

Do I have to choose a madhhab? And do I have to ascribe to Salafeeyyah?

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

## QUESTION

Please I would like to know if there is anything wrong with not subscribing to a *madhhab*. I learn from both the Salafees and Sunnees (i.e. I try to adhere to the Qur'aan and the Sunnah) but I don't like to claim either of the two because I fear that pride that might grow in me and cause me to avoid the truth if it comes from another source. In other words, I don't want to be like some people who follow a *madhhab* and don't want to change when the proof is against them. Please advise me.

**ANSWER** by Shaykh Muhammad 'Umar Baazmool (حفظه الله)<sup>1</sup>, instructor at Umm Al-Quraa University in Makkah

This question requires that we clarify some issues first. In the first part of the question, it seems the questioner is asking about blindly following *madhhabs*. Then, the questioner refers to the following of a general *manhaj*, one that includes the *madhhabs* of Fiqh and others, called the Salafee *manhaj*, or Sunnee (*manhaj*).

Then, he makes a distinction between a Salafee and a Sunnee, while the Salafee is the who who follows the Sunnah of the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم)<sup>2</sup>, the one he was upon as understood by the Salaf, may Allaah have Mercy on them. So every Salafee is a Sunnee, and every Sunnee is a Salafee most definitely, if we are using the word "Sunnee" with its proper meaning.

His statement in the question, "I learn from both the Salafees and Sunnees," seems to make a distinction between the Salafee Muslims and the Sunnees. It can be understood from this that the questioner does not understand that *Salafeeyyah* and *Sunniyyah* are the same thing, and that every Salafee is a Sunnee and every Sunnee is a Salafee...

[Someone interrupts, "Or it could be that they are learning from Sunnees, meaning the Soofees that claim they are Sunnees, saying, 'We are Ahlus-Sunnah...'" ]

...So there seems to be some confusion about these names... if it is the case that some Soofees are saying that they are the Sunnees while they are actually Soofees, then this is a big form of deception that must be warned against.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> (حفظه الله) (hafidhahullaah) may Allaah preserve him

<sup>2</sup> (صلى الله عليه وسلم) (sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him

<sup>3</sup> And this is the case with many of the deviant groups of today. They try to make a distinction between *Salafeeyyah* and *Ahlu-Sunnah*, saying that *Salafeeyyah* is a new sect or *madhhab* different from *Ahlu-Sunnah*. In reality, they are one in the same as the Shaykh explains. This confusion comes from many different groups, like the Tableeghees, the Naqshabaandees, and other Soofee groups. While they claim that they are *Ahlu-Sunnah*, they are actually people of innovation far from the Sunnah.

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Anyway, let me rephrase the question and then answer it.

Is the Muslim obliged to follow a *Fiqh madhhab*? And is the Muslim obliged to follow *Salafiyyah*, or should he follow the *manhaj* of other groups and parties... like the *manhaj* of the Tableeghees, the Soofees, the Ikhwaanees, the Tahreerees, etc.?

So then as for the Muslim following a *Fiqh madhhab*, like the *Hanafee madhhab*, the *Maalikee madhhab*, the *Shaafi'ee madhhab*, or the *Hambalee madhhab*, I say: The basic ruling regarding this affair is that a Muslim is not required to follow any of these four *madhhabs*.

The Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) only called the people to follow the Book and the Sunnah. And he clarified to them that they must understand the Book and the Sunnah as he and his Companions (may Allaah be pleased with them) understood it. He also emphasised that we follow the rightly-guided *khaleefahs*. This remained the case all the way to the era of the four *Imaams* of *Fiqh* and others. There was never any obligation for the Muslim to follow any of these four *madhhabs*.

So then, based on this, I say that the correct position is that Islaam does not require the Muslim to follow one of the four *madhhabs*. And this is clear, *Inshaa'allaah*.

However, I say: The Muslim should evaluate himself. If he finds that he has reached the level of *ijtihad* and he can look into the evidences, then he must look into the evidences and follow what is clear to him from the evidences, whether the evidence contradicts the Hanafee, Maalikee, Shaafi'ee or Hambalee *madhhab*. There is no harm in that, as the important thing is that he follows the evidence.

However, if a Muslim is not able to look into the evidences and make *ijtihad*, then it is obligatory on him to ask the people of knowledge, those known for their adherence to the Book and the Sunnah in light of the understanding of the righteous Salaf. This is based on Allaah's Statement:

**(Then ask the people of knowledge if you do not know)<sup>4</sup>**

Therefore, the common Muslim who is not able to look into the evidences and make *ijtihad* must ask the people of knowledge, and to learn the affairs of his Religion he needs from them, without restricting himself to a specific *madhhab*. Thus, the scholars say, "*The madhhab of the common Muslim is the madhhab of the one who gives him his fatwaa.*"

One last thing before I address the other topic: In our time and in the times before us, there are and were great scholars who ascribe to *madhhabs*, while, in reality, they followed the evidences. Their ascription to their *madhhab* only came because they studied that *madhhab* specifically, or that it was the one that was common in their land. Thus, they have been given the ascription to the *madhhab*, not because they were blind followers.

