



ليتفقوها (٣)

Bid'ah

Its Concept and Boundaries

Prepared by
The General Iftaa' Department
In The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan



**In The Name Of ALLAH, The Entirely Merciful, The Especially Merciful
All perfect praise be to Allah the Lord of The Worlds. May His peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Mohammad and upon all his family and companions.**

This is a pamphlet addressing the most important jurisprudential questions commonly raised regarding the ruling of Islamic Law on Bid'ah. Its content is derived from authoritative legal rulings (fatāwā) issued by the General Iftaa' Department, drawing upon the established juristic principles documented in the texts of the Shāfi'ī school in particular, and the recognized texts of the four major Sunni schools of thought in general.

Allah the Most High says {what means}: «...And [they invented] monasticism, which We did not prescribe for them except [that they did so] seeking the pleasure of Allah. But they did not observe it with due observance. So We gave those who believed among them their reward...» [Al-Ḥadīd/27].

It is reported from Jarīr al-Bajalī that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said: “Whoever establishes in Islam a good practice (sunnatun ḥasanah) will have its reward and the reward of whoever acts upon it after him, without that decreasing from their rewards in the least. And whoever establishes in Islam an evil practice (sunnatun sayyi'ah) will bear its burden and the burden of whoever acts upon it after him, without that decreasing from their burdens in the least.” [Reported by Muslim in his Ṣaḥīḥ (1017)].

This ḥadīth explains the other ḥadīth reported by Muslim (867) from Jābir ibn 'Abd Allāh, where the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said: “As for what follows: Indeed, the best of speech is the Book of Allah, and the best of guidance is the guidance of Muḥammad, and the worst of matters are the newly-invented ones, and every bid'ah is misguidance.” Thus, the meaning of “and every bid'ah is misguidance” is: “every evil bid'ah that contradicts the texts of the Sharī'ah.” This is evidenced by his affirmation, peace and blessings be upon him, of both a good bid'ah (ḥasanah) and an evil bid'ah (sayyi'ah) in the first ḥadīth with his words “a good practice” and “an



evil practice.” The practice (sunnah) of the Beloved Chosen One, peace and blessings be upon him, contains nothing evil. The word “sunnah” means a way/practice, and it is also used for what is newly-invented (muḥdathah) and bid’ah. There is a sound ḥadīth in which “sanna” is used in the sense of “invented/initiated” (ibtada’a). It is reported from Ibn Mas’ūd, attributed to the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him: “No person is killed wrongfully, but a share of responsibility for his blood will be upon, the first son of Adam, because he was the first one to kill.” [Reported by al-Bukhārī (3336) and Muslim (1677)].

Imām al-Nawawī said in Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim (104/7): “This contains an exhortation to initiate good deeds and to establish good practices (sunan ḥasanāt), and a warning against inventing falsehoods and reprehensible things... This ḥadīth specifies the statement of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, ‘Every newly-invented matter is a bid’ah, and every bid’ah is misguidance,’ and clarifies that what is intended are the false innovations and the blameworthy bid’ahs. This has been explained previously in the Book of Friday Prayer, and we mentioned there that bid’ah is of five categories.”

Therefore, the scholars of the early generations (Salaf) explicitly stated that newly-invented matters (muḥdathāt) are of two types: praiseworthy (maḥmūd) and blameworthy (madhmūm). Al-Bayhaqī reported with a sound chain in al-Madkhal (190) from al-Rabī’ ibn Sulaymān, who said: “Al-Shāfi’ī, may Allah be pleased with him, said: ‘Newly-invented matters (al-muḥdathāt) are of two types: The first: What is invented, contradicting the Book, the Sunnah, a transmitted report (athar), or consensus (ijmā’). This is the misguiding bid’ah (al-bid’ah al-ḍalālah). The second: What is invented of good, not conflicting with any of these. This is a newly-invented matter that is not blameworthy.’ And ‘Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, said concerning the night prayers in Ramaḍān: ‘What an excellent bid’ah this is!’” This statement of our master ‘Umar is reported by Mālik in al-Muwatta’ (252) and al-Bukhārī in his Ṣaḥīḥ (2010).

