

The realistic renewing dimension of the Muslim Scholars Association in interpretation and hadith: The case of Ibn Badis'

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Abstract---This paper addresses the issue of realistic renewal in Hadith and interpretive studies within the writings of the Muslim Scholars Association. Among the association's leading scholars who embraced this principle in their advocacy and guidance was the scholar Abdul Hamid Ibn Badis, who played an active role in the educational, guiding and awareness-raising movement. He emphasised the importance of Hadith and interpretation in his academic work, carefully selecting the Hadith and interpretive texts he taught. He analysed and explained them, applying them to the challenging situation faced by the Algerian nation and proposing effective solutions. The key realistic issues addressed by this scholar in his written and oral works on Prophetic Hadith and Qur'anic interpretation include education and upbringing; protecting the Algerian identity from those who seek to undermine it; combatting the innovations, superstitions and polytheisms propagated by colonialism; affirming the status of the Book and the Sunnah in the hearts of the Muslim community; and advocating for the dignity and status of Muslim women. These were some of the issues prevalent at that time which he and his fellow scholars from the Association courageously confronted.

Keywords---Muslim Scholars Association, realistic dimension, renewal, Ibn Badis, Hadith, interpretation.

Introduction

During the colonial period in Algeria, France pursued various policies towards the Algerian population, one of the most prominent being an attempt to erase the identity of the native Muslim population. This prompted Algerians to resist in various ways.

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One of the most significant forms of resistance that undermined the French occupation was the reformist movement in Algeria, particularly the activities of the Muslim Scholars Association from 1931 to 1956. The association made significant scientific and advocacy efforts, confronting all French schemes aimed at erasing the identity of the Algerian individual.

The association mobilised all its resources to carry out a realistic scientific renaissance aimed at rectifying the corruption caused by the oppressive coloniser through various practices, such as proselytisation policies, the promotion of ignorance and polytheism, and the encouragement of illiteracy and backwardness by dismantling schools, mosques and centres of Arabic Islamic education.

Consequently, the Muslim Scholars Association pioneers adopted a rigorous scientific approach in their written and oral advocacy activities, with intellectual and scientific dimensions and directions, aimed at raising awareness, effecting reform, and providing guidance. This can be seen in the teachings of the association's president, Abdul Hamid Ibn Badis, who devoted considerable attention to Hadith and interpretive studies in his various writings and public speeches.

From this scientific perspective, I intend to address the topic of the realistic dimension of renewal in the writings of the Muslim Scholars Association, particularly as articulated by its leader, Sheikh Ibn Badis, by presenting examples of his modern interpretive lessons and highlighting their realistic and renewing dimensions for the benefit of those calling to God.

First: study problem:

The central question of this study is:

To what extent did the realistic renewing dimension emerge in the teachings of Imam Abdul Hamid Ibn Badis in his hadith and interpretive lessons?

Second: Importance of the Study:

This study recognises the contributions of the Scholars Association and their efforts to improve the dire situation of the nation through religious, educational and pedagogical reform, addressing the significant issues that the coloniser sought to erase. This is achieved through educational activities related to the sciences of righteous Sharia. The influence of these sciences is evident in the reality of the Algerian nation, particularly in the sciences of interpretation and Prophetic Hadith, as they pertain to the sources from which legal rulings are derived. During that period, the banner of education, guidance and direction was carried by "Scholar Ibn Badis", the leader of the Muslim Scholars Association, through his written and oral lessons. Therefore, we will highlight examples of his lessons that showcase his reformist intentions.

Third: Objectives of the study:

This study aims to achieve several key objectives, primarily:

1. To introduce the Muslim Scholars Association and its president, Scholar Abdul Hamid Ibn Badis.
2. Clarifying the contributions of Sheikh Abdul Hamid Ibn Badis and the Muslim Scholars Association to religious reform and raising awareness among the Algerian nation.
3. To highlight the realistic dimension of renewal in Abdul Hamid Ibn Badis's thought, as expressed in his Hadith and interpretive lessons.
4. To shed light on the scientific methods and approaches employed by the Muslim Scholars Association in their educational and advocacy activities.

Fourth: Previous studies on the topic:

After thorough investigation and research, we found several relevant studies, the most important of which are:

1. 'The Religious Dimension in the Reformist Thought of Abdul Hamid Ibn Badis', by Ma'tallah Fatiha, researcher at the University of Tlemcen, Algeria, published in Researcher Journal, Volume 7, Issue 1.
2. 'The Realistic Dimension in the Interpretation of Sheikh Abdul Hamid Ibn Badis', by Professor Nadia Waznaji, University of Hajj Lakhdar, Batna, Revival Journal, Issue 12.
3. 'Realism in the Hadith Studies of Sheikh Abdul Hamid Ibn Badis', by Professor Akram Belamri, Research and Studies Journal, Issue 16, Year 10, Summer 2013.

Fifth: Research Methodology:

In this research, I relied on a descriptive, historical, inductive and analytical methodology.

1. I employed the descriptive historical method to introduce the personality of Sheikh Abdul Hamid Ibn Badis, highlighting key aspects of his personal and academic life, and presenting the Muslim Scholars Association.
2. I also used the inductive and analytical methods to emphasise the realistic, renewing dimension of Abdul Hamid Ibn Badis's writings by selecting examples from his hadith and interpretive writings, shedding light on their scientific dimensions in his reformative activities.

Sixth: Plan:

This research is organised into an introduction, three main sections and a conclusion with recommendations.

The introduction outlines the topic's problem, importance, and objectives; previous studies; the methodology followed in its preparation; and its plan.

