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The Difference between Advising and Condemning

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About the Book: This is a complete translation of the classical treatise “*Al-Farq baynan-Naseeha wat-Ta’yeer*” [The Difference between Advising and Condemning] of Imaam Ibn Rajab Al-Hanbalee, may Allaah have mercy on him. The source used for this translation was the Daar ‘Ammar publication which was checked and verified by ‘Alee Hasan Al-Halabee.

In this treatise, Imaam Ibn Rajab discusses some of the manners and etiquettes of differing amongst Ahlus-Sunnah, explaining the distinction between advising and condemning. This is since these two things are often confused for one another. So the author goes into depth explaining the characteristics of sincere advice and condemnation. This treatise also lays down some guidelines for Ahlus-Sunnah in their criticisms and refutations. It should be noted, as the author states, that this treatise only applies to Ahlus-Sunnah, and as for the innovators and people of desires, then these guidelines do not apply to them.

In recent times, Shaikh Rabee’ Al-Madkhalee has provided an explanation for some of the important points covered in this book in a two-part lecture which was later transcribed and can be downloaded for free from his website www.rabee.net.

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CONTENTS

Introduction.....	4
Text of the Book.....	4
Forms of Advising.....	12
The Manners of Advising.....	14
The Recompense.....	18
Concerning Condemning.....	20
The Remedy.....	24

Introduction

In the Name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, Bestower of Mercy

All praise is for Allaah, Lord of the universe, and may His peace and blessings be on the foremost of those who fear Allaah and the seal of the prophets (Muhammad), as well as his family, his Companions and (all) those who follow them with goodness, until the Day of Recompense.

As for what follows, then:

These are some brief, yet comprehensive words concerning the difference between advising and condemning, for indeed they are counterparts in the sense that they both consist of mentioning something about a people that they hate to have mentioned. However, the distinction between the two is something that is not understood by many people. Thus, Allaah is the One who grants correctness.

Know that mentioning something about a person that he hates to have mentioned (about him) is forbidden, **if** the objective behind that is for nothing else but to dispraise and declare (his) faults and defects.¹

However, if there is found in this mentioning, a beneficial good for the general masses of Muslims – specifically for some of them – and the objective behind it is to accomplish this beneficial good, then it is not forbidden, but rather recommended.

The scholars of Hadeeth have agreed with this (principle) in their books on the subject of *Al-Jarh wat-Ta'deel*,² and they have mentioned that there is a difference between criticizing hadeeth reporters and backbiting them. And they further refuted those who placed these two (categories) at the same level, such as those constantly engulfed in worship (all the time) as well as others who do not possess sufficient knowledge.³

¹ This is an important restricting condition, so memorize it.

² See *Al-Kifaayah* (pg. 88) of Al-Khateeb, *I'laan bit-Tawbeekh Liman dhamma At-Taareekh* (pg. 461) of As-Sakhaawee, *Sharh Saheeh Muslim* (16/144) of An-Nawawee, *Majmoo' Ar-Rasaa'il wal-Masaa'il* (4/110) of Ibn Taimiyyah and *Raf'a-ur-Raibah* (pg. 24-27) of Ash-Shaukaanee. [Translator's Note: *Al-Jarh wat-Ta'deel* is the Islaamic science of determining whose reports and testimonies are to be accepted and whose are not. Those who fall under the category of *Al-Jarh* are the ones who are criticized and discredited, such as weak narrators, liars, etc. Those who fall under the category of *At-Ta'deel* are those whom the scholars have approved of and considered reliable in speech and trustworthy in narration.]

³ [Translator's Note: This is not a criticism against those who are constantly engulfed in worship. Rather it is a warning for those who may be deceived by their appearance. For indeed it is common that

Furthermore, there is no difference between 1) criticizing narrators of one of the hadeeth scholars (*huffaadh*) and distinguishing whose reports are to be accepted from them and whose reports are not, and between 2) clarifying the mistake of one who has erred with regard to understanding the meanings of the Book and the Sunnah, interpreted some aspect of it incorrectly, and who has adhered to something false. This (clarifying) was done so that this individual would not be followed in that which he erred in. The scholars have also unanimously agreed upon the permissibility of doing this (clarification).⁴

This is why we find that the books they authored concerning the various sciences of the religion - such as tafseer, explanation of hadeeth, Fiqh, the difference of opinions amongst the scholars, and so on - are filled with arguments⁵ and refutations of the statements of those who voiced weak opinions from the scholars of the past and present, such as the Sahaabah, the Taabi'een and those after them.

Not one of the people of knowledge abandoned (doing) this (clarification). Nor would he claim in his (refutation) to disparage, dispraise or defame the individual whose saying he was refuting, unless the author (he was refuting) was from those whose speech consisted of wickedness and who displayed vile manners when expressing himself. In this circumstance, his wickedness and vileness were forsaken apart from the original state of refuting and opposing him. And this (refutation) was based upon sound arguments and stable proofs. The reason for all this was due to the unanimous agreement of the scholars of this Religion that the truth which Allaah sent His Messenger ﷺ with must be made known, and so that all of the Religion can be purely for Allaah (alone) and so that His word can be the highest.

