

# **Christian Missionaries on the Historical Method and Science of Hadith**

Missionaries raising polemics against Islam have a constant habit of citing from what Muslims deem to be weak sources. They think that the Western historical method is superior to the Muslim's historical method of verification. Thus, when they examine our Islamic sources they apply their own standards and reach different conclusions than what Muslim scholars have reached.

The two missionaries that have argued this in somewhat more detail than others on the internet or have basically summed up what other missionaries are trying to say on this issue are David Wood (in his comments section over here) and Sam Shamoun (mainly in part of his article over [here](#) and in other areas of his website)

I would be writing this article with the assumption that the reader knows very well what I am talking about when I discuss the issue of Hadith collection. So before I proceed on to my article, I strongly advise those who are not familiar with the collection of Hadith to please read and fully understand these articles first:

- [Refuting The Argument That The Hadith Have Been Collected 200 Years After The Death Of The Prophet And Therefore Are Unreliable](#)
- [God's Preservation of the Sunnah: by Jamaal al-Din Zarabozo](#)
- [Modern Historical Methodology vs Hadeeth Methodology: by Reem Azzam](#)
- [Hadith: Obligation to Verify authenticity: by Akram Y Safadi](#)
- [On The Nature Of The Hadith Collections Of Imam Al-Bukhari & Muslim](#)
- [Explosive Increase Of Isnad & Its Implications](#)
- [Hadiths Inserted Posthumously In The Sahih Of Al-Bukhari?](#)

One may get the impression that there is no logical flow to this article. This is due to the fact that I am responding to individual comments made by David and Shamoun scattered around the place. So please forgive me this; however you would still benefit from the replies to the individual arguments.

Sam Shamoun said:

One such Muslim that happened to do this was Ibn Hisham, the editor of Ibn Ishaq's biography, who candidly admitted to removing certain stories from Ibn Ishaq's work:

God willing I shall begin this book with Isma'il son of Ibrahim and mention those of his offspring who were the ancestors of God's apostle one by one

with what is known about them, taking no account of Isma'il's other children, omitting some of the things which I.I. has recorded in which there is no mention of the apostle and about which the Quran says nothing and which are not relevant to anything in this book or an explanation of it or evidence for it; poems which he quotes that no authority on poetry whom I have met knows of; things which it is disgraceful to discuss; matters which would distress certain people; and such reports as al-Bakka'i told me he could not accept as trustworthy – all these things I have omitted. But God willing I shall give a full account of everything else so far as it is known and trustworthy tradition is available. (The Life of Muhammad, A Translation of Ibn Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah, with introduction and notes by Alfred Guillaume [Karachi Oxford University Press, Karachi, Tenth Impression 1995], p. 691; underline emphasis ours)

First of all, Shamoun is assuming that Ibn Hisham was a scholar of hadith. Well, he wasn't. He was only a biographer and he didn't utilize the sophisticated methodology of hadith collection that hadith scholars make use of.

Secondly, Shamoun is assuming that the certain things that Ibn Hisham is speaking about of which he omitted are things that are related to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his actions. Ibn Hisham didn't specify exactly what he was talking about here. He only said that they are disgraceful things that distress certain people. He didn't specify what these things were. Furthermore, he went on to say:

**But God willing I shall give a full account of everything else so far as it is known and trustworthy tradition is available.**

So Ibn Hisham made it clear what his methodology was. Of course this was his intention according to him; **this says nothing about how good of a job he did in doing so.**

Thirdly, what are these “negative” things that Muslims are trying to hide? Did Muslims hide the Prophet's marriage to Ayesha, which Shamoun finds disturbing? Did they hide the fact that the tribe of Bani Qurayda was executed? Or that the Prophet (peace be upon him) ordered for those criminals from the tribe of Ukl to be punished?, etc. and all other things that westerners such as Shamoun find disturbing? No they didn't. If the Muslims were conspiring to hide “disturbing stories”, which they knew to be true, then they would have been consistent and hid everything that others would have deemed to be objectionable.

Muslims have not hid any of the things that so many Western people find disturbing. Thus, to say that Muslims are keen on hiding “embarrassing things about their Prophet” is just absurd. We are not here to impress or

appeal to anyone's desires. We convey the message as it is. If people want to follow their desires and reject Islam, then off to hell they go. If they don't, then we praise Allah for guiding them. Islam continues to spread rapidly in America, despite all these "disturbing" things about Islam being known to them. We have nothing to hide.

