

9788 - Does saying something that is bid'ah make one an innovator ?

the question

If a scholar says something that is bid'ah or he agrees with those who follow bid'ah concerning a particular innovation, is he one of them?

Detailed answer

This question was put to Shaykh Muhammad ibn 'Uthaymeen (may Allaah have mercy on him), who said:

The question may be examined from two angles:

If a scholar says something which is bid'ah or follows the path of bid'ah with regard to a particular issue, is he counted as being one of them?

The answer is no, he is not counted as being one of them and is not to be described as such. If he agrees with them on one particular issue then he has agreed with them on that issue, but it is not correct to say that he is one of them in absolute terms.

For example, there may be someone who follows the madhhab of Ahmad (i.e., Hanbali) but with regard to a particular issue he follows the view of Imaam Maalik – is he to be counted as a Maaliki? No.

Similarly, if a faqeeh follows the madhhab of Abu Haneefah (i.e., Hanafi) but with regard to a particular issue he follows the madhhab of al-Shaafa'i, do we say that he is a Shaafa'i? No.

So if we see a scholar who is known to be sincere following something that is the view of the people of bid'ah, it is not correct for us to say that he is one of them or is following their way. Rather we should say that because we know that they are following the Qur'aan and Sunnah, and that they are sincere in advising people, if they err with regard to this issue, that error stems from ijtihaad, and the mujtahid in this ummah will have two rewards if he reaches the right conclusion, and if he makes a mistake then he will have one reward.

Whoever rejects the whole truth (to which that person is calling people) because of one mistaken word is misguided, especially if the thing that he thinks is a mistake is not actually a mistake. Some people, if anyone disagrees with them, say that he is mistaken. They may describe him as being mistaken or misguided, or even as being a kaafir – Allaah forbid. This is an extremely bad way of judging people. The one who regards people as being kaafirs for any reason or for any sin, is following a way that is even harsher than the way of the Khawaarij, because the Khawaarij used to regard the one who committed a major sin as being a kaafir, not just the one who committed any sin. So if there is anyone who regards the Muslims as kaafirs for any sin, then he is misguided and is going against the Qur'aan and Sunnah, and is more extreme than the Khawaarij whom 'Ali ibn Abi Taalib fought against. The Muslims differed as to whether they were to be regarded as kaafirs. Some described them as kaafirs (disbelievers) and some described them as evildoers and extreme wrongdoers. Does not Allaah say (interpretation of the meaning):

“If you avoid the great sins which you are forbidden to do, We shall expiate from you your (small) sins, and admit you to a Noble Entrance (i.e.

Paradise)”

[al-Nisaa’ 4:31]

By avoiding major sins, a person may be forgiven for minor sins, so long as he does not persist in those minor sins. But if he persists in them, then the scholars said that persisting in a minor sin makes that a major sin. No doubt the view of those who label people as kaafirs because of their sins is misguided, and the one who says that the Muslims should be regarded as kaafirs because of their sins should note that the Messenger SAWS (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Whoever calls his brother a kaafir – when that is not the case – it will come back on him.” This is what the Messenger said, so even if that person is not regarded as a kaafir in this world, he may become a kaafir in the sight of Allaah.