Conceptual section: introduction to the Muslim Scholars Association and scholar Abdul Hamid Ibn Badis.

First section: The realistic renewing dimension in the hadith studies of Abdul Hamid Ibn Badis.

- Second section: The realistic renewing dimension in the interpretive studies of Abdul Hamid Ibn Badis.

- Conclusion with key recommendations.

Conceptual section: Introduction to the Muslim Scholars Association and Scholar Abdul Hamid Ibn Badis

In this section, I will introduce the Muslim Scholars Association before discussing Sheikh Abdul Hamid Ibn Badis in two branches, as follows:

First Branch: Introduction to the Muslim Scholars Association

The Muslim Scholars Association is an Algerian Islamic association with scientific principles and objectives. It was established for a noble purpose, which was necessitated by the needs of the nation, its people and its history. It is a religious and educational institution¹.

Its definition states: 'It is an Islamic Algerian association founded by a group of Algerian scholars in 1931. In its founding statement, it is described as a religious and educational association that seeks to serve religion and society while remaining distant from politics, with Sheikh Abdul Hamid Ibn Badis as president.'²

The Muslim Scholars Association also defined itself in a publication in the *Al-Basair* newspaper, stating: 'The Algerian Muslim Scholars Association is Islamic in its conduct and activities, Algerian in its orientation and conditions, and scientific in its principles and goals. It was established for a noble purpose, which is necessitated by the needs of this nation and its people, and is required by their history, which extends back centuries and generations. This purpose is to teach religion and the Arabic language, which expresses its truths. All its activities revolve around religion and education, which are beliefs and professions that all civilisations have agreed to protect and respect.'³

¹- Bouflaka, Mohammed Saif. Lectures on Contemporary Algerian History, Algeria, 2018, p. 287.

²- Al-Nashiwati, Omar. 'The Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars: Lessons in Thought and Movement', *Rawa Journal for Research and Studies*, Issue 08, p. 54.

³- See: *Al-Basair* Newspaper, Issue 16, 7 April 1939, p. 16.

This definition emphasises the true nature of the association as a religious, Algerian, reformist, educational body. Its establishment was in response to events in the country and the actions of the coloniser and their policies. It is closely linked to the people's response to it, and its impact was felt both domestically and abroad. Thus, it is a protector of religion and the Arabic language in Algeria.

The first section of the constitution of the Algerian Muslim Scholars Association contains a statement of its motto, penned by its president Imam Abdul Hamid Ibn Badis, which states that it is: 'A religious guidance association under the name of the Algerian Muslim Scholars Association, with its social centre at the Al-Tarqi Club, 9 Al-Batahwa, Algiers.'⁴

Second branch: Introduction to Scholar Abdul Hamid Ibn Badis

First: His Name, Lineage and Birth

His full name was Abdul Hamid bin Muhammad Al-Mustafa bin Al-Makki bin Muhammad bin Abdul Rahman bin Badis Al-Sanhaji. His mother, may God have mercy on her, was Zuhaira bint Ali bin Jaloul. He was born in Constantine, the capital of eastern Algeria, on Friday 11 Rabi' al-Thani 1307 AH (4 September 1889) at 16:00. He grew up⁵ in a family of noble lineage known in Algerian history for its knowledge, wealth and historical connections.

Second: His Upbringing and Education

Ibn Badis grew up in an educational environment that enabled him to memorise the Holy Qur'an at the age of thirteen under the guidance of Sheikh Al-Madassi. He then studied under Sheikh Hamdane al-Wanisi, one of his first teachers, who significantly influenced his religious and reformist orientation. He also led the people in prayer as an imam at a young age⁶.

In 1908, he travelled to Tunisia, where he enrolled at the Al-Zaytuna scholarly centre to further his studies in Islamic sciences. There, he studied under Sheikh Muhammad Al-Nakhli, who had a profound impact on him, instilling a love of renewal and change, and of the Qur'an and its teachings⁷.

He also studied under Sheikh Muhammad Al-Tahir Ibn Ashour, who made a significant impact on his studies of Arabic language sciences. Sheikh Al-Bashir Safar played a crucial role in mobilising him historically and directing him towards the realities facing Muslims, encouraging him to study and diagnose their problems in an attempt to understand the causes of decline and prescribe remedies.

He also studied at the Grand Mosque and in the home of Sheikh Muhammad Al-Khadr bin Al-Hussein in Tunisia, as well as under Sheikh Muhammad Al-Sadiq Al-Nifer, Sheikh Saeed Al-Aiyadi, Sheikh Muhammad bin Al-Qadi and Abu Muhammad Bilhassan bin Sheikh Al-Mufti Al-Najjar⁸.

Third: his academic achievements

He graduated from the Al-Zaytuna Mosque in 1912, after which he studied there for a further year before returning to Constantine to give lectures at the Grand Mosque. After opponents of reform reported him, he was forced to travel to the East again, where he performed the pilgrimage and then spent three months teaching at the Prophet's Mosque⁹.

This culminated in a meeting with his teacher, Al-Wanisi, and his companion, the scholar Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi. This meeting formed the basis for the establishment of the association and the start of the reform project, after Sheikh Hussain Ahmad al-Hindi advised him to return to Algeria due to its need for him. On his return journey, he passed through Syria and Egypt, meeting scholars, literary figures

⁴- Documents of the Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars, compiled and prepared by the Department of Reviving the Association's Heritage, Dar Al-Ma'rifah, Algeria, 2008, p. 21.

⁵- See: Talbi, Ammar. Ibn Badis: His Life and Works, Dar Al-Ummah, Algeria, 3rd edition, 2014, p. 72.

