



The Debate with Shaykh Nāṣiruddīn al-Albānī

Dr. Shaykh Muḥammad Saʿīd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī

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A Preview of al-Lā Madhhabiyya:

Abandoning the Madhhabs is the most dangerous Bid'ah Threatening the Islamic Sharī'ah

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¹ Forthcoming at www.sunnipubs.com. This preview is a special internet-release by www.marifah.net which differs from the printed version of the book in several ways. The foreword, all footnotes, titles and subtitles found in this preview have been added by the publisher. Shaykh al-Būṭī's original footnotes as found in the book 'Al-Lā Madhhabiyya' have been presented as part of the main text. The preview has been excerpted by the publisher from different pages in the original book with reference to the page numbers made in the footnotes.

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Publisher's Foreword

This is a preview of the forthcoming English translation of Shaykh Muḥammad Sa'īd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī's groundbreaking work, *al-lā madhhabīyya akhṭaru bid'atin tuhaddidu al-sharī'at al-islāmīyya*. This work was originally written in 1969 as a refutation of Muḥammad Sulṭān al-Ma'ṣūmī al-Khajnadī al-Makki's work "Are Muslims obligated to follow one of the Four Madhhabs?" which was translated into English and published as "The Blind Following of Madhhabs." In the later editions of this book Shaykh al-Būṭī included further debates he had with *Lā Madhhabī* scholars and counter-replies to some of their supposed 'refutations'.

In 1995, Shaykh Nuh Ha Mim Keller translated an excerpt from *al-Lā Madhhabīyya* which was titled, 'Why Does One Have to Follow a Madhhab? Debate Between Muhammad Sa'īd al-Buti and a Leading Salafi Teacher.' This article was published on the internet ² and eventually reached the staff of 'Salafi Publications.' In response, they attempted to refute it, describing the content of their efforts as "Numerous refutations against al-Buti who tries, by cleverly devised arguments, to nullify the way of the Salaf, claiming that Salafīyyah ³ was only a short and historical period of time." The two articles they produced were released on-line in 1999 having been excerpted from the book, *al-ta'aṣṣub al-madhhabīyya hiya al-bid'ah*, which was written in response to Shaykh al-Būṭī's *al-Lā Madhhabīyya*.

In this preview from *al-Lā Madhhabīyya* we intend to focus specifically on the debate with Shaykh Muḥammad Nāṣiruddīn al-Albānī which 'Salafi publications' referred to as '*Imam al-Albani's Subjugation of al-Buti.*' ⁴ This was further described in their article as "A summarised transcript of a meeting that took place between Imaam al-Albani and al-Buti and in which al-Buti was left with nowhere to turn. Includes a discussion of taqlid, madhhabs etc." Unfortunately, nine years on, a response in English remained lacking, and many may have been misled into believing a false outcome of the debate which had occurred. What had been presented by 'Salafi Publications' was, of course, not the complete story. After *al-ta'aṣṣub al-madhhabīyya hiya al-bid'ah* was released and false rumors began to spread, Shaykh al-Buti published a second edition of his book in which he himself responded to these new developments. This was, in fact, as early as 1970, many years before the articles of 'Salafi Publications' were even written!

Our preview at hand is a compilation of only some of the replies by Shaykh al-Buti found in the latest edition of his book which is soon to be released in its entirety in English. We pray that this brief presentation will, inshā' Allāh, clarify some of the misconceptions brought forth by those who sought to distort and deceive. And all success is from Allah!

² <http://www.masud.co.uk/ISLAM/nuh/buti.htm>

³ 'Salafi Publications' is here referring to another book by Shaykh al-Būṭī, *al-salafīyya marḥalatun zamanīyyatun mubārakatun, lā madhhab islāmī*. Its translation is also forthcoming at www.sunnipubs.com. However, neither of the two 'numerous refutations' are actually in refutation of this book.

⁴ <http://www.salafipublications.com/sps/sp.cfm?subsecID=NDV06&articleID=NDV060001&pfriend=>

THE DEBATE WITH SHAYKH AL-ALBĀNĪ

Introduction to the Debate

All that can be said is that Shaykh Nāṣiruddīn al-Albānī expressed his desire for a meeting in order for him to present his views in regards to this book of mine. We actually met, and I listened to his comments and views, which can be summarized into two points:

(1) The first was pertaining to the title of the book, *Abandoning the Madhhabs is the Most Dangerous Bid'ah Threatening the Islamic Sharī'ah*. He thought the book did not contain any substance justifying this dangerous title.

