoteric way based on the prophet's saying: "I am the city of knowledge and Ali its gate." The explanation is not present in İBB OE Ms. No. 9, 21a, but it is featured in Rahmi, *Büyük İslam İlmihali,* 39. In Rahmi's version the text does not explicitly say that in this case it is permissible to prefer Ali, but this is implied. In this way later editors seem to have attempted to carve out a circumscribed yet palpable space for the veneration of Ali and the house of the prophet (*ehl-i beyt*).

32   Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed,* 127–128.

33   *Ibid.,* 192.

34   İBB OE Ms. No. 9, 21a. Interestingly, in Rahmi, *Büyük İslam İlmihali,* 40, it is Hadija that is said to be above Fatima and Aisha.

35   Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed,* 130.

issues of the day and those beliefs and practices, among numerous potential items, that directly offset Sunnis from the Shia.

In Birgili's *Vasiyetname* concerns with contemporary dissenting groups are a bit more difficult to discern, since the first part of the text is modeled more closely on older Hanafi creeds – in particular the *Wasiyya* of Abu Hanifa, but also on al-Ghazali's creed included in the second volume of his *Ihya' Ulum al-Din* – and contains a more extensive list of items pertaining to *ehl-i sünnet ve cemaat.* After first discussing the divine attributes, Muhammad's prophethood, miracles and death; the order of the caliphs and each article of faith, Birgili begins to engage with other issues that pertain to faith (*iman*) and *islam.* Among other items, he echoes Aksarayi's list by mentioning that the wiping of the socks was allowed (*caiz*) and that it is permissible to follow any believer in prayer, even if he were a grave sinner (*fasik*). He also states that it is not permitted to rebel and draw sword against the ruler, no matter how unjust he is. However, Birgili's list goes on and seemingly does not have a single polemical target. For instance, he adds that funeral prayers have to be performed upon any believer's death, be he righteous (*salih*) or a grave sinner; that prayers are useful; that prayers performed upon somebody's death are useful for the spirit of the deceased, etc. However, in his *al-Tariqa al-Muhammadiyya,* a didactic and moralistic work that was very popular with *imam*s, he includes a more detailed heresiography where he explicitly proscribes the Twelver Shias and belief in transmigration of the divine soul through the chain of the twelve *imam*s. He also denounces the Yazidis, Kharajites, Mutazilites, and several other "classical" sects.[36]

Before Birgili switches his focus in the *Vasiyetname* to the issues related to practice, he addresses the question of how to define one's *mezheb* in terms of belief. He writes: "If they say: 'Which is your way (*mezheb*) in terms of tenets of belief (*itikad*)?' Say: *'Ehl-i sünnet ve cemaat.'*" Then he explains: "In other words, whichever beliefs were followed by the Prophet, his Companions and community, I follow them as well. These beliefs have been enumerated heretofore. And proclaim that *ehl-i sünnet ve cemaat* way is the correct one, while others are false." This sentence captures how Ottoman Sunni orthodoxy was articulated, through the selection of particular polemical arguments already existing in the repertoire of the classical *akaid* texts, foregrounding of select arguments and, if necessary, their slight tweaking in conjunction with the needs of the time, all the while permitting the authors to claim that

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36   Ivanyi, *Virtue, Piety and the Law,* 149; Imam Birgili, *The Path of Muhammad.* Interpreted by Tosun Bayrak. Bloomington, IN, 2005, 87–92.

they were expounding nothing more than the beliefs followed by the prophet himself and his companions.[37]

It is useful to contrast the definitions of *ehl-i sünnet ve cemaat* in these two popular works authored by individuals who were not directly affiliated with the Ottoman government, to Lütfi Pasha's views on the same subject in his treatises *Tenbih al-Akilin ve Tekid al-Gafilin* (c. 1543) and *Hayat-i Ebedi* (1546), two in the series of polemical and catechetical works he wrote after he was dismissed from the post of the grand vizier. Lütfi Pasha states that *ehl-i sünnet ve cemaat* are people who embrace the following ten virtues:

1. they perform five daily prayers with the community
2. they do not believe that one of the prophet's companions followed the road of mischief and betrayal or mention any one of them with disdain
3. they do not draw the sword against the sultan
4. they do not have doubts in their faith
5. they believe that everything that is good and lawful is owing to God
6. they do not bring fight or dispute into the places of worship
7. they do not denounce anyone among the people believing in oneness of God (*tevhid*) as unbelievers (that is, they do not engage in *tekfir*)
8. they do not reject the prayers of anyone who prays to Mecca
9. they believe that moistening of the socks is permitted
10. they follow in prayer any individual regardless of whether he is righteous or sinful.[38]

Items 3, 9, and 10 appear in Aksarayi's and Birgili's lists, as well as in the older Hanafi creeds, where, as we already saw, they typically figure as a response to the Shia (and in some cases also Kharijites). Item 2 can also be taken as a restatement of the argument about the first four caliphs all deserving the caliphate and respect. However, the wording here brings to mind the above-mentioned ritual cursing of Uthman, Abu Bakr and Umar practiced in contemporary Safavid realm. Item 7 deals with the issue of *tekfir* – denouncing other Muslims as unbelievers – which was traditionally associated with the Kharijites; however, in his own definition of the *rafizi*s, Lütfi Pasha writes that they pronounce *tekfir* on all caliphs before Ali.[39] *Rafizi*s can also be seen as the

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37   On this discursive process of establishing orthodoxy in creeds, see also Calder, 'The Limits', 222–224.

38   *Tenbih al-Akilin ve Tekid al-Gafilin*, Millet Kütüphanesi, Ali Emiri 257, 52a; *Hayat-i Ebedi, ibid.,* 6a.

