

Original Title: الفتاوى للشيخ

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Source: http://www.rabee.net/show_fatwa.aspx?id=157

Translator: Harrison

Answering-Extremism
الرد على التطرف

Are the Khawārij Sincere in Worship?

Question: Regarding the hadīth of the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) about the Khawārij:

يَخْرُجُ مِنْ ضَيْضِيٍّ هَذَا أَقْوَامٌ يَحْقِرُ أَحَدَكُمْ صَلَاتَهُ مَعَ صَلَاتِهِمْ وَصِيَامَهُ مَعَ
صِيَامِهِمْ يَمْرُقُونَ مِنَ الدِّينِ كَمَا يَمْرُقُ السَّهْمُ مِنَ الرَّمِيَّةِ

“There will appear from this man’s progeny people who one of you would belittle his own prayer when compared with theirs, and his fasting compared to theirs.

(But) they will pass through the religion just as an arrow might pass through a target.”¹

As for the wording, “One of you would belittle his own prayer when compared with theirs, and his fasting compared to theirs...,” does this mean that he (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) described the Khawārij as being people sincere in worship?

Answer: No, if they had anything of sincerity, they would follow the prophet’s guidance (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), but they don’t have sincerity, and Allaah knows best. They do, however, possess hypocrisy and showing off, incorrect acts of worship, and extremism in worship.

Three people once came to the houses of the wives of the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), asking how the prophet used to worship. When they were informed about it², they belittled their own worship and said, “What are we compared to the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ)? Allaah has already forgiven all his past and previous sins.” So, one of them said, “As for me, I am

¹ Recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 3610, 6163, 6933) and Muslim (no. 1064).

² i.e. That he did not use to be extreme in worship.

going to pray all night, every night.” Another said, “And I will fast every day.” The third said, “I am going to avoid women and never get married.” Later, the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) came to them and said:

أَنْتُمْ الَّذِينَ قُلْتُمْ كَذَا وَكَذَا؟ أَمَا وَاللَّهِ إِنِّي لِأَخْشَاكُمْ لِلَّهِ وَأَتَقَاكُمْ لَهُ لَكِنِّي
أَصُومُ وَأُفْطِرُ وَأُصَلِّي وَأَرْقُدُ وَأَتَزَوَّجُ النِّسَاءَ فَمَنْ رَغِبَ عَن سُنَّتِي فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي

“Are you the ones who said this and that? As for me, by Allāh, I am the most fearing of Allaah among you. Still, I fast some days and not other days, I pray sometimes and I sleep, and I marry women. Whoever isn’t satisfied with my way then he’s not from me.”³

As for the Khawārij, when they go to extremes in acts of worship and go beyond the limits, they fall into extremism. This – may Allaah bless you – is misguidance and we shouldn’t praise them for it. Instead, it’s disgraceful of them because they’ve fallen into extremism.

The companions (of the prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) were the best of Allaah’s creation and used to worship Allaah more than anyone else. Do these people (the Khawārij) pray more than they did? Do they recite the Quran more than they did? These Khawārij recite the Quran yet understand it in ways other than it is intended, other than what it really means.

Brother, I could read one text from the Sunnah in the way it’s to be understood according to the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and it’s better than (their) praying all night. This is nothing but extremism in worship. They have left the prophet’s Sunnah (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), turned away from it while being dissatisfied with it. They are people of misguidance. So, this ḥadīth is neither in praise of them, nor is it commending them for being sincere.

³ Recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 5063).