

## Shaykh al-Albaanee on blind following

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Is it permissible for the student of knowledge to suffice with the declarations of the scholars of the past as to whether a saying of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم)<sup>1</sup> is weak or authentic? For example, he reads the checking of Haafidh al-Iraaqee where he says, "This hadeeth is authentic." So is it permissible for him to suffice with that and the same with Imaam Ahmad or other than him?

**Shaykh al-Albaanee** (رَحْمَةُ اللهِ)<sup>2</sup>: "This matter resembles blind following in Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh). It is sufficient for the student of knowledge to listen to and act upon an opinion of one of the Imaams who are followed, and by that I do not mean only the four [famous ones], since there are more, by the Grace of Allaah, the Mighty and Majestic.

We say: Since it is not possible for all students of knowledge to be on the same level of ability in discerning the truth in those matters where the people have differed. So it is enough for the student of knowledge to implement the aayah, "**So ask those who know the Scripture if you know not.**"<sup>3</sup>

So if there are people of knowledge who are alive then he should ask them and embrace their answer, and if there is not a scholar who is alive for him to question, and he knows that a certain scholar from those who are followed has a certain opinion then he can follow him. And in this he is safe from any reproach or blame even if in reality the opinion that he followed is a mistake because he has implemented what was mentioned in the aayah as being obligatory upon him, "**So ask those who know the Scripture if you know not.**"

But this is based upon certain premises—there is one condition to this, which is that it is not evident to him that the opinion he is following is a mistake. And knowing whether the opinion he is following is incorrect or not can be done by the student doing some personal research if he has the capability of doing so, or it can become known by the direction of another scholar whom he trusts and in whose knowledge he trusts. What is important is that it is permissible for the student of knowledge to blindly follow a scholar if the mistake [in that opinion] is not clear to him and he himself is not capable of clarifying whether [the chosen opinion] is correct or incorrect ..."<sup>4</sup>

"Likewise, totally, is the answer regarding the student of knowledge, he finds an Imaam from the Imaams of the Muslims or a preserver of hadeeth who authenticates hadeeth and declares others to be weak, then it is sufficient for this student of knowledge to follow this verifier [who declares hadeeths to be authentic or weak] as long as two conditions are met, just as we have mentioned regarding the issue of [blind following] in fiqh:

<sup>1</sup> (صلى الله عليه وسلم) May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him

<sup>2</sup> (رَحْمَةُ اللهِ) (rahimahullaah) May Allaah have mercy on him

<sup>3</sup> Soorah an-Nahl [16: 43]

<sup>4</sup> Footnote here by Amr Abdul-Mun'im Salim the one who compiled and explained the book the question is taken from, he said, "In other words, that he should not take this blind following to be religion. Rather whenever the mistake of the scholar or the Imaam becomes clear to him, it is obligatory for him to shun the opinion in which he is mistaken, whether it is with regard to matters of rulings or the creed, or that which is particular to declaring hadeeths to be authentic or weak. And Shaykh al-Albaanee has another very important religious verdict [fatwaa] concerning this topic in the book, *Fataawaa Madinah*, no., 32 on pages 42-43 ..."

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**1) The first condition:** That he does not know it to be a mistake, since what is intended by this condition—whether it is hadeeth or fiqh—is that he does not follow his desires and thus say, “So and so gave me this religious verdict and the matter is closed ...” [even though while saying this in reality] he feels some uneasiness in his soul, and the Prophet, (صلى الله عليه وسلم), said, **“Question your heart even if the mufti gives you his fatwa.”**<sup>5</sup>

“This is the first condition, i.e., that he does not know that the opinion is a mistake—whether it is regarding the declaration of a hadeeth to be authentic or weak, or whether it is regarding the permissibility of something or its forbiddance.

**2) The second condition:** That he himself is not capable of verifying the authenticity or inauthenticity of the particular hadeeth in question, so this is something permissible—since we cannot burden all of the people [by saying that they must] become capable of reaching the level of ijtihaad or that they become scholars.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Footnote of Amr Abdul-Mun'im Salim, “Reported through different paths of narration the most authentic of which is the one reported by Imaam Ahmad (17922) with an authentic chain of narration from the hadeeth of Waabisah ibn Ma'bad, may Allaah be pleased with him, and the relevant part of that hadeeth is, *“Righteousness is that which gives delight to your heart and sin is that which wavers in your heart, even if the people give you religious verdicts [fatwaas] concerning it.”* ]

<sup>6</sup> Footnote here by Amr Abdul-Mun'im Salim who said, “That is because if someone reaches the level of being capable of making ijtihaad and he acquires the tools of this knowledge, then it is not permissible for him to blindly follow anyone rather it is then obligatory upon him to make ijtihaad in the declaring of hadeeths to be authentic or weak, but it is permissible for him to look at the rulings of the Imaams and the criticsers of hadeeth to pick from them that which is in accordance with the truth, so that he does not isolate himself with his opinion from their opinion.”]