

Differences of Opinion Amongst the Salafis

by

The Noble Shaykh

Ubayd bin Abdillah Al-Jaabiree

Translated by

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Miraath Publications



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The Question:

May Allaah be good to you. The questioner says, may Allaah protect you:

“What do you say with regard to the differences that exist amongst the Salafis these days? What was the stance of the Salaf the pious predecessors with respect to differences of opinion?”

The Answer:

'Firstly: The (Salaf) predecessors of Ahlus-Sunnah and those who came after them did not, and do not, speak out unrestrictedly. They do not merely attack, rather they adhere to the balanced position (of speaking out) in the religion; so they look at:

Firstly: The issues of opposition

Secondly: At the person who is opposing

So, the issues of opposition that occur around the world in the area of knowledge are of two types:

That in which there is scope for striving to arrive at the correct position (Ijtihad), and it being allowed to have opinions and differences in that issue. This is in (fiqh) rulings. So, one should look at the evidences. If both parties have religious proofs to back up their positions, then one group should not blame the other. The Salafis may possess something of this, in fact even the Companions (may Allaah be pleased with them) did. If one group was to hold something against another group – I say this as a presumption – say one group was to hold an issue against another group, and was to launch a vicious attack and showed allegiance and enmity upon evidence which is justified according to his viewpoint, then here he leaves the fold of Ahlus-Sunnah (the people of the Sunnah) and enters the fold of Ahlul-Bid'ah (the people of innovation). We know of many situations where Ahlus-Sunnah differed and one group did not blame the other.

I will suffice with two examples:

The first of them is related to the branch of Aqeedah (belief) and the other is in the branch of Fiqh (rulings relating to acts of worship).

As for an issue in the branch of Aqeedah, the Companions (may Allaah be pleased with them), did not differ in the night journey and ascension (of the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam), rather they all agreed that it took place. Furthermore, the Imaams (leading scholars) after them took this from them and agreed upon it too. So, where was the difference of opinion? The difference was in a subsidiary issue – did the Prophet (sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) see his Lord or not? So the truthful one (Aa’isha) the daughter of the truthful one (Abu Bakr) – may Allaah be pleased with her and her father, criticised the one who said that the Prophet (sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) saw his Lord that night. She said, indeed he has lied, “Whoever said this has indeed lied”.

It is narrated from Ibn ‘Abbas (may Allaah be pleased with him and his father), that he said, in an absolute sense, that the Prophet saw Him, while on a different occasion, he said: “The Prophet saw him with his heart twice”.

So, the scholars combined the two narrations, and considered the negation mentioned in the narration of Aa’isha (may Allaah be pleased with her), as (a negation of) actually seeing with his eyes – that he did not see Him with his eyesight – with his very own eyes. The scholars considered the affirmation in the narration of Ibn Abbas (may Allaah be pleased with him and his father), as a knowledge based sighting, i.e. he saw Him with his heart.

As for the example related to Fiqh, I will select one example, going down for the prostration – and it is referred to as al-Khoroor lis-Sujood, (going down/falling to prostrate) which is (the prostration) after rising from the bowing position. Is going into prostration done with the hands (first) or with the knees?

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There are two sayings attributed to the people of knowledge. The first of them is that the prostration is with the hands and the other opinion is that it is with the knees. We did not ever see the people of knowledge, one group from these or those, or from the ones who differed in the example mentioned previously, ever blame each other. However, it is upon the Mujtahid (the one who is qualified to strive in delivering rulings) who correctly uses the evidences, whilst revising (knowledge) or answering a question, to clarify what he considers to be more correct based on evidences. This is what we learned from the Imam, the Mujtahid, the 'Allaamah (possessor of an abundance of knowledge), the Faqeeh (the one with correct understanding), the Athari (the one who depends on and uses the narrations), the Shaykh Abdul-Aziz bin Abdullah bin Baaz (may Allaah have mercy on him). He would mention the two sayings and then say, the more authentic of the two sayings, the more preferred of the two sayings, the more correct of the two sayings, is such and such and then he would mention the evidence.