Furthermore, all of them acknowledge that grasping the entirety of the knowledge, without neglecting any part of it, is not a level that has been reached by any of them, nor has anyone from the scholars of the past or those of the present claimed to have reached it. For this reason, the Imaams of the *Salaf* – those whose knowledge and merits are widely and unanimously agreed upon – used to accept the truth from

many people when they see someone who exceeds in performing worship, they automatically assume that he is knowledgeable. But most of the times this is not the case. So one must be careful because there does exist a difference between the '*Aalim* (scholar) and the '*Aabid* (worshipper), as the Prophet ﷺ said: **"The virtue of the scholar over the worshipper is like the virtue of the moon over the all the stars."** (Abu Dawood: 3641, At-Tirmidhee: 2683 and others)]

⁴ Consider these great words, O reader and may Allaah have mercy on you, and apply them to the condition of the Muslims today!

⁵ So therefore, these matters are not from the fabrications of some "people" but rather they are nothing more than the actions of the scholars of the past!

anyone that disclosed it to them, even if that person was young.⁶ And they would advise their companions and followers to accept the truth, even if it appeared in someone else's statements.

An example of this is found in 'Umar's رضي الله عنه saying when he stated his opinion concerning the dowry of women. A woman responded to him by reciting Allaah's statement:

وَإِنْ أَرَدْتُمْ اسْتِبْدَالَ زَوْجٍ مَّكَانَ زَوْجٍ وَءَاتَيْتُمْ إِحْدَهُنَّ قِنطَارًا
فَلَا تَأْخُذُوا مِنْهُ شَيْئًا أَتَأْخُذُونََهُ بِهَتَاتِنَا وَإِنَّمَا مِئِينَا ﴿٢٠﴾

"But if you intend to replace a wife with another, and you have given one of them a *qintaar* (large amount of gold in dowry), take not the least bit of it back."
[Surah An-Nisaa: 20]

Upon this, 'Umar went back on his opinion and said: "A woman has spoken correctly and a man has erred."⁷ And it has also been reported that he said: "Everyone is more understanding of Fiqh than 'Umar."⁸

Some of the famous (scholars) used to say, upon having formed an opinion concerning a matter: "This is the opinion that we have derived, so anyone that brings an opinion better than it, we shall accept it (from him)."

Imaam Ash-Shaafi'ee used to go to great extents with regard to this understanding, for he would advise his companions to follow the truth and accept the Sunnah, even if it should appear to them in contradiction to their (own) opinions. And he encouraged them to, at that point, throw his opinion against the wall (i.e. throw it away).⁹ He would say in his books¹⁰: "There is no doubt that you will find in them (my opinions) that which contradicts the Book and the Sunnah, for Allaah, the Most High, says:

⁶ See the story of Al-Haafidh Ad-Daaraqutnee who corrected the Haafidh, the Imaam Ibn Al-Anbaaree when he was young. And he (Ibn Al-Anbaaree) was an elder and respected Imaam, but yet he still accepted the correction from him. The story is found in *Taareekh Baghdaad* (3/183)

⁷ Reported by Abu Ya'laa in his *Musnad-ul-Kabeer* from the path of Mujaalid bin Sa'eed who is very weak. Al-Bayhaqee also reported it and its chain or narration is broken. 'Abd-ur-Razzaaq reported it and in its chain is Abul-'Ujfaa As-Sulamee and he is weak also. See *Al-Maqaasid-ul-Hasanah* (pg. 320).

⁸ It is found in the previous story itself.

⁹ See *I'laam-ul-Muwaqqi'een* (2/363) and *Iqaadh Himam Uleel-Absaar* (pg. 100)

¹⁰ See his book *Ar-Risaalah* (no. 598-599) and *Al-Maqaasid-ul-Hasanah* (pg. 15).

وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا

“And if it (the Qur’aan) were from someone other than Allaah, they would have found many contradictions in it.” [Surah An-Nisaa: 82]”

And what is more profound than this is his saying: "No one ever debated me except that I noticed: either the truth was manifested on his tongue or on my tongue."

This indicates that his intention was for nothing else but to manifest the truth, even if it were found on the tongue of someone other than him, such as those who debated or differed with him.

Whoever possesses this type of condition, then indeed he will not hate having his opinion rejected, nor having his contradiction of the Sunnah clarified, whether during his lifetime or after his death.

This was the way the scholars of Islaam from past and present – those who are the protectors of it and who rise to support it – used to think about others. They would also not detest the opposition they received from those that contradicted them with a proof that was made known to them. This was even if the proof that these individuals (who opposed them) used was not strong according to them, such that they would accept it and abandon their proof in place of it.