39   *Hayat-i Ebedi, ibid.,* 6b. The Shia appears as a separate category within the larger *rafizi* group. For them Lütfi Pasha says that they are from the group of Ali (*Hazret-i Ali bölüğin-den*) and that they believe that Ali was the *imam* after the prophet, that imamate is passed on through Ali and his descendants, and that it is their right. He concludes the entry in

target of item 8, since it was believed that Safavids were trying to change the direction of prayer and pilgrimage (*kible*) to Ardabil.[40] Item 6 may be referring to the destruction and desecration of graves of the prominent Sunni jurists and individuals, such as those of Abu Hanifa (which was adjacent to a mosque and a madrasa) and Abd al-Kadir al-Gilani upon the Safavid conquest of Baghdad in 1508.[41] As we can see, compared to Aksarayi's and Birgili's creeds, Lütfi Pasha's definition of the *ehl-i sünnet ve cemaat* is much more explicitly informed by the contemporary religio-political challenges faced by the Ottoman Sunni community at the time of his writing. It is also more aligned with the views of the contemporary *ulema* integrated into the Ottoman state administration, as expressed in the *fetava* issued against the *kızılbaş* by *şeyhülislam*s of the first half of the 16th century, Kemalpaşazade and Ebussuud, as well as in various polemical treatises.[42] The phrasing of his key items, while within the general spirit of the classical Hanafi creeds, departs from them in terms of singling out particular aspects of the more general issues according to the specific historical context.

This brings us to the remaining items on Lütfi Pasha's list, which are also typically not found in older creeds. He sees five daily prayers performed with the community as the primary distinguishing mark of the *ehl-i sünnet ve cemaat*. In this respect, too, Lütfi Pasha echoes contemporary state policies. As Gülrü Necipoğlu has shown, starting in the late 1530s, Sultan Süleyman's administration made the performance of the five daily congregational prayers and the availability of communal prayer spaces the corner stone of their strategy for creating an empire-wide community of believers which Süleyman would lead as the caliph.[43] All Islamic jurists traditionally delegated the enforcement of the rights of God to the state, but as recent research suggests, reinterpretation of the moral limits of the sultanate and sultanic law during Süleyman's reign gave the state new claims to enforcing the divine law.

In recent years scholars like Reem Meshal, Guy Burak and Shahab Ahmed have suggested that we should revise our understanding of the sultan as a secular figure and sultanic law (or *kanun*) as secular law. To quote Ahmed,

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the same way he concludes every entry on the seventy-two sects of *ehl-i heva ve bidat* (people of fancy and innovation), namely, "crushed with these beliefs and these words, they are destroyed (*bu itikadlarıyla ve bu sözleriyle ezüp helak oldılar*)"; see 13b–14a.

40   On the issue of *qibla* in the context of Ottoman anti-Safavid polemics, see Eberhardt, *Osmanische Polemik,* 101–104.

41   *Ibid.,* 110–111.

42   For a detailed analysis of the tropes found in the *fetava* and in other 16th-century anti-Safavid polemical treatises, *ibid.,* 71–116.

43   Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan,* 48.

"Sultanate represents a (re-) ordering of the world in terms of Islam in which the religious-secular distinction is not present. There is no indication that these rulers regard themselves as acting in a separate domain of 'secular' values, or that they, or anyone else, recognized the operation of two separately constituted domains of truth or of value".[44] Indeed, these scholars have challenged the heretofore-prevalent notion that what transpired in Süleyman's reign can be described as "harmonization of *kanun* and *şeriat*", whereby the subordination of *kanun* to *şeriat* (or *fıkıh,* the jurists' law) is implied. Reem Meshal has argued that a "measure of alignment between Islamic jurisprudence and state legislation took place, but on the latter's terms".[45] The ultimate illustration of this, as Guy Burak has argued, was the Ottoman state's ability to promote the Hanafi school of law (*mezhep*) into the state school of law – a development unprecedented in Islamic history – which he historicizes in the context of the new "political cosmologies" of the post-Mongol period that led to the new and heretofore poorly studied perceptions of Islamic law.[46] By combining various Islamic discourses, jurists affiliated with the Ottoman state, like Ebussuud and Kınalızade, recast the sultan as a caliph and *imam* with a claim to universal sovereignty derived from his ability to rule with justice and equity.[47] In addition to justice and enforcement of the divine law within the community of believers, this bid for sultan's universal sovereignty also had a strong messianic undercurrent of moral renewal (*tecdid*). Consequently, enforcement of the correct and regular performance of the acts of worship in a communal setting and greater attention to public morality became a key feature of the imperial policy.

The boom in the building of the neighborhood *mescid*s, many of which were funded by artisans, suggests that this imperial strategy – which is visible in the numerous *fetava* of Şeyhülislam Ebussuud – was indeed embraced by the wider urban middle-class population.[48] Further evidence of this increased emphasis on and attention to performance of prayer (*salat, namaz*) is also reflected in the contemporary catechetical literature, which begins to focus in great detail on the regulations for performing acts of worship (*ibadet*) and all the possible things that might invalidate one's ritual ablutions (*abdest*) and prayers.[49] In

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44   Ahmed, *What Is Islam,* 223.

45   Reem A. Meshal, *Sharia and the Making of the Modern Egyptian-Islamic Law and Custom in the Courts of Ottoman Cairo.* Cairo, New York, 2014, 63.

46   Burak, 'The Second Formation', 581.

47   On this issue, see Meshal, *Sharia,* 41–68; Ahmed, *What is Islam,* 473.

48   Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan,* 48.

49   Progressively greater emphasis on *salat* will culminate by the early 17th century in the ubiquitous copies of prayer handbooks under the generic title of *Kitabü's-Salat.*

the context of the Ottoman catechetical literature and its evolution during Süleyman's era, one corollary of this attention to the performance of the acts of worship in general and prayer in particular, which were regulated by Islamic law, was the new prominence of jurisprudential (*fıkıh*) sources and approaches to belief and worship at the cost of other "hermeneutical resources" of Islam, as Ahmad terms them, that were heretofore prominent, such as Sufism. The inclusion of detailed *fıkıh* regulations on acts of worship in combination with the articles of faith (*iman*) is also what distinguishes Ottoman *ilmihal* literature from the major medieval Hanafi *akaid* texts, which tended to focus on elements of communal creed without reference to law.[50] By including references to legal stipulations on both faith and worship, Ottoman authors of religious primers moved discursively closer to setting the boundaries of orthodoxy than their medieval colleagues, and also appear to have produced a new genre that reflected distinctly Ottoman approach to religious education.