**Sam Shamoun said:**

**Most of the documents which provide an isnad are written centuries after Muhammad's death:**

**Muhammad Ibn Isma`il al-Bukhari- 194-256 AH/809-869 AD.**

**Muslim Ibn al-`Hajjaj Ibn Wird Ibn Kushadh al-Qushairi- 204-261 AH/819-874 AD.**

**Abu Dawud Sulaiman Ibn al-Ash`ath as-Sujstani- 202-275 AH/817-888 AD.**

**Muhammad Ibn `Isa at-Tirmidhi- 210-279 AH/825-892 AD.**

**Ahmad Ibn Shu`aib an-Naqai- 215-303 AH/830-915 AD.**

**Abu Abdullah Muhammad Ibn Yazid Ibn Majah- 209-273 AH/824-886 AD.**

**Malik Ibn Anas- 93-179 AH/711-795 AD.**

**Ahmad Ibn `Hanbal- 164-241 AH/780-855 AD.**

**Following is a list of some of the hadith collections prior to Bukhari:**

- 1. Book of Khalid ibn Ma'dan (d. 104)**
- 2. Books of Abu Qilabah (d. 104). He bequeathed his books to his pupil, Ayyub Saktiyan (68-131 A.H.), who paid more than ten dirhams as a fare for them being loaded on a camel.**
- 3. The script of Hammam ibn Munabbih, already referred to.**
- 4. Books of Hasan al-Basri (21-110 A.H.)**
- 5. Books of Muhammad al-Baqir (56-114 A.H.)**
- 6. Books of Makhul from Syria**
- 7. Book of Hakam ibn `Utaibah**

- 8. Book of Bukair ibn ‘Abdullah ibn al-Ashajj (d. 117)**
- 9. Book of Qais ibn Sa’d (d. 117). This book later belonged to Hammad ibn Salamah.**
- 10. Book of Sulaiman al-Yashkuri**
- 11. Al-Abwab of Sha’bi, already referred to.**
- 12. Books of Ibn Shihāb az-Zuhri**
- 13. Book of Abul-‘Aliyah**
- 14. Book of Sa’id ibn Jubair (d. 95)**
- 15. Books of ‘Umar ibn ‘Abdul Aziz (61-101 □.H.)**
- 16. Books of Mujahid ibn Jabr (d. 103)**
- 17. Book of Raja ibn Hywah (d. 112)**
- 18. Book of Abu Bakr ibn Muhammad ibn ‘Amr ibn Haq**
- 19. Book of Bashir □bn Nahik.**
- 20. Book of ‘Abdul Malik ibn Juraij (d. 150)**
- 21. Muwatta of Malik ibn Anas (93-179)**
- 22. Muwatta of Ibn Abi Zi’b (80-158)**
- 23. Maghāzi of Muhammad ibn Ishaq (d. 151)**
- 24. Musnad of Rabi’ ibn Sabih (d. 160)**
- 25. Book of Sa’id ibn Abi ‘Arubah (d. 156)**
- 26. Book of Hammad ibn Salmah (d. 167)**
- 27. Jami’ Sufyan ath-Thauri (97-161)**
- 28. Jami’ Ma’mar ibn Rashid (95-153)**
- 29. Book of ‘Abdur-Rahman al-Awza’I (88-157)**
- 30. Kitāb az-Zuhd by ‘Abdulla□ ibn al-Mubārak (118-181)**