(2) His second point was that I misunderstood the message al-Khajnadī, the author of the *Karrās*,⁵ meant to convey, and I went ahead and wrote this book as a rebuttal of his message. In the view of Shaykh Nāṣir, he [al-Khajnadī] did not deny the validity of the four Madhhabs and their necessity, nor did he condemn adhering to them by those who are incapable of *ijtihād*. What he did was condemn the bigotry of those who favored them at the expense of the evidence they understood and comprehended. This, according to him, was a common denominator between al-Khajnadī and myself, and that there was no need, on my part, to instigate this much rebellion against him!

The following is a summary of the comments he presented in a session between us that lasted for about three hours.

⁵ *Karrās* means Pamphlet, referring to Shaykh al-Khajnadī's book.

Shaykh al-Albānī's First Point *The Title 'al-Lā Madhhabiyya'*

In regards to the first point he presented, I told him that the book was true to its title in every respect. What I intended to clarify as a priority in my book was that the Muslims who have no means of relying directly on the Qur'ān and Sunnah cannot help but follow an Imām, whether they choose to adhere to him or switch to some other Imām, a fact that had been shown to be true during the times of the Companions and those who came after them. There were those among the Companions who did not feel satisfied with a *fatwā* from anyone else other than Ibn 'Abbās, so they did not seek an answer from anyone else. No author indicated that any of the Companions had frowned upon such an adherence.

Furthermore, the people of Iraq spent a long time adhering to the Madhhab of 'Abdullāh bin Mas'ūd represented by him or his disciples after him. No scholar prohibited adhering to his Madhhab. The people of the Hijāz spent a long time as well adhering to the Madhhab represented by 'Abdullāh bin 'Umar, his disciples and companions. No scholar prohibited adhering to their Madhhab. 'Aṭā' bin Abī Rabāḥ and Mujāhid were distinguished in Mecca for *fatwā*. The Caliph's caller would tell people not to seek *fatwās* from anyone other than those two Imāms. The people of Mecca spent a considerable amount of time adhering to the Madhhabs of those two Imāms. No scholar opposed the Caliph in that. No one prohibited the Caliph or anyone else from adhering to a specific Imām.

Having said all of that, does it not follow that calling for the unlawfulness of adhering to a specific Imām is a baseless *bid'ah* (innovation) unsanctioned by Allah? Is *lā madhhabiyya* anything else other than that? ⁶

A Terminological Discussion

We explain this point further by saying that *madhhabiyya* means the *taqlīd* exercised by a layman, or whoever has not attained the rank of *ijtihād*, of a Madhhab of a *mujtahid* Imām whether he chooses to adhere to one *mujtahid* in particular or to keep switching from one to another. *Lā-madhhabiyya*, on the other hand, means when the layman, or whoever has not attained the rank of *ijtihād*, does not exercise *taqlīd* of any *mujtahid* Imām, whether it is of one in particular or more. This is how this term is defined in the language, used in legal nomenclature, and how people understand it. You refer to a person as being as a *ḥizbī* (partisan) if he follows a certain party, whether he chooses to stick to it or keeps changing from one party to another. A *lā-ḥizbī* (non-partisan) however, is one who does not belong to any party whatsoever.

Nonetheless, Shaykh Nāṣir says that “this interpretation is different from what every Muslim nowadays understands.” (*Description of the Prophet's Prayer*, p. 232). I don't know why this man is under the illusion that he is the exemplary model of truth for every Muslim, and that what he understands out of something, everyone should understand the same way, and what he does not understand, everyone should turn away from! Since he did not understand the meaning of the terms *madhhabiyya* and *lā madhhabiyya*, which I explained during our debate, every Muslim should line up behind his ignorance, and turn away from this intended meaning! He further argues that through this definition, I destroy everything I have built in my book. According to him, his definition necessitates saying that all people are then

⁶ *Al-Lā Madhhabiyya: Abandoning the Madhhabs is the most dangerous Bid'ah Threatening the Islamic Sharī'ah*, p.18-20 'Introduction to the Second Edition.'

madhhabīs in which case I am talking about something non-existent. It would be quite easy to consider all followers of Salafism as *madhhabīs* according to this interpretation, which Shaykh Nāṣir has never imagined to be case with the meaning of *madhhabiyya*. This means that they do not cease to imitate one of the *mujtahid* Imāms whose opinions have been verifiably relayed to us. This is so whether they choose to stick to that Imām or to keep switching from one to the other. Otherwise, there would have been no need for me to publish this book in the first place.