⁶- See: Imamrah, Turki Rabah. Sheikh Abdul Hamid Ibn Badis: Pioneer of Islamic Reform and Education in Algeria, 5th edition, National Institution for Communication, Publishing and Advertising, Algeria, 2001, p. 338.

⁷- See: Fadhil, Abdul Qadir and Ramadan, Mohammed Saleh. Imam of Algeria: Abdul Hamid Ibn Badis, Dar Al-Ummah, Algeria, 1st edition, 1998, p. 27.

⁸- See: Rahal, Al-Zubair. Imam Abdul Hamid Ibn Badis: Pioneer of Scientific and Intellectual Renaissance, Dar Al-Huda, Ain Mellila, 1st edition, 1997, p. 12.

⁹- See: Imamrah, Turki Rabah. Sheikh Abdul Hamid Ibn Badis: Pioneer of Islamic Reform and Education in Algeria, p. 171.

and intellectuals. A notable highlight was his visit to Al-Azhar and his encounter with Sheikh Bakhit Al-Mut¹⁰.

In 1913, he settled in Constantine and began implementing his educational reform project, teaching children and adults from the mosque. Recognising the important role of the press in mobilisation and awareness, he also published scientific newspapers to disseminate religious content. He fought with his intellect, his pen and his tongue, and participated in the foundation of the Al-Najah newspaper in 1919. In 1925, he established the Al-Muntaqid newspaper, which published 18 issues before being suspended. In the same year, he also created the Al-Shihab magazine, which became one of the most famous magazines in North Africa. Initially published weekly, it later became a monthly due to pressing circumstances¹¹.

A significant event in the Sheikh's life occurred in 1931 with the official founding of the Algerian Muslim Scholars Association at the Al-Tarqi Club, alongside a group of reformist, intellectual and scientific figures¹².

Fourth: His Supervision of Scientific Newspapers

During his advocacy journey, he oversaw various newspapers, including Al-Sunnah Al-Nabawiyyah, Al-Shari'ah Al-Muhammadiyah, Al-Sirat Al-Sawi, and finally Al-Basair in its first series until his death. Even if his prominent role in establishing the association were his only virtue, it would suffice, especially since many of its members were his former students¹³.

Fifth: His Scientific and Advocacy Works

He spent over 25 years interpreting the Holy Qur'an and explaining Malik's Muwatta. He taught science in around 17 daily sessions, during which he theorised about the reformist call. One of his foundational principles was to establish the pillars of education and upbringing in a manner aligned with the reformist renaissance in the Islamic world. This addressed a gap not tackled by agencies, associations or institutions. His engagement with politics was unparalleled in his time in terms of style, methodology and purpose. Consequently, his scientific writings are limited; his primary focus was nurturing individuals, becoming a spiritual father to the call, scholars, and Muslims¹⁴.

Sixth: His Scientific Works

Ibn Badis left behind a significant scientific legacy, including:

- A. Majalis al-Tadhkir from the words of the Wise Expert.
- B. Majalis al-Tadhkir from the Hadith of the Herald of Good News.
- C. Men of the Ancestors and Their Women.
- D. Islamic Beliefs from Qur'anic Verses and Prophetic Sayings.
- E. Principles of Usul (Foundations).
- F. Biographies of Notable Figures.
- G. Principles of Jurisprudence from Verses and Hadiths of Rulings.
- H. Education through the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Seventh: His Death

After a life filled with struggle, sacrifice and jihad to rehabilitate a people on the brink of extinction, he passed away at the appointed time determined by God on 16 April 1940, leaving behind a precious legacy of principles, men and scholars¹⁵.

¹⁰- See: Rahal, Al-Zubayr. 'Imam Abdul Hamid Ibn Badis: Pioneer of Scientific and Intellectual Renaissance, p. 16.

¹¹- See: Hamidato, Mustafa Muhammad. Abdul Hamid Ibn Badis and His Educational Efforts, Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, Qatar, Series of the Nation's Books, Issue 57, 1st edition, Muharram 1418 AH (June 1997), p. 65.

¹²- See: Fadhil, Abdul Qadir and Ramadan, Mohammed Saleh, 'Imam of Algeria Abdul Hamid Ibn Badis', p. 44. Imam of Algeria: Abdul Hamid Ibn Badis, p. 44.

¹³- See: Same reference, p. 38.

¹⁴- See: Marhoum, Ali. Glimpses from the Life of Sheikh Ibn Badis, Al-Asalah Magazine, Algeria, Year 4, Issue 24, Rabi' Al-Awwal and Rabi' Al-Thani, 1395 AH, p. 96.

¹⁵- See: Boufssaf, Abdul Karim. 'The Echo of Ibn Badis's Death in French Reports and Local Press in 1940', Al-Asalah Magazine, Issue 67, Ministry of Religious Affairs, Algeria, 1979, p. 49.

First section: The Realistic Renewing Dimension in the Hadith Studies of Ibn Badis

One of the most notable aspects of the emergence of the realistic, renewing dimension in Imam Ibn Badis's Hadith teachings is his selection of Prophetic Hadith texts that facilitate an understanding of reality. He addresses these issues and presents effective solutions to the problems they pose. This realism is evident in the articles he wrote for Algerian newspapers and magazines to promote religious and cultural awareness. In this context, I will present examples of Sheikh Ibn Badis' realism and renewal in Hadith studies through the following branches.

First Branch: His call to adhere to the Qur'an and Sunnah.