31. **Book of Hushaim ibn Bashir (104-183)**
32. **Book of Jarir ibn ‘Abdul-Hamid (110-188)**
33. **Book of ‘Abdullah ibn Wahb (125-197)**
34. **Book of Yahya ibn Abi Kathir (d. 129)**
35. **Book of Muhammad ibn Suqah (d. 135)**
36. **Tafsir of Zaid ibn Aslam (d. 136)**
37. **Book of Musa ibn ‘Uqaysh (d. 141)**
38. **Book of Ash’ath ibn ‘Abdul-Malik (d. 142)**
39. **Book of Aqil ibn Khalid (d. 142)**
40. **Book of Yahya ibn Sa’id Ansari (d. 143)**
41. **Book of Awf ibn Abi Jamilah (d. 146)**
42. **Books of Jafar ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq (d. 148)**
43. **Books of Yunus ibn Yazid (d. 152)**
44. **Book of ‘Abdur-Rahman al-Mas’udi (d. 160)**
45. **Books of Zaidah ibn Qudamah (d. 161)**
46. **Books of Ibrahim al-Tahman (d. 163)**
47. **Books of Abu Hamzah al-Sukri (d. 167)**
48. **Al-Gharab by Shu’bah ibn al-Hajjaj (d. 160)**
49. **Books of ‘Abdul-Aziz ibn ‘Abdullah al-Majishun (d. 164)**
50. **Books of ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abdullah ibn Abi Uwais (d. 169)**
51. **Books of Sulaiman ibn Bilal (d. 172)**
52. **Books of ‘Abdullah ibn Lahi’ah (d. 147)**
53. **Jami’ Sufyan ibn ‘Uyainah (d. 198)**

- 54. Kitāb-ul-Aṭhār by Imām Abu Hanīfah (d. 150)
- 55. Maghāzi of Mu'tamir ibn Sulaiman (d. 187)
- 56. Musannaf of Waki' ibn Jarrah (d. 196)
- 57. Musannaf of 'Abdur-Razzaq ibn Hammam (136-221)
- 58. Musnad of Zaid ibn 'Ali (76-122)
- 59. Books of Imām Shāfi'i (150-204)

Dr. Mustafa Al Azami in his excellent acclaimed work [Studies in Early Hadith Literature](#) from pages 34 to 60 mentions the names of 50 companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) who wrote down hadith. Then from pages 60 to 74 he mentions the names of 49 successors from the first Islamic century that wrote down hadith. Then from pages 74 to 106 he mentions the names of 87 scholars that wrote down hadith from the late first and early second centuries. Then from pages 106 to 182 he mentions the names of 251 scholars from the early second century who wrote down hadiths.

This is clear evidence that the writing down and collection of hadith started much earlier than most people think.

Now one might ask himself why we don't have most of these first century hadith works.

Dr. Mustafa Al Azami in his other acclaimed work [Studies in Hadith Methodology and Literature](#) on page 103 said:

What happened to the earlier Hadith literature?

I have mentioned earlier that hundreds and thousands of books of Hadith were in circulation in the first and second century. Only a very small amount of this Hadith literature has survived. It could be said that either what I have described is totally wrong, or these books were in existence at sometime but were lost later. This second hypothesis raises another problem, i.e. of the negligence of the Hadith of the Prophet s.a.w. by Muslim scholars. It is possible that they did not feel any necessity of Hadith literature and so it was destroyed?

As a matter of fact, my position is precise and correct. These books were not destroyed nor did they perish, but were absorbed into the work of later authors. When the encyclopedia type books were produced, scholars did

not feel the necessity to keep the early books or booklets, and so, slowly they disappeared. To explain this point I will describe the method of quotations in early days which would prove my point.

Indeed, Muslims today could be confident that we have incorporated all the hadiths that were written down in the first century. The strongest evidence for this is the Sahifah of Hammam bin Munabbih, where we find all of its hadith found in the later hadith collections. For more detail please visit [this article](#).

Sam Shamoun said:

Furthermore, one can easily account for Ibn Ishaq not providing a source for this event on the grounds that he didn't feel he needed to do so since he was writing not too long after these events (at least as far as he may have been concerned since 750 A.D is still over a hundred years after Muhammad's death). He may have assumed that the facts of this event were common knowledge by the people he was writing to, and that there was no reason to substantiate the report by providing the name of his source(s).

Moreover, Ibn Ishaq wrote at a time where providing a chain or source isnad may not have been an issue for verification (at least for that generation of Muslims to whom he was writing). It is only some considerable time later where the issue of an authoritative chain became vitally important for demonstrating authenticity. (bold emphasis is mine)

David Wood said the same thing:

The writers of the Sira literature, unlike the Hadith collectors, weren't obsessed with Isnads. So they recorded credible reports without always listing the Isnads, because Isnads didn't really become all that significant until there were hundreds of thousands of dubious stories going around (produced by the Ummah, of course). (bold emphasis is mine)

This exposes the ignorance of these two so called "experts of Islam".

The concept of verifying where a report came from initiated during the Caliphate of Abu Bakr and was common during Umar's caliphate as well.

