

of young men who visited the *diwan* were associated with the Muslim Brotherhood. It was a very nice place where fresh young graduates would gather, and I enjoyed visiting every Monday until one day when Abu Al Baraa showed up. He too had recently graduated from an American university with an engineering degree and whenever he came to the diwaniya, he insisted on giving religious lessons to everyone that was there. He forced everyone into listening to his lectures, and personally I didn't like it. I didn't see how our lecturer was really qualified to be teaching religion especially when he would take questions from his audience and answer as if he were an ordained Imam. So one evening I asked him, "Abu Al Baraa, I've been puzzled by a question which I hope you can answer for me." Of course, because he knew all the answers, he jumped to the task saying, "Go ahead, ask." So I asked him, "Is beer pure, or impure?" I could see from his face that my question fell upon him like a bolt of lightning and he started shouting, accusing me of mocking religion for asking what he thought was ridiculous question. He even attempted to have me thrown out, although he was not actually the host. As he continued to throw his fit, I just smiled. I was amused by his reaction because it served to further prove my point. Eventually our host, Bu Mohamed, interfered and I asked him if he had a copy of *Fiqh Us-Sunnah*, which he did. So he brought the book and I said to the attendees, "This book was written by Sayid Sabiq at the request of Hasan Al Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, so would you accept the authority of this book to settle the argument between me and Abu Al Baraa?" Everyone, including Abu Al Baraa, agreed. I turned to the section which concerns the prohibition of alcohol (Fiqh 1.12) and there we read that "the prohibition of alcohol does not necessarily entail its also being considered impure . . . if one claims other than that, he must substantiate it." To avoid further