It is reported from the Lady ‘Ā’ishah, may Allah be pleased with her, attributed to the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him: “Whoever introduces into this matter of ours that which is not from it, it is rejected.” [Reported by al-Bukhārī (2697)]. In a version by Muslim



(1718): “That which is not from it.” The phrase “what is not from it” indicates that what is from it is not rejected. This is in addition to his statement in the first ḥadīth: “a good practice” and “an evil practice.” Thus, the meaning of his statement, peace and blessings be upon him, “what is not from it” is: what is not found in the Book or the Sunnah and does not fall under a ruling within them nor contradicts their rulings. In some versions, “what is not from it, it is rejected” means: it is invalid and rejected, not to be considered.

Al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī said in Jāmi‘ al-‘Ulūm wa al-Ḥikam (177/1): “This ḥadīth, by its explicit wording (maṭṭūq), indicates that every action not based on the command of the Lawgiver (al-Shārī‘/Allah) is rejected, and by its implied meaning (mafḥūm), it indicates that every action that is based on His command is not rejected. The meaning of ‘His command’ here is: His religion and His law.”

The Concept of Bid‘ah and its Division into Good (Ḥasanah) and Evil (Sayyi‘ah):

Bid‘ah is: everything that is newly invented. If it conforms to the Sharī‘ah, or if the Sharī‘ah is silent about it—as with customs and means that contain good—or if it has a basis (aṣl) in the Sharī‘ah that indicates it, then it is a good bid‘ah (bid‘ah ḥasanah). If it contradicts the Sharī‘ah and does not fall under its fundamental principles, then it is an evil bid‘ah (bid‘ah sayyi‘ah).

Al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar said in al-Fath (253/13), clarifying the meaning of bid‘ah: “What is intended by it is what is newly invented and has no basis in the Sharī‘ah... For everything invented without a precedent is called bid‘ah, whether it is praiseworthy or blameworthy.”

Therefore, a newly-invented matter or bid‘ah, if it contradicts the texts of Islamic Law and has no basis in the Sharī‘ah, is blameworthy. If it conforms to the texts or falls under the general principles of the Sharī‘ah and has a basis that indicates it, then it is not a blameworthy bid‘ah in the Sharī‘ah; rather, it is praiseworthy.

Rulings Pertaining to Bid‘ah:

Bid‘ah is divided into five categories:

1. Obligatory (Wājibah): That which is a means to an obligation, as scholars state in the Sharia maxim: “Means take the ruling of their ends.” Such as engaging in the science of Arabic grammar (al-naḥw),



as it is a means to preserve the Shariah texts from distortion, and codifying the principles of jurisprudence (uṣūl al-fiqh), principles of religion (uṣūl al-dīn), and the like.

2. Prohibited (Muḥarramah): That which is a means to something prohibited or involves a clear contradiction to the rulings of the Sharī'ah, such as creedal innovations (bid'ah i'tiqādiyyah) like anthropomorphism (al-tajsīm), likening Allah to creation (al-tashbīh), and denying anything established from Islamic beliefs, such as the believers' sight of their Lord on the Day of Resurrection, the punishment of the grave, and the Resurrection.

3. Recommended (Mandūbah): That which is a means to something recommended, such as building schools and every act of kindness not known in the first era.

4. Disliked (Makrūhah): That which is a means to something disliked, such as washing the parts of wuḍū' more than three times without a reason.

5. Permissible (Mubāḥah): That which pertains to customs and permissible matters, such as expanding in varieties of food and clothing. Imām al-Nawawī said in Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim (154/6): "His statement, peace and blessings be upon him: 'and every bid'ah is misguidance' is a general statement that is specified (ʿāmm makhṣūṣ). What is intended is the majority of bid'ahs. Scholars of language say: 'It is everything done without a prior example.' Scholars [of religion] say: 'Bid'ah is of five categories: obligatory, recommended, prohibited, disliked, and permissible.'... Therefore, when what we have mentioned is understood, it becomes clear that the ḥadīth is from the general statements that are specified, as are similar narrations. What we have said is supported by the statement of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, may Allah be pleased with him, concerning the Tarāwīḥ prayers: 'What an excellent bid'ah this is!' The fact that the ḥadīth says 'every bid'ah,' emphasizing with 'every' (kull), does not prevent it from being subject to specification. This is similar to the statement of Allah the Most High: 'Destroying everything by the command of its Lord' [al-Aḥqāf/25]. It did not literally destroy everything, as it did not destroy the entire world; indeed, it did not destroy their dwellings, as indicated by Allah's



statement in the same verse: ‘...so they became such that nothing could be seen except their dwellings.’”