In his Ph.D. dissertation, Umar Fullaatah after discussing the question of the history of Isnad in detail confidently concluded the following:

1. The Isnad was first used during the time of the Companions.
2. Abu Bakr was the first to force narrators to mention the source for their hadeeth.

3. The narrator himself insisted on mentioning the Isnad of each hadeeth on the heels of (1) and (2) above. (Fullaatah, al-Widha fi al-Hadeeth, vol. 2, p. 30)

Some examples would suffice to prove the point that Abu Bakr and Umar found it important to verify the source of the hadith being narrated:

#### Saheeh Muslim

‘Abd Allah bin Shaqiq said: Ibn ‘Abbas one day addressed us after al-‘asr till the sun disappeared and the stars appeared, and (as the time for maghrib passed) the people began to say: Prayer, prayer! A person from Banu Tamim arrived and without slackening or stopping (continued saying): Prayer, prayer! Ibn ‘Abbas said: May you be deprived of your mother, do you teach me the Sunnah? And then he said: I saw the Messenger of God combining the noon and afternoon prayers and the sunset and night prayers. ‘Abd Allah bin Shaqiq said: Some doubt was created in my mind about it. So I came to Abu Hurayrah and asked him and he testified his assertion.

Shaqiq did not consider the report of Ibn ‘Abbas to be binding without further verification.

#### Saheeh Bukhari

Abu Musa went to see ‘Umar and asked permission to enter thrice. But ‘Umar did not reply as he was busy. So Abu Musa went back. When ‘Umar finished his job he said: “Didn’t I hear the voice of ‘Abd Allah bin Qays (= Abu Musa)? Let him come in.” ‘Umar was told that he had left. So, he sent for him and on his arrival, Abu Musa said, “We were ordered to do so (i.e. to leave if not admitted after asking permission thrice). ‘Umar told him, “Bring a witness in proof of your statement.” In some narrations in Bukhari and Muslim ‘Umar threatened Abu Musa with some unspecified action if he did not bring a second witness. Abu Musa brought Abu Sa’id al-Khudri who testified before ‘Umar. In the narration in Muwatta, ‘Umar says to Abu Musa: “I did not suspect you. I was merely afraid that people might attribute something to the Messenger of God that he did not say.”

It is clear that ‘Umar did not consider the report of Abu Musa to be binding despite the fact that he already considered him to be a trustworthy companion of the Prophet (peace be upon him)

#### Sunan Abu Dawud

A grandmother came to Abu Bakr al-Siddiq and asked him for her inheritance [when one of her grandchildren died]. Abu Bakr said to her,



**‘You have nothing in the Book of God, and I do not know that you have anything in the Sunnah of the Messenger of God. Go away therefore, until I have questioned the people.’ He questioned the people, and al-Mughirah ibn Shu’bah said, “I was present with the Messenger of God when he gave the grandmother a sixth.” Abu Bakr said: “Was there anybody else with you?” Muhammad ibn Maslamah al-Ansari stood up and said the like of what al-Mughirah said. Abu Bakr al-Siddiq gave the share to her.**

**Here we see that Abu Bakr insisted that another witness verify what was being attributed to the Prophet (peace be upon him).**

**Thus, it is clear that the companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) found it important to verify where the hadith were coming from. This is the whole logic and wisdom of isnaad. Thus, it is fair to say that the isnaad started with the companions.**

**Moving on to some of the earliest classical scholars:**

**[Abdullah ibn al-Mubaarak](#) the well known Hanafi scholar (born in 118-181 A.H.) was a contemporary of Ibn Ishaq and he said:**

**“The Isnad is part of the religion. If it were not for the Isnad anyone would say whatever he wishes to say.” (Imam Muslim in the introduction to his Sahih in the chapter entitled, “Expounding on the point that the Isnad is part of the religion.”)**

**Concerning the importance of the Isnad, [Sufyaan al-Thawri](#) (d. 161 A.H.) another contemporary of Ibn Ishaq said:**

**“The Isnad is the sword of the believer. Without his sword with him with what will he fight?” By the use of the Isnad, the Muslim scholars were able to eradicate (or “fight”) the innovations that some people tried to bring into Islam.**

