
Differentiating between innovations*

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Article taken and slightly adapted from: shaikhalbaani.wordpress.com

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Questioner: Some people say that someone who innovates a type of innovation which can lead to disbelief [bid'ah 'mukaffirah'] has left the Ahlus-Sunnah, [but that] someone who innovates a type which can lead to defiant disobedience [bid'ah 'mufassiqah'] does not leave the Ahlus-Sunnah. If the proof was established against him and he persisted in it would he [still] be regarded as being from the Ahlus-Sunnah then?

Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ)¹: Repeat [your question].

Questioner: Some people say that someone who innovates a type of innovation which can lead to disbelief has left the Ahlus-Sunnah ...

Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ): Firstly, what is an innovation which can lead to disbelief and one which can lead to defiant disobedience?

Questioner: An innovation which can lead to disbelief and one which can lead to defiant disobedience.

Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ): What are they?

Questioner: An innovation which can lead to disbelief would be like if he were to innovate an innovation comprising disbelief like when some of them do not hold that Allaah the Most High rose above His Throne and so on. And an innovation which can lead to defiant disobedience would be like if he were to fall into an innovation connected to worship, like celebrating the Prophet's birthday, for example.

Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ): This speech is incorrect, it emanates from [scholastic] theology [ilmul-kalaam].

Differentiating between innovations connected to fundamentals [usool], innovations in the subsidiary issues [furoo], innovations connected to rulings [ahkaam], innovations connected to worship—this differentiation is [in itself] an innovation.

Do you see if there was a man who approached a certain Sunnah of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) like the Sunnah for the morning prayer, for example, and read four [instead of two] and insisted on that, which type of innovation would this be? One which can lead to disbelief or defiant disobedience?

Questioner: According to the categorisation [I asked about] it would be an innovation which can lead to defiant disobedience.

* Al-Hudaa wan-Noor, 664.

¹ (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) (rahimahullaah) May Allaah have mercy on him

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Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ): This is false and futile speech.

From the things which later generations [khalaf] inherited from the Salaf—and by the term ‘Salaf’ here I don’t mean that technical meaning which we use it with [i.e., the Shaikh is saying that people have taken the incorrect understanding which he is going to mention in the next few sentences, from their fathers, forefathers, ancestors etc., and not from ‘the’ Salaf, i.e., the first three generations of Muslims and those upon their way, i.e., he’s using the term Salaf here with the linguistic meaning]—is to distinguish between mistakes in subsidiary issues [furoo’] and those in the fundamentals [usool], [saying that] mistakes in the subsidiary issues are forgiven while those committed concerning the fundamentals are not ... and the authentic hadeeth, **“If a judge passes judgment and makes Ijtihad and he is right then he will have two rewards. And if he makes a mistake he will have one,”**² this is concerning the subsidiary issues [they say], but as for the fundamentals, mistakes made concerning them are not forgiven—this [saying of theirs] has no origin, not the Book nor the Sunnah, and nor from the statements of the Salaf as-Saalih. That which is found in the statements of the Salaf is a severe threat from all innovation, whether in Aqeedah or [matters of] worship.

In reality, just now I remembered, **‘Whoever declares a Muslim to be a disbeliever has disbelieved,’** and I add to it that whoever declares a Muslim to be an innovator ... to the end.

Because the reality is that in my opinion there is no difference between disbelief and innovations. If a Muslim innovated something and his innovation was made clear to him but he still persisted in it, like the example I gave just now, like denying Allaah’s Ascendancy above His creation, or denying that the Qur’aan is His Speech or, or ... etc., [then] there is no difference between these things at all, not in affirming or negating: i.e., affirming by saying, ‘This is disbelief,’ [is done] with the aforementioned condition, i.e., that the proof has been established ... and negating, i.e., [saying] that he is not to be declared a disbeliever, is [also] not done except with the aforementioned condition [i.e., establishing the proof].

I say again that the Mu’tazilah and the Khawaarij are the same in some of their misguidance and different in other things. For example, the Khawaarij are the same as the Mu’tazilah in saying that the Qur’aan is created, and I just mentioned to you that the scholars of hadeeth do not declare the Khawaarij to be disbelievers, thus, in our minds how do we reconcile between [those who say that] someone who denies Aqeedah is a kaafir but someone who innovates something concerning worship is a Faasiq [and not a kaafir, even though both have innovated]?

[How can we say this when] we see that the Imaams of Hadeeth narrate from the Khawaarij and from the Mu’tazilah even though they oppose the correct Aqeedah in more than one issue?

So for example, these people who said that Allaah’s Speech is created also deny that Allaah will be seen in the Hereafter, this denial and the one before it cause our previous definition to apply to them, that it is disbelief but that not everyone who falls in to disbelief has the ruling of disbelief applied to them.

How do we reconcile between the fact that we find the Imaams of Hadeeth and the Imaams of the Salaf like Ibn Taymeeyah and Ibn al-Qayyim ruling that the Khawaarij and the Mu’tazilah are misguided no doubt, [and between the fact that] they do not declare them to be disbelievers who have apostatised from their religion? [This is so] because they hold that there is a possibility that, firstly, the issues was unclear to them and secondly that the proof was not established against them.