Unfortunately, Shaykh Nāṣir’s position is inconsistent with reality. None of those whom we are trying to guide back to the straight path of truth, accept following any of the four Imāms, and all allege that they rely directly on the Qur’ān and Sunnah. We have seen those semi-illiterates among them who categorically refuse to accept the *fatwās* of the four Imāms. We point out to them the evidence and the Ḥadīth their *fatwā* is based on, the strength of it, its validity, its chain of transmission, and who transmitted it. We talk to them as though they were some kind of experts and researchers in those matters, yet they either try to correct the Madhhab of the Imām or dismiss it altogether as ridiculous and faulty! These people are not from Mars or any other extraterrestrial planet. They are people like you and me, but from which every town, village, or neighborhood suffers. There are so many of them to make people like Shaykh Nāṣir proud. What does this al-Khajnadī mean – whom he refers to as a scholar, and whose *Karrās* he defends and labels as useful – when he says:

Ijtihād is easy and requires no more than a few books such as *al-Muwatta’*, the two *Saḥīḥs*, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, and the collections of al-Tirmidhī and al-Nasā’ī. Such books are easy to get, so if any of your brothers get them before you do, you should know that you are left with no excuse.

Or when he says:

If there were many versions of the transmission of the Prophet’s [Ḥadīths] in certain issues, and one cannot ascertain which one is confirmed and which is not, then one is to use all versions, at times using one version, and at other times using another.

Do you find in these words anything relevant to the definition of *madhhabiyya* we have established, and which Shaykh Nāṣir has objected to, claiming that this necessitates saying that everybody then is a *madhhabī*? Did he [i.e. al-Khajnadī] not block their access to any of the Imāms or their Madhhabs by placing the *Saḥīḥs*, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, and the collections of al-Tirmidhī and al-Nasā’ī in front of them? He says these books are well known and easy to get, “so if any of your brothers get them before you do, you should know that you are left with no excuse.” Meaning that Muslims should stop arguing because there is no need to follow any Madhhab altogether, neither through adhering one of them, nor otherwise. Shaykh Nāṣir is probably aware of the fact that all Imāms, including Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn al-Qayyim, and al-Shawkānī have a consensus over the fact that getting these books do not render one a *mujtahid*, nor can one rely on them solely to deduce rulings. Rather, one has to be qualified in terms of scholarly faculty which promotes him to the level of *ijtihād*, in sharp contrast to what al-Khajnadī says in his *Karrās*, which Shaykh Nāṣir refers to as ‘very useful’. Hence, my treatise in this book suffers nothing of the destruction Shaykh Nāṣir spoke of. Rather, there is a need for it, unfortunately, although I wish there was not such a need. ⁷

⁷ *Al-Lā Madhhabiyya: Abandoning the Madhhabs is the most dangerous Bid‘ah Threatening the Islamic Sharī‘ah*, footnote on p.20-23 ‘Introduction to the Second Edition’.

Shaykh al-Albānī's Second Point *The Statements of Shaykh al-Khajnadī*

As for his second point, it pertains to his interpretation of the statements [of al-Khajnadī] which contain clear mistakes and deviation from the truth.

When al-Khajnadī said, “Madhhabs are no more than the opinions of scholars and their understanding of some of the issues, and such opinions are not made obligatory by Allah ﷻ or His Prophet ﷺ for anyone to follow,” Shaykh Nāṣir thought that the author had addressed specifically those who possessed the qualification to carry out *ijtihād* on their own. Those are the ones, according to him, that were referred to here.

And his saying that,

Ijtihād is easy and requires no more than a few books such as *al-Muwattaʿa*, the two *Saḥīḥs*, *Sunan Abū Dāwūd*, and the collections of al-Tirmidhī and al-Nasāʾī. Such books are easy to get, so if any of your brothers get them before you do, you should know that you are left with no excuse.

According to Shaykh Nāṣir this refers to those who attained the level of *ijtihād* and could, on their own, deduce rulings from the primary texts. This, according to him, is conspicuous and by no means misleading. Therefore, it does not warrant any comment or response.

And his saying that, “When there is a text from the Qurʾān, the Sunnah, or the sayings of the Companions, one should not turn away from it, and take the positions of scholars.” According to Shaykh Nāṣir, this refers to someone with some knowledge and insight into Sharīʿah, its rulings, and interpretations.

Thus, all these texts, and others similar to them, in al-Khajnadī's *Karrās*, according to Shaykh Nāṣir, are interpreted in accordance with the truth I presented, and that one is supposed to understand his words in the light of the restrictions and specifications implied in various parts of his *Karrās*. I told Shaykh Nāṣir that no scholar goes about implying such restrictions, and yet makes the type of generalizations as he did at the same time. Not everybody would understand al-Khajnadī's statements the same way he, Shaykh Nāṣir, did. His answer to that was that al-Khajnadī was from Bukhārā, a non-Arab who was incapable of expressing himself as clearly as an Arab would. He added that the man has now left to the mercy of Allah [i.e. passed away], and that we should take his words to be well-meaning and think well of him as much as we could since he is a Muslim after all.