**Muhammad ibn Seereen (d. 110), Anas ibn Seereen, Al-Dhahaak and Uqba ibn Naafi have all been reported to have said, “This knowledge [of hadeeth] is the religion, therefore, look to see from whom you are taking your religion.” (Quoted in Umar ibn Hasan Uthmaan al-Fullaatah, al-Widha fi al-Hadeeth (Damascus: Maktabah al-Ghazzaali, 1981), vol. 2, p. 10.)**

**Dr. Mustafa Al Azami said:**

**We have just seen that the criticism of Hadith began in the life of the Prophet s.a.w. After his death, Abu Bakr, Umar, Ali, Ibn Umar, Aishah and other Companions took part in it. According to Ibn Hibban, after Umar and Ali came the turn of the Successors Ibn al-Musayyab (d.93 AH.); al-Qasim b.**

**Muhammad b. Abu Bakr (d.106 AH.); Salim b. Abdullah b. Umar (d. 106 AH.); Ali b. Husayn b. Ali (d.93 AH.); Abu Salamah b. Abd al-Rahman (d.94 AH.); Abdullah b. Abdullah b. Utbah; Kharijah b. Zayd b. Thabit (d.100 AH.); Urwah b. Al Zubayr (d.94 AH); Abu Bakr b. Abd al-Rahman b. al-Harith (d.94 AH) and Sulayman b. Yasar.**

**It is interesting to note that all of these scholars belong to the first century of Hijrah, though a few of them lived in the first decade of the second century. Later on, in the Madinah region, there were three scholars al-Zuhri, Yahya b. Said, and Hisham b. Urwah who learned this science from the above-mentioned scholars. The most famous of these three was al-Zuhri (d. 124 AH.)**

**In Iraq too the Hadith critics were active in the first century, prominent among them being Said b. Jubayr, al-Sha'bi, Tawus, al-Hasan al-Basri (d. 110 AH.) and Ibn Sirin (d. 110 AH.) (Dr. Mustafa Al Azami, Studies in Hadith Methodology and Literature, page 67)**

**So here we see that scholars who were contemporaries of Ibn Ishaq were already studying the science of isnaad and found it to be extremely important. Doesn't this clearly refute the lies of missionaries such as Sam Shamoun and David Wood who say that the Muslim scholars did not find the isnaad to be necessary or important at the time?**

**David Wood said:**

**But we find another problem with your hypothesis. Why didn't other Muslims, who studied history carefully, not point out to Ibn Ishaq or Abu Dawud that this story was false? So we see again that you have to expand your hypothesis to explain why no one corrected these men.**

**David also said:**

**Ibn Ishaq wasn't an idiot. He knew how to investigate things. So the reliability of the reports rests on Ibn Ishaq's ability to investigate history**

**David Wood is trying to give the false impression that our scholars have not spoken against Ibn Ishaq and his reliability. He assumes that Ibn Ishaq did a great job "investigating things", yet David does not tell us what Ibn Ishaq's methodology was. He provides no evidence what so ever for any of the claims that he makes.**

**Ibn Ishaq was condemned by some of our major Islamic scholars.**

**Shaykh ibn Taymiyyah said:**

Allah has provided evidence (i.e. Isnad) establishing the authenticity or lack thereof of the narrations that are necessary in matters of the religion. It is well known that most of what was reported in aspects of Tafsir (commentaries on the Qur'an) is similar to narrations reporting Maghazi (or Seerah) and battles, promoting Imam Ahmad to state that three matters do not have Isnad: Tafsir, Mala'him (i.e. great battles), and Maghazi. This is because most of their narrations are of the Maraseel (plural for Mursal) type, such as narrations reported by Urwah Ibn az-Zubair, ash-Sha'bi, az-Zuhri, Musa Ibn Uqbah and Ibn Ishaq." (Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah, Majmu' Al Fataawa, Volume, 13, page 345)

Shaykh Jalal Abu Al Rub puts it nicely:

**2 Adh-Dhahabi then mentioned these major Hadith scholars who stated that Ibn Ishaq was reliable in Hadith narrations, grading his narrations as Hasan' [Hasan', is the lesser grade of authentic Hadith; Sahih', is the upper grade.]: Yahya Ibn Maeen and Ahmad Ibn Hanbal [according to the conditions that soon will be mentioned inshallah]. Abu Zurah stated that Ibn Ishaq was Saduq (truthful), Ali Ibn Abdullah said that Ibn Ishaq's narrations are accepted; Ibn Adi said that Ibn Ishaq is acceptable; and Ibn Idris said that Ibn Ishaq was a Thiqah (reliable, or trustworthy). Also, Imam Abu Zurah stated that a group of scholars learned knowledge with Ibn Ishaq, such as Sufyan, Shubah, Ibn Uyainah, Ibn al-Mubarak, and so forth. Az-Zuhri, Asim Ibn Umar Ibn Qatadah and adh-Dhahabi also praised Ibn Ishaq's knowledge in the Maghazi (narration of battles).**

**3 Adh-Dhahabi also listed some of the major scholars of Islam who refuted Ibn Ishaq's reliability in Hadith narrations. Imam Malik, for instance, called Ibn Ishaq a liar and Yahya Ibn Saeed al-Ansari, as well as, al-Amash refuted one of Ibn Ishaq's narrations by saying that he lied. As a general statement, Yahya Ibn Saeed graded Ibn Ishaq as being weak in Hadith narration. Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal discounted the reliability of Ibn Ishaq if he alone narrates a Hadith. Also, Imams Yahya Ibn Maeen (in another narration from him), an-Nasai and ad-Daraqutni stated that Ibn Ishaq was weak in Hadith. The great Imam of Sunnah, Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, also added that Ibn Ishaq's narrations are not accepted if they are about the Sunan (Pl. for Sunnah; [yet, Craig Ibn Winn claims that Ibn Ishaq's Seerah is a Sunnah book!]), stating that even [in the rare occasions] where Ibn Ishaq clearly stated that he heard a Hadith from his teacher, he would often contradict other narrators. Therefore, and as Imam Ahmad stated, if Ibn Ishaq alone reports a Hadith, then that narration is not accepted. Adh-Dhahabi also stated that if a narration that Ibn Ishaq reports contradicts other [more established] narrators, then Ibn Ishaq's narration is rejected.**

**4 Adh-Dhahabi listed some of the reasons why Ibn Ishaq was considered weak regarding Hadith narration, as follows:**

**A) Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal stated that Ibn Ishaq was a Mudallis [Ibn Is`haq often started his narrations by saying, Those whom I trust narrated to me, or Some men from this city told me , etc. He also would collect Hadith s from unreliable narrators and hide the name of his teacher by saying, So and So said, meaning the teacher of his teacher, who may be trustworthy, so that the Hadith narration is not rejected if the name of his own teacher is specified. However, whenever Ibn Ishaq said, So and so said to me, he would not lie.] , and in another occasion, he said that Ibn Ishaq's Tadlees (v. for Mudallis) was substantial. Imam Ahmad also said that Ibn Ishaq did not care from whom he collected Hadith.**

**B) Imam Ibn Numair said that Ibn Ishaq reported false Hadith s from unknown narrators.**

**C) Adh-Dhahabi concluded by saying that among the worst errors made by Ibn Ishaq is that he used to record narrations he collected from anyone, and thus, did not have Wara [31] in this regard, may Allah forgive him.**

**5 How Ibn Ishaq's narration should be treated is summarized in this statement from Imam Ibn Numair, If he narrates a Hadith from teachers he directly heard from and who are known to be truthful, then his Hadith is from the grade Hasan because he is truthful. Yet, Imam Ahmad stated that if Ibn Ishaq is the only narrator of that Hadith, then his narration is discounted. And the key words to look for here, for Ibn Ishaq's narration not to be dismissed outright, are, If Ibn Ishaq says, So and so narrated to me', then he did hear that narration.' Otherwise, if he says, So and so said', then th narration is rejected.' Meaning, Ibn Ishaq would not lie; if he states that he heard the Hadith from his teacher, then his assertion is accep ed. (Shaykh Jalal Abu Al Rub, The Prophet of Mercy, Chapter 2, page 10)**

**So we do see that some of our greatest scholars have condemned Ibn Ishaq and this refutes David Wood's false statement uttered out of ignorance:**

**So we see again that you have to expand your hypothesis to explain why no one corrected these men.**

**Shamoun argues:**

**But since Zawadi and his authorities are often questioning Ibn Ishaq they cannot, therefore, appeal to him to support their case. Their skepticism towards Ibn Ishaq has basically left them with no credible way of authenticating the later traditions which they often appeal to in support of Islam.**

