
Use your brain

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Questioner: A questioner says, ‘When some scholars give a religious verdict [Fatawa] in a certain issue and another group of scholars give a verdict which is the opposite of the first, which one should the common Muslim follow?’

Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ)¹: The common Muslims must have a general education ... the common masses must have a general, Islaamic education; by ‘general education’ I mean the one which it is obligatory on every Muslim to know even if he is from the common masses, that he know the truth is not pluralistic.

So when, as occurs in the question, there are two contradictory statements, this common Muslim must call to mind that one of them is correct and the other is a mistake, due to His Saying, the Mighty and Majestic, **“So after the truth, what else can there be, save error?”**²

So when he brings this principle to mind it will motivate him to ask the people of knowledge, ‘You say it’s permissible ... and you say it’s not ... what’s your proof? And what’s your proof?’ This will open up a path to understanding and awareness and then he can choose what he feels at ease with and what his heart opens up to, and he will be rewarded.

As for him going against this legislated principle and saying as many of the people today do that, ‘Whoever blindly follows a scholar will meet Allaah safe and sound,’ [then] where has this sentence come from? It is not in the Book of Allaah and nor in a hadeeth from Allaah’s Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم), it’s only a sentence [prevalent] on the tongues of the common folk, ‘Whoever blindly follows a scholar will meet Allaah safe and sound ...’ no.

Rather whoever follows Allaah’s Guidance is the one who is rightly guided, and whoever goes astray then it goes against himself, I just said to you now that Allaah said, **“So ask the people of the message if you do not know,”**³ He said, **“... the people of the message [dhikr] ...”** here by the word ‘message’ [dhikr] what is not intended is the dhikr which some of the ignorant Soofees are familiar with, dancing while doing dhikr and going crazy in it, and they call it, as he (عليه السلام)⁴ said regarding something else [but which still applies here], **“... they will name it with other than its [real] name ...”** they call dancing and ecstasy [tawaajud] the remembrance of Allaah the Mighty and Majestic, but on the contrary it is play and amusement, in addition to another sin, which is to call things by names other than their legislated ones.

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

² سورة يونس - Soorah Yoonus [10:32]

³ سورة النحل - Soorah an-Nahl [16:43]

⁴ (عليه السلام) (alaihi-salaam) Peace be upon him

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So the dhikr mentioned in the verse is the Qur'aan, as He the Mighty and Majestic said, **“And We revealed to you the message [i.e., the Qur'aan] that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them ...”**⁵ so the dhikr here is the Qur'aan, **“So ask the people of the message if you do not know.”**

And there is another caveat for this questioner [to bear in mind] here: this person says [the thing being discussed is] permissible and that one says it's not permissible, Yaa akhee, are these people really scholars? Are they scholars of the Book of Allaah and the hadeeth of His Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم)؟ Or do they differ most greatly? This one giving a fatwa according to the Book of Allaah and the Hadeeth of His Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and that [other] one maybe walking on all fours, i.e., not walking according to the Book or the Sunnah but only according to the four madhhabs, taking whatever he fancies from them.

What a difference there is between these two.

For this reason, it is fitting that the common Muslim—and [when] I say, ‘The common Muslim,’ [it] doesn't mean that he doesn't understand ... no, if he couldn't understand it would mean he is mad, and if he was mad then he would not be accountable—but [on the contrary] he can understand, it's only that he is not a scholar—thus, he must use his intellect, so when two statements come to him, one of them will have come from someone who is not a scholar, and so such a statement has no weight, and thus the first opinion stands.

And it may happen and we do not deny it: that both of them may be scholars of the Book and the Sunnah but the issue may be a disputed or controversial one, and this happens as it did in the past, and it can happen today, here the common Muslim must use his brain and strip away his desires and not follow them which would be something that would lead him away from Allaah's Path, and he (عليه السلام) **“The Mujaahid is the one who strives against his desires for the Sake of Allaah.”**

But most regretfully, when the elite, the elite of the people today seek out the fatawa which suits them ... he will say to you—Yaa akhee, and all of them say that they go back to the sayings of Allaah's Messenger—[but then] he takes whatever suits him from these madhhabs, [if this is the case with the elite] what are we to say about the common folk then? And as was said:

If the man of the house is beating the daff, those living in it will dance along.

