Twitter Thread by Salman Nasir



Salman Nasir
@SN_Makkah

It's a very good question, and a complicated one. For starters, the Islamic manuscript tradition is vast both in terms of timespan and geography. As Dr. Shamsy points out in his latest book, the Arabic manuscript tradition is the most vast of any language in the world.

@TalhaAhsanEsq Why are some things given more prioritisation for publication than others? Why are some aspects of the tradition more emphasised than others. There's no single cause behind it.

@TalhaAhsanEsq And there is not necessarily always a sinister motive behind the suppression of some things, but sometimes there is...

@TalhaAhsanEsq It is true that the Hanbalis and Ash'aris had a very contentious and at times acrimonious relationship for much of their history. In later centuries, a sort of truce was reached. Al-Zabidi has said similar in his sharh of Ihya about the identification of 3 groups as Ahl al-Sunna

@TalhaAhsanEsq It seems that these truce efforts also spawned a number of works seeking to mediate the Hanbali-Ash'ari dispute over the nature of Divine Speech, the most contentious of issues between the two camps. A couple of these have been recently published.

@TalhaAhsanEsq For many Salafis with a deep commitment to IT, I think it's tough to look past the Aqidah wars because his major intellectual project was his theological one, even though his legal one was probably no less significant.

@TalhaAhsanEsq This is on top of the fact that with the exception of a few researchers from the new generation, Aqidah professors in Salafi institutions overwhelmingly have never read much of the Kalam/Falsafa tradition in general, or Ashari Kalam in particular. They have only read *about* it..

@TalhaAhsanEsq Either through the lens of IT's writings (who was extremely familiar with the traditions of Falsafa and Kalam) or through second hand research papers churned out by said Aqidah departments.

@TalhaAhsanEsq A frequent argument that is appealed to is the idea that the fact that there was so much mutual acrimony between scholars of these two schools, that the true position therefore must be that only one of them can be legitimately

Sunni while the other must be heretical.

@TalhaAhsanEsq A bit like the MAD (mutually assured desctruction) doctrine of the Cold War, only here it is mutually assured tabdi' or takfir.

"In the end there can only be one..."

@TalhaAhsanEsq Interestingly, it seems at times in history the relationship between Maturidi-Hanafis and Ashari-Shafi'is also had similar issues but the truce seems to have come about at an earlier time and the rift was never as pronounced,

@TalhaAhsanEsq perhaps because Maturidis were somewhat more isolated in Transoxania in their early history.

@TalhaAhsanEsq What is interesting is that while they appeal to this earlier view of Athari scholars towards Ash'aris as conclusive proof that acceptance of Ash'aris is simply not possible.

@TalhaAhsanEsq However, the early Ahl al-Hadith (including Imam Ahmad) had a similarly intolerant view of Abu Hanifa.

@TalhaAhsanEsq Abdullah b. Ahmad devoted an entire section of his creedal work, Kitab al-Sunnah, to collecting critique of Abu Hanifah, and it is much longer than his section on Jahm b. Safwan and Bishr al-Marrisi.

@TalhaAhsanEsq Even Abul Hasan al-Ash'ari criticises Abu Hanifa for Irja in his al-Ibana.

@TalhaAhsanEsq And yet, a few centuries later, there is universal consensus on the impeachable status of Abu Hanifa as an Imam of Ahl al-Sunna.

@TalhaAhsanEsq In fact, a major purpose of IT's Raf' al-Malam is defending Abu Hanifa.

@TalhaAhsanEsq Other than some truly fringe figures, no one in any Sunni circle today would think ill of Imam Abu Hanifa or doubt his status as an Imam of Ahl al-Sunna.