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By: Sheikh Abu Al Hasan Ali Aal Ali AR-Ramly

In the Name of Allâh, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.

All the praises and thanks be to Allâh, Who says in his noble Qur'an what it means:  
You [true believers in Islâmic Monotheism, and real followers of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his Sunnah (legal ways, etc.)] are the best of peoples ever raised up for mankind; you enjoin Al-Ma'rûf (i.e. Islâmic Monotheism and all that Islâm has ordained) and forbid Al-Munkar (polytheism, disbelief and all that Islâm has forbidden)... [Aal imran: 110], and peace and blessings be upon the prophet who says:

"He who amongst you sees a munkar (i.e. any of what Islâm has forbidden) should modify it with the help of his hand; and if he has not strength enough to do it, then he should do it with his tongue, and if he has not strength enough to do it, (even) then he should (abhor it) from his heart, and that is the least of faith."

And says:

"Al-Din is a name of sincerity and well wishing for Allah, His Book, His Messenger and for the leaders and the general Muslims."

To proceed:

A lot of people do not distinguish between invalidating people of innovation and backbiting. Further more they do not value the importance of disclosing the people of innovation and do not yet recognize how fatal it is to hold their tongues off those people. Therefore I decided to write this article to display some of the evidences, from the Qur'an and sound Sunnah that shows the permissibility of invalidating a Muslim's adalah (integrity)-if needed-and the advantages of that upon religion.

Definition of Tongue Invalidation:

Tongue invalidation means; to calumniate a person and prove him dishonest.

They say: the judge invalidates the witness; i.e. if the judge finds out things that drop the reliability of the witness such as: lying...etc.

Evidences of Invalidation permissibility

Qur'an evidences:

Allah {Exalted be He} says what it means:

O you who believe! If a rebellious evil person comes to you with a news, verify it, lest you harm

people in ignorance, and afterwards you become regretful to what you have done. (Al-Hujurat 49:6)  
And also says:

And take for witness two just persons from among you (Muslims). And establish the witness for Allâh...  
These two verses require that the news and testimony of the adl (trustworthy) person should be accepted and the news as well as testimony of the faasiq (transgressor) person should not be accepted.

Al-abnasee-in "ash-shadha al-fayyaah" (2/742- Ar-rushd)-says: "Allah {Exalted be He} has made it obligatory to reveal the news of the faasiq (transgressor) by saying: "...If a rebellious evil person comes to you with a news, verify it..." "

I say: distinguishing between the adl (trustworthy) person and the faasiq (transgressor) person can be achieved either by direct contact of people's state of affairs-which is impossible in most cases-or by jarh and ta'deel (invalidation and validation) which the scholars have agreed upon as follows.

Sunnah Evidences:

The first one who mentioned people of innovation and warned against them was the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him):

1-The hadeeth of Abu Sa'eed al-khudri:

"Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri reported that 'Ali (May Allaah be pleased with him) sent some gold alloyed with dust to the Messenger of Allaah (sallAllaahu alayhi wa sallam), and the Messenger of Allaah (sallAllaahu alayhi wa sallam) distributed that among four men, al-Aqra' b. habis al-Hanzali al-Mujashi'ee and Uyaina b. Badr al-Fazari and 'Alqama b. 'Ulatha al-'Aamiri-later to be one of the tribe of Kilab- and to Zaid al-Khair al-Ta'l-later to be one of the tribe of Nabhan- Upon this the people of Quraish and al-ansaar felt angry and said:

He (the Prophet) gave to the chiefs of Najd and ignored us. Upon this the Messenger of Allaah (sallAllaahu alayhi wa sallam) said: I have done it with a view to con-cillating them. Then there came a person with thick beard, prominent cheeks, deep sunken eyes and protruding forehead and shaven head. He said: Muhammad, fear Allaah! Upon this the Messenger of Allaah (sallAllaahu alayhi wa sallam) said: If I disobey Allaah, who would then obey Him? Have I not been (sent as the) most trustworthy among the people of the-world? -but you do not repose trust in me. That person then went back. A person among the people then sought permission (from the Prophet) for killing him. According to some, it was Khalid b. al-Walid who sought the permission but the Messenger of Allaah (sallAllaahu alayhi wa sallam), denied and said: From this very person's posterity there would arise people who would recite the Qur'an, but it would not go beyond their throat; they would kill the followers of Islam and would spare the idol-worshippers. They would glance through the teachings of Islam so hurriedly just as the arrow passes through the pray. If I were to ever find them I would kill them like 'Aad."