When we think of the prominence of law during Süleyman's reign, we mostly have in mind what scholars of Islamic law usually translate as "transactional law" or "laws regulating legal acts between people" (*muamelat*), such as marriage, divorce, emancipation, commercial exchange and unilateral legal acts. Rarely do we speak of the other equally integral sphere of *fıkıh*, the laws regulating the acts of worship (*ibadat*), which is often ignored by western historians because it pertains to ethical dimensions of *fıkıh* and is not a legal subject matter according to the western legal tradition.[51] The rise in the social stature of the *ulema* in the late 15th and early 16th century was not due exclusively to their expertise in transactional law necessary for running a bureaucratic state, but also in the laws regulating worship, which was central to communal purity of which the state saw itself in charge. However, sources suggest that during the 16th century *fıkıh* as a discourse was not considered an exclusive property of the *ulema*. It looks like many individuals who did not necessarily have a *medrese* education embarked on production of works drawing extensively on *fıkıh* literature, especially in reference to the acts of worship.

For instance, Lütfi Pasha, who was educated in the palace, was one of them, and in the catechetical works he produced he relied almost exclusively on the legal sources and presented himself as the facilitator of the popular access to the jurists' law in Turkish. Similarly, Abdurrahman b. Yusuf Aksarayi wrote in his *sebeb-i telif* (reasons for composing the work) that for a long time he had

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50   On the point, see Calder, 'The Limits', 225. As Calder points out, while the books of law contained expressions of creed, creeds did not contain references to law, which he, in turn, interprets as the limits of the genre of creed to establish the boundaries of orthodoxy.

51   Baber Johansen, *Contingency in Islamic Law – Legal and Ethical Norms in the Muslim* Fiqh. Leiden, Boston, Köln, 1998, 34.

intended to write a treatise based on the hadith stating that Islam was founded upon five pillars, which would explain all the elements of worship and be used like Abu Layth al-Samarqandi's *Mukkadimatu's-Salat*. However, then he came across Mevlana Abdulaziz's *Umdet al-Islam,* which was based on sixty-five well-known books of the Hanafi school of law, but was written in Persian. In light of the fact that a book in Persian was not of use to many people in Rum, he decided to translate it into Turkish.[52] In the conclusion, he styles his book as *ahkam-i şeriyye kitaplardan* and says that its aim was to make these legal precepts known to the people, since books intended to make people aware of the laws should be written in people's language, just as *müfti*s write their *fetva*s in Turkish and *kadı*s pronounce their decisions in Turkish.[53]

For Aksarayi, therefore, the legal culture established as part of the Ottoman imperial project by the 1540s and its comprehensibility to the general public was of paramount importance for justifying his own work, which he styles as a contribution to the public knowledge of law. Similarly, in his *Tuhfetü't-Talibin* (951/1544–1545), which he dedicates to Sultan Süleyman, Lütfi Pasha embarks on a work that would summarize the precepts of *fıkıh* related to belief and worship by citing the hadith saying that things should be explained to people so that they can understand them in their own language, reminding the reader that the jurists (*müfti*), teachers (*müderris*), hadith expounders (*muhaddis*), and preachers (*vaiz*) all delivered their teachings and opinions in Turkish.[54] Aksarayî and Lütfi Pasha were certainly not the only ones wanting to make aspects of *fıkıh* available to the general population. In her study of the court records of Aintab in 1540–1541, Leslie Peirce poses the question of popular legal knowledge and the extent to which it shaped people's strategies at the court. She remarks that it was likely not a coincidence that in one of the cases she analyzes the woman ran crying to precisely the number of witnesses necessary to establish her claim of rape.[55] It appears that in various ways the communication of legal precepts to the general population was on the rise together with a growing number of neighborhood houses of prayer (*mescid*) and *imam*s responsible for their congregants in the eyes of the state.

This development is well captured in Birgili's definition of *ilmihal* – a term that he uses in both *Vasiyetname* and his other popular didactic work,

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52   İBB OE Ms. No. 9, 7a–b; see also Rahmi, *Büyük İslam İlmihali,* 8–9.

53   İBB OE Ms. No. 9, 316b; Rahmi, *Büyük İslam İlmihali,* 623.

54   Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Fatih 1507. The theme of language and his intention to facilitate students' and common people's access to legal precepts is discussed from 2a to 3a, but for the specific comment on *ulema* writing in Turkish, see 3a.

55   Leslie P. Peirce, *Morality Tales – Law and Gender in the Ottoman Court of Aintab.* Berkley, Los Angeles, 2003, 105–106.

al-Tariqa al-Muhammadiyya. As Katharina Ivanyi points out, Birgili understood *ilmihal* to denote the knowledge "about what a given situation demands of [a man] in terms of the law, whatever situation he may be in. Since he must pray, it is incumbent upon him to know what it entails exactly [that is, in terms of postures, movements, words, etc.], to the extent that this helps him carry out the duty of prayer. ... And likewise with fasting and almsgiving, if he has money, and the pilgrimage, if it is incumbent upon him; and likewise in buying and selling, if he works as a merchant. ... And everybody who works in the trades and crafts has to know how to guard himself against that which is unlawful in his dealings." Ivanyi also remarks that Birgili at some points seems to equate *ilm al-fiqh* with *ilm al-hal.*[56]

It is important, in this context, that most *ilmihal*s from Süleyman's reign make an explicit allegiance to the Hanafi legal school, an integral part of the new confessional template that was emerging. For instance, *Cevahirü'l-İslam,* which will become one of the most popular Ottoman *ilmihal*s by the mid-17th century due to its question-and-answer format, progressively classifies a believer's belonging in this way, as does Lüfti Pasha's *Risale-i Sual ve Cevap:*[57]

> If they ask: Whose offspring (*zürriyet*) are you?
> Answer: I am the offspring of the Prophet Adam.
> If they ask: Of whose religion (*millet*) are you?
> Answer: I am of the Prophet Abraham's religion.
> If they ask you: Of whose community (*ümmet*) are you?
> Answer: I am of the Prophet Muhammad's community.
> If they ask you: Whose way (*mezheb*) do you follow?
> Answer: I follow the Great Imam Abu Hanifa's way.