Examples of Matters Introduced by the Companions during the Time of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, Which He Did Not Describe as Bid'ah:

There are reports indicating that the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, did things which the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, approved and did not describe as bid'ah. These include:

1. The First Ḥadīth: Reported by Ibn Mājah in his Sunan (No. 761) with a sound chain from Sa'īd ibn al-Musayyib, from Bilāl: “That he came to the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, to call him for the Fajr prayer.” He was told, “He is sleeping,” so he said: “Prayer is better than sleep, prayer is better than sleep.” This was approved for the Fajr call to prayer, and the matter was established as such. Our master Bilāl, may Allah be pleased with him, added a phrase to the call to prayer (adhān) which the Sharī'ah approved because it conformed to the purpose for which the adhān was legislated: calling to prayer and announcing the arrival of its time.

2. The Second Ḥadīth: Reported by Imām al-Bukhārī in his Ṣaḥīḥ (No. 799) from Rifā'ah ibn Rāfi' al-Zuraqī, who said: “We were praying behind the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, one day. When he raised his head from bowing (rukū'), he said: ‘Allah hears whoever praises Him (Sami'a Allāhu li-man ḥamidah).’ A man behind him said: ‘Our Lord, to You is praise—abundant, good, and blessed praise (Rabbanā wa laka al-ḥamd, ḥamdan kathīran ṭayyiban mubārakan fih).’ When he finished the prayer, he said: ‘Who was the speaker?’ The man said, ‘I was.’ He said: ‘I saw over thirty angels rushing to see which of them would record it first.’” Al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar said in Fath al-Bārī (287/2): “This is used as evidence for the permissibility of initiating a remembrance (dhikr) in prayer that is not transmitted, provided it does not contradict what is transmitted.”

3. The Third Ḥadīth: Reported by al-Bukhārī (155/1) from Anas ibn Mālik: “A man from the Anṣār used to lead them in prayer in the mosque of Qubā'. Whenever he began a sūrah he would recite for them in prayer from what he recited, he would begin with ‘Say: He is Allah, the One’ [Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ] until he finished it, then he would recite another sūrah



with it. He would do this in every unit (rak'ah). His companions spoke to him, saying: 'You begin with this sūrah, then you do not deem it sufficient until you recite another. So either recite it alone, or leave it and recite another.' He said: 'I will not leave it. If you wish for me to lead you doing that, I will do so. If you dislike it, I will leave you.' They considered him the best among them and disliked for anyone else to lead them. When the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, came to them, they informed him of the story. He said: 'O so-and-so, what prevents you from doing what your companions command you, and what compels you to adhere to this sūrah in every rak'ah?' He said, 'I love it.' He said: 'Your love for it will admit you into Paradise.'" Al-Hāfiẓ Ibn Baṭṭāl said in Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī (391/2): "This indicates the permissibility of his action, for if it were not permissible, it would have been clarified to him."

4.The Fourth Ḥadīth: Reported by al-Bukhārī (1149) and Muslim (2458)—the wording is from al-Bukhārī—from Abū Hurayrah, that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said to Bilāl at the time of the Fajr prayer: "Tell me about the most hopeful act (i.e., one which you deem the most rewarding with Allah) you have done since your acceptance of Islam because I heard the sound of the steps of your shoes in front of me in Jannah». Bilal said: «I do not consider any act more hopeful than that whenever I make Wudu» (or took a bath) in an hour of night or day, I would immediately perform Salat (prayer) for as long as was destined for me to perform." Al-Bukhārī said: "The sound of your sandals' means the movement of your sandals." Our master Bilāl ibn Rabāḥ, may Allah be pleased with him, committed himself, of his own accord and as a personal striving (ijtihād), to praying two rak'ahs after every purification and after every call to prayer (adhān). This became among his most hopeful righteous deeds with Allah the Most High. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, did not describe him as having innovated that or specified a prayer at a particular time before approving it. He was rewarded both before and after the approval.

How do we respond to one who says that using as evidence what the Companions introduced during the time of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, is invalid because these actions derived their



permissibility from the approval of the Prophet himself, peace and blessings be upon him, whereas after the era of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, there is no such thing as a good bid'ah? If it is said: "It is not permissible to do anything that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, did not do, because it is a bid'ah," we respond: How is it that the Companions did things that the Messenger of Allah did not do initially, while he was present among them? The obligation upon them would have been to ask before they introduced anything. Since they did that before asking the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, while he was present among them, it indicates that they did not understand that it was impermissible to do anything the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, did not do. Furthermore, if their action was not valid according to Islamic Law, it would have been obligatory upon the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, to clarify that to them—either to approve it or to forbid them from it—so that the action would be established by his statement or his approval. All of that did not happen.