Misunderstanding his Words

Shaykh Nāṣir believes there is a sentence in this *Karrās* which rectifies misconceptions throughout all the paragraphs and texts which we cited from the *Karrās*. He believes this sentence is what al-Khajnadī says (on page 29):

Mind you, taking the positions of Imāms and their analogies is tantamount to *tayammum* (the license to perform ablution using earth when water is not accessible). When there is a text from the Qurʾān, the Sunnah, or the sayings of the Companions, one should not turn away from it, and take the positions of scholars.

This is what Shaykh Nāṣir said during our debate. We pondered at this statement to which Shaykh Nāṣir drew our attention, only to find that it makes matters worse, and adds insult to injury, as they say.

So, every time a Muslim encounters a text from the Qur’ān or the Sunnah, he is to adhere to it, and it would be unlawful for him to turn to the *ijtihād* of the Imāms! What an odd statement to make! How can there be anything correct about it? Have we not written this book for the main purpose of countering such outlandish remarks?

Place the two *Saḥīḥs* of Bukhārī and Muslim in front of Muslim laymen today, and tell them to understand the rulings of their religion from the texts found therein, and be prepared for the ignorance, the confusion, and the tampering with the religion. Is this what the scholar al-Khajnadī, and the defender of his oddities Shaykh Nāṣir want?

Shaykh Ibn al-Qayyim, as well as the majority of the scholars and Imāms said:

Having access to books on Sunnah alone does not render a *fatwā* valid. One should attain the ability to deduce, and should be qualified to research and consider. Short of this qualification, one should follow what Allah has said: “Ask the people of the Reminder if you know not” [Qur’ān 16:43].

But Shaykh al-Khajnadī, together with Shaykh Nāṣir, says: ‘Whenever one encounters a text from the Qur’ān, the Sunnah, or the sayings of the Companions, one is commanded to take it, rather than take the position of the scholars instead!’ Whom are we to believe? The consensus of scholars such as Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn al-Qayyim, etc., or the unique positions of al-Khajnadī and Shaykh Nāṣir in this ‘useful’ *Karrās* of theirs? Once again, consider what al-Khajnadī said; you will be surprised by the underlying ignorance in it. He is under the illusion that Imāms based their *ijtihād*, which Muslims justifiably follow, on their own convictions and ideas which bear no connection to the texts of the Qur’ān and the Sunnah. Accordingly, this is what makes people justified in following them, and this is the inescapable *tayammum*. The *ijtihād* of the Imāms, however, cannot be valid unless they are based on the primary texts. Any Imām who exercises *ijtihād* without basing it on the Qur’ān and the Sunnah cannot be justifiably followed by Muslims. In his case his *ijtihād* is neither the water nor the *tayammum*.

Imām al-Shāfi‘ī said in his book *al-Risāla*:

No one after the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was allowed to base anything on anything before him or on anything else other than the Qur’ān, the Sunnah, consensus, and the sayings of the Companions, and what can be referred to as analogy. Furthermore, no one is to exercise analogy unless he has the qualification to do so. This qualification assumes the knowledge of the rulings in the Book of Allah in areas such as: obligations, manners, abrogative and abrogated rules, generalizations, and specifications, as well as guidance in it.

So you can see that the most profound type of *ijtihād* is analogy (*qiyās*) which cannot be valid unless it is based on the Qur’ān, the Sunnah, or the sayings of the Companions. The sayings of Companions are, in fact, considered Sunnah except for some which may allow room for opinions. He is also under the illusion that ignorance in *shar‘ī* rulings is a result of the absence of a text on that ruling. If, however, there is a text pertaining to it in the Qur’ān or the Sunnah, then the causes of ignorance disappear, and people indiscriminately should be able to understand the *shar‘ī* rulings from that text, thereby abolishing the need to follow the

Imāms. Does a saying like that come from anyone who knows the meanings of texts, and the methods of deducing rules from them? An agreement between buyer and seller on a sales transaction is not something that is non-existent for any researcher who is looking for texts on it in the Qur’ān and the Sunnah. Yet, if the researcher is not qualified for *ijtihād*, deduction, and their rules, he will not be able to ascertain the validity of such contracts. Also, land taken by Muslims as the spoils of war is an issue that does not lack any clear texts in the Qur’ān and the Sunnah, yet I challenge the most capable scholar of those *lā madhhabīs* if he does not feel dizzy trying to extract rulings from these texts in this regard.

There are many issues like that in *fiqh*. So how can al-Khajnadī say: “...When there is a text from the Qur’ān, the Sunnah, or the sayings of the Companions, one should not turn away from it, and take the positions of scholars.” And what need remains for any *tayammum* after that? Shaykh Nāṣir told us that al-Khajnadī’s words are based on the implied assumption that a researcher needs to attain a capability enabling him to deduce from the text. When we said that he made a generalization and did not specify that, Shaykh Nāṣir insisted that the writer meant that specifically.

