

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Bleak House

By

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I have a few observations [*Mulahazat*] regarding the recent retraction of Shaykh Hamza Yusuf on mistakes which he has made.

A: Stating that an action or saying is Kufr [Disbelief] does not necessitate the Takfir [Anathematization] of the individual it has been ascribed to. This is the way of the Ahl al-Sunnah. Imam Taqi al-Din al-Subki رحمته in his refutation of the heresies of Ibn Taymiyyah entitled *al-Durat al Mudiyyah fi alRad a'la Ibn Taymiyyah* refers to his positions as Kufr, but throughout the very same work refuses to make Takfir of Ibn Taymiyyah. In the same epistle he refers to the position of Ibn Taymiyyah as a rejection of consensus which is disbelief, but yet does not anathematize any specific individual.

By the same right, learned people have the right to point out positions that are heterodox and disbelief. Highlighting positions that are problematic and in opposition to the consensus does not make anyone an irresponsible Takfiri. Imam Nawawi, Imam Qadi Iyadh and Imam Rafi'i (amongst many others) رحمته have pointed out that a person who doubts the disbelief of Jews and Christians himself is a disbeliever. Would anyone have the audacity today to oppose these great Imams on their positions? If anyone were to cite these valid and relied upon positions today we cannot condemn them for doing so.

By the same token, if a Muslim cites the agreed upon position that the Qadiyani Sect, Lahori and other, are Kuffar and rejection of their Kufr is also Kufr, the Ulama of the Ahl al-Sunnah do not condemn him for doing so. In summary, propagating the agreed upon position of the Ahl al-Sunnah does not necessitate the Takfir of an individual unless the position explicit, thus moving from *Luzum* to *Iltizam*. The theologians have been more stringent in this regard compared to the jurists. Therefore the scholars have stipulated in this regard that taking the position of the theologians is safer. A clear example is where the jurists have declared anyone who insults the Shaykhayn [Abu Bakr and Umar] رحمته as disbelievers, yet the theologians have stated otherwise, however at the same time acknowledging that the latter positions is a heterodox position.

The scholars that I follow also take the position of the theologians over that of the jurists simply because it is the way of precaution. However this does not rule out that a particular position will be referred to as Kufr, yet this does not necessitate the disbelief of the individual. When looking at positions from the books of the scholars it is always necessary to see what the contemporary scholars of that age and later scholars have stated. This is the way of scholarly integrity and honesty. We will take the example of Imam Ghazali's رحمته passage in 'Faysal al-Tafriqa' which has been cited elsewhere by Shaykh Hamza and others. Imam Qadi Iyadh رحمته pointed out the mistake of this position and stated that anyone who moves away from the orthodox position on the salvation of the disbelievers has left the consensus and Islam. Yet Imam Khafaji رحمته explains in his commentary on the 'Shifa' of Qadi Iyadh رحمته that the passage from Imam Ghazali رحمته has been taken out of context and the Imam himself has opposed the position ascribed to him. Imam Ibn Hajr al-Makki رحمته also exonerates Imam Ghazali رحمته by stating that these passages have been tampered and at the same time forwarding Imam Ghazali's

ﷺ real position. He does this in ‘al-Swaiq al-Muhriqah’ and ‘al-I’lam bi Qawati’ al-Islam’. Imam Muhammad bin Yusuf al Sanusi ﷺ also clarifies Imam Ghazzali’s ﷺ position in his ‘Sharh alMuqaddimat’.

B: Responsibility in an age of Irresponsibility

Fitna [Tribulation] and Bida’ [Heretical Innovation] are sometimes used as synonyms. In a Hadith narrated by al-Khatib and others, it is said “When dissension [Fitan] appears and my companions are cursed, then every learned one must reveal his knowledge. Whoever does not then upon him is the curse of Allah, the angels and Mankind. Allah will not accept any act of justice from him.” In another variation of the same narration the word ‘Fitan’ is exchanged by ‘Bida’”.

Today, we are living in an age where Fitna is rife and the companions are cursed on television, the internet and in literature. If the curse of Allah is upon those who conceal their knowledge, then what about those who spread Fitna [Innovation]? This is why in this age of irresponsibility our responsibilities as callers to Islam are more. Initially when the ‘Lahori Qadiyani’ debate ensued, some individuals aggressively defended the mistaken position. Now that Shaykh Hamza has retracted and acknowledged his mistake, and we commend him for doing so, where do these individuals stand? This is a time for introspection on how we formulate positions within our religion. Do we follow the consensus on a given position or do we follow the odd opinion of one individual without evaluating it with the consensus?

C: Taking Responsibility

When I first refuted Shaykh Hamza in a public lecture on the Dante issue, I referred to him as ‘Mark Hanson’. Some admirers of the Shaykh were offended, and from their perspective they had every right to be.

To me, however, someone teaching Dante’s ‘Inferno’ is as equivalent to teaching Rushdie’s ‘Satanic Verses’. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ gave us guidelines with regard to such literature when he said:

“Should the stomach of anyone of you be filled with pus is better than it be filled with poetry in which I am reviled”

Similarly, I took great offence when Shaykh Hamza referred to our Master by his name without adding ‘Sayyiduna’ or saying ‘Salla Allahu alayhi wa Sallam’. In an age when we have Muslims placing the Quran on the floor when reciting it, stretching their feet out towards the Ka’bah, not acknowledging the special qualities of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, calls for the destruction of the Green Dome in Madinah the Illuminated and destruction of our heritage at the hands of zealots, we need to teach books like the ‘Shifa’ of Qadi Iyadh ﷺ and the works of Imam Yusuf al-Nabhani ﷺ. It is not without reason that the author of ‘Dalail al-Khayrat’, Muhammad Ibn Sulayman al-Jazuli ﷺ, states:

“Oh Allah! Grant us a death on the two testimonies of faith and the Sunnah wal Jama’ah.”

May Allah grant us this and make us responsible people.

Written by His sinful slave,
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