

## Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah and the Foundational Principles of the Khārijite Renegades (D): Attachment to the Qur’ān and Rejecting the Sunnah

In the various works of Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah (728H) is a very insightful, detailed and elaborate analysis of the Khārijite doctrine and the underlying reasons for its appearance. One of the traits of the Khārijites is that they are attached primarily to the Qur’ān in the development of their doctrine. The reason for this is that it allows them to interpret the Qur’ān through their own opinions without recourse to the Sunnah.

Ibn Taymiyyah explains this: “When the foundation of innovations is known, then the foundation of the statement of the Khārijites is that they expel [from Islām] on account of sins, they believe to be a sin what is not a sin and they hold that the Book is to be followed but not the Sunnah which [appears to them to] oppose what is apparent [to them] from the Book, even it was related by large-scale successive transmission. They excommunicate whoever opposes them and make lawful with respect to him on account of his [alleged] apostacy what they do not make lawful with respect to an original disbeliever, just as the Prophet (ﷺ) said about them: ‘They slaughter the people of Islām and leave alone the polytheists’. Thus, they expelled ‘Uthmān, ‘Alī and their respective parties from Islām, likewise they expelled from Islām those who participated in Şiffīn – the two parties [who

engaged in the battle] – on account of [what has been mentioned] of vile statements [in doctrine].”<sup>1</sup>

**Comment:** In this statement are numerous affairs: **1.** That the Khārijites treat to be a sin what is not a sin. Modern-day Khārijite pseudo-scholars wallowing in ignorance and desires such as Abū Muḥammad al-Maqdisī treat matters permitted in the Sharīʿah such as legislation to regulate affairs related to public interest and safety, such as customs, border controls, road regulations and so on, to be disbelief, when they are in fact related to matters of broad public interest (al-maṣlahah al-mursalah). **2.** The Khārijites follow the Book but not that from the Sunnah which opposes what they have misunderstood from the Qurʾān. For example, they wrongly misinterpret verses to imply that a major sinner becomes a disbeliever and they neglect the Sunnah wherein a habitual drinker in the time of the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) – though reprimanded and punished – was declared as being one who loves Allāh and His Messenger. So this and many other examples from the Sunnah are neglected by them because they clash with their faulty understanding. This is the same with the issue of ruling by other than Allāh’s law and the verses in Sūrah al-Mā’idah which form the basis of the doctrine of the Khārijites. The Sunnah makes clear the context of the revelation of these verses which in turn makes clear the nature of the disbelief intended in these verses and that they cannot be applied to this nation unrestrictedly, without tafṣīl. This Sunnah was understood and conveyed by the Companions to the rest of the ummah. The Khārijites oppose this and persist in applying the verses

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<sup>1</sup> Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā (3/355).

according to their exaggerated and erroneous opinions **3**. They make takfīr of anyone who opposes them in their doctrine and their judgements upon the rulers. This because the quintessential element of the religion is ḥākimiyyah, and anyone who does not agree with their judgements has not brought this quintessential element of Islām. Thus he remains in jāhiliyyah and is a disbelieving apostate for not having rejected the tāghūt. This is the sum of their knowledge and the basic inner workings of their pea-sized brains. **4**. They consider their opponents from the Muslims to be worse than original disbelievers and more worthy of fighting and killing. And this can be found explicitly in the statements, writings and verdicts of Khārijites such as Sayyid Imām, Abū Qatādah, Abū Muḥammad al-Maqdisī and other misguided, straying dogs.

Ibn Taymiyyah also wrote: “For the foundation of the innovation of the Khārijites is that they do not hold the [necessity] of obedience to the Messenger and of following him in what [appears to] oppose what is apparent [to them] from the Qur’ān, and this is abandonment of an obligation.”<sup>2</sup>

**Comment:** It is obligatory to follow the Messenger and to return back to his Sunnah. The Khārijites do not implement this obligation when the Sunnah clashes with what they have understood through their personal opinions from the Qur’ān. Whilst they may not verbally reject or deny the Sunnah and may make claim to follow and venerate the Sunnah, they do not follow it and submit to it in totality.