If the holder of this doubt were to reflect on what he is saying, he would realize that he is casting aspersions on the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them. They are the most just of people, the most pious, the most God-fearing, the most knowledgeable of Allah's limits and rulings, and the most adherent to the Sunnah of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him. They are the people with the greatest understanding of the Noble Qur'ān and the Pure Sunnah.

Are there examples of matters introduced by the Companions after the death of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, which none of them denounced and which the rest of the Companions did not describe as bid'ah?

Numerous reports indicate that the Companions introduced things after the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, which no one denounced and none of the scholars described as a misguiding bid'ah. Among these is the well-established compilation of the Qur'ān during the era of our master Abū Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, then its completion during the time of our master 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, and the copying of the maṣāḥif during the era of our master 'Uthmān, may Allah be pleased with him. Other examples include:



1. Reported by Abū Dāwūd in his Sunan (No. 971) from Ibn 'Umar, from the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, regarding the tashahhud: "All greetings, prayers, and good things are for Allah. Peace be upon you, O Prophet, and the mercy of Allah and His blessings (wa barakātuh)." Ibn 'Umar said, "I added to it: 'and His blessings.' 'Peace be upon us and upon the righteous servants of Allah. I bear witness that there is no god but Allah.'" Ibn 'Umar said, "I added to it: 'alone, without partner' (waḥdahu lā sharīka lah). 'And I bear witness that Muḥammad is His servant and His messenger.'" Al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar said in Natā'ij al-Afkār (174/2): "Al-Dāraquṭnī said: 'Its narrators are trustworthy.'" And in the marginal notes of al-Sunan: "Its chain is sound." Imām Badr al-Dīn al-'Aynī al-Ḥanafī said in Sharḥ Sunan Abī Dāwūd (251/4): "This chain is sound."

2. The Forenoon Prayer (Ṣalāt al-Ḍuḥā): Ibn 'Umar considered it a bid'ah yet deemed it good. This is reported by Ibn Abī Shaybah in his Muṣannaf (7782) from al-Ḥakam ibn al-A'raj, who said: "I asked Ibn 'Umar about the forenoon prayer (ḍuḥā). He said: 'A bid'ah.'" This is also in al-Bukhārī (1776) and Muslim (1255). 'Abd al-Razzāq reported in his Muṣannaf (4868) with a sound chain from 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, that he said: "Indeed, 'Uthmān was killed while no one was praying it [ḍuḥā], and the people have not introduced anything more beloved to me than it." Al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar said in al-Fath (52/3): "Sa'īd ibn Manṣūr reported with a sound chain from Mujāhid, from Ibn 'Umar, that he said: 'It is an innovation (muḥdathah), and indeed it is among the best of what they have introduced.'"

3. Reported by al-Bukhārī in his Ṣaḥīḥ (1128) from the Lady 'Ā'ishah, may Allah be pleased with her, who said: "The Messenger of Allah would sometimes abandon an action, though he loved to do it, fearing that people might do it and it would be made obligatory upon them. The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, never prayed the forenoon prayer (ṣabḥat al-ḍuḥā) at all, but I pray it." Thus, she, may Allah be pleased with her, held that the Prophet did not pray ḍuḥā, yet she prayed it.

4. Reported by al-Bukhārī (70) from Abū Wā'il, who said: "'Abd Allāh [Ibn Mas'ūd] used to remind the people every Thursday. A man said to him, 'O Abā 'Abd al-Raḥmān, I wish you would remind us every day.'"



He said, ‘What prevents me from that is that I dislike boring you. I choose times to admonish you just as the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, used to choose times to admonish us, fearing weariness upon us.’” Thus, ‘Abd Allāh ibn Mas‘ūd, may Allah be pleased with him, specified Thursday for admonition and did not consider his action a misguiding bid‘ah, contrary to those who claim that specifying a particular day is considered a bid‘ah.

These are some examples of the approach of the pious predecessors (al-Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ) and the eminent Imams in considering the ḥadīth “Every bid‘ah is misguidance” as being from the specified (makhṣūṣ) narrations, not to be taken in its absolute generality. This indicates that it is not permissible to describe every bid‘ah as misguidance or as evil. And Allah the Almighty knows best.