This is why Imaam Ahmad (*rahimahullaah*) would mention Ishaq bin Raahawaih (*rahimahullaah*) while praising and commending him. And he would say: “Even if he does contradict (me with regard to the Sunnah) in some matters, then indeed, the people will never cease to differ with one another.” Or it is as he said.

And many times he (*rahimahullaah*) was presented with the words of Ishaq and other Imaams, and their sources from where they derived their opinions, and he would not agree with them in their opinion, nor would he reject their views or their evidences for it, even though he would not agree with any of that.¹¹

Imaam Ahmad (*rahimahullaah*) approved of what was related from Haatim Al-Asam, when it was said to him: “You are a non-Arab and do not speak eloquently, yet no one debates you, except that you silence him. So with what do you gain victory over your

¹¹ This is not in the unrestricted sense. See the great scholar Ibn Al-Qayyim's refutation of those who say, "There is no rejection to be done on the issues in which there is difference of opinion" included in *Ilaam-ul-Muwaqqi'een* (3/288), for it is very important.

opponents?” He replied: “By three things: I become happy when my opponent speaks correctly (on a point). I become grieved when he errs. And I withhold my tongue from him, lest I should say something that would harm him” - or something with this meaning - so Ahmad (*rahimahullaah*) said: “How wise of a man he is.”

Therefore, refuting weak (erroneous) opinions and clarifying the truth with regard to what opposes it, based upon sound evidences, is not from what these scholars detested. Rather, it was from that which they loved and for which they commended and praised those who did it.

So it does not enter into the realm of backbiting at all. But suppose there is someone that hates to have his error, which contradicts the Sunnah, exposed. In this case, there is no consideration given to his hatred for that, because hating to manifest the truth - if it is in opposition to the opinion of a man - is not from those matters that are praiseworthy.

Rather it is an obligation on the Muslim to love that the truth be made manifest and that the Muslims (in general) are aware of it, regardless of whether it is in conformity or in opposition to his (personal) view.¹²

This is from the aspects of sincerity (*naseehah*) towards **"Allaah, His Book, His Messenger, His Religion, the leaders of the Muslims and their common folk."** And this, in fact, is the Religion itself, as the Prophet ﷺ has informed us.¹³

As for clarifying the mistake of one of the scholars who erred in the past, then if one observes good manners in his speech and does well in his refutation and response, then there is no harm upon him nor is there any blame that he can be accused of. And if it turns out, that he was misled by this (past) scholar's (erroneous) opinion, then there is (also) no harm (i.e. sin) on him.

When a statement would reach some of the *Salaf* that they rejected, they would say: "This person has not spoken the truth." This example is taken from the saying of the

¹² **These words ought to be written in gold ink, so consider them!!**

¹³ More than one of the Companions have reported this hadeeth, among them Tameem Ad-Daaree. It is transmitted by Muslim (55), Abu Dawood (4944), An-Nasaa'ee (7/156), Ahmad (4/102), Abu 'Uwaanah (1/36-37), Al-Humaidee (837), Al-Baghawee (3514), At-Tabaraanee in *Al-Kabeer* (1260-1262), Ibn Hibbaan in *Raudat-ul-'Uqalaa* (194), Ibn An-Najaar in *Dhail Taareekh Baghdaad* (2/193 & 301) Ash-Shihaab Al-Qadaa'ee in his *Musnad* (17-18), Wakee' in *Az-Zuhd* (346 & 621), Abu 'Ubaid in *Al-Amwaal* (9) and Al-Bukhaaree in *At-Tareekh-us-Sagheer* (2/35)

Prophet ﷺ: **"Abu As-Sanaabil has not spoken the truth"**,¹⁴ when news reached him ﷺ that he issued a ruling that a woman whose husband passed away, while she was pregnant, was not permitted to remarry upon delivering her child, but instead had to wait until four months and ten days had passed.¹⁵

The righteous Imaams went to great lengths in forsaking the weak sayings (opinions) of some of the scholars. And they refuted them with the highest degree of refutation, as Imaam Ahmad (*rahimahullaah*) used to censure Abu Thawr and others in their opinions that they were alone in saying. And he went to great extremes in refuting them in these opinions.

All of this relates to the outer and apparent matters. As for the inner affairs, then if one's intention in doing that (criticism) is to just clarify the truth and so that the people will not be deceived by the sayings of someone who erred in his opinions, then there is no doubt that this individual will be rewarded for his intention. And by doing this with this intention, he falls into the category of being from those who show sincerity to Allaah, His Messenger, the leaders of the Muslims and their common folk. And it is the same whether the one who clarifies the mistake is young or old. So he has a good example in those scholars who refuted the (weak) opinions of Ibn 'Abbaas ؓ which have been declared irregular, and which have been rejected by the scholars, such as (his opinion) regarding *mut'ah* (temporary divorce), *sarf* (bartering), two *'Umrahs* and other than that.¹⁶

And he has a good example in those who refuted the opinion of Sa'eed Ibn Al-Musayyib (*rahimahullaah*) concerning his allowing the woman that was divorced three times (to remarry her first husband) with just the (marriage) contract,¹⁷ and his other opinions that contradicted the established Sunnah. And there are the scholars who

¹⁴ With this wording, the hadeeth has been reported by Ahmad (1/447), Al-Baghawee (2388) and Al-Haythamee in *Al-Majma'* (5/3) and he said that its narrators were of the standard of the *Saheeh*. The source of this story occurs in *Saheeh Al-Bukhaaree* (9/415) and in *Saheeh Muslim* (1484).