² Bukhaaree: 7352, Muslim: 1716

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Let's go back to the root of our first topic, that these people are innovators, but that we do not know whether they wilfully intended that innovation, [nor do we know if] the proof has been established against them ... etc., this is the manhaj of the scholars—they declare the Mu'tazilah to be misguided, and the Khawaarij, and the Ash'arees, in more than one issue, but they do not declare them to be disbelievers, and nor do they declare them to be outside the fold of Islaam due to the possibility of what we just mentioned, which goes back to two things which I will remind you of: the first, that they did not intend to innovate or [fall into such] violations, and secondly, that we do not know if the proof was established against them or not.

Thus, their reckoning is with Allaah and we go by what is apparent from them—which is Islaam, and they died upon Islaam and were buried in the Muslim graveyards, and thus, they are Muslims.

So differentiating between innovations which can lead to disbelief [bid'ah 'mukaffirah'] and innovations which can lead to defiant disobedience [bid'ah 'mufassiqah'] is terminology which emanates from the scholars of theological rhetoric, and secondly, there is no proof for it whatsoever.

And I will finish this topic by reminding you [of the point I'm making] with a hadeeth which proves what I just mentioned: that not everyone who falls into disbelief becomes a disbeliever.

I'm referring to the hadeeth of Bukhaaree reported by the two venerable Companions, Aboo Sa'eed al-Khudree and Hodayfah ibn al-Yamaan, who said that Allaah's Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said, "A man used to do sinful deeds, and when death came to him, he said to his sons, 'After my death, burn me and then crush me, and scatter the powder in the air, for by Allaah, if Allaah has control over me, He will give me such a punishment as He has never given to anyone else.' When he died, his sons did accordingly. Allaah ordered the earth saying, 'Collect what you hold of his particles.' It did so, and behold! There he was (the man) standing. Allaah asked (him), 'What made you do what you did?' He replied, 'O my Lord! I was afraid of You.' So Allaah forgave him."

So now let us ask, did this man disbelieve or not?

Questioner: He disbelieved.

Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ): He disbelieved? But Allaah forgave him?

Questioner: He didn't disbelieve [then].

Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ): Didn't you see what he said, '... if Allaah has control over me ...' he didn't disbelieve?

Questioner: According to this statement, [then] yes [he disbelieved].

Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ): I didn't restrict it [to being based upon that statement alone], I said did he disbelieve or not?

We know from the Noble Qur'aan that Allaah does not forgive associating partners with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whoever He wills. How do we reconcile [between these two things]?

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We do so based upon what we just said before: [that] Allaah does not forgive associating partners with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whoever He wills—He does not forgive someone who associates partners with Him intentionally and deliberately.

What do you think about this condition/stipulation?

Questioner: Good.

Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ): Good. But is it present in the aayah?

Questioner: It's not.

Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ): Did we conjure it up based upon our desires?

Questioner: No.

Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ): This is how the Sharee'ah is, it is not taken from one aayah or one hadeeth, but rather from a group of what has been reported in the issue [at hand].

For this reason, it is not only in issues of fiqh that we must gather all the texts in order to know the abrogating from the abrogated, the general from the specific, the unrestricted from that which restricts/limits, and so on—rather Aqeedah has a greater priority in that by far, so when the scholars explain this aayah, **“Indeed, Allaah does not forgive association with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whom He wills ...”**³ they normally do not mention such detail, but when problems and doubts occur, it is there that the scholar is compelled to make clear the knowledge that he has.

So this man left a will which I cannot picture there being an equivalent to, in its injustice, oppression and misguidance: [he told them to] burn him so that he could get away from His Lord, and Allaah says, **“And he presents for Us an example and forgets his [own] creation. He says, “Who will give life to bones while they are disintegrated?”**⁴ Yet despite that, our Lord forgave him, because disbelief had not taken root in this person's heart.

He pictured his sins before Allaah the Mighty and Majestic and his fear of Him and the fact that when he reaches Him, the Mighty and Majestic, He would punish him severely, this inclination and dread blinded him from seeing the correct Aqeedah, and so he ordered that [that] wrongful will [be carried out], and the hadeeth is clear, **‘Go, for I have forgiven you.’**

So for example, [although] we believe he did fall into Wahdatul-Wujood, it is not fitting for us to picture that Sayyid Qutb did so intentionally and that he firmly set his heart onto it—unlike Ibn Arabee, the one who misguided millions of Soofee Muslims. Maybe this Soofee ideology, occurred to him [i.e., Qutb] while he was imprisoned and he didn't grasp the issue based upon knowledge, and so he wrote that phrase which I was one of the first to criticise.

We do not judge him to be a disbeliever, because we do not know if disbelief took root in his heart or not, or whether the proof was established against him, especially when he was in prison—how could it have been?

³ Soorah an-Nisaa [4:48]

⁴ Soorah YaaSeen [36:78]

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For this reason we do not connect the fact that a Muslim falls into disbelief with him being a disbeliever, we do not bind these two issues together, this is the first matter and it has been repeated in order to warn [you]. Secondly, we do not differentiate between innovations in Aqeedah or innovations in worship, both of them are either misguidance or disbelief.

And maybe in this much there is sufficiency, O Aboo Abdur-Rahmaan.