

Shaykh Muḥammad al-Ghazālī

WITHIN THE
BOUNDARIES
OF ISLAM



A Study on Bid'ah

Translated and introduced by
Aslam Farouk-Alli





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Publisher's Note

What is *bid'ah* or innovation? This Islamic term has been the subject of debate for centuries among Muslim scholars, the majority of whom try to define it from their own sectarian perspectives. Some stretch their arguments too far, even linking them to a practitioner's *īmān* and *'aqīdah*.

While this is going on, innovations in various forms have continued to creep into Muslim societies, casting a shadow on the pristine purity of Islamic religious practices, some of them clearly outside the boundaries of Islam. Thus the debate has been turned into subjectively defining 'positive' and 'negative' types of *bid'ah* or innovation.

In this book, Shaykh Muḥammad al-Ghazālī addresses a 'central characteristic of Islamic thought, i.e., the constant process of deviation and correction that it is continually subjected to. The specific focus of this study is the subject of *bid'ah* which is best understood as heretical innovation in matters related to religious practice.'

The translator has successfully conveyed Shaykh al-Ghazālī's work to the English reader in the best way possible, staying true to his style of writing, which is straight to the point. The translator's own deep insight into the subject is reflected in his Introduction to the book.

This book is one of three works by Shaykh al-Ghazālī published

by Islamic Book Trust, the others being *A Thematic Commentary on the Qur'an*, and *Our Beginning in Wisdom*.

It is hoped that the reader will approach this book with an open mind. Finally, it is worth noting that there is a common thread running through the text and it is therefore recommended that the book not be read in bits and pieces but as a whole, so that justice can be done to the author.

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