¹⁵ [Translator's Note: The *'iddah* (waiting period) before a woman can remarry is 4 months and ten days. But if she is pregnant, then the her waiting period is whichever of the two comes first - either the four months and ten days or the day of her delivery. So if she delivers before the four months pass by, then the time of delivery takes precedence and she is allowed to remarry from this point on.]

¹⁶ These are well known Fiqh issues.

¹⁷ [Translator's Note: When a woman is divorced three times by her husband, he cannot remarry her unless she first marries someone else, has intercourse with him, and then is divorced by him. Only then is she permissible for her first husband again. The weak opinion mentioned above states that the woman that was divorced three times by her husband, in order to become *halaal* (permissible) for him again, she just needed to remarry another man, without having intercourse with him (i.e. upon the marriage contract alone), and get divorced from him. And Allaah knows best.]

refuted Al-Hasan Al-Basree with regard to his opinion that a wife should not mourn for her deceased husband, and who refuted 'Ataa for his (weak) opinions, and Taawoos in the numerous issues in which he differed from the scholars, as well as all those (other scholars) whom the Muslims have agreed upon their guidance, knowledge, respect and reverence.

And not one of the scholars considered those that didn't agree with him in these issues and their likes to be belittling or defaming these Imaams.

The books of the Muslim scholars from past and present, such as the books of Ash-Shaafi'ee, Ishaq, Abu 'Ubaid, Abu Thawr and those scholars of Hadeeth and Fiqh that came after them, are filled with the clarifications of these opinions. And if we were to mention that in words, this discussion would be severely prolonged.

But if the intention of the one refuting is to expose the faults of the one being refuted and to debase him and manifest his ignorance and shortness of knowledge, then this is forbidden, whether the refutation is done in the presence of the one being refuted or in his absence, or whether it is done during that person's lifetime or after his death. This type of action falls under the acts which Allaah condemns in His Book and which He threatens the one who does it, concerning his slander and backbiting. It also falls into the statement of the Prophet ﷺ:

"O you group of people that believe with your tongues but not with your hearts! Do not abuse the Muslims nor seek after their faults. For indeed, he who seeks after their faults, Allaah will seek after his faults. And whoever has Allaah seek after his faults, He will expose them, even if he may have committed them in the privacy of his own home."¹⁸

All of this talk is with respect to the scholars that are followed in the Religion. **As for the people of innovation and misguidance and those who imitate the scholars**

¹⁸ Reported by Abu Ya'laa in his *Musnad* (1675) and Abu Nu'aim in *Ad-Dalaa'il* (356) on the authority of Al-Baraa' ؓ. Al-Haithamee (*rahimahullaah*) said in *Al-Majma'* (8/93): "Abu Laylaa reported it and its narrators are all reliable. It has also been reported from the hadeeth of Abu Barzah ؓ with a strong chain of narration in Ahmad (4/421 & 424) and Abu Dawood (4880)." And in this section occurs the hadeeth of Ibn 'Umar with a *hasan* chain of narration in *At-Tirmidhee* (2033), *Al-Baghawee* (3526) and *Ibn Hibbaan* (1494 of the *Mawaarid*). See also *At-Targheeb wat-Tarheeb* (3/177) of *Al-Mundhiree*.

but are not from them,¹⁹ then it is permissible to expose their ignorance and manifest their deficiencies, in order to warn others against following them.²⁰

However, our discussion now is not concerning this topic and Allaah knows best.

¹⁹ And in these days, how many people exist who imitate the scholars yet are not from them. They deceive the people by making beautiful expressions and using nice words!!

²⁰ [**Translator's Note:** This is an important point mentioned by the author before continuing further in his book, since he does not want his readers to think that this discussion pertains to innovators. Rather, as he states, their affair is to be publicized so that they may be abandoned and rejected. So the discussion here does not apply to them in the least nor can it be used in defense of one of them.]

FORMS OF ADVISING

If it is understood from someone, that he intends with his refutation of the scholars, to advise sincerely towards Allaah and His Messenger, then it is obligatory that he be treated with kindness, respect and veneration, just as was done by all the Muslim Imaams whose mention and examples were stated (previously), as well as those who followed them in goodness.

And if it is understood from someone that he desires, with his refuting of them, to defame, slander and expose (their) faults, then he deserves to be confronted with disciplinary action so that he and his likes will be prevented from these grotesque forbidden actions.