**Shamoun is committing the fallacy of false dilemma. He is trying to force us to either accept all of Ibn Ishaq as reliable or all of Ibn Ishaq as unreliable.**

**I have never called into question all of Ibn Ishaq's work. I only call into question those narrations that have no chain (because we don't know where they came from) or those narrations that have weak chains (because we know the people who narrated them are not reliable). We have to remember that Ibn Ishaq wrote his Sirah more than a hundred years after the Prophet's death. One hundred years is plenty of time to forge stories and circulate them around to a good number of people (but not all people).**

**That is why we need the hadith methodology to distinguish the truth from falsehood. Something that Shamoun is not interested in doing. This is not surprising coming from a Christian who risks burning in hell forever by placing his faith on a bunch of books (i.e. New Testament) written in the first century not knowing for a certainty who wrote a good chunk of them ([see here](#)).**

**Shamoun said:**

**Furthermore, a major problem with this often repeated lame response is that it fails to explain why would Muslim historians, scholars, expositors etc., pass on or concoct such stories when these anecdotes portray Muhammad in such a negative light?**

**First of all, early historians such as Imam Tabari would admit to his audience that the book that he has written is filled with weak narrations:**

**Let him who examines this book of mine know that I have relied, as regards everything I mention therein which I stipulate to be described by me, solely upon what has been transmitted to me by way of reports which I cite therein and traditions which I ascribe to their narrators, to the exclusion of what may be apprehended by rational argument or deduced by the human mind, except in very few cases. This is because knowledge of the reports of men of the past and of contemporaneous views of men of the present do not reach the one who has not witnessed them nor lived in their times except through the accounts of reporters and the transmission of transmitters, to the exclusion of rational deduction and mental inference. Hence, if I mention in this book a report about some men of the past, which the reader of listener finds objectionable or worthy of censure because he can see no aspect of truth nor any factual substance therein, let him know that this is not to be attributed to us but to those who transmitted it to us and we have merely passed this on as it has been passed on to us. (Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Jarir al-Tabari, Tarikh al-Tabari: Tarikh al-Umam wal-Muluk, 1997, Volume I, Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, Beirut (Lebanon), p. 13.)**

Notice how Imam Tabari is saying that his task is only to collect all the narrations transmitted down to him and record it in his book. He is not attempting to distinguish the true narrations from the false ones. Rather, he is leaving it up to the qualified reader to do research and find out which narrations are true or not. That is why it is not advised for laymen such as Sam Shamoun and David Wood to go ahead and read a book such as Tabari's Taarikh, for they have no knowledge of how to distinguish the true narrations from the false ones.

Secondly, it might have been the intention of some of the early Muslims to collect authentic stories, but were not successful in doing so because they didn't utilize the proper methodology of investigating their sources. Thus, they would unintentionally include these forgeries into their books.

Shamoun would say the same thing about many of the early Christians that mistakenly incorporated some books into the Canon of the Bible, which later turned out to be apocryphal. Surely, Shamoun wouldn't accuse these Christians of purposely incorporating forgeries. Rather, he would argue that they unintentionally accepted false books due to not utilizing proper methodologies of investigation. I would say the same thing regarding certain early Muslims.

Shamoun said:

In fact, the most unpleasant events in early Islam have the strongest probability of really having occurred because it is inconceivable that Muslims would make them up on their own or receive them from non-Muslims. These harsh anecdotes and accounts, therefore, cannot be explained away in terms of the (alleged) unreliability of the source documents.

Shamoun is speaking about the principle of embarrassment, which basically states that if a person narrates an embarrassing story about himself or someone that he admires then that story is likely to be true, since the person would have no motive to pass on such a story.