A similar hypothetical interrogation, which may be inspired by the questions the angels Münker and Nekir would ask of each believer upon death, also figures in Birgili's *Vasiyetname* which emphasizes that, when asked, one should

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56 Ivanyi, *Virtue, Piety and the Law,* 183–184. In the *Vasiyetname* Birgili refers to "compulsory knowledge that constitutes *ilmihal* (*farz-i ayn olan ilimleri ki ilmihaldur*)": *Vasiyyetname,* 118.

57 *Risale-i Sual ve Cevap,* Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Kılıç Ali Paşa 378, 64b–73b (internal fo-lio pagination 71b–79b); *Cevahirü'l-İslam,* Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek A. F. 437 (282), 22a–28b. On the complicated and intertwined history of *Cevahirü'l-İslam* and Lütfi Pasha's *Risale-i Sual ve Cevap,* see Tijana Krstić, 'From *Shahâda* to *'Aqîda*: Conversion to Islam, Catechization, and Sunnitization in Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Rumeli', in An-drew C. S. Peacock (ed.), *Islamisation: Comparative Perspectives from History.* Edinburgh, 2017, 296–314.

declare oneself as a follower of the *ehl-i sünnet ve cemaat* way (*mezheb*) in terms of beliefs (*itikad*), while

> If they say: Which is your way in terms of practice of worship (*amel*), say "Imam Abu Hanifa's". However, do not say: "Abu Hanifa's way is the correct one and others are false. Say, perhaps, "Abu Hanifa's way is the correct one (*doğru*), but there is a possibility of its erring as well".[58]

This explicit declaration of one's *mezheb,* although it appears in passing in earlier Ottoman *ilmihal*s, becomes particularly prominently featured in the texts from Süleyman's era, and appears to be related to the progressive institutionalization of the Hanafi *mezheb* as the state school of law. While that may indeed be the case, it would be wrong to assume that all the *ilmihal* writers' – especially Birgili's – quest for piety and morality rooted in the knowledge of legal precepts was identical to that of the Ottoman state establishment. On the contrary, Birgili's didactic opus seems to rather illustrate the extent to which the legal discourse became the arena for debating and making moral claims as to who the real custodians of the Sunna and the Community as well as of the Hanefi school of law are. A major focus of Birgili's criticism in his *al-Tariqa al-Muhammadiyya,* for instance, is sanctimony (*riya*) or seeking approval of others by feigning devoutedness or publicizing one's good deeds.[59] In this context, he is particularly concerned with sanctimony in the performance of the ritual acts, or in pursuit of power and leadership, especially among the men of religion (*ehl-i din*). While the issue of intention and sincerity in worship was central to the legal tradition up to Birgili's time (especially in Abu al-Layth al-Samarqandi's work, by which Birgili was very influenced), one cannot help but feel the currency of his concerns when he speaks of "the self-righteous and exaggerated display of concern for ritual purity", "making a show of one's worship", "feigning a posture of humility", attending religious gatherings whereas one would normally not do it, or praying only in public but not in private.[60] It is not hard to surmise that the state's attempt to promote the moral edification of the society by emphasizing ritual worship created conditions in which various individuals could be perceived as trying to outdo others in public displays of piety, possibly in pursuit of worldly goals. Birgili is particularly critical of sanctimony among religious scholars who "no longer act

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58 *Vasiyyetname,* 107. Birgili later goes on to explain the history of different schools of law and points out that their disagreements (*ihtilaf*) on issues of practice (but not belief!) transpired with God's permission and that they do not pose a harm (*ibid.,* 108–109).

59 Ivanyi, *Virtue, Piety and the Law,* 190–191.

60 *Ibid.,* 215.

in accordance with what they know [to be right]", but sacrifice this knowledge and right intention by endorsing illegal practices in pursuit of positions. This is not a very veiled stab at the state-affiliated *ulema* like Ebussuud Efendi, with whom Birgili had a well-publicized feud over the legal validity of the cash wakfs – an issue that he also discusses in *al-Tariqa al-Muhammadiyya*.[61] Like many of his jurist colleagues in Ottoman Syria and Egypt, Birgili did not condone what he saw as unwarranted encroachments of *kanun* upon *şeriat* (especially in terms of land ownership and tenure laws) during Süleyman's reign, and represented those members of the Ottoman *ulema* ranks who were not ready to condone the state's interference into determining which from the range of legal opinions from the Hanafi tradition, and beyond, will become the legal orthodoxy of the empire.[62]

Iman – Personal Dimensions of Belief

Now that we got some sense of how communal beliefs were framed in the sources under discussion, it is important to examine how they approached the issue of faith (*iman*). All the texts in question discuss the divine attributes and the articles of faith first, before getting to the discussion of the acts of worship, which are sometimes followed by other topics as well. When it comes to the articles of faith, the authors agree that faith consists of belief in one God, in his angels, books, prophets, the Day of Judgment and the divine predetermination of all things, but there are variations in the method of presentation. Lütfi Pasha, for instance, seems to be most concerned of all authors with the individual believers' process of learning, so he repeatedly insists in his works that faith consists of six key beliefs, which he carefully itemizes for easier memorization and repeats often throughout his catechetical works, with his *Risale-i Sual ve Cevap* being the epitome of simplicity and conciseness of presentation of basic compulsory knowledge.[63] Easy learning experience also seems to be central to the anonymous *Cevahirü'l-İslam,* which teaches through answers and questions the divine attributes and the six articles of faith and their underlying proofs, before turning to the performance of the acts of worship.[64] Aksarayi also provides a concise summary (*hulasa*) of what *iman* is,[65] while Birgili discusses the six articles of faith and their sub-items

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61   *Ibid.*
62   On this issue, see particularly Burak, 'The Second Formation' and 'Faith, Law and Empire'.
63   *Risale-i Sual ve Cevap,* Kılıç Ali Paşa 378, internal folio pagination 73b.
64   *Cevahirü'l-İslam,* Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek A. F. 437 (282), 22a–28b.
65   İBB OE Ms. No. 9, 22 a; Rahmi, *Büyük İslam İlmihali,* 43.