This intention can be recognized at times by the (own) affirmation and acknowledgment of the one refuting and at times by hints that are given in his actions and statements. So whoever is known for his knowledge, religious characteristics, respect and esteem for the Imaams of the Muslims, he will not state a refutation nor a clarification of an error except in the manner in which other scholars see it proper.

With regard to books and works of research, it is an obligation for one to understand the author's words as having the intention mentioned in the first case.²¹ And whoever takes his words to mean something other than that – while his condition is like that which has been stated (of good) – then he is from those who think evil and suspicious thoughts about one who is innocent. And this is from the types of suspicion that Allaah and His Messenger ﷺ have forbidden. So he falls under the saying of Allaah, the Most Perfect:

وَمَنْ يَكْسِبْ خَطِيئَةً أَوْ إِثْمًا ثُمَّ يَرْمِ بِهِ بَرِيئًا فَقَدِ احْتَمَلَ بُهْتَانًا وَإِثْمًا مُّبِينًا

“And whoever earns a fault or a sin and then throws it onto someone innocent, he has indeed burdened himself with falsehood and a manifest sin.” [Surah An-Nisaa: 112]

This is because having suspicious thoughts about someone that did not manifest any signs of evil is from the things that Allaah and His Messenger have forbidden, since the one holding the suspicious thoughts combines two things: 1) Earning a fault and sin, and 2) accusing an innocent person of it.

²¹ Meaning: That he desires to guide and bring about good

And his entering into the severe threat found in this *ayah* becomes even greater if there should appear from him – I mean the one who holds suspicious thoughts – signs of evil, such as much injustice, enmity, little piety, a loose tongue, excessive backbiting and slandering, jealousy of people for what Allaah has given them from His bounty²² and blessing, and rushing to compete to gain a position of authority before due time.

So if these attributes, of which the people of knowledge and faith are not pleased with, are recognized in someone, then indeed he only thinks sickly of the scholars. And if one's refutation of them is based according to the second case mentioned,²³ then he deserves to be countered with contempt and degradation.

And whoever does not have any signs show from him that indicate a specific matter, in the total sense, then it is an obligation to take and accept his words according to the best manner (of understanding), and it is not permissible to take them in a negative way.

'Umar رضي الله عنه said:

“Do not suspect evil thoughts due to a word that has come out of the mouth of your Muslim brother. Rather, you should find that it is only filled with good.”²⁴

²² See the treatise *Dhamm-ul-Hasad wa Ahlihi* (In Dispraise of Jealousy and its Adherents) of Ibn Al-Qayyim with my checking.

²³ Meaning: That he desires to only expose faults and to disparage

²⁴ Reported by Ahmad in *Az-Zuhd* as has been stated by As-Suyootee in *Ad-Durr-ul-Manthoor* (6/92).

THE MANNERS OF ADVISING

And from this discussion is: when it is said to a man in his face that which he hates to hear. So if this is done with the intention of sincerely advising him, then it is good. Some of the *Salaf* would say to their brothers: “Do not advise me until you tell me in my face what I hate (to hear).” So when an individual informs his brother about a defect (found in him) in order that he may avoid it, it is good for the one being informed about one of his defects to make an excuse for it, if an excuse for it exists.

But if this advising is done with the intention of (only) blaming him due to a sin (he committed), then it is reprehensible and condemned. It was said to one of the *Salaf*: “Would you love that someone inform you about your faults?” So he replied: “If he does so with the intention of blaming me, then no.”

So blaming and condemning someone for a sin he committed is detested. The Prophet ﷺ forbade the condemning of a fornicating woman, even though he commanded that she be lashed with a whip.²⁵ So she was whipped according to the legal limits (*hudoos*), but she was not condemned for her sin, nor was she blamed for it.

It is reported in At-Tirmidhee²⁶ and other collections in *marfoo'* form [i.e. that the Prophet said]:

“Whosoever condemns his brother for a sin (he committed) will not die until he has committed it (i.e. the same sin) himself.”

The hadeeth is referring to a sin, of which the person who committed it has repented from.

Al-Fudail (*rahimahullaah*) said: “The believer conceals (the sin of his brother) and advises (him), while the evildoer disgraces and condemns (him).”

²⁵ It is reported in Al-Bukhaaree (4/350) and Muslim (1704) on the authority of Abu Hurairah ؓ. See *Sharh-us-Sunnah* (10/298) of Imaam Al-Baghawee.

²⁶ Under no. (2507) on the authority of Mu'aadh ؓ. Ibn 'Adiyy also reported it in *Al-Kaamil* (6/2181), Al-Khateeb in *Taareekh Baghdaad* (2/339) and Az-Zabeedee added that it was also found in Ibn Abee-Duniyaa's *As-Samat* and *Al-Gheebah* as well as in Al-Baghawee. There are two defects with its chain of narration. The first is that Khaalid bin Ma'daan never met Mu'aadh. And the second is that Muhammad bin al-Hasan bin Yazeed is very weak. This has been mentioned by Adh-Dhahabee in *Al-Meezaan* (3/515) and he listed this hadeeth as an example. As-Saghaanee also mentioned this hadeeth in his *Al-Mawdoo'aat* (no. 58).