We have the excuse not to accept any kind of specificity for this generalization because no Arab grammarian, when he spoke of generalizations, ever said that among such generalizations are specificities Shaykh Nāṣir can attribute to what others say.⁸

Excusing his Expressions

Shaykh Nāṣir gives the excuse on behalf of al-Khajnadī, that what he meant was opposite to what we said, based on the fact that al-Khajnadī was a non-Arab from Bukhārā whose native language wasn’t Arabic.⁹ He prays for him, wishing him reward for having been able to write what he had written, and invites us to think well [of him], and not be suspicious of what Muslims say.

What is strange here is to assume there is any connection between having shoddiness in an expression or text to the point that it affects the intended meaning in those texts, giving almost the opposite of what the writer truly means. We looked everywhere in al-Khajnadī’s book, and could not find any other traces of such shoddiness indicating that he was non-Arab. Would Shaykh Nāṣir, in the same way, find an excuse for the some of the exuberant expressions of the non-Arab Ṣūfīs based on the fact that they were misinterpreted because they had shoddiness in Arabic? Would he follow the same principle he is inviting us to adopt when it comes to having good thoughts, and banishing suspicion toward what Muslims write or say?¹⁰

⁸ *Al-Lā Madhhabiyya: Abandoning the Madhhabs is the most dangerous Bid’ah Threatening the Islamic Sharī’ah*, footnote on p.37-40 ‘Summary of what was discussed in the *Karrās*.’

⁹ We could not help but notice that not only Shaykh al-Khajnadī, but also the 2 debaters and others present at the debate were not of Arab origin. Yet, unlike Shaykh al-Khajnadī, they do not seem to be in need of such excuses.

¹⁰ *Al-Lā Madhhabiyya: Abandoning the Madhhabs is the most dangerous Bid’ah Threatening the Islamic Sharī’ah*, footnote on p.50-51 ‘The New Claim made in the *Karrās*: its Evidences and Rebuttal.’

In Response to his Request

This was a summary of the encounter we had that lasted for about three hours, and which was recorded. He later sent me a message suggesting that we meet again.¹¹ This is what I had to say to him in response:

Regarding your suggestion that we meet again, I noticed in our last encounter that none of us benefited from that meeting. You did not change your position in regards to al-Khajnadī's innocence, and I was not satisfied with the way you went about interpreting his words either. In my opinion, if you had been willing to accept interpreting the words of Shaykhs such as Muḥiyuddīn bin 'Arabī, and give him one fourth of the interpretation you were willing to give to al-Khajnadī, you would not have declared him to be a sinful disbeliever. In any case, your discussion last time centered around defending al-Khajnadī and showing that his intentions were consistent with the points I presented in my book. It is just that I misinterpreted his words, and missed the true meanings intended by him. Whether al-Khajnadī is who you say he is, or who I say he is, it would be my pleasure to find out that you personally do not agree with what I took al-Khajnadī's words to mean. I would be pleased if you were to publish a correction for the misconceptions, and an explanation for what al-Khajnadī had written. It would be nice to include the homage you said you owed to the four Imāms, and the necessity of adherence to them in the case of those who have not attained the level of ijtihād. As for meeting again, I see no point in doing that. I came out of the first encounter feeling that I had wasted three hours which I could have otherwise invested in something useful. Please accept my sincere regards.¹²

¹¹ Perhaps we should wonder why someone who has supposedly subjugated his opponent, and has left him nowhere to run, would be the one to request a second debate.

¹² *Al-Lā Madhhabiyya: Abandoning the Madhhabs is the most dangerous Bid'ah Threatening the Islamic Sharī'ah*, p.13-27 'Introduction to the Second Edition.'

ADDITIONAL NOTES TO THE DEBATE

Praying Behind a Follower of another Madhhab

The scholars of early times had a consensus concerning the validity of the prayer of a Shāfi'ī behind a Ḥanafī and vice versa. It is known that in this context, prayer is an absolute term. So it means a prayer in which the person praying is not aware of anything that should spoil the prayer of the Imām leading the prayer according to his Madhhab. This absoluteness does not include the disagreement among scholars, for example, in the case of a Shāfi'ī praying behind a Ḥanafī who has touched his wife. Such a scenario does not go into the specific parts of the whole, so it is not included in this absoluteness. Therefore, there should not be anything barring a Shāfi'ī from praying behind a Ḥanafī. This is similar to saying: There is a consensus that prayer is valid in an orchard. So, when prayer is not valid in a usurped (or unlawfully seized) orchard, this should not mean that prayer is absolutely invalid in any orchard. This is clearly understood by anyone who studied the absolute and the restrictive in any of the books of *uṣūl*.