One of the most important principles that the Muslim Scholars Association focused on teaching future generations was that "Islam is our religion". This principle can only be upheld through adherence to the Qur'an and Sunnah. At every opportunity, the Sheikh emphasised these two foundations and called for adherence to them, as they are the means of salvation and the path to success. He stated: "There is no salvation for us from the confusion and suffering we endure except by returning to the Qur'an and its knowledge and guidance. We must build our beliefs, rulings and ethics upon it. We must also gain an understanding of it and the Prophetic Sunnah. We must explain and clarify it. We must seek assistance in this with sincere intention, correct understanding and reliance on the views of established scholars. We must be guided by their teachings in order to understand the will of God."¹⁶

Conversely, France sought to distance the Algerian people from their religion and the strong bonds of Islam. Therefore, it became essential for the Association and Sheikh Ibn Badis to defend these two principles by constructing mosques, schools, institutes and religious centres in rural areas and villages to preserve the Qur'an and educate people in the principles of righteous Islam.

The Sheikh, may God have mercy on him, endeavoured to clarify this by writing an article titled 'Adhering to the Book of God'¹⁷, prefaced with a hadith from Ali ibn Abi Talib, may God be pleased with him. He said: 'I heard the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, say, "Gabriel came to me and said: O Muhammad, your nation will differ after you." I asked him, "Where is the way out, O Gabriel?" He replied, "The Book of God, by which God will defeat every tyrant. Whoever adheres to it will be saved, and whoever abandons it will perish." This is no jest; it is not fabricated, and its wonders will never fade. It contains news of what has occurred before you, a separation of what is between you, and information about what will happen after you."¹⁸

The Sheikh commented on this hadith, saying: "The Messenger of God, peace be upon him, spoke the truth. Division has occurred, and we have called people to the way out: the Book of God and the Sunnah of His Messenger, which clarifies it. The dissenters have said what they have said, except for those who believe that Muhammad is the Messenger of God. They should adhere to his guidance, as he directed us to the solution to this difference. Let us act upon his guidance. He showed us the path of truth in times of confusion, so let us follow it. God has described His Book as follows: 'A guidance for mankind, and clear proofs of guidance and the criterion'. It is clear, evident guidance for those seeking truth and guidance"¹⁹.

Second Branch: The Call to Knowledge and Education and the Encouragement of Both

These are among the priorities of the Muslim Scholars Association, particularly given the widespread ignorance and the loss of the means and methods of acquiring knowledge and education. Therefore, it has become necessary to address this situation. During religious and national occasions, Sheikh Ibn Badis seized opportunities to encourage his compatriots to value and pursue knowledge, recognising its importance in the life of nations.

¹⁶- Majalis al-Tadhkir from the Hadith of the Herald of Good News, Publications of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, 1st edition, 1403 AH – 1983, p. 175.

¹⁷- Same source, p. 204.

¹⁸- Ahmad ibn Hanbal. Al-Musnad, edited by Shu'ayb al-Arna'ut, Adel Murshid et al., publisher: Al-Risalah Foundation, 1st edition, 1421 AH – 2001 CE, vol. 2, p. 112, hadith no. 407.

¹⁹- See: Majalis al-Tadhkir from the Hadith of the Herald of Good News, p. 203.

He encouraged the pursuit of knowledge and education in all its forms, emphasising Hadith texts that urge the quest for knowledge. In his article "Majalis Al-'Ilm", he discussed the Hadith of Abu Waqqad Al-Laythi about the three individuals who approached the Prophet. The hadith states: 'While the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, was sitting in the mosque with people, three men came. Two approached the Messenger of God, while one turned away. One of them saw a gap in the circle and sat in it, while the other sat behind them and the third turned away.' When the Prophet had finished speaking, he said, "Shall I not inform you about the three individuals? One of them sought refuge with God, and God sheltered him; the second felt shy, and God felt shy from him; and the third turned away, and God turned away from him."²⁰

He also highlighted the hadith of Zaid bin Thabit, which encourages learning languages other than Arabic as required by the Algerians. Zaid said: 'The Messenger of God, peace be upon him, commanded me to learn some words from the Jewish Book, saying, "I swear by God, I do not trust the Jews regarding their Book."' Zaid continued, 'I did not wait more than half a month until I had learnt it for him.' He said, 'When I had learnt it, whenever he wrote to the Jews, I would write to them on his behalf, and whenever they wrote to him, I would read their letter to him.'²¹ The Prophet also urged Zaid to learn the Syriac language of the Jews²².

In his book *Majalis Al-Tadhkir*, he titled this discussion "The Importance of Learning Necessary Languages"²³, as if to say that we need to learn other languages to succeed in our endeavours and spread our culture and religion. 'The Importance of Learning Necessary Languages'²⁴, emphasising the importance of learning other languages to succeed in our endeavours and spread our culture and religion. His enmity towards France should not prevent us from learning its language.

He also meticulously categorised Hadith texts that touched on the realities of the Algerian nation, aligning them with the meanings he aimed to convey, such as eradicating ignorance and illiteracy, and promoting knowledge and education. This discourse was initially directed towards the general Algerian populace rather than the intellectuals. Examples of his meticulous categorisation include: 'The Importance of Seeking Knowledge and the Rejection of It', 'The Call of Ignorance and the Stinking Word', 'The Deceiver Shepherd of His Flock', and 'May God Curse Those Who Take Mosques as Graves and Teach Women to Write'²⁵.