together, without providing a pithy summary.[66] Unlike in the case of communal beliefs, where we see variations, the authors are unanimous on the list of beliefs upon which one's personal faith should be based, as well as in affirmation that faith should be articulated by the tongue and rooted in the heart. At the same time, however, they seem to disagree over how detailed one's knowledge of faith should be, which is a topic that merits a separate discussion.[67]

Aksarayi, Lütfi Pasha and Birgili all agree that basic knowledge of faith had to be coupled with the knowledge of laws of worship and a rigorous regime of introspection (*nefisni tanımak*) in order to proceed on the path to piety, although they do not put the same emphasis on this point. While Birgili seems to take his contemporaries' knowledge of faith more for granted than Aksarayi and Lütfi Pasha, he puts greater emphasis on actions and deeds as a reflection of one's piety in everyday life. As Ivanyi explains, for Birgili, piety (*takva*) denoted guarding oneself from everything that might harm you in the Hereafter. In legal terms, it denoted guarding one's soul by active commission or omission of certain acts.[68] Scrutinizing one's behavior and speech was central to maintaining one's virtue and piety in everyday life, and in both *Vasiyetname* and *al-Tariqa al-Muhammadiyya* he details "evils" of various parts of body that might lead to smaller or greater sins. Birgili's conceptualization of piety as guarding oneself from sin thus breeds a much more defensive kind of a Muslim believer, fearful lest anything he or she does might lead to unbelief. In order to preserve oneself from lapsing into *küfr* unknowingly, Birgili suggests renewing one's faith every day by saying "O, God, if I uttered a blasphemy or made a mistake, I repented and returned to faith by re-entering Islam. I believe that everything that Hazret-i Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) brought from you is correct. And I believe upon God's wish in everything that came from God. And upon the wish of the prophets, I believe in everything that came to them and from them".[69] Aksarayi and Lütfi Pasha also advise believers to say prayers that are supposed to protect one against unbelief.[70]

While Lütfi Pasha and Aksarayi do not go into such details on sins potentially committed by various parts of the body, all texts under discussion devote considerable space to evils of the tongue or blasphemous utterances

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66   *Vasiyyetname,* 95–104.
67   Authors discuss various categories of faith, such as *iman-i icmali* (the summary faith) as opposed to *iman-i tafsili* (the detailed faith). I will address this subject in a separate article on the discussion of belief and unbelief in Ottoman *ilmihal*s from the 16th and 17th centuries.
68   Ivanyi, *Virtue, Piety and the Law,* 153.
69   *Vasiyyetname,* 114.
70   Rahmi, *Büyük İslam İlmihali,* 41; *Hayat-ı Ebedi,* 16b.

(*elfaz-i küfr*)*,* accidental or intentional.[71] Here again the encroachment of *fıkıh* on the genre of *ilmihal* becomes clear, as *elfaz-i küfr* was typically a section in the *fetva* collections. By bringing this section into the structure of the *ilmihal,* something that seems to be an innovation of the Süleymanic period,[72] the authors explicitly circumscribed the field of piety for Ottoman Muslims by erecting ever more numerous signposts beyond which the domain of infidelity began, while at the same time promoting *fıkıh* and its practitioners as the ultimate arbiters of the boundaries of belief. By cataloguing myriad ways in which believers could become unbelievers (*kafir*)*,* Ottoman Hanafi *ilmihal*s display exactly the opposite spirit from the early Hanafi *akaid* literature that is concerned with a positive definition of faith and insists that even committing a grave sin does not make one an infidel, unless he or she proclaims it lawful – paradoxically, this is also something that Birgili himself insists upon in the first part of his *Vasiyetname,* giving rise to a curious tension at the core of his text.[73] Many of the listed "signposts" had nothing to do with mistakes in belief or worship per se, but condemned as unbelief joking or off-hand remarks or swearing that made light of the boundaries between belief and infidelity (such as "I was so enraged that I wished I would become an unbeliever…", an utterance that would turn the speaker into an unbeliever; or if a husband called out to his wife "Hey, unbeliever!" and she responds in anger "So I am!", she would be lapsing into infidelity).[74] Furthermore, many of the utterances deemed blasphemous appear to aim at the preservation of the social hierarchy in which it is tantamount to *küfr* to offend or disrespect *müfti*s, *kadı*s, and *imam*s or learning (*ilm*) that was the basis of their social distinction.[75] The subject of blasphemous utterances was particularly developed in the Hanafi legal tradition. According to a recent study, Hanafis considered blasphemous utterances as violations against the rights of God, and by extension, as violations against public good and notions of Islamic propriety, which were, in turn, culturally and historically contingent.[76] Given the new attention to

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71   For Birgili's discussion of sins committed by various parts of the body, see *Vasiyetname,* 112–113; for *elfaz-i küfr*: 114–118; for Aksarayi's, see İBB OE Ms. No. 9, 29a–33a; Rahmi, *Büyük İslam İlmihali,* 55–70; for Lütfi Pasha's, see *Hayat-i Ebedi,* 15a–53b.

72   For instance, in his *Mukaddime,* İzniki omits the details on *elfaz-i küfr,* saying that those interested can take a look at the relevant chapter of the *fetva* collections. Kutbe'd-din İzniki, *Mukaddime (Giriş–İnceleme–Metin–Sözlük*). Ed. by Kerime Üstunova. Bursa, 2003, 154.

73   See his discussion of sins in *Vasiyyetname,* 105.

74   For both examples, see Aksarayi's section on blasphemous utterances in Rahmi, *Büyük İslam İlmihali,* 59.

75   See also Burak, 'Faith, Law and Empire', 7–8.

76   For an insightful discussion on this topic, see Intisar A. Rabb, 'Society and Propriety: The Cultural Construction of Defamation and Blasphemy as Crimes in Islamic Law', in Camilla

purity and moral integrity of the community of believers in Süleyman's era, it is not difficult to see why blasphemous utterances begin to receive so much attention in the catechetical literature of the time.

