

200323 - Can he continue to follow the Hanafi madhhab, and how can he determine which view is correct?

the question

I have grown up in a community of people following barelwi aqida and Hanafi fiqh, I have come to realise that its wrong and repented and changed my aqida but because there are no imams or learned muslims upon correct aqida in my community it makes it difficult to learn the strongest opinion in matters. I am already acquainted with hanafi fiqh so my question Is it permissible for me to continue following Hanafi fiqh whilst having correct aqida?

Detailed answer

Our advice to all the Muslims who are not specialists in Islamic sciences is to adhere in their beliefs and practice of Islam to the straight path that is protected from error, that Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, has enjoined them to adhere to, and all that which may guide to it. This may be explained as follows:

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The Qur'an and saheeh Sunnah, for in them is guidance and light, and in them is protection from error and misguidance. We are certain that the people will not be able to thoroughly examine the Qur'an and Sunnah in order to develop proper understanding as the scholars and fuqaha' do, but we are certain that there is something in common that any rational Muslim can learn and understand of the Holy Qur'an. This is what is called the clear and unambiguous texts or general principles, that cannot be hidden from anyone who reads this great Book, such as the call to affirm the Oneness of Allah (Tawheed) and devote worship only to Him; to avoid shirk and kufr; to believe in Allah and His angels, His Books, His Messengers, the Last Day and the divine

decree, both good and bad; to promote virtues, good character and good traits; the prohibition on wrongdoing, transgression, murder, theft, zina, drinking alcohol, consuming orphans' wealth, and other major sins and bad characteristics. All of that we find clearly stated in the Book of Allah, may He be exalted, and in the Sunnah and biography of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And We have indeed made the Quran easy to understand and remember, then is there any that will remember (or receive admonition)?”

[al-Qamar 54:17]

“Do they not then think deeply in the Quran, or are their hearts locked up (from understanding it)?”

[Muhammad 47:24].

Were it not that the Qur'an is clear and unambiguous with regard to the basic and general principles of Islam for everyone who reads it and contemplates it, there would be no benefit in it, and it would have been a book for the elite, which no one would read except a certain class of highly educated people. In that case its light and the purpose for which it was revealed would be lost. If an Arab from the time of Jaahiliyyah (i.e., before Islam), one of the disbelievers of Quraysh, came across the verses of the Holy Qur'an, he would sense what it contained of guidance and light, and he would understand what it was telling him of the call of truth, justice and goodness. But some of them would believe and some of them would be stubborn and arrogant. It cannot be the case that the Muslim who grows up in a Muslim family today, at a time of knowledge and reason, would be less capable of understanding the Book of Allah, may He be exalted, and knowing its basic principles, general rulings and noble guidelines.

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Learning from the trustworthy scholars and fuqaha' – of whom there are many nowadays, praise be to Allah. They are the ones to whose knowledge, understanding and righteous deeds the ummah testifies and bears witness that they have attained a high level in that regard, by virtue of their efforts, patience and sincerity towards this religion.

Their sign is that you will always find them quoting as evidence the verses of the Qur'an and the hadeeths of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), distinguishing what is sound from what is unsound, and fully aware of what abrogates and what is abrogated, what is specific in meaning and application, and what is general.

Another of their signs is that you will find them following the example of the righteous early generations, namely the Sahaabah, Taabi'een and prominent imams (leading scholars), and not diverging from their teachings. In every fatwa or comment they refer to one of the earlier imams, such as Abu Bakr and 'Umar, or Sufyaan and al-Azwaa'i, or Abu Haneefah, Maalik, ash-Shaafa'i and Ahmad, and after them they refer to prominent scholars among Ahl as-Sunnah and the followers of the righteous early generations, such as Ibn Taymiyah, Ibn Katheer, Ibn Rajab and other similar scholars of Islam concerning whose pre-eminence and sincerity the Muslims do not disagree.

One of the most prominent of their signs in general terms, which we advise people to pay attention to, is the fact that they do not claim to belong exclusively to any particular group and they do not have a name that sets them apart from the ummah; rather they attribute themselves to this ummah as a whole with its entire history. As for those who claim to belong a particular ideological group, such as the Bareilawis, Deobandis, Qadianis and so on, or who have a description that sets them apart from the description of Ahl as-Sunnah wa'l-Jamaa'ah by using a made-up name or some

specific clerical hierarchy, in most cases that is indicative of innovation (bid'ah) or drifting away from the Sunnah, because if what they believed in was the belief of the Muslims of Ahl as-Sunnah, there would be no need for some other name or to call themselves by a name other than that by which Allah called them. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And strive hard in Allah’s Cause as you ought to strive (with sincerity and with all your efforts that His Name should be superior). He has chosen you (to convey His Message of Islamic Monotheism to mankind by inviting them to His religion, Islam), and has not laid upon you in religion any hardship, it is the religion of your father Ibrahim (Abraham) (Islamic Monotheism). It is He (Allah) Who has named you Muslims both before and in this (the Quran), that the Messenger (Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)) may be a witness over you and you be witnesses over mankind! So perform AsSalat (Iqamat-as-Salat), give Zakat and hold fast to Allah (i.e. have confidence in Allah, and depend upon Him in all your affairs) He is your Maula (Patron, Lord, etc.), what an Excellent Maula (Patron, Lord, etc.) and what an Excellent Helper”

[al-Hajj 22:78].