So if this is the case with the elite, except for those whom Allaah has had mercy on, and how few they are, then what will the state of the general folk be?

I remind the elite and the general masses that the religion is not desires but rather knowledge, and it is upon the general folk to learn how to ask questions.

And maybe in some of these blessed, Inshaa'allaah, gatherings I have on more than one occasion mentioned that hadeeth narrated by Aboo Daawood in his Sunnan that the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) sent a detachment to fight in the Way of Allaah, whereupon one of them received wounds to his body, when he awoke in the morning, he found that he needed to take a ghusl, and so he asked those around him whether they knew of an excuse for him not to have to bathe, they said no, that he must take a ghusl, so he did and died because when the water got on his wounds they festered ... and so on and his temperature rose and he died.

⁵ سورة النحل - Soorah an-Nahl [16:44]

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When news about what happened to him reached the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) he became extremely angry (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and said, **“They killed him, may Allaah kill them,”** i.e., the ones who gave the fatawa that he had to take a ghusl were the reason for his death, **“They killed him, may Allaah kill them, should they not have asked if they didn’t know?! Verily the cure for ignorance is to question! It would have been enough for him had he performed tayammum.”**

So, those [Companions] gave him a fatawa without knowledge, so we take a lesson from this hadeeth, that it is not fitting for the common folk to ask [just] anyone who claims knowledge, or who it is claimed has knowledge, but rather, O Muslim, the person who you know does not give fataawaa except based upon, ‘Allaah said ... Allaah’s Messenger said,’ such a person is the one you should direct your question to, as for those people who say what they do not do, and who give fataawaa that aren’t based upon the Book and the Sunnah, then such people are not scholars.

And these are the people the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) foretold [us] about when he said, as occurs in Saheeh Bukhaaree and Muslim from the hadeeth of Abdullaah ibn Amr ibn al-Aas (رضي الله عنهما)⁶, that, ‘Allaah’s Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said, **“Verily, Allaah does not take away knowledge by snatching it from the breasts of the scholars, but He takes it away by taking away the scholars such that when no scholar remains the people take the ignorant ones as leaders and so they are asked and give religious verdicts without knowledge and [thus] are misguided and lead others astray [too].”**

This is the state of affairs of many of those in places of responsibility today who it is thought are from the people of knowledge [but who really aren’t], and so the commoner who asks [them] a question becomes confused: ‘This one says haraam and that one says halaal, or this one says obligatory and that one says Sunnah,’ or other such things from the issues which are disputed.

A process of purification must be carried out in the minds of all the common folk: the scholar of the Book and the Sunnah must be filtered from the one who, as some of the witty people in our country Syria say, ‘The scholars are of two types. One is a scholar-doer, the other is the doer-scholar!’ The ‘scholar-doer’ i.e., is a scholar who acts upon his knowledge, and the ‘doer-scholar’ is the one who does things and whose status is that of a scholar but who has nothing whatsoever to do with knowledge.

And unfortunately this is present, and whoever doesn’t know, let him go and try [and he’ll see how true what I am saying is].

Ask whoever you want from those who you think are from the people of knowledge well-known amongst the people, and I will not name them even if only by title, ask whoever you want, even though it [i.e., a certain situation] may be a fiqh issue in which there is difference of opinion, he will answer you according to the madhhab he grew up on, was nurtured on, and became old on, he will give you a fatawa according to it, and then you will say, ‘What’s the proof?’ And he will say [rhetorically], ‘We are people of proof? How can we understand the proof?’ This is if he is forthright [admitting that he doesn’t know the proof], but if he is someone who hides things, he will say, ‘How are you going to perceive the proof?’ So he covers his own ignorance by declaring others to be ignorant.

This, unfortunately, is the reality of many people today, and the One whose Aid is sought is Allaah.

Al-Hudaa wan-Noor, 455.

⁶ (رضي الله عنهما) (rad iyallaahu 'anhumaa) May Allaah the Most High be pleased with them both