According to the *ilmihal*s and the *fetva* collections they were drawing upon, anyone making a blasphemous utterance voided his or her previous acts of worship and their marriage became automatically invalid, triggering the necessity of the renewal of faith and marriage (*tecdid-i iman ve nikah*) in order to re-enter the community of believers. In his recent study of this phenomenon from the perspective of the Ottoman *fetva* literature, Guy Burak has suggested that Ottoman jurists departed from their medieval colleagues' understanding of faith and elaborated a state of temporary excommunication from which a believer could return into the community upon pronouncing shahada and renewing his or her marriage.[77] This procedure presumably had to be done at the court of law and thus not only promoted imperial courts as the sites at which one's faith was "certified", but also state-affiliated *müfti*s and *kadı*s as the certifiers. The reasons for and timing of the invention of this juridic device, which became fully elaborated in the Ottoman *fetva*s of the 16th and 17th centuries but appears to stem from earlier legal compendia of Transoxanian provenance, await a more detailed study. However, as Burak and Reem Meshal have both pointed out, this stratagem of the Hanafi jurists affiliated with the Ottoman government was rejected by non-state Hanafi and other jurists, especially in Syria and Egypt, who interpreted it as practicing *takfir* against other Muslims – a notion they deemed in contravention of the tradition (Sunna).[78] *İlmihal*s from Süleyman's era thus bear witness to the process of negotiation of what Sunna was not only vis-à-vis dissenting groups such as *rafizi*s or the Shia, but also vis-à-vis other Sunni communities with different relationships with the Ottoman government.

Conclusion

When we return to the questions from the beginning of the paper in light of this discussion, what conclusions can we draw? While scholars continue to acknowledge that the notion of "orthodoxy" is relevant to Islamic tradition, they emphasize that it is a discursive process different from articulation of

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Adang, Hassan Ansari, Maribel Fierro and Sabine Schmidtke (eds.). *Accusations of Unbelief in Islam*. Leiden, Boston, 2016, 434–464.

77   Burak, 'Faith, Law and Empire', 4–11.

78   *Ibid.,* 11–13; Meshal, *Sharia,* 79–83.

orthodoxy in the Christian (especially Latin) tradition, due to the absence
of an ecclesiastical authority with a mandate to define correct belief, the
fundamentally pluralistic nature of the Islamic law, and multiple hermeneutic
paths for reaching the Truth. As Norman Calder pointed out, Muslims are
always engaged in the process of reinterpreting their own past and their
tradition depending on day-to-day experiences of the community; as a
consequence, each articulation of the communal creed and attempt to set the
limits of orthodoxy, no matter how influential, will not be final.[79] Talal Asad,
on the other hand, has argued that "orthodoxy is not a mere body of opinion
but a distinctive relationship–relationship of power".[80] More recently, Shahab
Ahmed, while disputing Asad's contention that "orthodoxy is crucial to all
Islamic traditions", agreed that attending to social and discursive locations of
power is central to the notion of orthodoxy.[81] When we conceive of orthodoxy
as a historically-contingent discursive process informed by particular relations
of power, the grounds for characterizing the developments in the Ottoman
Empire in Süleyman's long reign as "orthodoxizing" become clearer as we see
attempts to limit pluralities characteristic of Islam on several conceptual levels.
First, we have a desire on the part of the state and the *ulema* affiliated with
the state to define the boundaries of the Sunni community and its beliefs and
practices, backed by the social authority and power to impose legal sanctions
on dissenters.[82] When it comes to plurality of Islamic law, by making the Hanafi
mezheb the state school of law, and even prioritizing certain opinions within the
range of the Hanafi tradition, the Ottoman state and its chief jurists attempted to
circumscribe the plurality that was a traditional feature of Islamic law. Research
so far has focused on the decisions of the chief Ottoman jurisprudents as the
primary evidence of this initiative; however, 16th-century *ilmihal*s discussed
here allow us to understand how various individuals with or without ties to

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79   Calder, 'The Limits of Islamic Orthodoxy', 224.

80   Talal Asad, 'The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam', in *Occasional Papers Series, Center for
      Contemporary Arab Studies.* Washington, D.C., 1986, 15.

81   Ahmed, *What Is Islam,* 273–274.

82   Shahab Ahmed has recently argued that "Those commitments and practices which are
      answerable to the demands of the 'ulamā'/'religious experts' – who render Muslim sub-
      jects answerable to them (that is, to both norms and 'ulamā) by acting for/through the
      state by instruments of legal sanction – is orthodoxy, the social existence of which re-
      quires the authority to impose sanction on dissenters, but does not require 'ecclesiastical
      authority' per se." He also wrote that "the intervention to disqualify is, of course, an inter-
      vention to establish orthodoxy – that is, the staking of a claim to the authority exclusively
      to answer the question 'What is Islam' – which is, in turn, contingent upon (a) a desire to
      establish orthodoxy, and (b) the possession of the social authority to establish orthodoxy."
      See Ahmed, *What Is Islam,* 297 and 270, respectively.

the state engaged with these orthodoxizing initiatives and elaborated them in normative texts designed for a wide public consumption.

