
Distinction between praying behind innovators and mixing with them

Translated by Ahmed Abu Turaab

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

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Questioner:

How do you deal with a dissenter [i.e., someone who opposes the Sunnah], between those who are too lenient which can lead to tamyee' in practising the Sunnah, and those who are too harsh/strict which can lead to that which we have heard you mention many times, i.e., the lack of establishing the proof against the dissenter and other things, and I say this so as to not tire you by repeating what you have already mentioned.

But a doubt crops up based upon some actions of the Salaf, like the statement of some of them, 'The hearts are weak, and sitting with the innovators snatches them away ...' and likewise, the fact that Imaam Ahmad (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ)¹ would drive the people away from al-Haarith al-Muhaasibee.

Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ): Yes, yes.

Someone Else: He prohibited that his books be read.

Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ): Yes.

Questioner: ... and dealing with this dissenter according to the scale of his good and bad deeds, i.e., there is a principle which says, 'We look at the person's good and bad actions,' [but] then we have the statements of some of the Salaf regarding driving the innovators away even if they have some good deeds?

Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ): Yes. That which I hold, and Allaah knows best, is that the statements of the Salaf, are related regarding a Salafee environment, i.e., an environment that is full of strong faith and the correct following of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم)² and the Companions.

And [this issue you mentioned] is totally like that of boycotting, where a Muslim boycotts another to educate and discipline him, this is a well-known Sunnah. But my conviction, and how many times I'm asked about this, is that I say: our day and age is not right for boycotting, our day and age is not right for boycotting the innovators, because that means that you will have to go and live on the peak of a mountain, that you isolate yourself from the people and seclude yourself from them.

And that is because if you do boycott the people due to their sins or innovations then you will not have the effect which the Salaf used to have when they made those statements encouraging the people to avoid the people of innovation. There is no doubt that that is something which is derived from the directions of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) amongst which is his well-known saying, "The

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

² (صلى الله عليه وسلم) (sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam) May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him

Distinction between praying behind innovators and mixing with them

example of a good companion (who sits with you) in comparison with a bad one, is like that of the musk seller and the blacksmith's bellows (or furnace); from the first you will either buy musk or enjoy its good smell while the bellows will either burn your clothes or your house, or you get a bad nasty smell thereof,"³ the well-known hadeeth, this is like what is mentioned in some places, 'Your friend pulls/draws you [to whatever he/she is upon], 'Your friend pulls/draws you [to whatever he/she is upon].'

But accompanying/associating with innovators is one thing and distancing yourself from them to such an extent ... like that which is asked about often, for example [people will ask], 'So and so is a Soofee who uses the Prophets and Messengers as intermediaries [instead of calling upon Allaah directly themselves], and so on, '... and he leads the people in prayer, should I pray behind him?' I say: pray behind him, so this is one thing and [actually] accompanying and associating with him and benefitting from him is something else.

And I think that which will support me in this distinction and which comes together/agrees with the guidance of the Salaf stated in those words I just mentioned, is that it has reached us that from the Aqeedah of the Salaf as-Saalih is to pray behind and over every righteous person and sinner, so it will be from harshness that we take these statements to drive the people away from praying behind these Imaams [who lead the prayers in the mosques], Imaams amongst whom it is very rare to find those upon the Sunnah. The result of doing so would be that the people would have to stick to their houses and suspend the Jamaa'aah of the Muslims, such a thing goes against the statement of the Salaf that it is from Aqeedah to pray behind every righteous person or sinner.

But what is correct is that we warn these people from mixing with the people of innovation and the Soofees due to what we just mentioned in the hadeeth and [due to] the example which is a summary of the hadeeth, that, 'Your friend pulls/draws you [to whatever he/she is upon].'

This is my opinion, and Allaah knows best.

Al-Hudaa wan-Noor, 511.

³ Saheeh Bukhaaree