I say: In this hadeeth the messenger (peace be upon him) warned against this man after he had left further more he warned against his posterity and he did not consider either of that as backbiting. Those people who descends from that person mentioned in the hadeeth are the khawaarij (Kharijits) as people of knowledge have clarified.

2-The hadeeth of A'isha:

A'isha reported that a person sought permission from Allaah's Prophet (sallAllaahu alayhi wa sallam) to see him. He said: Grant him permission. (and also added: ) He is a bad son of his tribe or he is a bad person of his tribe. When he came in he used kind words for him. 'A'isha reported that she said: Allaah's Messenger, you said about him what you had to say and then you treated him with kindness. He said: A'isha, have you ever known me as obscene? Verily in the eye of Allaah, worst amongst the person in rank on the Day of Resurrection is one whom the people abandon or desert out of the fear

of indecency.

Al-khateeb al-baghdadee (may Allah have mercy upon him) in "al kifayah" (p39) said:

" Out of the saying of the messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) to the man " he is a bad person of his tribe" there is an obvious evidence that mentioning a fault of a person-when it is required for advice and sincerity-is not considered as backbiting otherwise the prophet (peace be upon him) would not do it."

3-The hadeeth of Fatimah bint Qaiys:

She said: "When my period of 'Idda was over, I mentioned to him (i.e. the messenger) that Mu'awiya b. Abu Sufyan and Abu Jahm had sent proposal of marriage to me, whereupon Allaah's Messenger (sallAllaahu alayhi wa sallam) said: As for Abu Jahm, he does not put down his staff from his shoulder, and as for Mu'awiya, he is a poor man having no property; marry Usama b. Zaid. I objected to him, but he again said: Marry Usama; so I married him. Allaah blessed there in and I was envied (by others).

Al-khateeb al-baghdadee (may Allah have mercy upon him) in "al kifayah" (p40) said:

"This hadeeth proves the permissibility of invalidating weak reporters as a means of advice in order to avoid their narrations and consider them as un reliable, as the prophet (peace be upon him) when mentioned Abu jahm that he does not put down his staff from his shoulder, and that Mu'awiya is a poor man having no property he mentioned all of that because he was consulted by the woman. Therefore revealing the hidden faults-which if not mentioned and clarified would lead to make what is permissible prohibited and vise versa and would also lead to corruption in Islamic sharee'ah-of some of the narrators of the sunnah is considered more deserving to be permissible.

While the backbiting which Allah (Exalted He be) has prohibited in His saying:

"... neither backbite one another..." and which the messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) has warned against in his hadeeth:

"O, you who have believed only by tongue and yet the faith have not entered their hearts do not backbite Muslims and do not search for their faults" is mentioning the faults of somebody in order to degrade, despise and belittle him and not for the sake of advising and warning against accepting the news of the transgressor, listening to the liar's testimony and trusting the betrayer. A word may have two different meanings. It depends on the state of the person who says it; in some situations the sayer is considered sinner and in other ones is not.

Ibn Rajab in "sharh 'al-ilal" (1/348, Ar-raazee) said:

"...Also mentioning the fault (invalidation), on the condition that there is a certain benefit can be gained, is permissible; such as consulting and asking advice for marriage or the likes, just like what the prophet (peace be upon him) did when Fatima bint Qaiys asked him about Abu Jahm and Mu'awiyah. In another occasion the messenger (peace be upon him) consulted Ali and Usamah in divorcing his wife during the incident of ifk. Therefore Shu'bah used to say: " Let us sit and backbite in the sake of Allah awhile i.e. let us practice jarh and ta'deel (Invalidation and validation)."

I say: There are a lot of evidences -other than what we have mentioned-which prove the permissibility of Invalidation on the condition of benefit and necessity, however we think that what we have mentioned is quite enough. Meanwhile some of the people of knowledge narrated the consensus upon the permissibility of invalidating the witnesses.

Ibn Rajab in "sharh 'al-ilal" (1/348) said:

"Verily mentioning the fault of a person where there is a benefit-even if it is private like invalidating the testimony of the false witness-is indisputably permissible and when it comes to the benefit of the whole Muslims then it more deserves to be permissible.

I say: Al-khateeb al-baghdadee which we quoted previously clearly distinguished between invalidation aimed to give advice and sincerity to the religion and to the Muslims as well as to preserve the Islamic

sharee'ah and keep it pure and clean and the prohibited backbiting aimed to degrade, despise and belittle a brother with no longer referring to advice or preserving the religion.