Third Branch: The Call to Reject Innovations and Polytheism Spreads Through Algerian Society

The phenomenon of widespread innovations and doctrinal violations was prevalent in Algerian society as a result of the French occupation's policies aimed at eradicating Muslim beliefs and religious constants, promoting Christianisation and instilling atheism. Consequently, the Sunnah was perceived as an innovation, and innovations were considered commendable. In expressing this sentiment, Ibn Badis, may God have mercy on him, stated: 'What has occurred... often happens among the ignorant and the innovators who have grown up with them until old age, so that innovation has become a Sunnah for them and the Sunnah has become an innovation...'²⁶

This painful doctrinal reality was widespread in his time and common among his people, with significant consequences. One major issue was the construction of graves on top of mosques. This prompted the Sheikh to reinforce Hadith lessons addressing this topic, as it poses a danger to a Muslim's religion and their connection with God. Among these lessons were "Cursing Those Who

²⁰- Narrated by al-Bukhari in the 'Book of Knowledge', 'Chapter on Sitting Where the Circle Ends', vol. 1, p. 24, hadith no. 66.

²¹- Narrated by al-Tirmidhi in Sunan, in the chapter on knowledge, chapter on teaching Syriac, hadith no. 2715, vol. 5, p. 67.

²²- He said: 'The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) commanded me to learn Syriac.' This hadith is also narrated by al-Tirmidhi in the Chapters of Knowledge (Vol. 5, p. 68).

²³- Majalis al-Tadhkir from the Hadith of the Herald of Good News, p. 69.

²⁴- See: Belamri, Akram. 'Realism in the Hadith Studies of Sheikh Ibn Badis', Journal of Research and Studies, Issue 16, Year 10, Summer 2013, p. 127.

²⁵- See: Belamri, Akram. Op. cit., p. 127.

²⁶- See: Majalis al-Tadhkir from the Hadith of the Herald of Good News, p. 175.

Build Mosques on Graves” and “Prohibition of Building on Graves”, emphasising that those who build mosques on graves will be among the worst of creation in the eyes of God on the Day of Judgement.

All of these titles were issued successively in an attempt to curb the practice of building on graves. He also wrote an article titled Polytheism, Idolatry, and False Prophethood, in which he interpreted the Prophet’s hadith: ‘The Hour will not come until tribes from my nation align with the polytheists and worship idols. There will be thirty liars among my nation, all of whom will claim to be prophets, while I am the Seal of the Prophets; there will be no prophet after me.’²⁷ The Sheikh outlined the types of innovations and polytheism that had spread among Algerians and warned against them. He stated: ‘Today, many people turn to deceased individuals who cannot benefit or harm them. They pray to these individuals and stand humbly before their graves in complete submission. They call upon these individuals, believing that they bring them closer to God and intercede for them. They claim that these individuals can fulfil their needs, grant their desires and avert calamities. One of the practices of the ignorant polytheists is to bring livestock to their idols and slaughter them in the hope of gaining their favour and assistance.’²⁸

These types of innovations and doctrinal violations that Sheikh Ibn Badis alerted his people to at that time are still prevalent in our society today. It is essential for scholars and students of knowledge to prepare themselves to warn people against these violations and to teach them the correct beliefs and religion in order to avoid them. In affirming this idea, the Sheikh stated: ‘All of this is indeed occurring in the nation, without a doubt. Just as it was part of the Prophet’s advice — peace be upon him — to warn the nation before these things happened, it is also the duty of its scholars today to make the nation aware of these issues after they have emerged and depict them in their idolatrous forms, which repel Muslims by nature. Had the nation heeded the warnings of every knowledgeable person, it would have rejected its misguided ways and come to its senses. Blessed are those scholars who advised and tried to rescue it. So, let us take action, O reformers and sincere advisors, for the era of deception and trickery has come to an end...’²⁹

Fourth Branch: His Call to Clarify the Status of Women in Algerian Society

Sheikh Ibn Badis considered the status of women to be of great importance; in Islam, their status is no less than that of men. This is because women in Algerian society are mothers, wives, sisters and daughters. Therefore, the Sheikh accorded them a high status, recognising that their righteousness is linked to the righteousness of society and future generations. He viewed this as essential for reform and change.

May God have mercy on him. He often held gatherings to emphasise the status and value of women in Algerian society, highlighting that Islam has granted them a lofty position. To illustrate this point, he would cite the hadith of Abu Musa al-Ash’ari, who said: ‘The Messenger of God, peace be upon him, said, “Many men have attained perfection, but no women except Maryam, daughter of Imran, and Asia, wife of Pharaoh.”’ The superiority of Aisha over other women is like the superiority of thareed (a type of food) over all other foods.³⁰

He held a session titled ‘Women and Perfection’, in which he explained the concept of female perfection and refuted any perceived deficiencies. In his view, perfection is achieved through three qualities: strength of will, strength of knowledge and strength of action. He stated: ‘Human perfection depends on the strength of knowledge, will, and action. These are the foundations of noble character and good conduct, enabling one to engage in great deeds and reach the highest goals of honour and perfection.’ Since women are created for internal aspects of life, they are endowed with these three strengths to a degree that meets their needs — less than men require for external responsibilities.

²⁷- Narrated by al-Tirmidhi in Sunan, Book of Trials, Chapter on What Has Been Said About Liars Coming Before the Hour, Hadith No. 2219, Vol. 4, p. 498

²⁸- See: Majalis al-Tadhkir from the Hadith of the Herald of Good News, p. 94.

²⁹- See: Ibn Badis, Op. cit., p. 95.

³⁰- Narrated by al-Bukhari in Sahih, Book of Prophets, Chapter on Allah’s Saying: ‘And Allah set forth a parable,’ Hadith No. 3411, Vol. 4, p. 158.