The types of issues of opposition for which there is no room for ijtihaad (striving to arrive at the correct ruling) in the fundamentals of the religion or its subsidiaries for which there is an established textual proof or a textual proof and consensus (of the scholars) for which there is no room for doubt. So this, for the one who is Salafi, or a second description of a person who brings opposing opinions would be, as a genuine or true person, or a third description, someone with weak knowledge, he does not oppose his brothers in this. Rather, if he slipped-up and it was pointed out to him, then he returns (to the truth).

As for the gathering of the strange, lone opinions of Fiqh and foundations which are completely separate from the Salafi way, then the Salafi never ever traverses upon this. So, the Salafi, why is he named a Salafi? Because he does not bring to the people strange, lone or odd opinions or introduce principles from himself. No! He restricts himself to the Salaf as-Salih, who established their rulings based on the Book and the Sunnah.

This is one issue.

The other issue: The opposing action whose opposition is known by a textual proof or consensus of opinion, is not accepted by Ahlus-Sunnah under any circumstances. This is because Ahlus-Sunnah do not weigh up what comes to them or trickles to them in terms of statements or actions of the people based on their intellect. Rather they weigh it up in accordance with the legislation, the textual proofs and consensus of opinion. Therefore, whatever is in agreement with the textual proofs or the consensus of opinion, is accepted by them, and whatever is in opposition to the textual proofs or the consensus of opinion, is rejected by them, regardless of the status of the person.

As for the person who is opposing, if he is from the people of desires, Ahlus-Sunnah criticise him, censure him, and cry out against him from various directions and strive to turn him away from the Muslim community so that he does not corrupt their religion. This is if their strength is of a high level, and weighs heavier on their side and dominance is with them. If however, they are in a state of weakness, then they refute the opposing views and they remain silent with respect to the opposing person out of wisdom and pacification, this is if, for instance he was a Minister of Islamic Affairs in a country or the Chief Judge in a country, or other than that from the high-level positions. As for innovations, Ahlus-Sunnah never accept them under any circumstances whatsoever.

I would like to draw your attention here to an issue, which is, what method do Ahlus-Sunnah follow when refuting issues of opposition?

Ahlu-Sunnah, are the people of moderation and justice – as the Shaykh of Islam Ibn Taymiyyah (may Allaah have mercy on him) said about them:

“They are the most knowledgeable of the people with respect to the truth, and the most merciful of the people towards the creation.”

So, Ahlus-Sunnah traverse upon the same path by which the opposing opinion reached them and they do not transgress beyond that. So, if the opposing opinion took place in a sitting, there are two scenarios:

The first of them is: The one who refutes is present – so he clarifies with evidences and wisdom. He clarifies for the people with proof so that they do not split up due to it.

The second of them is: If there is someone who is transmitting this issue of opposition, then he is either trustworthy or not trustworthy.

If he is not trustworthy, then his statement is overlooked, rejected and thrown out.

If he is trustworthy, there is no harm to test him and request more information and ask: ‘Did you hear it for yourself’ – confirm – and if he said: ‘No, it was narrated to me’, you can ask who narrated it to you? He replies: ‘So and so, who is considered trustworthy to you’. Since he is considered trustworthy with me, okay I accept (this statement).

Therefore, I say, it was transmitted to me from so and so, from so and so trustworthy person, well-known. If he was unknown, I say: ‘he is unknown, I don’t know him – who provides you with a reference for him?’ So, if it is not confirmed it is left off. If it was confirmed by way of transmission in a gathering, he says: ‘This is a mistake and what is correct is such and such. Let so and so know.’ There is no harm in saying, ‘Convey my greetings to him, and what he said is incorrect, do not spread it, this is a mistake, this opposes that.’ He clarifies. If it was in a book and the book has been distributed, then he clarifies to the people through a recording or a book so that its (negative) effect is removed. If it was a recording from a trustworthy recording company and it was transmitted from trustworthy people, then it is obligatory to refute it. If the people of knowledge to whom this information reached did not refute them, then they have imitated the people of the book by way of hiding the truth. Allaah, the Most High, said:

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ لَتُبَيِّنُنَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَكْتُمُونَهُ
فَنَبَذُوهُ وَرَاءَ ظُهُورِهِمْ وَاشْتَرَوْا بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا فَبُئْسَ مَا يَشْتَرُونَ

<< (And remember) when Allaah took a covenant from those who were given the Scripture (Jews and Christians) to make it (the news of the coming of Prophet Muhammad and the religious knowledge) known and clear to mankind, and not to hide it, but they threw it away behind their backs, and purchased with it some miserable gain! And indeed worst is that which they bought.>>

[Soorah Aali 'Imraan: 187]

So, it is imperative for a refutation so that the effects of the opposing opinion are removed. So, we will summarise this for you:

Firstly: Confirmation – what is the method of confirmation? We have three ways:

Correct transmission (of the words) and a sound chain (of transmission).
His own written words, in a book – there is no reason not refute him.
A trustworthy recording.

So, if it is confirmed that an issue of an opposing opinion has taken place, for which there is no room for striving to arrive at the correct position, or disputation, or to have an opinion about, it is obligatory to refute it. For this there are many proofs, some of which are:

The statement of Ibn 'Abbas (may Allaah be pleased with him and his father):

“An innovation occurs in the East or the West and a man brings it to me, and if it finally came to me then I would destroy it with a Sunnah.”

'Umar (may Allaah be pleased with him) said:

“Be warned of the people of opinions, the enemies of the way of the Sunnah, they failed to memorise the narrations of the Messenger of Allaah (sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam), so they spoke based on their opinions and deviated and led others astray.”

The lone, strange, odd principles and fundamentals are nothing but what occur from a corrupted opinion. However, the example to be followed for these people, their predecessor, is the Messenger of Allaah (sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) – that which is preserved in his Sunnah is (his saying):

يَحْمِلُ هَذَا الْعِلْمُ مِنْ كُلِّ خَلْفٍ عُدُولُهُ، فَيُنْفُونَ عَنْهُ تَحْرِيفَ الْغَالِينَ،
وَأَنْتِحَالَ الْمُبْطِلِينَ، وَتَأْوِيلَ الْجَاهِلِينَ

“This knowledge will be carried by those trustworthy ones that come after, and they will negate the distortion of the ones who go into excesses, and of the ones who deny, and the misinterpretation of the ignoramuses.”

And, he (sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said:

سَيَكُونُ فِي آخِرِ أُمَّتِي أَنَاسٌ يُحَدِّثُونَكَ مَا لَمْ تَسْمَعُوا أَنْتُمْ وَلَا آبَاؤُكُمْ
فَإِيَّاكُمْ وَإِيَّاهُمْ

“In the latter part of this community (of Muslims) there will be people who speak with that which you did not hear and neither did your ancestors, so you and they should be aware.”

[Reported on the authority of Abu Hurayrah by (Imam) Muslim in his introduction – it was graded ‘Hasan’ by Al-Baghawi – May Allaah have mercy on them all]

And, he (sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said:

الْمَرْءُ عَلَى دِينِ خَلِيلِهِ فَلْيَنْظُرْ أَحَدُكُمْ مَنْ يُخَالِلُ

“An individual is on the religion of his intimate friend, so look to whom you befriend.”

One searches for a person of the Sunnah – in terms of his speech, his actions, his beliefs, his statements and his teachings, until one is aided by the people of the Sunnah, by way of this intimate companion.

Muhammad ibn Seereen (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: “Indeed this knowledge is religion, so look to whom you take your religion from.”

This saying establishes:

Firstly: a proof for those who refute in this time.

Secondly: this (refuting) is what is agreed upon by way of the Book, the Sunnah, the consensus of the leading scholars and the advice of the leading scholars.

However, in reality there are people who are agitated by knowledge-based refutations, even though they are based on proofs from the Book and the Sunnah, and the statements of the leading scholars. What causes this is one of two reasons:

Firstly: uncontrolled emotions which have taken control of their intellect, and covered it, until the person becomes from those who have become confused and blind – blinded with respect to discernment. So, they believe that a refutation means that the one who is refuted is considered an innovator and that the refuter is declaring him to be an innovator. This is why they say, “why is he warned against?”