This is what Al-Fudail has mentioned as being from the signs of advising and condemning - and it is that advising is linked to secrecy while condemning is linked to publicizing.

It used to be said: “Whosoever commands his brother (towards doing good) at the head of a gathering, then he has condemned him.” Or it is something with this meaning.

The *Salaf* used to hate that commanding good and forbidding evil be done in this manner. Instead, they loved that it be done privately between the one commanding and the one being commanded, for indeed, this is from the signs of sincere advice. This is since it is not the goal of the one who is advising to spread and publicize the faults of the person he is advising, rather his goal is only to put an end to the evil that he has fallen into.

As for spreading and exposing someone's faults, then that is from the things that Allaah and His Messenger ﷺ have forbidden. Allaah, may He be Exalted, says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ تَشِيعَ الْفَاحِشَةُ فِي الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ
فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٩﴾ وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ
عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ رَعُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ

“Verily, those who love that the evil and indecent actions of those who believe should be propagated (and spread), they will have a painful torment in this world and the Hereafter. And Allaah knows and you know not. And had it not been for the grace of Allaah and His mercy on you, (Allaah would have hastened the punishment on you) and that Allaah is full of kindness, Most Merciful.” [Surah An-Noor: 19-20]

The *ahaadeeth* concerning the virtue of keeping the faults of others secret are many.²⁷

Some of the scholars would say to those who were commanding towards good: “Strive hard to conceal the faults of the sinners, for indeed, exposing their faults shows a weakness in Islaam. The thing that deserves the most to be concealed is one’s faults.”

²⁷ See *Fath-ul-Baaree* (5/97) and *Saheeh Muslim* (4/1996)

It is for this reason that spreading someone's evil and indecent actions is linked to condemning. And they are both from the affairs of the evildoer, since it is not the goal of the evildoer to put an end to the fault nor that the believer avoids that fault or defect. Rather his only goal is to spread and publicize the defects found in his believing brother, and to destroy his honor. So he initiates that and repeats it. And his intention is to belittle his believing brother by exposing his defects and bad qualities to the people so that some harm can fall upon him in this world.

But as for the person that is sincerely advising, his aim in doing that (advising) is to eradicate the faults found in his believing brother and to help him avoid it. This is what Allaah the Most High, has described His Messenger ﷺ with, saying:

لَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ عَزِيزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا عَنِتُّمْ حَرِيصٌ عَلَيْكُمْ
بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ

“Verily, there has come unto you a Messenger from amongst yourselves. It grieves him that you should receive any harm or difficulty. He is anxious over you (to rid you of faults and sin), for the believers he is full of pity, kind and merciful.” [Surah At-Tawbah: 128]

And He described his ﷺ Companions with that, saying:

مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ

“Muhammad is the Messenger of Allaah. And those who are with him (i.e. his Companions) are severe with the disbelievers and merciful towards one another.” [Surah Al-Fath: 29]

And He described the believers with the characteristics of patience and mutual advising of one another towards mercy and compassion.²⁸

But what drives the evildoer to propagate (his brother's) evil and to disgrace him is force and harshness, his love for abusing his believing brother, and (his desire) to

²⁸ As is found in Allaah's saying: **“Then he became from among those who believed and recommended one another towards patience and recommended one another towards compassion.”** [Surah Al-Balad. 17]

inflict some harm upon him. These are the characteristics of the Devil – the one who beautifies disbelief, sin and disobedience to the children of Adam so that due to it they may become amongst the dwellers of the Hellfire, as Allaah says:

إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ فَاتَّخِذُوهُ عَدُوًّا إِنَّمَا يَدْعُوا حِزْبَهُ لِيَكُونُوا
مِنَ أَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ

“Verily, the Devil is an enemy for you, so take him as an enemy. Verily, he only calls his party (of followers) to be from amongst the dwellers of the Hellfire.”
[Surah Faatir: 6]

And He says, after telling us the story of Iblees (the Devil) when he was with the prophet of Allaah, Aadam, and the evil plot that he unleashed on him, such that it brought him to be cast out from Paradise:

يَذَرِيكُمْ فِي النَّارِ لَعْنَةُ رَبِّكَ لِأَنَّكُمْ كَانْتُمْ فِيهَا فَتَاهُمْ أُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ السَّعِيرِ
يَذَرِيكُمْ فِي النَّارِ لَعْنَةُ رَبِّكَ لِأَنَّكُمْ كَانْتُمْ فِيهَا فَتَاهُمْ أُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ السَّعِيرِ

“O Children of Aadam! Let not the Devil deceive you, as he got your parents out of Paradise, stripping them of their garments, to show them their private parts.”
[Surah Al-A'araaf: 27]

So what a difference there is between one whose intention it is to advise (*naseehah*) and one whose intention it is to disgrace (*fadeehah*)! And no one confuses one of these with the other, except someone who does not possess sound intellect.

