

240391 - Was there consensus on the permissibility of absolute taqleed of one of the four madhhabs?

the question

Is there any ijma of scholars regarding absolute taqleed of any of the four madhab in the third century hijri? what this is meant by this ayat " obey Allah and the messenger and those who are given authority. if you disagree in anything, plz refer to Allah and his Prophet". i was reading that this ayat refer to absolute taqleed of any four school of thoughts and 2nd part "in case of disagreement" is only for the scholars/mujjadid, not for other people. Does this means that Quran and sunnah can only be understood by elite of scholars. People other than scholars, are bound to follow any of the four school of thoughts.

Detailed answer

It is not obligatory for the Muslim to follow a specific madhhab, whether it is one of the four madhhabs or otherwise, and it is not permissible for the Muslim to follow anyone in the religion of Allah, may He be exalted, in the sense that he does not differ from him in any matter, small or great (this is what is meant by “absolute taqleed”).

Concerning that, Shaykh ash-Shanqeeti (may Allah have mercy on him) said in Adwa’ al-Bayaan fi Eedaah al-Qur’an bi’l-Qur’an (7/307):

With regard to the type of taqleed (following) in which the later generations differed from the Sahaabah and other generations that are stated (in a hadith) to be the best, it is following one specific man to the exclusion of all other scholars. This type of following is not prescribed in any text of the Qur’an or Sunnah, and was not advocated by any of the companions of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) or any of the three generations which are stated to be the best.

It is contrary to the views of the four imams (may Allah have mercy on them). Not one of them advocated absolute adherence to the view of one particular man, to the exclusion of

all other Muslim scholars.

Therefore following a particular scholar is one of the innovations of the fourth century, and whoever claims otherwise, let him point out to us any one individual from the first three generations who adhered to the madhhab of a particular man. But he will never be able to do that, because it never happened at all. End quote.

The imams (may Allah be pleased with them) forbade people to follow them in this manner (taqleed). Imam Ahmad said: Do not follow me, and do not follow Maalik or Thawri or al-Awzaa'i. Learn from the sources from which they learned. He also said: It is a sign of a person's lack of understanding that he follows others in religious matters.

End quote from I'laam al-Muwaqqi'een 'an Rabb al-'Alaameen (2/139)

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked:

What do the leading religious scholars (may Allah be pleased with them all) say about a man who is asked "What is your madhhab?" and he says, "Muhammadi; I follow the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)"?

When it is said that every believer should follow a madhhab, and whoever does not have a madhhab is a devil, he says: "What was the madhhab of Abu Bakr as-Siddeeq and the caliphs after him (may Allah be pleased with them)?"

And it is said to him: you must follow one of these madhhabs. Which one is in the right?

He replied:

All that people are required to do is to obey Allah and His Messenger.

With regard to those who are in authority, whom Allah instructed the people to obey in the words (interpretation of the meaning): "Obey Allah and obey the Messenger (Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)), and those of you (Muslims) who are in authority" [an-Nisa' 4:59], it is only obligatory to obey them within the framework of

obedience to Allah and His Messenger, and not independently of that. Then Allah says: “(And) if you differ in anything amongst yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), if you believe in Allah and in the Last Day. That is better and more suitable for final determination” [an-Nisa’ 4:59].

If the Muslim is faced with a novel issue, then he must ask someone who he believes will give him a verdict on the basis of the laws of Allah and His Messenger, no matter what his madhhab is. It is not required of any Muslim to follow a particular scholar in all that he says, and it is not required of any Muslim to adhere to the madhhab of any specific individual other than the Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) in all that he enjoins and says. Rather anyone’s view may be accepted or rejected, except that of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

As for a person following the madhhab of a particular individual because he is unable to learn about the rulings of Islam except through him, this is acceptable, but it is not something that is obligatory for everyone, if one is able to learn about the rulings of Islam by other means. Rather each individual is required to fear Allah as much as he can and seek knowledge of what is enjoined by Allah and His Messenger, so that he may do what is enjoined and refrain from what is forbidden. And Allah knows best.

End quote from Majmoo’ al-Fataawa (20/208-209)

We have previously explained that whoever is able to derive shar’i rulings directly from the Qur’an and Sunnah may refer directly to them as those who came before him did, and it is not permissible for him to follow anyone. Rather he should follow what he believes is the truth, but it is permissible for him to follow others with regard to that which he is unable to work out and needs to know. Please see the answer to question no. [21420](#).

With regard to the words of Allah, may He be exalted (interpretation of the meaning): “O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger (Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)), and those of you (Muslims) who are in authority. (And) if you differ in anything amongst yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger (blessings and peace of

Allah be upon him), if you believe in Allah and in the Last Day. That is better and more suitable for final determination” [an-Nisa’ 4:59], there is nothing in this verse to indicate that one should follow the four imams; rather it is a command to obey Allah, may He be exalted, and His noble Messenger, and to obey those in authority. Those in authority are the rulers who rule in accordance with what Allah has revealed, and the scholars and fuqaha’ who follow the commands of Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, without limiting that to a specific scholar.

Al-Baghawi said in his Tafseer (2/239):

The scholars differed as to what is meant by “those of you (Muslims) who are in authority”. Ibn ‘Abbâs and Jâbir (may Allah be pleased with them) said: They are the fuqaha’ and scholars who teach the people about their religion. This is also the opinion of al-Hasan, ad-Dahhâk and Mujâhid. The evidence for that is the verse in which Allah, may He be exalted, says: “if only they had referred it to the Messenger or to those charged with authority among them, the proper investigators would have understood it from them (directly)” [an-Nisa’ 4:83]. Abu Hurayrah said: They are the rulers and governors. ‘Ali ibn Abi Tâlib (may Allah be pleased with him) said: It is the duty of the ruler to rule in accordance with that which Allah has revealed and to fulfil trusts. If he does that, it is the duty of the people to listen to him and obey.

End quote.

With regard to the words of Allah, may He be exalted, “(And) if you differ in anything amongst yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), if you believe in Allah and in the Last Day. That is better and more suitable for final determination” [an-Nisa’ 4:59], this is addressed to everyone who is qualified to understand the evidence (mentioned in Qur’an and Sunnah). As for one who is not qualified to do so, he has to ask people of knowledge and act upon whatever verdict they give.

Al-‘Aamidi said in al-Ihkaam fi Usool al-Ahkaam (4/228):

With regard to the ordinary Muslim and one who is not qualified to engage in ijtihaad, even if he has some limited Islamic knowledge, they have to follow the view of the mujtahid and follow his fatwa, according to the scholars of usool.

End quote.

And Allah knows best.