However, the principle of embarrassment can only be applied once we know for a certainty who the person narrating the story is. There are several chainless stories that exist in Ibn Ishaq's work. We don't know who these missing people are. We don't know if they are Muslims, non-Muslims, hypocrites acting as Muslims and purposely spreading lies, etc. So if we are not sure who the people in the missing links are, how can we apply the principle of embarrassment to the narrations? We can only apply this principle if we were to know that the person is a trustworthy Muslim who would definitely have no motive to lie and make up something derogatory about the Prophet (peace be upon him). However, for all we know, the

**people in the missing link could be people known for fabricating narrations. You can't apply this principle to these narrations. Since we are not sure who the people in the missing link are, we can't confidently go ahead and apply this principle to this situation. So Shamoun's argument here is invalid.**

**Shamoun said:**

**Reputable historians, apologists, polemicists and students of Islam correctly reason that these are reliable traditions**

**We ask Shamoun to name these Muslims and provide the references for their statements. He also has to make sure that he is not misquoting them. These Muslims might find several stories in Ibn Ishaq to be reliable (such as myself), but still condemn it for containing many forgeries.**

**After he does that, he must provide evidence that their arguments are stronger than the scholars that I have cited.**

**Sam Shamoun said:**

**Note just how circular this truly is:**

- Muslims assume the veracity of a specific narration because of its chain.**
- Muslims accept the soundness of a chain because of the specific collection which contains it.**
- Muslims are basically proving the hadith by its chain and then proving its chain by this very same hadith, a wonderful display of circular reasoning!**

**Shamoun is attacking straw man. I challenge Shamoun to cite one hadith scholar that "accepts the soundness of a chain because of the specific collection which contains it".**

**We believe that Saheeh Bukhari and other authentic collections are the most reliable because they were the strictest ones in their methodology in distinguishing the false Hadith from the authentic ones. Basically, they did their homework really well. That is why we believe in their authenticity.**

**That is why we deem an authentic Hadith found in Bukhari even 200 years after the Prophet's death to be more reliable than the chainless narrations found in Ibn Ishaq's book 120 years after the Prophet's death. This is because there is evidence that the statement said by the Prophet is truly verified and that we know the source to be reliable.**

**Shamoun said:**

**Besides, Zawadi erroneously assumes that just because a report provides a chain of transmitters (isnad) this means that Muslims are able to accurately trace back the origin of a specific report.**

**Thus, if Ibn Ishaq who was writing closer in time to Muhammad is questionable then what makes us assume that the documents written hundreds of years after Muhammad's death are any more reliable?**

**Despite this huge time gap Muslim propagandists like Zawadi would want people to actually believe that just because these sources provide a chain this makes them more reliable than Ibn Ishaq's chainless narrations.**

**The problem with this approach is that one must first assume that these later writings are reliable, or reliable enough to provide an accurate transmission, and yet the only way to know whether any of these later narrations are credible is to analyze whether the chains listed within them are sound! In other words, these dawagandists assume that a report is correct if there is a sound chain of transmitters despite the fact that such chains are only recorded in the very collections that are written down centuries after the events!.....**

**The fact is that there is simply no possible way for someone writing two hundred years after an event to be able to completely guarantee that all the names of the chain going back two hundred years prior are entirely correct, or that the men listed within these chains were completely honest.**

**Muslims acknowledge that the Hadith are not 100% accurate. It is the work of man and the work of man is prone to error. I don't want to get into a whole discussion of the methodology that Hadith scholars have used in order to ensure the reliability of each person in the chain and that the chain that was obtained is accurate. We ask our readers to refer to the links that I put forth at the beginning of this article.**

**Shamoun said:**

**There is one way, however, to ascertain whether a report or chain is reliable and that is by consulting documents that were compiled closer in time to the events in question and see whether they mention such stories or individual transmitters. One of the earliest sources that Muslims can turn to for verification of the later material is Ibn Ishaq's work.**

**Notice how Shamoun said:**



**that is by consulting documents that were compiled close□ in time to the events in question**

**Shamoun does not take the following questions into consideration:**

- **Where did the stories come from? Who narrated them?**
- **After we know who narrated them, how do we know whether they were trustworthy?**
- **After we know that they are trustworthy, how do we know that they are reliable? How do we know whether they had a memory problem, comprehension problem (i.e. inability to pass on information accurately because they misunderstood the event) or communication problem (i.e. don't know how to express themselves properly so gives the historian the wrong information unintentionally)?**

**Notice how Shamoun takes none of the above factors into consideration. To him if something is early then you take it at face value as reliable. Anyone with common sense knows that this methodology is absurd. It assumes that anyone near to the event (in terms of time lapse) is reliable and can be trusted. This of course is logically fallacious.**

**So much for the missionaries and their criticisms of the science of Hadeeth, which is a science way too sophisticated and superior for their understanding.**

**Allah Knows Best.**