

Regarding the Claim:

**Lavishly Praising Someone and Later Criticizing Him
Harshly is Proof of Instability and Self-Contradiction,
Something that Opposes the Way of the Early Scholars
Like Ahmad ibn Hanbal and Yahyaa ibn Ma'een**

*Transcribed from the live Q&A session of Class #7
of the Explanation of Kitaab at-Towheed*

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There was an e-mail I received this week sent to the brothers from TROID by someone who was a bit disturbed by an answer I gave about people hiding behind the names of Shaykhs al-Albaanee, Ibn Baaz, and Ibn 'Uthaymeen. At times, you find people harboring a lot of hatred for certain members of the 'ulamaa' (scholars) - specifically those 'ulamaa' who are harsh against the people of innovation and firm against them. And this is not only today but throughout history, the scholars who are harshest and the clearest in their stances against the people of innovation, they had always been targeted and overly criticized by their opponents.

I mentioned that people hide behind the connections, or the so-called connections, to the Shaykhs: al-Albaanee, ibn Baaz, ibn 'Uthaymeen - the great shaykhs of our time - and they (these people who hide behind these great shaykhs) do not seem to have any real connection to scholars who are alive today. Perhaps it is due to hidden connections that they really have but do not disclose, or perhaps it is just ignorance...¹

Just as a point here, we've seen for years people criticizing the likes of Shaykh Rabee' ibn Haadee al-Madkhalee (حفظه الله تعالى) [may Allaah preserve him], regarding the claim that he is not upon the way of the early critics of the Salaf - the likes of Imaams Ahmad ibn Hanbal and Yahyaa ibn Ma'een. And what they say: *"His 'foolishness' of lavishly praising people and then abandoning them has excluded him from resembling the critics of old, and it shows that he is 'unstable' and his statements in criticism of people are 'not reliable'."*

Let us begin with understanding something in this issue so that we don't pass on and parrot things without understanding them.

¹ Refer to: <http://www.bakkah.net/en/hiding-behind-the-names-of-al-albaanee-ibn-baaz-and-ibn-uthaymeen.htm>

True Academic Criticism in Islaam

In academic criticism in Islaam - as understood by the scholars of *Jarh wa Ta'deel*² throughout history (النقد العلمي) [Academic criticism] - **No one is beyond criticism**, no one is immune from criticism, other than those who have gained immunity from Allah (عزوجل) i.e. they have been praised in the Qur'aan and they have been sanctified by the Book of Allah or by the revelation given to Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم), i.e. his Sunnah. Aside from that, the narrators, the teachers, the callers, the scholars themselves - all of them are subject to criticism. As one of the greatest of the scholars, al-Imaam Maalik, is so commonly quoted as saying:

مَا مِنَّا إِلَّا رَادٌّ وَمَرْدُودٌ عَلَيْهِ

Meaning: Every single one of us (every scholar) is either criticizing / refuting, or being criticized / refuted.

That is the case of the scholars, and, of course, every writer and every caller is subject to criticism. The criticism of the scholars of Islaam is ongoing, it is **mutajaddid** [continuously updated], it is renewed, and it is revisited, at every possible occasion. No one from the critics of Islaam had ever agreed to the principle that - I think is understood from this questioner/complainer or others that have speech resembling this - that a person who has been praised (lavishly especially), that he is now immune from criticism, and to say that he should be abandoned or that he is weak (in his reliability) and should not be taken from, to say that after lavishly praising him is a kind of self-contradiction and it is proof of instability and lack of firmness, or lack of reliability, in the area of academic criticism. **No one ever understood that.**

There's the whole issue of narrators in Islaam who went astray, narrators in Islaam that became unreliable and poor in their memory in their old age, narrators whose conditions changed, and the imaams of criticism who called them *thiqah* (reliable, trustworthy) before their situation changed had no problem ever and had nothing preventing them from saying either "*dha'eef*" (not reliable), or he's abandoned, or he's nothing (لا شيء) or he's a liar (كذاب), if

² **Jarh and Ta'deel:** the science of evaluating the reliability of hadeeth transmitters, preachers, writers, etc.

the situation dictated those words. No one believed that would be self-contradictory, no one believed that was *tanaaqudh* (contradiction). No one believed that it would be a proof of the instability of the critic. On the opposite understanding, rather, they understood that as **an indication of the sincerity of the critic** and that the critic is upon the right way of criticism - that he renews his criticism and that he modifies it based on the current situation or the path taken by the one being criticized.