However, it was in vain that we tried to get Shaykh Nāṣir to understand this meaning. During the discussion we had, he insisted on repeating: 'What is an absolute remains so until something makes it restrictive', as though he was saying: 'A generalization is general until something makes it specific,' without realizing the wide difference in their meanings! Therefore, according to him, I was wrong in saying that the consensus of Imāms was absolute ... etc. There was disagreement among them in regard to a person praying behind an Imām who does something that spoils the prayer according to his own Madhhab. Shaykh Nāṣir considered my position in regards to this disagreement among scholars, and my support of it, as a dangerous restriction against absolute consensus. He considered it a restriction that rendered everything I said meaningless, and thought I was one of those who call for having many *miḥrābs*, and prayer groups in mosques, even though, according to him, I pretended to condemn that, and claimed I was a moderate.

He said in his book, *Description of the Prophet's Prayer* (p. 231): "The brother, Dr. Būṭī, claimed in his book – *al-lā madhhabiyya* – that there is consensus that the prayer of a Ḥanafī behind a Shāfi'ī is valid." When I told him about the absolute invalidity of this claim, imagine, he answered: "This is contingent on the fact that the Imām's (who is of a different Madhhab than his) prayer needs to be valid according to his own Madhhab." In that he destroyed all the moderation he had pretended he had. So, Shaykh Nāṣir, sees no moderation at all unless we say that a person's prayer behind an Imām different from his Madhhab is valid regardless of whether the Imām commits something that is invalid in the person's Madhhab or not, and whether or not that person is aware of that violation.

We ask Shaykh Nāṣir the following question: What would he do if he prayed behind an Imām who he knew had a bottle of alcohol in his pocket, and according to Shaykh Nāṣir's *ijtihād* alcohol was an impurity? Would he be moderate enough, and continue praying behind such an Imām, or would he give up his moderation, withdraw to another corner in the mosque, and form a new group? We know with certainty that he would refuse to attend the funeral of many dead righteous Muslims because, they fell into *kufr* or *shrik* according to his understanding. It is not a question of being led, neither is it a question of following. Would he allow himself to be led in prayer by someone who, according to his own *ijtihād*, has committed a violation?

I am not interpolating anything when I report the Imāms' consensus about the validity of the prayer of Muslims behind one another irrespective of the differences in their Madhhabs. It

does not behoove me in a scholarly discussion to pretend something I do not believe in although he claimed I did. My words are clear in the matter. Anyone with knowledge in the composition and the principles of *uṣūl al-fiqh* is aware of that. Moderation is what our *fuqahā'* have all along said in regards to the validity of Muslims' prayer behind one another irrespective of their differing Madhhabs as long as the one being led in prayer does not know of any violation for certain the Imām has committed according to the Madhhab of the person being led in prayer. If the person being led becomes aware for certain of any violation by the Imām, then the correct thing to assume is the invalidity of the prayer. This is so because the validity of prayer or the lack thereof is according to the belief of the person being led rather than according to the belief of the Imām leading the prayer.

Suppose that Shaykh Nāṣir was led in prayer by an Imām who did not read the *basmallāh* (In the name of Allah, Most Merciful, Most Gracious) before reading al-Fātiḥa and that the *basmallāh*, according to Shaykh Nāṣir's *ijtihād*, was part of al-Fātiḥa. In this case, we would not consider Shaykh Nāṣir to be immoderate in not allowing himself to be led in that prayer. What we truly condemn, and don't consider to be moderation, is when some people shy away altogether from praying behind someone who is not of their Madhhab. In other words, they shy away from prayer as a whole behind such a person. None of our respectable *fuqahā'* of olden times, during whose time consensus was established, has ever taken such a position characterized by the abominable bigotry Shaykh Nāṣir has accused them of in his book. It would have been nice if he were to mention the names of such *fuqahā'* and where in their books or biographies they have ever said something like that.¹³

¹³ *Al-Lā Madhhabiyya: Abandoning the Madhhabs is the most dangerous Bid'ah Threatening the Islamic Sharī'ah*, footnote on p.44-47 'Summary of what was discussed in the *Karrās*.'

The Madhhab of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ

We asked Shaykh Nāṣir about al-Khajnadī's words declaring the Madhhabs of the four Imāms to be competing with what he calls the Madhhab of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. He said, when condemning these Madhhabs: "The true Madhhab that is the duty of every Muslim to follow is that of our Master Muḥammad ﷺ." Shaykh Nāṣir said that al-Khajnadī was right in saying that because not all the Madhhabs are correct. It is possible for the Imāms to make mistakes in their *ijtihāds*, whereas what the Prophet ﷺ said is immune from mistakes. We told him that the outcome of *ijtihād* of Imāms is considered from the *dīn* (religion), be it wrong or right, because in either case it is rewarded, and in either case it is considered the duty of a Muslim to follow as long as the mistake has been inadvertent. The man insisted that the *ijtihād* of a *mujtahid* is not *dīn* so long as it does not conform to the truth that was intended by Allah Almighty. One of those present, Shaykh Aḥmad Ra'fat Akbāzli asked him:

Shaykh Akbāzli: "Is *ijtihād dīn* or is it not?"