Therefore, they are inherently weaker than men in terms of knowledge, willpower and action, and for this reason, they are less perfect.³¹

He also emphasised the importance of women's education, stating: 'Women are the counterparts of men in responsibilities; it is obligatory to teach and educate them. The Prophet, peace be upon him, taught, honoured, cared for, and encouraged them to seek knowledge. As in the hadith of Ibn Abbas, may God be pleased with him, the Messenger of God went out with Bilal and thought that he had not heard the women, so he admonished them and commanded them to give charity.' The women then began to throw their earrings and rings, which Bilal collected in the corner of his garment³².

He also urged men to support women in a religious manner, saying: 'We must educate women religiously to prepare them for the internal aspects of life and help raise those who will contribute to the external aspects. In this way, life will be organised naturally, allowing humanity to achieve happiness and perfection.'³³

Second section: The Realistic and Renewing Dimension in Ibn Badis's Exegesis

The scholar Ibn Badis regarded the Holy Qur'an as the starting point for the reform process, as well as a launchpad for reviving the Islamic nation and overcoming its struggles. This revival is achieved by engaging with the profound guidance contained within its verses, reshaping Islamic civilisation and considering the realities of the times. 'There was an urgent need for an interpretation that focused primarily on the Qur'an's guidance, warnings, promises and reform, and considered the circumstances of the time with clarity and attention to the understanding of various audiences.'³⁴

First Branch: Manifestations of the Realistic and Renewing Dimension in Sheikh Ibn Badis's Exegesis

Ibn Badis titled his exegesis of the Book of God "Majalis Al-Tadhkir from the Words of the Wise Expert and the Hadith of the Herald of Good News". He recognised that the Holy Qur'an, along with the sciences related to it and the explanation of the words of the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, were the ideal means of reforming Algerian society. By interpreting the Qur'an in public and private gatherings, he aimed to inspire the Algerian revolution. "The Qur'anic verses evoked renewed meanings in him, connected to the painful socio-religious and political reality experienced by the Algerian nation. This broadened his understanding of Qur'anic meanings through skilful interpretation.'³⁵

He divided his exegetical lessons into scientific and practical sections, urging contemplation of the meanings of the Qur'an, as these are the best deeds for the heart. The Qur'an serves as a reminder to soften hardened hearts, cure sick souls, and act as an antidote to beliefs, morals and actions, leading to happiness in this world and the next³⁶.

Diverging from interpreters who limited themselves to explaining and analysing linguistic mechanisms, he adopted Muhammad Abduh's approach as a model for educational, social and religious critique. Admiring Abduh's method of interpretation, he emulated it in crafting a contemporary exegesis that addresses societal issues and the call for revival. He selected verses and Hadiths for discussion to encourage thought, reflection, and consideration. His method of conveying the truths of revelation and miracles was educational, simple and direct³⁷.

From this, we can conclude that Abdul Hamid Ibn Badis aimed to make understanding simple in order to convey truths, employing explanation, analysis, critique, and inference. His goal was to make meanings more accessible using clear and simple language. At the end of his sessions, he would often conclude with guidance, urging contemplation of the Qur'an and Sunnah and encouraging the

³¹- See: Ibn Badis, *Majalis al-Tadhkir from the Hadith of the Herald of Good News*, p. 164.

³²- See: Ibn Badis, *Op. cit.*, p. 156.

³³- See: Same source, p. 167.

³⁴- See: Dr Abdullah Shahat. *Interpretation between the Past and Present*, Dar Al-I'tisam, no date, pp. 20–21.

³⁵- See: Iffat Al-Sharqawi. *Human Issues in the Works of Interpreters*, Dar Al-Nahda Al-Arabiya, Beirut, 1980, p. 230.

³⁶- See: *Majalis al-Tadhkir from the Hadith of the Herald of Good News*, p. 9.

³⁷- See: Imamrah, Turki Rabah. *Sheikh Abdul Hamid Ibn Badis: His Efforts in Education and Teaching*, p. 13.

application of their rulings in life by emulating the righteous predecessors. He also encouraged the acquisition of worldly knowledge and hastening to repentance. This reflects the approach of established scholars who are deeply rooted in Islamic knowledge.

The following examples from his exegesis prominently showcase its realistic and renewing dimensions:

Second Branch: A Model in Supplicating to God

From the words of the Almighty: ‘Say, “Call upon those you have claimed besides Him; they do not possess the power to remove adversity from you, nor to change it.”’ Those whom they call upon seek a means of access to their Lord, striving to be closer to Him and hoping for His mercy while fearing His punishment. Indeed, the punishment of your Lord is to be feared. [Al-Isra: 56–57].

The Sheikh, may God have mercy on him, titled a section to clarify the meaning of these verses, focusing on invoking others besides God. He then provided an explanation of the terms in the verse and an overview of its meaning, followed by a detailed exposition of the related rulings. One of the most prominent aspects is invoking others in matters that only God can handle. This highlights a deviation from Muslim beliefs, which call for invoking and worshipping God alone and rejecting other deities.