Criticism Revisited - Example #1

So, for example, the imam, '**Abdur-Razzaaq ibn Hammaam as-Sa'aanee** - the imaam of Yemen in his time that Imaams Ahmad ibn Hanbal and Yahyaa ibn Ma'een would travel to, as well as other great scholars of hadeeth - they would travel to him to get his hadeeth. Then, somewhere around the year 200 (after Hijrah), he became blind and he became very weak in his narrations (i.e. unreliable). He would have his books that he wrote down before he was blind read to him, and he would allow mistakes to be read to him (without objecting), he would allow *ahaadeeth* that were not from his book to be read to him, and he would *yulaqqan* (he would agree and pass on everything as if it were correct). He was no longer able to distinguish his hadeeth from other people's hadeeth. He was no longer able to distinguish the correct narrations of his own hadeeth versus the mistakes added to his books, and so on.

So, after that, the same scholars who would travel - with very little provisions and even run out of provisions on the way as you've heard these stories of Yahyaa ibn Ma'een and Ahmed ibn Hanbal on the way running out of provisions and encountering near-death situations to reach this imaam³ - they would then say about him: "**laa shay**" (He's nothing). Imaam Ahmad said about him after the year 200, "His narrations are لا شيء" (worthless, lit. nothing).⁴ And Imaam Ahmad never thought that his saying "nothing" after

³ Ibn Rajab said, "*Abdur-Razzaaq ibn Hammaam as-San'aanee was one of the famous imams of hadeeth. People would migrate to him in his time for the sake of his hadeeth, so much so that it was said: No one had ever been the intended destination of people's journeys after the Messenger of Allaah (may Allaah raise his rank and grant him peace) more than 'Abdur-Razzaaq.*" He further explained how his loss of eyesight led to many errors in his hadeeth and he was then abandoned by the scholars of hadeeth. See: *Sharh 'ilal at-Tirmitheh* (2/752-754).

⁴ See: *Muqaddimah Ibn Salaah* (p.396), *Kitaab al-Mukhtaliteen* (pp.74-75) of al-'Alaa'ee, *Kitaab Alightibaat (Lisaan al-Meezaan* (1/349-350, within in the biography of Is-haaq ibn Ibraaheem ad-Dubaree), *al-Kawaakib an-Nayyiraat* (p.58-62).

saying "*thiqah*" and "*imaam*," that it would be some sign of instability. **No one ever blamed him for that** in the history of Islaam.⁵

Criticism Revisited – Example #2

[**'Abdul-Maalik ibn Abee Sulaymaan**]⁶ **al-'Arnazee** - Shu'bah considered him reliable. Shu'bah ibn al-Hajjaaj - the great critic of Islaam, the critic of narrators – was amazed at his precision. And then when a narration - one narration! - came from him (the hadeeth of *ash-Shuf'ah*⁷) - when he heard this hadeeth, he understood this hadeeth to be a mistake, and he said, "*If 'Abdul-Malik narrates another hadeeth like this, I'll drop him*," meaning: I'll abandon him, I'll not narrate anything from him anymore, he doesn't deserve to be narrated from if he makes another mistake like this. And, in the end, he ended up actually abandoning him.⁸

And that was Shu'bah ibn al-Hajjaaj who considered him reliable yesterday; today: **abandoned**. Why? Because he felt the situation dictated that. His evaluation of that narrator - should he be taken from or not - was *mutajaddid* (continuously revisited). It was renewed, it was updated. It was something that was looked at and revisited. And he had no problem giving the opposite verdict that he used to give since the situation necessitated that. **And no one blamed Shu'bah for that.**⁹

Criticism Revisited – Example #3

Similarly, the books of narrators' biographies and criticism are full of these kinds of cases. Where Imaam **Yahyaa ibn Ma'een** who, because of his precision in his criticism, the extent of his criticism - every letter would be under the microscope if you were reading a hadeeth to Yahyaa ibn Ma'een.¹⁰ People

⁵ In fact, through this revisited stance, the people became aware of the situation of 'Abdur-Razzaaq, and they would refrain from taking his hadeeth. Whenever someone did narrate from him after he changed, his narrations were quickly classified as worthless. Through this ongoing, renewed criticism of the carriers of Allaah's Religion, Allaah preserved the clarity and purity of Islaam. Review: *Sharh 'ilal at-Tirmitheeh* (2/752-754, 770-771) of Ibn Rajab.