If the concept of "orthodoxy" can be said to be relevant to the Ottoman context, the situation is less clear-cut with the notion of "confession". In a recent magisterial study of Christian creeds and confessions of faith, Jaroslav Pelikan pointed to the difficulty of defining either notion or distinguishing between them, arguing that adequate understanding arises only after studying numerous examples of such texts in a historical perspective. He provisionally defined "confession of faith" as "a formal statement of religious beliefs" and argued that it was only in the 16th century, with the advent of the Reformation, that it established itself as a theological and literary form distinct from creed (which he defined as "a brief authoritative formula of religious belief").[83] Early modern Christian confessions tended to be subdivided into chapters and articles and tended to combine expository and polemical passages, seeking to delineate the boundaries of a confessional community in terms of both teachings and practices, with special attention to moral issues. In this respect, the *Augsburg Confession* (1530), a statement of Lutheran beliefs drafted by Philipp Melanchthon, does not greatly differ in type of content and issues it covers from Birgili's *Vasiyetname,* but the two texts emerged in different social contexts and acquired different type of authority, which in turn goes back to the fact that the notion of orthodoxy is negotiated differently in Christian and Muslim contexts. While the first text was formally proclaimed soon after its publication as the official confession of faith of Lutheran communities everywhere, manuscript evidence from the major Ottoman collections suggests that the second text gradually and spontaneously won communal endorsement by the mid-17th century as the most popular statement of Sunni beliefs – one of many – among Turkish-speaking Muslims. Establishment of a Lutheran confessional identity was not an event but a process, which resulted in further texts explaining, defending, and supplementing the *Augsburg Confession* (including Luther's *Small* and *Large Catechism*, his booklets on marriage and baptism, etc.), which were compiled in 1580 in the *Book of Concord* that constitutes the definitive, officially authorized collection of Lutheran confessional writings. In contrast, while study of the content of numerous Ottoman miscellanies suggests that a canon of Ottoman Turkish Sunni confessional literature eventually emerged, consisting of Birgili's *Vasiyetname,* Ahmet Rumi Efendi's (d. 1631?) *Risale-i Rumi,* which is also a statement of Sunni beliefs closely modeled on the *Vasiyetname,* Kadızade's (d. 1635) *Risale-i Salat*

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83   Jaroslav Pelikan, *Credo – Historical and Theological Guide to Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition.* New Haven, London, 2003, 2 and 458, respectively.

(which focuses specifically on the performance of prayer), and the anonymous *Cevahirü'l-İslam* (which is a catechism in question-and-answer format), it was again through a spontaneous process of communal selection and endorsement. So, while the notion of "confession" in the sense of a "statement of religious beliefs" is certainly relevant to the 16th-century Ottoman context, these texts were neither authoritative nor constitutive of the community in the same sense as in contemporary Lutheran contexts, even if most Lutherans were not necessarily intimately familiar with the finer theological points expounded in the *Augsburg Confession* and other confessional texts.

But does that automatically mean that we cannot speak of confessionalism or confessionalization in the Ottoman context, in the sense of "creating fixed identities and systems of belief for separate [religious groups] which had previously been more fluid in their self-understanding, and which had not even sought separate identities for themselves"?[84] Wietse de Boer in his study of the Milanese Cardinal Carlo Borromeo, one of the foremost champions of the post-Tridentine Catholic Reformation, defines "Catholic confessionalism" as "the attempt to shape a disciplined, devout and loyal Christian community able to withstand the perceived threats of a religiously and politically divided world". He describes the main feature of this "project" as "orthodoxy, a code of public conduct, a general penitential ethos" and its methods as a "disciplinary turn in pastoral services, particularly confession".[85] Central to these efforts at Catholic confessionalism was a package of normative texts, catechisms, seeking to explain facets of orthodoxy. While we cannot speak of a uniformly worded and universally-sanctioned text of a Sunni confession, as we saw above, *ilmihal*s in Turkish from Süleyman's era did promote a particular state-and-*ulema*-endorsed doctrinal template that expected the believers to identify themselves as the followers of the "only true" way in terms of belief, that of *ehl-i sünnet ve cemaat,* which was in turn defined primarily in contrast to the Shia/*kızılbaş*/*rafızi*s, as well as the followers of the Hanafi way in terms of practice. Furthermore, these texts contained didactic, polemical, moral and disciplinary codes, and sought to create a devout, disciplined and loyal Muslim community able to "withstand the perceived threats of a religiously and politically divided world".

Of course, one should be very careful not to overestimate the impact of the normative texts such as *fetva*s and *ilmihal*s, and confuse wishes of particular power structures for control over their subjects' piety with social realities. We know that there existed many groups throughout the empire that did not fit the confessional template promoted by these sources. First of all, by the virtue

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84   Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years*. New York, 2009, 639.
85   Wietse de Boer, *The Conquest of the Soul*. Leiden, Boston, Köln, 2001, 3.

of their being in Turkish, these texts catered to a particular group of Ottoman Sunnis, Turkish-speaking Muslims who hailed mostly from the Balkans and Anatolia and were known to other early modern Muslims as Rumis, while they were not necessarily acceptable to other Arabic-, Kurdish-, and Persian-speaking Sunnis in the territories ruled by Ottomans (and beyond), many of whom were followers of other legal *mezheb*s. Furthermore, scholars criticizing the notion of "Sunnitization" have pointed to the absence of persecution of the empire's Shia population in Mt Lebanon, for instance, and inconsistencies in the persecution even of the *kızılbaş* groups in various parts of the empire.[86] However, as we have seen, persecution and punishment were hardly the only aspects of "Sunnitization" and state its only enforcer. Various members of the *ulema* and individuals able to comprehend legal texts had vested interests, sometimes in reaction to the state's exclusive claims, in determining the boundaries of the (legal) tradition and *ehl-i sünnet ve cemaat*. Elements from the legal discourse at the highest level, such as increased attention to outward signs of unbelief reflected in some *fetva*s and *risale*s, appear in a more basic form in both *ilmihal*s and popular epics that discuss not only *rafizi*s' headgear but also eating, drinking and personal grooming habits, suggesting a rising awareness of various forms of alterity.[87] People engaged with this alterity and the discourse of the new social, legal, and political orthodoxy in everyday life. As 16th-century court records from Üsküdar and Aintab illustrate, one could denounce as *kızılbaş* individuals who may have irritated other members of the community by their non-normative behavior or posed some sort of competition.[88] So, even in the absence of the overt persecution by the state, social mechanisms of compliance informed by the confessional template were

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86   For instance, see Stefan Winter, *The Shiites of Lebanon under Ottoman Rule, 1516–1788*. New York, 2010; Idem, *A Secular History of the 'Alawis: From Medieval Aleppo to the Turkish Republic, 947 to 1936*. New Jersey, 2016; Baltacıoğlu-Brammer, 'The Formation of Kızılbaş Communities'.