In this clarification, the Sheikh addressed the reality of Muslims, where manifestations of polytheism and innovations have spread. He sought to remedy these issues through proper religious education and guidance drawn from the teachings of the Holy Book. Affirming this idea, Sheikh Ibn Badis stated under a subheading titled ‘Application’: ‘If you understand these rulings and observe the situation of Algerian Muslims and others, you will find that the vast majority of ordinary people are immersed in this misguidance. You see them calling upon those they believe to be righteous, both living and dead, asking them to remove harm and bring benefit, and making other similar requests. They visit shrines covered with domes or mosques built over graves, calling upon those inside and striking the graves. Oh, how we lament for ourselves! How have we perverted our religion, leading us to this wretched state of misguidance?’³⁸

Having elucidated these meanings from the Quranic text, he offered readers and recipients a warning, some advice and some guidance, urging them not to direct their supplications to anyone other than God and advising those who do so to abandon this practice. This is all part of the duty of advising Muslims. Therefore, under another heading titled ‘Warning and Guidance’, he stated: ‘Let our readers beware of directing any part of their supplications to anyone or anything other than God. Let them warn others against doing so and spread these truths among their fellow Muslims as widely as possible, in the hope that the heedless will be awakened, the ignorant will learn and the misguided will abandon their misguided ways, even if only gradually. In this way, our readers will have fulfilled their responsibility to share knowledge, performed their duty to advise, and served Islam and Muslims.’³⁹

Third Branch: A Model in Prohibiting Excessive Spending during Feasts and Mourning

From the saying of the Almighty: ‘Those who, when they spend, are neither extravagant nor miserly, but strike a balance between the two extremes’ [Al-Furqan: 67].

After clarifying the subject of the verse and explaining its terms, Sheikh Ibn Badis moved on to discuss its general meaning. He then applied the interpretative truths to real life, transferring the meaning of the verse from the context in which it was revealed to similar circumstances that illustrate its relevance. Under a subheading titled ‘Application’, the Sheikh stated: ‘For the most part, the state of our nation in feasts and mourning is not free from extravagance, which leads to subsequent miserliness. Thus, the sin affects its owner in both forms and surrounds him on all sides. Evil begets evil, and sin leads to its like. Many Algerian Muslim scholars have expressed their hope of addressing this situation, particularly with regard to mourning.’⁴⁰

³⁸- See: Ibn Badis, *Majalis al-Tadhkir min al-Kalim al-Haqiq al-Haqiq*, Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, Beirut, Lebanon, 1st ed., 1416 AH – 1995, p. 119.

³⁹- *Majalis al-Tadhkir from the Words of the Wise Expert*, p. 119.

⁴⁰- See: Ibn Badis, *Op. cit.*, p. 218.

The text that the Sheikh referred to at the end of his interpretation of these verses highlights the practical issues he aimed to address, explaining them in a way that everyone can understand. We see how the Sheikh highlights the wounds of society resulting from colonial policies, ignorance of Islamic knowledge and the destructive ideas spread to eliminate the foundations of this noble people.

Sheikh Ibn Badis emphasised the profound guidance contained in the Holy Book, relating it to people's everyday lives and addressing their issues. This aligns with Afghani's aim of enlightening the Quranic text and applying it to real life, reflecting the intention behind the Sheikh's title, 'Application'⁴¹.

He then said: 'May God have mercy on him.' 'Advice', a title containing a warning against certain actions and customs of people in mourning and at celebrations. 'Oh, I wish those who receive such guests would ask each one about their situation and where they got the money they gave; perhaps they would learn of the misery of those poor souls and their hearts would soften towards them, prompting them to return the money or give more. They should limit their generosity to those whom they find capable of reciprocating.' If this advice were followed, it would alleviate the evil and misery faced by the visitors and reduce sin and blame for the hosts⁴².

In this verse, the Sheikh did not merely critique the painful reality he experienced; he also offered advice and guidance to the hosts. He urged them to fear God in their treatment of their guests and to show compassion for their situation. He told them to assist their guests rather than extracting their money and exploiting them, as this constitutes sin and blame. At the end of his advice, he called upon God for success in relieving the evil and misery of the visitors and the sin and blame of the hosts.

The Sheikh's concluding statements—"Application," "Advice," and "Warning"—reflect a renewal in the science of exegesis and a realistic approach to addressing the issues facing the Algerian nation. This is the hallmark of a devout scholar and interpreter who seeks to address the nation's ailments by providing counsel and warning against threats to its security, peace, faith and doctrine⁴³.

Fourth Branch: A Model for Worshipping God Alone, Prohibiting Killing and Avoiding Adultery

From the words of the Almighty: 'And those who do not invoke another deity with Allah, nor kill the soul which Allah has forbidden, except by right, nor commit unlawful sexual intercourse.' [Al-Furqan: 68].

After stating that the topic was derived from this verse, titled "Worshipping God Alone, Prohibiting Killing and Avoiding Adultery", the Sheikh moved on to discuss the reasons for its revelation and its overall meaning. He then began to articulate the guidance drawn from the verse by linking it to deviant manifestations in society. He attempted to remedy these issues by offering a Qur'anic solution to their doctrinal problems. Under a subheading titled 'Warning and Guidance', he said: 'From the heart of the Muslim community, this is a call from him, may God have mercy on him, to correct the creed. How often do you hear people say in their prayers: 'O my Lord and the Sheikh', 'O my Lord and the people of my Lord', or 'O my Lord and the good people'? This is invoking others besides God. Beware, O Muslim, of this, and call upon God, your Lord and Creator alone, and reject polytheism.⁴⁴

This warning and guidance realistically calls for the rejection of polytheistic expressions that circulate among people, and advises Muslims to avoid such expressions and to learn how to invoke the one God while disregarding other humans.

The Sheikh interpreted the Qur'anic text from a religious and doctrinal perspective, clarifying that many of the phrases commonly used in Algerian prayers are polytheistic. He warned against these phrases and guided his audience towards expressions that are free from doctrinal errors and emphasise invoking and worshipping God alone⁴⁵.

Through this approach, the Sheikh clearly linked Algerian reality to Qur'anic texts that provide solutions and eradicate polytheistic manifestations within the Algerian community.

⁴¹- See: Nadia Wajnaji. 'The Realistic Dimension in the Interpretation of Sheikh Abdul Hamid Ibn Badis', *Al-Ihya Journal*, Issue 12, p. 520, Haj Lakhdar University, Batna.