With regard to joining da'wah activities in order to cooperate in practical terms, this is not what we are warning against here, and neither is belonging to one of the four madhhabs; rather what is meant is joining or attributing oneself to a group on the basis of some specific beliefs that this group has adopted, and uniting on that basis and taking people as friends or enemies on that basis

Among the most important resources that non-specialists may refer to are: Saheeh al-Bukhaari, Saheeh Muslim; the Sunans of Abu Dawood, at-Tirmidhi, an-Nasaa'i and Ibn Maajah; the books of Imam Maalik and ash-Shaafa'i, and so on; and the saheeh reports in the books of Imam Abu Haneefah and other leading scholars. There is nothing wrong with following them and learning from their views on fiqh and 'aqeedah, and reading their books and learning from them, because their books are proof for the right path, and Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, has instructed us to learn from the scholars as He says (interpretation of the meaning):

"And We sent not (as Our Messengers) before you (O Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)) any but men, whom We inspired, (to preach and invite mankind to believe in the Oneness of Allah). So ask of those who know the Scripture (learned men of the Taurat (Torah) and the Injeel (Gospel)), if you know not"

[an-Nahl 16:43].

If any of them made a mistake, this is something that no human being can avoid and it is a mistake that is forgiven; in fact they will be rewarded for it by Allah's leave. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "If a judge passes a judgement having striven to reach a decision, and he gets it right, he will have two rewards. If he passes a judgement having striven to reach a decision and he gets it wrong, he will have one reward."

Narrated by al-Bukhaari (7352) and Muslim (1716).

Determining which scholarly view among the leading scholars of Islam is most likely to be correct is not an easy matter; it is not possible for everyone, and ordinary Muslims are not obliged to try to do that, because that is something which is only for the scholars. What matters is that the Muslim

should not follow odd views, which are few and are well-known; and he should only acquire knowledge from those to whose virtue, knowledge and understanding the ummah has testified.

Al-'Allaamah Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

I heard our shaykh – i.e., Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) say: One of the Hanafi fuqaha' came to me and said: I want to ask you about something. I said: what is it? He said: I want to change my madhhab. I said to him: Why? He said: Because I see that the saheeh hadeeths often differ from it. I asked one of the leading scholars of the Shaafa'i madhhab about that and he said to me: If you recant your madhhab, that will not affect the madhhab in any way. The madhhabs are well-established and your recanting will serve no purpose. One of the Sufi shaykhs advised me to turn to Allah and beseech Him, and ask Him to guide me to that which He loves and is pleased with. What do you advise me to do?

I said to him: Divide the madhhab into three categories:

1. One category where the truth is clearly apparent and in accordance with the Qur'an and Sunnah, so follow it and be at ease with it.

2. Another category that is not well founded, and the view that is contrary to it is based on stronger evidence, so do not issue fatwas or verdicts on that basis, and keep away from it.

3. A (third) category containing issues that are subject to ijtihaad, for which the evidence

points in different directions. If you wish, you may issue fatwas on that basis or if you wish you may keep away from it.

He

said: May Allah reward you with good – or words to that effect.

End quote from I'laam al-Muwaqqi'een (4/236-237)

Moreover, with regard to the category that is not based on well-founded evidence, as mentioned here, the imam (Abu Haneefah) is not to be blamed for it and this does not undermine the madhhab, because the fact that other views are stronger does not mean that this view has no evidence at all, or that he (Imam Abu Haneefah) based that on whims and desires or innovation. All it means is that other views are stronger and more well-founded in the view of other scholars, as Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said: It should be noted that there is none of the great imams who were widely accepted in the ummah who would deliberately oppose the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) with regard to anything of his Sunnah, whether in minor or major issues, because they were all agreed, on the basis of certainty, on the obligation of following the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and were agreed that the view of anyone may be subject to acceptance or rejection, apart from the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

But if one of them has a view and there is a saheeh hadith that says the opposite, there must be a reason why he did not follow it, and all reasons can only be one of three things: either he does not believe that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said it; or he does not believe that the hadith refers to that particular issue; or he believes the ruling (in the hadith) was abrogated. These three reasons may be due to various causes.

End quote from Raf' al-Malaam 'an A'immat al-Islam (p. 8-9)

To

sum up: there is nothing wrong with continuing to follow the Hanafi madhhab whilst adhering to sound beliefs. It is also permissible for you to follow any of the other well-known madhhabs and views of the prominent scholars.

For more information, please see fatwas no. [69836](#),
[149035](#) and [158755](#)

For more information on the Bareilawi sect, please see fatwas no.
[1487](#), [150265](#),
[161862](#) and [200321](#)

And Allah knows best.