How do we respond to one who says that bid‘ah is whatever the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, did not do, and everything he left is a bid‘ah?

Abandonment (tark) is a matter of non-action. What is intended here is: a matter the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, did not do, or that the pious predecessors left, without there being a ḥadīth or report (athar) prohibiting that abandoned thing that necessitates its prohibition or dislike.

This abandonment alone, if not accompanied by a text stating that the abandoned matter is forbidden and prohibited, is not evidence for prohibition and declaring something unlawful (taḥrīm). At most, it indicates that abandoning that action or statement is permissible. As for it indicating the prohibition of that action or statement, it does not indicate that. That is only derived from evidence that points to it.

What some people understand—that “abandonment necessitates prohibition”—is not mentioned by the scholars of uṣūl al-fiqh (Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence) in their books. Rather, what is known among the scholars of uṣūl al-fiqh is that “prohibition (al-nahy) necessitates forbiddance (al-taḥrīm),” and this is if there is no contextual indication (qarīnah) that the intended meaning is only a matter of reprehensibility (karāhah).

Evidence for this includes what is reported by al-Dāraqutnī (183/4) and al-Ḥākim in al-Mustadrak (7114) from Abū Tha‘labah al-Khushanī,



that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said: “Indeed, Allah has set limits, so do not transgress them. He has made obligations for you, so do not neglect them. He has prohibited things, so do not violate them. And He left things, not out of forgetfulness from your Lord, but as a mercy from Him to you, so accept them and do not investigate them.”

Al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Haythamī said in *Majma‘ al-Zawā'id* (103/1): “From Abū al-Dardā’, that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said: ‘What Allah has made lawful in His Book is lawful, and what He has prohibited is unlawful, and what He remained silent about is a concession (‘afw). So accept Allah’s concession, for Allah is not One to forget anything.’ Then he recited: «And your Lord is not forgetful» [Maryam/64].” Reported by al-Bazzār and al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Kabīr*; its chain is ḥasan and its narrators are reliable.” From this we understand that abandonment does not indicate prohibition, nor does it indicate blameworthy bid‘ah.

Types of Abandonment and whether it Necessarily Indicates that the Abandoned Thing is a Bid‘ah or Forbidden:

It is known in the science of uṣūl al-fiqh and according to the principles of the noble Sharī‘ah that if the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, performed an action, that does not in itself indicate the obligation of that action. Rather, one refers to other contextual evidence and proofs that indicate the ruling—it may be obligatory, recommended, permissible, or even specific to the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him. If the mere performance of an action does not indicate a specific ruling, then how can the abandonment of an action indicate a specific ruling? Therefore, the scholars of uṣūl al-fiqh have said: If the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, abandoned something, several possibilities exist:

First: That his abandonment was due to habit. An example is what al-Bukhārī reported (5537) from Khālīd ibn al-Walīd: He entered with the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, the house of Maymūnah. A roasted ḍabb (spiny-tailed lizard) was brought. The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, reached his hand toward it. One of the women present said, “Inform the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, of what he is about to eat.”



They said, “It is a ḍabb, O Messenger of Allah.” He withdrew his hand. I [Khālīd] said, “Is it forbidden, O Messenger of Allah?” He said: “No, but it was not in the land of my people, and I find myself disliking it.” Khālīd said, “So I pulled it toward me and ate it, while the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, was watching.” This ḥadīth is evidence for the Sharia maxim: “Abandonment does not necessitate prohibition.”

It might be said: Khālīd’s question indicates the opposite of this principle—that abandonment does necessitate prohibition.

The response is: When Khālīd saw the Prophet’s, peace and blessings be upon him, turning away from the ḍabb after reaching for it to eat, a doubt arose in Khālīd’s mind about its prohibition, so he asked. The Prophet’s, peace and blessings be upon him, answer supports the principle: that abandoning something, even after inclining toward it, does not imply its prohibition. If abandonment by itself indicated prohibition, Khālīd would have been content with that and would not have asked about its ruling. Since we see he asked the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, about the ruling, we understand that the mere abandonment of something by the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, does not indicate prohibition.

Second: that his abandonment was due to forgetfulness. The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, forgot during prayer and omitted something from it. He was asked, “Has something happened concerning the prayer?” He said: “I am only human; I forget as you forget. So if I forget, remind me.” [Reported by Muslim (572)].