This is not correct. The Salaf warned against people, who were on the Sunnah however, these people whom they warned against mixed issues up, and they had become lost, and they had issues which the Salaf were not pleased with – so, the Salaf warned against them.

Secondly: Partisanship – this despised partisanship is not pleased with refutations. Here I will categorise these people who have been agitated by refutations, the people of partisanship have disparaged the refuters, and discouraged people from looking into refutations and knowing what they comprise of in terms of well-established knowledge-based proofs.

They are of different types:

Firstly: Those who parted from those who refute and were then quiet. So, after he was in contact with the refuter, he cut off from him. From these types of people are those to whom come the whispers of Satan, and he says, “How can I know the truth? I must therefore leave them all – this person is a Salafi and that person is a Salafi – how can they refute each other?”

So it is said to these types of people, out of amazement: ‘Why leave them!?’ We will give you some examples in addition to what has preceded:

Shaykh Sulaymaan bin Samhaan (may Allaah have mercy on him) refuted an individual from the Ash-Shaykh family. I think this individual was sent to ‘Oman to call the people (to the truth) but he fell into some of the mistakes of the Jahmiyyah sect. So the refutation of Shaykh Sulaymaan bin Samhaan was accepted – it is said (that it was accepted) by the refuted ones' father and it is said by his uncle. The refutation was accepted! Look... (it was) their son. He is refuted and they supported the refutation.

Ibn Qudaamah (may Allaah have mercy on him) refuted Ibn Aqeel (may Allaah have mercy on him) in an issue in which he differed with him after he had repented from it. However, when this (issue) spread Ibn Qudaamah saw that it was incumbent to refute it. Such is the way of those who refute in these times. This is because the one who sits with the one who has strange and odd principles and fundamentals, will take them from him, assuming that they are from the religion of Allaah.

This is from the fundamental principles of Ahlus-Sunnah which they religiously adhere to, for the sake of Allaah, the Mighty and Majestic, and they believe in it, that a mistake must be stopped and the Salaf were clear and all praises are due to Allaah, that the principle is the Book, the Sunnah and the saying of an Imaam.

Secondly: the one who abstains from refutations and says: “Don’t busy yourselves with these refutations and leave these refutations. Why...?” This is speech of a general nature – it does not come except from two types of people:

A person of desires – who knows that these refutations will reveal his evil, uncover him and expose him, after which the people will detest him.

A failed individual – he acts as a bridge for the innovators whether he realises it or not – he is a bridge for them – he is a failure. Rather he should have said: “So-and-so refuted and he is our brother... yes, his refutation is beneficial.”

However, if we see that the people have become pre-occupied with other than gaining knowledge and all they have in their hands are books of refutations, then it is right for him to rebuke them and to say: “leave this for another time – busy yourselves with knowledge.” As for continuously (saying this), then, no! This does not come from an Imaam, ever. As for those who fell into this (busying themselves), it was a temporary advice for them at that time, not for always.

Thirdly: The one who allies himself to the refuted individual, and is hostile in support of him. (And says:) ‘How can so and so be refuted?’ He detests these ones who refute, and he exposes them. He ascribes deception to them and warns against them.

So, as for this type of person, what Ibn Taymiyyah (may Allaah have mercy on him) said, truly applies to him:

“Whoever appointed an individual for the people such that allegiance and hostility takes place on account of him, he is from those who split up their religion and became groups.”

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This is the saying or its meaning. So this individual, is therefore a partisan, according to the terminology used these days – in our terminology (he is) a partisan. He took sides with these who were refuted and began to hold allegiance and enmity because of them.

Fourthly: The one who shows a malicious joy and repulsiveness, carries out a vicious attack upon those who refute, he hardly ever mentions their names, he mentions contradictory phrases – such that whoever read the refutations would know what was intended. So this one is a poor, deluded one.

This is what Allaah, the Most High, far from imperfections, facilitated (for me) in answering this question. Excuse me, I took somewhat of your time.

Translated by: Abu Abdillah Naasir Hussain
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