So it is said about Ibn Taymeeyah, for example, that he was a Hambalee, and the reality was that he followed the evidences. It is said about Ibn Al-Qayyim that he was a Hambalee, too, and the reality was that he followed the evidences. It is also said that Ibn Hajr was a Shaafi'ee, and the reality was that he followed the evidences. It is said about Al-Laknawee that he was a Hanafee, and the reality was that he followed the evidences. And it is said about Shaykh Bin Baaz and Shaykh Ibn 'Uthaymeen that they were Hambalees, and the reality is that they followed the evidences. It is said that Shaykh

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<sup>4</sup> The meaning of Soorah an-Nahl [16:43]

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Muhammad ibn Ibraaheem was a Hambalee, and the reality is that he followed the evidences. It is said that Shaykh Al-Fawzaan is a Hambalee, and the reality is that he follows the evidences.

The *manhaj* of all of these great scholars is to give verdicts according to the evidence. When the evidence came to them, they followed it. If they did not have the evidence, then they would give a verdict according to their *madhhab*. They would clarify the ruling of on something based on their *madhhab*.

So this is a very important point to pay attention to when we talk about adhering to a *madhhab*.

We do not say that everyone must be *mujtahids* and follow the evidences. Without a doubt, the common people are not able to make *ijtihaad* and look into the evidences. We also do not say that everyone must follow a specific *madhhab* and follow it. Rather, what we say is that whoever is able to look into the evidences and draw his rulings from them, then he must make *ijtihaad*, looking into the evidences and following them.

And his status of being someone who make *ijtihaad* and looks into the evidences does not prevent him from being ascribed to a *madhhab* that he studied, or one that was common in his land, or one that he sees as being the closest to the truth in general when he is not able to derive a ruling himself from the evidences. This does not harm someone who is from those who can make *ijtihaad* and follow the evidences.

As for the one who does not reach this level, then he must ask the people of knowledge, as Allaah the Exalted says:

**(Then ask the people of knowledge if you do not know)<sup>5</sup>**

When he asks, he should try his best to make sure that the one he is asking is from the people of knowledge, and he should not specify that the one he asks be ascribed to a certain *madhhab*. Rather, he must follow what the scholar giving him his verdict says, so long as he is upon evidence, and Allaah knows best.

As for the second part of the question that is related to ascribing oneself to the *manhaj* of one of the so-called "*movements*" as they are calling them, I say that the Muslim is obliged to ascribe to the Salafee/Sunnee *manhaj*. Moreover, I say that Islaam, true Islaam, is just that. It is to follow what the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and his Companions were upon. It is to understand the Religion in light of the understanding of the righteous predecessors. So then the Muslim is indeed required to follow this methodology.

It is not permissible for the Muslim to abandon what the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and the Companions were upon for any reason whatsoever.

Therefore, this is the *manhaj*, the straight path by which a person reaches salvation on the Day of Standing, *Inshaa'allaah*. The Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said,

**"The Jews split into 71 sects, and the Christians split into 72 sects. My nation is going to split into 73 sects, and all of them will be in the Hellfire except one."**

It was said, "*Who are they, O Messenger of Allaah?*" He replied,

<sup>5</sup> The meaning of Soorah an-Nahl [16:43]

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"They those who are upon what I and my Companions are upon."<sup>6</sup>

This is what the Salafee *manhaj* is. It is the following of the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and his Companions. So then can we say to the new Muslim, "You are not required to follow this *manhaj*"? No! Rather we say, "Your *Islaam* will never be true, sound *Islaam*, free of innovations and mistakes, unless you follow this *manhaj*, unless you follow what the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and his Companions were upon."

Whoever opposes what the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and his Companions were upon is from the people of differing, and he is included in the 72 groups. He is still a Muslim, however he is subject to the threat mentioned in the hadeeth - that "All of them will be in the Hellfire except one."

When I say, "He is subject to the threat mentioned in the hadeeth," I mean that he is subject to the Will of Allaah. If Allaah wants, He punishes them; if He wants, He forgives them.

Due to his opposition to what the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and his Companions were upon, then he can only be in one of two categories: (1) his contradiction leads him outside of the Religion, thus he is from the disbelievers; or (2) his contradiction does not expel him from the Religion, thus he is from the people of disobedience and innovation, and thus from the 72 groups that are subject to punishment, and Allaah knows best.

So, with this, we have differentiated between the issue of following a *Fiqh madhhab* and the issue of following the Salafee *manhaj*. So the Muslim is not required to follow one of the *madhhabs*. But as for following the Salafee *manhaj*, meaning to understand the Religion in light of what the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and his Companions were upon, to follow the way of the Salaf, I say that this is the true *Islaam*. Whoever goes away from this, he only goes away from the true *Islaam*. And his departure from true *Islaam* is either a departure from the Religion in totality, or a deviation from the straight path that makes him from the people of innovation, disobedience, and error, and thus is considered to be from the 72 groups, and Allaah knows best.

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<sup>6</sup> From an authentic hadeeth collected by Aboo Daawood, At-Tirmidhee, Ibn Maajah, and others. Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحْمَةُ اللهِ) discusses its different chains and wordings in *Silsilatul-Ahaadeeth us-Saheehah* (203-204).