THE RECOMPENSE

The recompense of one who spreads the evil deeds of his believing brother and seeks after his faults and exposes his defects, is that Allaah will seek after his faults and disgrace him (by exposing them) even if he may have committed them in the privacy of his own home. This is based on what has been reported from the Prophet ﷺ in several places, and Imaam Ahmad, Abu Dawood and At-Tirmidhee have transmitted it from numerous paths of narration.²⁹

At-Tirmidhee transmitted from the hadeeth of Waa'ilah Ibn Al-Asqa' on the Prophet ﷺ that he said: **"Do not express joy at your brother's misfortune or else Allaah will pardon him for it and test you with it."**³⁰

And he (At-Tirmidhee) said that it was a *hasan ghareeb* hadeeth. He also reports the hadeeth of Mu'aadh ؓ in *marfoo'* form: "Whoever condemns his brother because of a sin (he committed) will not die until he commits it (himself)." Its chain of narration is *munqati'* (broken).

Al-Hasan (Al-Basree) said: "It used to be said: 'Whoever condemns his brother for a sin that he repented from, will not die until Allaah tests him with it (i.e. the same sin).'"³¹

And it is reported from the hadeeth of Ibn Mas'ood ؓ with a chain of narration that has weakness in it: **"Affliction is charged by speech. So if a man condemns another man by saying that he breast-fed from a female dog, then that man (who said that) will indeed breast-feed from one."**³²

²⁹ The checking for this has been stated previously

³⁰ At-Tirmidhee reported it under number (2507) and in its chain is Al-Qaasim bin Umayyah Al-Hidhaa. Ibn Hibbaan mentioned him in *Al-Majrooheen* (2/213) and said: "He was a shaikh who reported from Hafs bin Gayyaath many strange and weak narrations. It is not permissible to use him as a support when he is alone (in his narration)." Then he reported this hadeeth from him and commented upon it, saying: "There is no source for this found in the sayings of the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ." I say: This hadeeth has also been reported by At-Tabaraanee in *Al-Kabeer* (22/53), *Musnad Ash-Shaamiyeen* (384), Al-Qadaa'ee in *Musnad Ash-Shihaab* (917-918) and Abu Nu'aim in *Al-Hilyah* (5/186). And it is also succeeded by 'Umar bin Isma'eel bin Mujaalid found in At-Tirmidhee, Abu ash-Shaikh in *Al-Amthaal* (202) and Al-Khateeb in *At-Taareekh* (9/95-96). However, there is no point in that, since 'Umar is *matrook* (rejected).

³¹ The discussion of this has been stated previously in detail.

³² Reported by Abu Nu'aim in *Akhbaar Asbahaan* (1/161) Al-Khateeb in his *Taareekh* (13/279) and Ibn Al-Jawzee mentioned it in *Al-Mawdoo'aat* (2/83). Al-'Ajaloonee in *Kashf-ul-Khufaa* (2/343) added to that by attributing it to Ad-Daylamee. The hadeeth is reported through other paths from 'Alee and Hudaifah, however they have severe weaknesses in them. See *Al-Laalee Al-Masnoo'ah* (2/293-295) of

The meaning of this has been reported on a group amongst the *Salaf*. And when Ibn Sireen failed to return a debt he owed and was detained because of it, he said: “Indeed, I am aware of the sin (I committed) by which this befell me. I condemned a man forty years ago saying to him: ‘O bankrupt one.’”

As-Suyootee and *Mukhtasar Maqaasid-ul-Hasanah* (pg. 83) of Az-Zurqaanee and *Ad-Durr--ul-Multaqitt* (pg. 22) of As-Saghaanee.

CONCERNING CONDEMNING

From the apparent signs of condemning is: Exposing someone's evil and propagating it under the pretense of advising, while claiming that it is only these defects that are making him do it, general or specific. Meanwhile, on the inside, his aim is only to condemn and cause harm.³³ So he is from the brothers of the hypocrites, those whom Allaah has disparaged in His Book in many places, for indeed Allaah disparages those who outwardly display a good action or saying, while intending inwardly to accomplish a mischievous and evil goal. And He has counted that as one of the aspects of hypocrisy, as is stated in Surah Baraa,³⁴ in which He humiliates the hypocrites and exposes their despicable attributes:

وَالَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مَسْجِدًا ضِرَارًا وَكُفْرًا وَتَفْرِيقًا بَيْنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ
وَإِرْصَادًا لِّمَنْ حَارَبَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَلَيَحْلِفُنَّ إِنْ أَرَدْنَا
إِلَّا الْحُسْنَٰى وَاللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ إِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ

“And as for those who set up a masjid in order to cause harm, (spread) disbelief, disunite the believers and to make it as an outpost for those who made war against Allaah and His Messenger since aforetime, they will indeed swear that their intention is nothing but good. But Allaah bears witness that they are certainly liars.” [Surah At-Tawbah: 107]

And Allaah says:

لَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ يَفْرَحُونَ بِمَا آتَوْا وَيُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يُحْمَدُوا بِمَا لَمْ
يَفْعَلُوا فَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّهُمْ بِمَفَازَةٍ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

“Think not that those who rejoice in what they have done, and love to be praised for what they have not done – do not think that they are rescued from the torment. And for them is a painful punishment!” [Surah Aali 'Imraan: 188]

³³ This is from the actions of the heart which no one has knowledge of except Allaah, the Most Perfect.