⁶ Mistakenly mentioned as "Abdul-Malik ibn Sulaymaan" in the original Q&A audio file.

⁷ See: *Jaami' at-Timitheeh* (#1369).

⁸ See *Tah-theeb at-Tah-theeb* (6/398).

⁹ Some critics disagreed with Shu'bah's stance on 'Abdul-Malik ibn Abee Sulaymaan, however, the point here is that no one blamed him for the idea of changing his stance.

¹⁰ Haaroon ibn Ma'roof said: I was early to the gathering of a shaykh, so we asked him to read out his narrations to use (so we could write them). He grabbed his book (and began), and then there was a knock at

knew that, and they were afraid of him, so when they narrated to him, they were on their P's and Q's. They would narrate to him in the best possible way they could. This led to a situation where - because of his reputation of being such a precise critic - you would find narrators who were not normally reliable, they would only narrate the very best and most accurate narrations in his presence, and, thus, based on this, Imaam Yahyaa ibn Ma'een would call them "*thiqah*". And then later he would sometimes find out - either through his peers or from visiting that same narrator years later - that in fact he is *dha'eef* and he would say: "*dha'eef*" (unreliable). **And he did not understand the idea that he was unstable in his criticism, nor did anyone else from the history of the scholars of Islaam.** No one ever understood that he was contradicting himself or that he was unstable as a critic. Rather, they understood that his criticism was ongoing.

An example of this would be **Aboo Hudbah Ibraaheem ibn Hudbah**. Yahyaa ibn Ma'een called him "*thiqah*" (reliable), until he found out later that he was not honest, so he changed his stance based on what he learned about him, having no problem calling him thereafter *kath-thaab khabeeth* (a filthy liar)!¹¹

Criticism Revisited – Example #4

Similarly, look at this case - this is an example that might be shocking to some: **Ahmad ibn Hanbal and Yahyaa ibn Ma'een**. And what did Ahmad ibn Hanbal say about Yahyaa ibn Ma'een after he took the excuse during the trials of those people who were forcing the *ummah* to say the Qur'aan is created, may Allah grant us refuge?

When it came down to the last '*ulamaa*' holding to the correct '*aqeedah*', Imaam Ahmad did not view it to be permissible for that last group of scholars to give in to the excuse of coercion. They had to remain firm and face whatever they face for the sake of upholding the proper '*aqeedah*'. It could not be that the whole *ummah* just loses the '*aqeedah*' because of individuals accepting the

the door. The shaykh said, "Who is it?" "Ahmad ibn Hanbal," replied the guest. He allowed him in and remained seated just as he was, until another knock at door, "Who is it?" "Ahmad ad-Dowraquee" He allowed him in and again remain seated. Then "Ibn ar-Roomee," and then, "Aboo Khaythamah," and both were allowed in while the shaykh continued undisturbed. Another knock, "**Yahyaa ibn Ma'een**," was the reply, which caused the shaykh's hand to flinch (nervously) and he dropped his book! (*Siyar A'laam an-Nubalaa'*, 11/80)

¹¹ See: *Taareekh Baghdaad* (6/200-201).

excuse of coercion, until there remained no *'aqeedah*. Rather, as a *fardh kifaa'ee* (as a communal obligation), some people must have upheld the correct *'aqeedah* and that is what he [Imaam Ahmad] held to and he never gave in. But Yahyaa ibn Ma'een gave in and took the excuse, and he has his excuse from the Book of Allaah, and no one blames him, and everyone makes *tarahhum* - O Allah! Have mercy on Yahyaa ibn Ma'een. And no one blames him or criticizes him for taking the excuse of coercion.¹²