Third: That he abandoned it out of fear that it would be made obligatory upon his Ummah, such as his abandonment of the continuous congregation for the Tarāwīḥ prayers.

Fourth: That he abandoned it because it fell under the generality of Qur’ānic verses and ḥadīths, as it is encompassed by Allah’s statement {which means}: «And do good that you may succeed.» [Al-Ḥajj/77].

There is no explicit statement in any ḥadīth or report indicating that if the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, abandoned something, it was forbidden.

The Danger of Being Lenient in Accusing People and Labeling Them with Bid’ah:



It is reported from Abū Dharr that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said: “No man accuses another of immorality (fusūq) or accuses him of disbelief (kufr) except that it returns upon him if his companion is not like that.” [Reported by al-Bukhārī (6045)]. Moreover, from Ibn Mas‘ūd, that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said: “Abusing a Muslim is immorality (fusūq), and fighting him is disbelief (kufr).” [Reported by al-Bukhārī (48) and Muslim (64)]. People speaking about one another without restraint is from the forbidden backbiting (ghībah). Occupying oneself with declaring others innovators (tabdī‘) and accusing them of polytheism (shirk), disbelief (kufr), and misguidance is a forbidden matter. Allah the Most High says {what means}: «When you were receiving it with your tongues and saying with your mouths that of which you had no knowledge and thinking it insignificant, while it was, in the sight of Allah, tremendous.» [Al-Nūr/15]. He, glorified be He, has commanded justice and forbidden transgression, saying {what means}: «O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm for Allah, witnesses in justice, and do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is Acquainted with what you do.» [Al-Mā‘idah/8]. And He said {what means: «O you who have believed, avoid much [negative] assumption. Indeed, some assumption is sin.» [Al-Hujurāt/12]. Moreover, He said {what means}: «And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed, the hearing, the sight, and the heart—all those will be questioned.» [Al-Isrā’/36].

Al-Bukhārī (5144) and Muslim (2563) reported from Abū Hurayrah that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said: “Beware of assumption, for assumption is the falsest of speech.” Accusing people and charging them with bid‘ah and immorality (fisq) carries great danger in religion and significant harm to the individual and society. It leads to severing ties and hatred, which are both prohibited, and it may lead to declaring others misguided (taḍlīl) or disbelievers (takfīr). It is not permissible for anyone to issue a judgment of bid‘ah against any Muslim, for that is the responsibility of the firmly grounded scholars (al-‘ulamā’ al-rāsikhūn) who distinguish between good and evil bid‘ah, and it is not the affair of the general public.



Is it permissible to declare someone an innovator (tabdī') or misguided (taḍlīl) in matters of legitimate disagreement (khilāf) that have occurred among the scholars of the four well-established schools of Islamic law (madhāhib)?

Every opinion that relies on the Book of Allah the Most High, the Sunnah of His Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, a valid consensus (ijmā' ṣaḥīḥ), an accepted analogy (qiyās maqbūl), or other valid Shariah evidence is an opinion that has standing in the Islamic Law. It is not permissible to claim that it is mere whim and misguidance. The scholars of the respected schools of law derive rulings according to the Shariah evidences, in accordance with what those evidences bear. All the adherents of these schools are upon good, guidance, and righteousness. We think of them only that they pondered, strove in reasoning (ijtihād), and came close [to the truth]. Some were correct and some erred, and each of them is rewarded for his effort and has reward from Allah. The one who arrives at the truth has two rewards with Allah the Most High, as the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said: "When a judge (ḥākim) judges and strives in reasoning (ijtihad) and is correct, he has two rewards. And when he judges and strives in reasoning and errs, he has one reward." [Reported by al-Bukhārī (7352)].

Therefore, it is not permissible to declare the scholars of the respected, followed schools to be innovators (mubtadi'ah) or immoral (fussāq) in matters over which they differed in a legitimate disagreement arising from their examination of the Shariah evidences.

As for declaring the scholars of the respected, followed schools misguided (muḍallilīn) and immoral (fussāq), this opens the door to strife (fitnah), discards the statements and Shariah rulings of the scholars of the early generations (Salaf), and leads to intellectual disorder in society, a decline in the status of scholars among the common people, and the spread of sin and ignorance of the rulings of the religion. We ask Allah for pardon and well-being, and we ask Him for a good end.

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