

## How to View Information from Anonymous Sources

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Over the past few days there has been a “fatwa” with no author listed circulating and I felt it important to give a brief breakdown of what a person should ideally look for in a fatwa before considering whether to accept the advice. This breakdown is by no means comprehensive. It is merely designed to shed some light and share some insight on this important matter.

The giving of religious advice is a heavy burden, and the advice-giver must always be careful to ensure the advice is in line with the commands of Allah, and that they are not making permissible what Allah has forbidden, nor making forbidden what Allah has made permissible. Allah says in the Quran:

((وَلَا تَقُولُوا لِمَا تَصِفُ أَلْسِنَتُكُمُ الْكَذِبَ هَذَا حَلَالٌ وَهَذَا حَرَامٌ لِتَفْتَرُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ ۗ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَفْتَرُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ لَا يُفْلِحُونَ)) – سورة النحل 116

**Do not falsely declare with your tongues, “This is lawful, and that is unlawful,” ‘only’ fabricating lies against Allah. Indeed, those who fabricate lies against Allah will never succeed – Al Quran 16:116.**

The following *hadith* illustrates the seriousness of falsely attributing a hadith to the Prophet peace and blessings upon him. How would we then view false attributions of rulings and claims of apostacy to “following the Quran and Sunnah”?

قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " لَا تَكْذِبُوا عَلَيَّ، فَإِنَّهُ مَنْ كَذَبَ عَلَيَّ قَلْبِيح النَّارِ " .<sup>1</sup>

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Do not tell a lie against me for whoever tells a lie against me (intentionally) then he will surely enter the Hell-fire."

## Should We Entrust Our Faith Decisions to Anonymous Preachers?

Accountability and credibility are important in Islam. Throughout our history if Muslim scholars gave a ruling or made any statement related to Islam the people knew who they were, knew what kind of person they were and knew who their Sheikhs were. This was vital in preserving the authenticity of narrations and preserving the teachings of Islam as a whole. So why is it that we have some people in our times producing religious works without penning their name to it? Where are they assuming their credibility from and why should they be trusted? I may explore in a future article whether this practice constitutes a prohibited *bid'ah* (innovation).

<sup>1</sup> Sahih Al Bukhari: The Book of Knowledge, Chapter on the sin of a person who tells a lie against the Prophet peace and blessings upon him, Hadith 106

Our faith determines our outcome in the eternal life. We must not allow an anonymous person or unknown group to influence us by putting words to paper and adding loosely related verses and *ahadith*. The Prophet peace and blessings upon him avoided disaster by verifying the information of a known Sahabi, and Allah revealed a verse in the Quran about it. Imagine how our Prophet would have treated information coming from an anonymous author.

((يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصْبِحُوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نَادِمِينَ)) – سورة الحجرات 6

**Believers, if a person, breaking from convention, brings you news, verify it so that you do not wrong others unwittingly and later regret what you have done – Al Quran 49:6**

Some may argue that the name of a centre or organisation is sufficient for credibility. If the centre is of established renown among respected scholars, it may alleviate the credibility question to a degree, but it certainly does not alleviate the accountability question. An artificial entity (mosque, centre, organisation, etc.) is not responsible before Allah. Rather the individuals who work for this entity are responsible.

### Referencing the Quran and Sunnah<sup>2</sup>

Anybody can express their opinion and then add a verse from the Quran or Hadith from the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, even if the link between the quote and the opinion is weak or even imaginary. Unfortunately, we see people accept the opinion as credible regardless of how unrelated the verse or *hadith* are to the opinion. This point is highly significant because we see as a result of this that some people who claim to follow only the Quran and Sunnah seek adoption of their own opinion rather than the Quran and Sunnah. Anyone who seeks to operate in the dawah space needs to ask themselves: “do I take my opinion prior to doing my research, or do I allow my research to guide my opinion”?

Anybody who references the Quran or the Sunnah needs to make sure that in relation to their expressed opinion it is either:

1. صريح الدلالة Sareeh Al Dalalah (It must clearly represent the opinion) or
2. a strong, clear link is drawn between the reference and the opinion.

Otherwise, you are deceiving the people. You are not only calling them to follow your opinion, but you are also using the religion to convince them to do so.

<sup>2</sup> In my article “Using the Quran and Sunnah to Support an Opinion”, dated 16 July 2021, I explore this in more detail. You can find it here: <https://afic.com.au/2021/07/using-the-quran-and-sunnah-to-support-an-opinion/>

### Conclusion

As Muslims we encourage healthy debate between contemporaries, as was the practice of the Righteous Khalifs. This should be done between people who know each other and their backgrounds. What isn't encouraged is opening the door for *Zanadiqah* (plural for *zindiq*, meaning miscreant) to play with our faith. We see this from time to time with some of the claims of scientific miracles in the Quran. A post or article invented by the enemies of Islam linking Quranic verses to either scientifically incorrect matters or matters that are not linked to the intended meaning of the verse. The Muslim who does not have a discerning or critical eye blindly accepts it and shares it widely.

I am not saying that all anonymous works come from *Zanadiqah*. What I'm saying is that if we become accepting of this practice, we make it much easier for *zanadiqah* to infiltrate our ranks posing as righteous, learned believers.

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