Narrated Ahmad bin Marwan Al-malikee that Abdullah bin Ahmad bin Hambal has told him: Abu Turab An-nakh-shabi came to my father while he was saying: "so-called person is weak and so-called person is trustworthy" Abu Turab said: "O' sheikh do not backbite the scholars!" My father turned to him and said: "Woe unto you! This is advising and not backbiting."

Muhammad bin Bindar As-sabbak al-jurjaneer said:

"I said to Ahmad bin Hambal: Verily it is quite difficult for me to say: so-called person is weak and so-called person is a liar? Ahmad said: "If you and I were to stop invalidation how could the ignorant differentiate between the weak and the sound narration?"

Isma'eel Al-Khutabi said: " Abdullah bin Ahmad told us: " I said to my father: What do you say concerning the narrators of hadeeth who come to a particular sheikh to receive hadeeth from him while he might be a murji' (procrastinator), a Shi'ite or may have something contradicts the Sunnah, shall I keep silent? or shall I warn against him? My father then said: If he is a leader of bid'ah (innovation) and calls or propagates for it then you should warn against him."

Ibn Al-Mubarak said: " Al-Mu'allah bin Hilal is good except that when time comes for narrating hadeeth he lies. So some sufees said to him: O, Abu Abdur-Rahman you are backbiting! He said: Hush! If we do not clarify how would the people differentiate between haq (truth) and baatil (falseness)?!

Finally, the following is a discussion which occurred between me and somebody whom I warned against one of the innovators. This discussion shall answer a lot of people's questions:

Q: I would like to purchase a cassette of so-called person, what do you think of that?

A: I advice you not to listen to him.

Q: Why?

A: Because he contradicts the decrees of As-salafus-saleh in several issues...

Q: But, you see a lot of people benefited from him so much.

A: This causes me to warn against him more than before.

Q: But why?

A: because people were deceived by what you said about him, just like you, and started to receive everything from him. Therefore it is obligatory upon me to warn against him to keep the religion pure and crystal clear and to advice Muslims in order not to deviate from their religion.

Q: How about listening to him and take the truth and leave the false?

A: It is impermissible for you to do that.

Q: Why?

A: Because you are either a student of knowledge who can differentiate between the truth and falseness, or an ignorant who can not distinguish between the truth and falseness and the later applies to the majority of the people. Therefore if you are among the second category, then your question is inapplicable. And even if you are of the first category you still are not protected against shubhah (i.e. misconception /doubt) which might take control of your heart.

So do not gamble with your religion and the benefit you will loose by quitting this sheikh of bid'ah can be substituted by another trustworthy sheikh.

Ma'mar said: "while Ibn Tawoos was sitting, a man of mu'tazilah came in and started talking. Ibn Tawoos then entered his fingers in his ears and ordered his son to do so and told him not to listen to anything of what that man was saying. Ma'mar explained: He meant that the heart is weak."

Abu Qulabah-who caught up with some of the companions- said:

"Do not associate with people of 'Ahwa' (desires /innovations) verily they can dip you into their deviations or they might let you doubt some of your beliefs."

Two men of people of 'Ahwaa' came in to Muhammad bin Sireen and said: " O, Abu Bakr: Let us narrate a hadeeth for you!" He said: "No" They said: " Well, let us recite an 'aayah from the book of Allah (Exalted be He)? He said: "No. You either leave or I will do." So the men left. Some of the people who were sitting said: "O, Abu Bakr what harm would have happened if you have let them recite an 'aayah of the Qur'an?" Ibn Sireen said: "I was afraid that they might recite the 'aayah in a deviated way which may affect my heart." He also said: "If I have known that my heart would be like the clock (or the time) I would have let them"

Q: But he is sincere and pious?

A: Sincerity is something in the heart and no one can be aware of except Allah (Exalted be He). What would you say if you have seen the kharijits whom the messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) has described? They exerted efforts for prayers and reciting Qur'an in a way that you belittle your effort. Nevertheless the prophet (peace be upon him) warned against them, even he wanted to kill them. So, the kharijits used to have the same of what you have seen in your sheikh, i.e. good deeds, exterior benefits ...etc. concerning his sincerity -if we have to agree upon that-this is something between him and his Lord and he will get the reward for that, but what concerns us is to keep Islam pure and crystal clear just like the time of the prophet (peace be upon him).