Shaykh Nāṣir: "Yes, it is *dīn*"

Shaykh Akbāzli: "Then, how can it be *dīn*, but its outcome cannot be *dīn*?"

Shaykh Nāṣir: "You want me to go against what most scholars agree on that the inadvertent implications of a Madhhab are not part of that Madhhab. A leader of a Madhhab may express the fact that *ijtihād* is part of *dīn*, but its inadvertent implications are not part of *dīn*."

Here, I cannot help but explain the strange illusion Shaykh Nāṣir is under when he says this famous rule: 'The inadvertent implications of a Madhhab are not part of that Madhhab.' I have to explain what it means first, according to those who said it. Scholars have maintained the position that if an Imām is known for a Madhhab, and his Madhhab inadvertently necessitates or implies something he did not intend or express, then that necessity is not part of his Madhhab. An example of that is the position taken by the Mu'tazila that things are intrinsically good or bad and that the rational mind alone can realize that. Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jamā'ah, however, saw that this Madhhab necessitates saying that things are good or bad in terms of their nature rather than in terms of their creation [i.e. That Allah ﷻ created it as such]; otherwise, one would assume that Allah's creation is deficient in which case it would be considered disbelief by consensus. However, we do not take this inadvertent necessity against the Mu'tazila, and we do not attribute to them except what they said in terms of things being intrinsically good or bad simply because this necessity might have escaped their attention, or they might have considered it to be invalid. However, if we were to meet with them, and they confirmed this necessity then it does become part of their Madhhab. Shaykh Nāṣir, however, is under the illusion that a man may follow a Madhhab without having to believe in its necessary implications although he may have explicitly confirmed such implications. That is why it is acceptable, in his view, to accept the implication and link between *ijtihād* being *dīn* and its outcome being *dīn*, while at the same time believing that if the outcome of such *ijtihād* is not correct in interpreting what Allah Almighty has revealed then it is not part of the *dīn*. What is more humorous is that he used the rule (The inadvertent necessities of a Madhhab are not part of that Madhhab) to back his position. At any rate, the man did finally admit that making a mistake in *ijtihād* is part of *dīn* as long as the mistake was inadvertent, and as long as the *mujtahid* did not insist on that mistake once he became aware of it. We asked him why is it that al-Khajnadī says the four Madhhabs are incorrect, although none of their Imāms persisted in what he found to be a mistake. Then he shifted his position and started saying

that what al-Khajnadi meant was not the Madhhabs themselves but the followers of those Madhhabs! For about a quarter of an hour he was saying that not all the positions of Imāms were correct because of mistakes they are not immune of making in their *ijtihāds*. Therefore, not all their positions are part of *dīn*. When he had to admit that they were part of *dīn*, and he realized that would mean al-Khajnadi's words became nonsense, he changed his position and started saying that what the man (al-Khajnadi) meant was not the opinions of Imāms themselves, but the followers who become aware of the mistake of their Imām, and yet persist in following him. All of that was for the sake of keeping al-Khajnadi in the right, maintaining his stature as a scholar, and making sure that his writings continue to be useful. You tell me, what do you call this? Is this not bigotry in its ugliest form? ¹⁴

¹⁴ *Al-Lā Madhhabiyya: Abandoning the Madhhabs is the most dangerous Bid'ah Threatening the Islamic Sharī'ah*, footnote on p.55-57 'The New Claim made in the *Karrās*: its Evidences and Rebuttal.'