87   For the discussion of headgear and wine-drinking in *fetava,* see Eberhard, *Osmanische Polemik*; for *risale*s, see al-Tikriti, 'Kalam in the Service of the State'. It was apparently well-known among Anatolian population that "*rafizi*s" do not eat rabbit meat (giving rise to a nickname *tavşan yemezler*), and in some texts we find references to this being used as a test for establishing whether or not particular individuals or groups are *rafizi/kızılbaş*. Such reference exists already in Ibn Battuta's travelogue (Mehmed F. Köprülü, *Early Mystics in Turkish Literature*. Translated by G. Leiser and R. Dankoff. New York, 2006, 233), but also appears in various popular Ottoman texts.

88   For Üsküdar, see Bilgin Aydın and Ekrem Tak (eds.), *İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri: Üsküdar Mahkemesi 1 Numaralı Sicil (H.919–927/M.1513–1521)*. İstanbul, 2008, Nos. 47, 201, 203; Rıfat Günalan (ed.), *İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri: Üsküdar Mahkemesi 2 Numaralı Sicil (H.924–927/M.1518–1521)*. İstanbul, 2010, No. 139; *İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri: Üsküdar Mahkemesi 3 Numaralı Sicil.* İstanbul, 2008, No. 1020, etc.; for Aintab see Peirce, *Morality Tales,* 251–350.

available to individuals and communities in various parts of the Ottoman realm to enforce or reject.

By emphasizing correctness in performance of prayer and worship in general, and promoting a particular code of public morality, the Ottoman administration of Süleyman's era, particularly starting in the 1540s, created a framework in which the legal discourse became the privileged hermeneutic resource for defining what Islam is, which is reflected in the contemporary *ilmihal*s. Unlike earlier catechetical texts, like İzniki's *Mukaddime* (c. 1418), where the author consistently emphasizes the plurality of paths leading to the Truth in Islam, and seeks to achieve a synthesis by carefully balancing esoteric (*batın*) and exoteric (*zahir*) ways and references to Sufi and *fıkıh* authors, there are few explicit references to Sufi sources in these 16th-century *ilmihal*s. While some of the authors (particularly Birgili) had a complicated personal history with Sufism, Sufi influences are for the most part sublimated and integrated as expressions of ethical conduct and self-improvement and only the exoteric path is elaborated.[89] This is not to say, however, that Sufism, *ahlak, edeb, kelam* and *felsefe* ceased to be forces in the education and formation of Ottoman Muslims. On the contrary, manuscript evidence suggests that during the 16th century Sufi and *ahlak* texts played a prominent role in religious education, much more so than the *ilmihal*s, with the latter gaining more importance in the 17th century.[90] However, we seem to be witnessing the emergence of a particular dynamic whereby public displays of piety were increasingly judged as Islamic (or not) based on *fıkıh* precepts, while other paths to the Truth could be explored within spaces designated for such purpose (*tekke*s,

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89   This tendency, which will become even stronger in the 17th century, affected Sufis as well. Ahmad captures this dynamic well in his description of the conceptual undertaking of the Indian Nakshbandi Sufi Ahmad al-Faruqi al-Sirhindi (1564–1624). He writes that: "Sirhindi sought to domesticate unbounded Sufi experience of the Unseen within the parameters of legal regulation of the Seen (producing a Sufism that subordinates its epistemological claims to Real-Truth to the final arbiting authority of the epistemology and truths of legal discourse)." Ahmed, *What Is Islam,* 30.

90   Interesting insight into this issue is provided by the collection of Ottoman Turkish, Arabic and Persian manuscripts "saved" from the mosque of Buda in 1686 by Luigi Marsigli, and currently housed in the Marsigli Fund in the library of the University of Bologna. For a mosque library collection with terminus ante quem of 1686 it contains surprisingly few catechetical works, while the number of Sufi and *ahlak* works, many by Muslim literati from Rumeli, is substantial. The collection has been catalogued by Orazgozel Machaeva: *Catalogo dei manoscritti islamici conservati nella Biblioteca Universitaria di Bologna. Vol. I: nn. 1–124.* Bologna, 2017. For an attempt at reconstructing the *müfti* of Buda's library, see Zsuzsa Kovács, 'The Library of the *Müfti* of Buda in the Marsili Collection, Bologna', in Pál Fodor and Pál Ács (eds.), *Identity and Culture in Ottoman Hungary.* (Studien zur Sprache, Geschichte und Kultur der Türkvölker, 24.) Berlin, 2017, 69–119.

*medrese*s, etc.), keeping in mind their "compatibility" (or lack thereof) with relevant legal principles. One could, therefore, say that Sunni confessionalism was a spatially differentiated phenomenon that was particularly visible in public communal spaces, but with aspirations to reach the private and interior through the normative texts such as *ilmihal*s and cooperation of the heads of households tasked with inculcating their dependents in correct precepts of faith and worship.[91]

Shahab Ahmed recently argued that "Muslims have, in making their modernity, moved decisively away from conceiving of and living normative Islam as hermeneutical engagement with Pre-Text, Text, and Con-Text of Revelation, and have, instead, begun conceiving of and living normative Islam primarily as hermeneutical engagement with Text of Revelation", which in turn led to the equation of Islam with law in popular and scholarly perception.[92] However, upon a closer inspection of the 16th-century Ottoman *ilmihal*s it would appear that this phenomenon does not have roots in modernity, but rather in early modernity, beginning in the era of Süleyman.

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91   For the discussion of the spatial differentiation of the hermeneutical resources in Islam, see Ahmed, *What is Islam,* 379–382.

92   *Ibid.,* 515. Ahmed defines Pre-Text as "the world of the Unseen". He writes: "That the Qur'ān/Text of the Revelation is true but does not encompass all the Truth of the Unseen Pre-Text of Revelation is accepted by all Muslims" (*ibid.,* 347), and he points out that over time Muslims have disagreed on whether Truth-in-the-Pre-Text can be accessed and known without the Text, or via the Text, or only in the Text (*ibid.,* 347), with Sufism and philosophy being primary projects for exploration of the Unseen. He defines Con-Text as "the entire accumulated lexicon of … meanings of Islam that has been historically generated and recorded up to any given moment", not only in the form of textual discourse but practices as well (*ibid.,* 356–357).