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<sup>2</sup> Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā (20/104)

Ibn Taymiyyah also wrote: “The Khārijites deemed it permissible for the Messenger himself to be unjust and to err with respect to His Sunnah, and they did not obligate obedience to him and following of him. Rather, they only believed him in what He conveyed of the Qur’ān besides what he legislated of the Sunnah which opposes – as they claim – the apparentness of the Qur’ān.”<sup>3</sup>

**Comment:** Whilst this may not be verbally expressed by many Khārijites today through the tongue of flesh (lisān al-maqāl), nevertheless, the tongue of state and condition (lisān al-hāl), meaning their actions and behaviour, suggest exactly what Ibn Taymiyyah notes about them. They believe in what the Messenger conveyed of the Qur’ān which they then interpret – in what relates to their core doctrines – upon their own desires and whims. And whatever clashes with what they have apparently understood from of the Qur’ān, they do not feel obliged to follow it, this is tantamount to saying that the Messenger can err with respect to the Sunnah. This is a very deep and insightful point from Ibn Taymiyyah (رحمته الله) and whilst overtly the Khārijite renegades might appear to follow the Sunnah, their behaviour and condition is actually saying something else: Our faulty interpretation of the Qur’ān is better and more guided than that from the Sunnah which opposes and clashes with what we have understood from the Qur’ān and since we are upon the truth and have actualised genuine, true faith as it was intended in the Qur’ān, those parts of the Sunnah are therefore erroneous and we are not obliged to follow them or be restricted by them. This

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<sup>3</sup> Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā (19/73).

means the Messenger must have erred with respect to them. Whilst no Khārijite will verbally say this, it is necessitated by his doctrine and behaviour.

To give an illustration:<sup>4</sup> In the ḥadīth of al-Miqdād bin ‘Amr al-Kindī (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ) who said: “O Messenger of Allāh, do you see that if I encountered a man amongst the non-Muslims who fought me, then struck and cut one of my hands with his sword, then [after I pursued him] sought protection from me behind a tree and then said: ‘I have submitted to Allāh’, that I should kill him O Messenger of Allāh, after I he said it?” The Messenger of Allāh (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: “Do not kill him.” Al-Miqdād said, “O Messenger of Allāh, he cut my hand and then said that after he cut it, should I kill him?” The Messenger of Allāh (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: “Do not kill him for he will be in the position you were in before you killed him and you will be in the position he was in before he said his word which he said.”<sup>5</sup>

Imām al-Shāfi‘ī explained that the blood of this person by virtue of expressing the word of faith would have become inviolable, it being prohibited to kill him, just as the believer was prior to killing this man. Similarly, had the believer killed this man, he would have become just like the man prior to his utterance of the word of faith, which is that his blood was not inviolable and not unlawful to kill him – without that turning the believer into a disbeliever of course. Further, that Allāh had made the blood of this person inviolable due to his manifestation of faith at time when he feared

<sup>4</sup> Refer to Rāyat al-Khawārij of Majdī bin Ḥamdī (1437), pp. 9-10.

<sup>5</sup> Related by al-Bukhārī (no. 4019) and Muslim (no. 59).

for his life and He did not permit acting upon what the situation would overwhelmingly make one believe, which is that this person did not accept Islām except out of saving himself from being killed.<sup>6</sup> This is just one of numerous texts which indicate this meaning. There is also the ḥadīth of Usāmah bin Zayd who actually killed a polytheist in a similar circumstance to the one alluded to in the ḥadīth of al-Miqdād, and likewise the ḥadīth of Ḥātib bin Abī Balta'ah who revealed the military secrets of the Messenger to the pagans of Quraysh. In all these situations, that which immediately comes to mind is that a person is not genuine and is simply using a screen to protect himself and his life and thus, should not be taken at face value. The Islāmic Sharī'ah has prohibited from acting upon what immediately comes to mind in such circumstances, as compelling as it might be, and has ordered with taking a person at face value in his expression of faith, and grants inviolability to him by virtue of the expression of faith.

On the other hand, the Khārijite hound does not feel obliged to abide by these mighty foundations of the Sunnah and sticks to the apparentness of the Qur'ān which he has understood with his faulty understanding and through which he is led to pass judgements of takfīr and killing upon whole villages, townships and societies, let alone rulers and individual subjects.

Abu 'Iyaad Amjad Rafiq ♦ kharijites.com ♦ @abuiyaadsp  
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<sup>6</sup> Refer to al-Umm of al-Shāfi'ī (1/259, 6/4, 6/157) and Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim of al-Nawawī (2/106).