The Madhhab of the Companions ﷺ

Does all that we mention not indicate that some of the Companions, Successors, and those who came even after them followed a specific Imām or Madhhab? Does it not indicate that adhering to a specific Madhhab is lawful and nothing barring it has been proven? The fact that the Companions and their followers did themselves adhere to specific Madhhabs proves the lawfulness rather than the unlawfulness of doing so. Is it not a *bid'ah*, after saying all of that, to declare adherence to a specific Madhhab or Imām unlawful? We asked Shaykh Nāṣir if he read this discussion, and he answered: “Yes, Allah Willing”. We do not know if this ‘Allah Willing’ was to comment or for the mere sake of blessings. He read the discussion ‘Allah Willing’, but the exclusiveness given to ‘Aṭā’ bin Abī Rabāḥ and Mujāhid’s *fatwās* in Mecca escaped his attention. This exclusivity indicates there was a consensus in terms of the legality of adhering to a specific Imām, and that declaring such adherence to be unlawful would be a *bid'ah*, and a contradiction to what Allah ﷻ has permitted. He read the discussion ‘Allah Willing’ but did not find in the adherence of the people in Iraq to the Madhhab of Opinion represented by Abdullāh bin Mas‘ūd, and his students after him, any evidence for the unlawfulness of such adherence, and the impermissibility to declare it unlawful. Nor did he find any evidence for the validity of this adherence in the case of the people of Ḥijāz and their adherence to the Madhhab of Abdullāh bin ‘Amr, his students, and his companions after him. He read the discussion but did not find any support for the absolute consensus in regards to the millions of people adhering to the four Madhhabs of the Imāms, which indicates that such adherence by a Muslim is neither prohibited, nor discouraged, nor was it a *bid'ah*. It is obvious that, after pretending to ignore all these evidences, and calling for the unlawfulness of adherence to a specific Madhhab, is an unfounded *bid'ah*. Based on that, we can say that *lā madhhabiyya* is the most dangerous *bid'ah* threatening the Islamic Sharī‘ah, especially in our times, when many people have been victims to their very own selfish desires.¹⁵

¹⁵ *Al-Lā Madhhabiyya: Abandoning the Madhhabs is the most dangerous Bid'ah Threatening the Islamic Sharī‘ah*, footnote on p.102-103 ‘Necessity of Taqlīd: The validity and evidence for adhering to a specific Madhhab.’

THE AFTERMATH OF THE DEBATE

False Rumors about Shaykh Mullā Ramaḍān al-Būṭī

Furthermore, some of the *lā Madhhabī* callers and some of their followers spread false rumors about the discussion I had with Shaykh Nāṣir, none of which warrants any comments from my part. After all, the efforts I have exerted in this respect were for the service of Islamic Sharī'ah, and for them I seek no rewards from anyone other than Allah ﷻ. Let those people say whatever they want to say after that.

What really mattered to me out of all the lies those people unleashed, was to give the reader the fact about something, namely their false claim that my father, may Allah protect him,¹⁶ who participated in parts of the debate, approved of Shaykh Nāṣir's views, and was opposed to mine. I could not keep silent about such rumor because if I did, it would be used by them to try and attract more people to their crooked ways. They would resort to saying that "the pious scholar of Damascus, Shaykh Mullā al-Būṭī," agreed with them.

To this end, my father asked me to clarify to the reader that this is a baseless lie, and that the truth is quite contrary to their lies, and to point out that the recording of the debate is the best evidence to that. The reader will find my father's statement signed by him right after this introduction.¹⁷

¹⁶ Mullā Ramaḍān al-Būṭī passed away several years ago, may Allah have mercy upon him.

¹⁷ *Al-Lā Madhhabiyya: Abandoning the Madhhabs is the most dangerous Bid'ah Threatening the Islamic Sharī'ah*, p.26-27 'Introduction to the Second Edition.'

Shaykh Mullā Ramaḍān's Statement

I, the father of Muḥammad Sa'īd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī, say that anyone who claims I support the words of Shaykh Nāṣir, knows nothing about methodology, research or debating.

How can my words be of any support to his, when I pointed out his ignorance regarding the absolute evidence? In other words, if something is absolute, then it covers every part of the individual. Many *fuqahā'* (jurists) have maintained that if a man attaches the contingency of the divorce of his wife according to her prayer, and her prayer was not *shar'ī* (lawful), then she is not divorced because her prayer cannot be referred to as a prayer; yet he believed me in this, and agreed to it. Then I told him that this book, '*al-lā Madhhabīyya*', was intended for scholars and not commoners, meaning that although you may question what the author intends to say in this book, you will ultimately find the answers in the scholarly terminology used therein rather than find it explicitly expressed by the author.

Then again, how would I support someone who says that the Madhhabs of the four Imāms are not part of religion? (This is in spite of the fact that I clarified for him that the Prophet ﷺ confirmed the legitimacy of *ijtihād*, and that the prayer of a *mujtahid* is right even if it was wrong, and that the Prophet's ﷺ confirmation thereof is part of religion). But according to him, such a prayer is wrong, and yet he does not feel that he is necessarily saying that the Prophet ﷺ confirmed a wrongful deed. Far from it! This should suffice to show that he is a victim of his own capriciousness, and unaware of the havoc he wreaked against himself. His recording is the best evidence. ¹⁸

Mullā Ramaḍān



¹⁸ *Al-Lā Madhhabīyya: Abandoning the Madhhabs is the most dangerous Bid'ah Threatening the Islamic Sharī'ah*, p.32 'My Father's Statement.'