Ahmad ibn Hanbal was frustrated and expected better from him being that he was from the best of the *ummah*. Ahmad ibn Hanbal said about him after that "لا يكتب حديثه" (his hadeeth are not to be written) meaning: he is now to be abandoned in hadeeth.¹³ After having recorded **a million hadeeth** - one million hadeeth!¹⁴ After Imaam Ahmad had said: "هذا رجل خلق الله لهذا شأن" (This is a man whom Allah has created for this field).¹⁵ And he said about him: "السماع منه شفاء لما في الصدور" (To hear hadeeth from Yahyaa ibn Ma'een is a cure for what ails the chests).¹⁶ These were his lavish praises for Yahyaa ibn Ma'een. His chosen companion for his journeys - the one he would say when he traveled without him, "I wish Yahyaa was here - he knows the hidden mistakes in the narrations. He would long for his companionship."¹⁷

And after that *fitnah*, his stance on him was renewed. He never viewed that Yahyaa ibn Ma'een was immune from criticism because he had lavishly praised him. He never considered that now his criticising and warning against Yahyaa ibn Ma'een would be considered as "instability" or "self-contradiction." Rather, his criticism of him was ongoing. Even if this case here is an example of a *jarh* (a criticism) that's not accepted in reality, all things considered; it is an example of how they did not view anyone as being immune and no one said about Ahmad ibn Hanbal, "Look at this man! Yesterday Yahyaa ibn Ma'een is the imaam of hadeeth," yesterday, "O! I wish I was with Yahyaa," yesterday, "If I hear a hadeeth from him it is like a cure for what ails the heart." And now today, "Abandoned, dropped!" – "What kind of foolishness is this?" **No one in the history of Islaam ever said that about Ahmad ibn Hanbal.**

¹² See: *Siyar A'laam an-Nubalaa'* (11/87).

¹³ See: *Siyar A'laam an-Nubalaa'* (11/87).

¹⁴ See: *Siyar A'laam an-Nubalaa'* (11/85).

¹⁵ See: *Siyar A'laam an-Nubalaa'* (11/80).

¹⁶ See: *Siyar A'laam an-Nubalaa'* (11/79).

¹⁷ See: *Siyar A'laam an-Nubalaa'* (11/79).

Use Your Brain and Stop Parroting Claims Recklessly

Think and reflect. Look at the *qawaa'id* (the principles), the *dhawaabit* (the guidelines) understood by the critics of Islaam throughout history. And don't say things out of your mouth that you just parrot from silly websites that are just people chatting away - students of knowledge who failed themselves, and failed their ummah, doomed to hide behind fake internet identities for the rest of their lives, condemned to writing under screen names on shameless forums of slander, pouring out the rancor and evil that is in their deadened hearts against *Ahlu-Sunnah*, the imaams of *Ahlu-Sunnah*, the scholars, the students of the scholars, and the callers to their way. They spend their lives chatting away, slandering, attacking, trying to find any possible avenue to discredit them. If you went to those websites, you would understand for sure that this is some kind of established principle: "Look at this self-contradiction of Shaykh Rabee', look how he's unstable," and so on.

But put everything in its proper place: The critics of Islaam have their guidelines, and their principles and their criticism is ongoing. They know nothing of your invented principle that "Someone who's been praised lavishly may not be dropped," or, "Someone who's been praised may not be criticized or warned against," and so on. ***No one ever heard of this principle.***

Apply This Innovated Principle to Your Own Selves

So keep this "principle" for yourselves - those of you who used to praise Shaykh Rabee' and now you follow this gossip and this silly talk that's from the cyber-kernels of the internet - Apply this to your own selves, that you used to speak well of the '*ulamaa'* and now you are on those silly websites under screen names chatting away, blaming them for not following the principles that you invented, blaming the likes of Shaykh Rabee' ibn Haadee al-Madkhalee - may Allah preserve him and grant his safety and security from the foolishness of your likes.

Blame your own selves! And apply your own principle to your own selves! The principle that **no one from this ummah wants** except you - that once you lavishly praise someone and once you make statements in favor of someone, to contradict that and to warn against him is "instability" and "foolishness".

Rule upon yourselves with instability! Rule upon yourselves with self-contradiction and foolishness!

And keep your principles to yourself, and do not seek to apply them to people who have never agreed to them, have never heard about them, and have no interest in them!

وصلى الله وسلم على نبينا محمد وعلى آله وصحبه أجمعين