⁴²- See: Wajnaji, Nadia. Op. cit., p. 218.

⁴³- See: Ibn Badis, *Majalis al-Tadhkir min al-Kalim al-Haqiq*, same reference, p. 520.

⁴⁴- Ibn Badis, same reference, p. 222.

⁴⁵- See: Wajnaji, Nadia: *The Realistic Dimension in the Interpretation of Sheikh Abdul Hamid Ibn Badis*, p. 521.

Fifth Branch: A Model of the Tyrant Over His Flock

From the words of the Almighty: ‘Until they came to the valley of the ants, when an ant said: “O ants, enter your dwellings lest Solomon and his soldiers crush you unwittingly.”’ [An-Naml: 18].

The Sheikh began his interpretation of this verse with a broad title that clarifies the intended meaning and paints it in the mind of the reader or listener. ‘The monarchy of prophecy is the gathering of truth and goodness, and a manifestation of beauty and strength.’⁴⁶ He then defined the terms and explained the overall meaning of the verse. Transitioning from the context in which the verse was revealed, he directed its application towards issues of leadership and governance, providing a political interpretation.

Under the subheading ‘Lessons and Teachings’, the Sheikh noted that the instinct of nationality is a natural drive. It did not only concern itself with its own safety, but also recognised the enormity of the army it saw and felt compelled to warn its kin. It instinctively knew that it could not survive without them. It warned them at the most critical moment of danger. Its fear for itself and its kind did not prevent it from acknowledging Solomon and his army’s excuse⁴⁷.

The Sheikh then drew a practical educational lesson from his surroundings, stating: ‘This teaches us that a person’s life is intertwined with that of their community, and their salvation depends on the salvation of others. A person will find no good unless they feel they are part of the community. One manifestation of this feeling is caring for the welfare of others as much as for oneself, without prioritising one over the other.’⁴⁸

He applied this lesson to the reality of the nation, particularly with regard to leaders and their subjects. He urged leaders to be aware of their duty to protect the interests of their people, and to support them in times of need and hardship. He described the qualities of those in leadership positions, listing their most important attributes.

He stated: ‘The duties of a leader and chief: The ant is the leader of the ants. It possesses enough awareness to perceive danger before others and quickly issues a warning. Therefore, only those with foresight, accurate intuition, keen insight and an understanding of matters before they arise are fit to lead the nation and its people, quickly alerting others to potential dangers’⁴⁹.

He then admonished us with a profound lesson: ‘This ant fulfilled its duty to its people!’ How much more should a rational human be concerned for their community? This is a stern warning to those who neglect their people’s affairs, do not fulfil their responsibilities, see imminent danger approaching yet remain silent and blind, or bring danger upon their people themselves. Oh, how we need more such ants!⁵⁰’

This message is a call to the agents of colonialism, linking the ant’s actions with leaders’ responsibilities and urging those treacherous individuals to learn from the ant’s behaviour towards its kin. The Sheikh laments the necessity for more of such weak creatures among Muslims in general and Algerians in particular⁵¹.

This reflects the Sheikh’s admonition to those in positions of authority to be compassionate, to advise and warn their people of potential dangers, to guide them to safety and to strive for their welfare and interests.

Conclusion:

After studying the realistic and renewing dimensions of modern hadith and exegesis in the writings of the Association of Muslim Scholars, with Ibn Badis as a model, we have reached several conclusions and made a number of recommendations. The most important of these are:

⁴⁶- See: Majalis al-Tadhkir: From the Words of the Wise Expert, p. 249.

⁴⁷- See: Same source, p. 262.

⁴⁸- See: Ibn Badis, Majalis al-Tadhkir, same reference, p. 263.

⁴⁹- See: Same source, p. 263.

⁵⁰- See: Same source, p. 263.

⁵¹- See: Waznaji, Nadia. The Realistic Dimension in the Interpretation of Sheikh Abdul Hamid Ibn Badis, p. 523.

First: Results:

1. The Association of Muslim Scholars is a scientific Algerian Islamic organisation established for a noble purpose necessitated by the needs of the nation, its people and its history. It is a religious and educational institution.
2. One of the most prominent figures in the association is Abdul Hamid Ibn Badis, a distinguished figure who advocated a scientific and awareness-raising revival in order to liberate Algeria from French colonialism and its destructive ideas through his oral and written jihad.
3. Sheikh Ibn Badis was a significant scholar and advocate in the fields of exegesis and hadith, with educational dimensions and objectives, including a realistic and renewing dimension.
4. Examples of the realistic and renewing aspects of Abdul Hamid Ibn Badis's hadith writings include his engagement with issues of knowledge and education, his efforts to eradicate illiteracy, his refutation of the innovations and superstitions propagated by the French occupation, his adherence to the Qur'an and the Sunnah, and his emphasis on the status of Muslim women in a new, scientific and realistic manner.
5. One of the most prominent signs of the realistic and renewing dimension in Ibn Badis's exegesis is his use of educational and social interpretation styles, his reliance on religious critique and his application of modern, realistic analysis to address societal issues and demands for liberation. He takes verses and hadiths as subjects for discussion, material for reflection and consideration.

Second: Recommendations:

In conclusion, I urge the relevant authorities in Algeria, as well as scholars, researchers, reformers and guides, to draw on the scientific experience of the Association of Muslim Scholars' pioneers, particularly Ibn Badis's advocacy and guidance methods and his significant scholarly and reformative activities. They should adopt his methodologies and scientific dimensions in calling to God.

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