³⁴ [Translator's Note: He means Surah At-Tawbah]

This *ayah* was sent down concerning the Jews, when the Prophet ﷺ asked them about something and they concealed knowledge of it informing him instead of something else. Yet they showed to him that they had indeed informed him about what he had asked them. And they sought praise from him ﷺ because of it and became joyous at what they gained by concealing it and because he ﷺ asked them. This is what Ibn 'Abbaas ؓ stated and his hadeeth concerning that is transmitted in the two *Saheeh* collections.³⁵

Abu Sa'eed Al-Khudree ؓ said:

"There was a group of men among the hypocrites who when the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ would go out to fight in the (military) expeditions, would refrain from going with him. And they would be happy with opposing the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ with their sitting (instead of fighting). So when Allaah's Messenger ﷺ would arrive, they would make excuses for themselves and swear to him. And they loved to be praised for that which they did not do. So this *ayah* was revealed."³⁶

Therefore, these characteristics are the characteristics of the Jews and the hypocrites. And it is that someone outwardly displays a saying or an action, while presenting an image in which he appears to be upon good. Yet his intention in doing that is to accomplish an evil goal. So he is praised for what good he has made manifest outwardly, while accomplishing by it, the evil goal he has kept hidden inwardly. And he basks in the praise he receives for that which he has outwardly portrayed as being good, which is in fact evil on the inside, and he is happy that his evil hidden objective has been achieved. So his benefit is perfected for him and his scheme is carried out effectively by this deception!!

Anyone with this characteristic definitely falls under the (threat) of this *ayah* - thus he is threatened with a painful torment. An example of this is: When someone desires to defame a man, belittle him and expose his faults so that people turn away from him. This is done either because he loves to cause harm to him, because of his enmity towards him, or because he fears him due to a rivalry that exists between them with regard to wealth, leadership, or other blameworthy causes. So he does not find a way

³⁵ Reported by Al-Bukhaaree (9/301), Muslim (17/123), Ahmad (1/298) and Ibn Jareer (4/207).

³⁶ Reported by Al-Bukhaaree (8/233), Muslim (17/123) and Ibn Jareer (4/205). It must be noted here that Al-Haafidh Ibn Hajr mentioned in *Al-Fath* (9/301) that it is possible to combine these two causes for the *ayah's* revelation found in the two hadeeths by saying that it was revealed with regard to both of these groups (Jews and hypocrites). Shaikh Muqbil bin Haadee Al-Waadi'ee said in his *As-Saheeh-ul-Musnad* (pg. 35): "If the hadeeth of Abu Sa'eed is more established then that takes more precedence because the hadeeth of Ibn 'Abbaas is from that which the two Shaikhs have been criticized by, as has been stated in *Muqaddimat-ul-Fath* (20/132) and as is stated in *Fath-ul-Baaree* (9/302). And there is no point in restricting it to only the People of the Book..."

towards accomplishing his goal, except by publicly degrading him due to some religious reason. For example, someone (i.e. a scholar) has refuted a weak opinion from the many opinions of a well-known and famous scholar. So this (evil) individual spreads that amongst those who respect that scholar, saying: "This person (that did the refutation) hates this scholar, and is only defaming and criticizing him."

So by doing this, he (the evil person) deceives all those people that hold that scholar in esteem, making them believe that such a refutation was done out of hatred and with insult on the part of the one refuting, and that his deed was full of audacity and arrogance. So he (the evil person) is (outwardly) defending this scholar and uplifting the abuse from him - and that is an act pleasing to Allaah and in obedience to Him. So he combines this outer facade of advising with two disgusting and forbidden things:³⁷

First: The insinuation that this scholar's refutation of the other opinion was done out of hatred, seeking to belittle (the other scholar), and as a result of following his desires. But (in reality) he only desires by it to advise the believers and to make known some aspect of knowledge that is unlawful to keep concealed.

Second: He (the evildoer) manifests and magnifies the (scholar's) criticism (for the other scholar), so that he can fulfill his desire and achieve his evil goal under the pretense of advising and defending the scholars of the Religion.

This type of evil plotting is similar to the injustice and oppression displayed by the tribe of Marwaan and their followers, who won the people's affection and at the same time, turned these people's hearts away from 'Alee bin Abee Taalib, Al-Hasan, Al-Husayn and their offspring, may Allaah be pleased with all of them.

When 'Uthmaan ؓ was killed, the Muslim nation did not see anyone possessing more right to succeed him other than 'Alee ؓ, so they pledged allegiance to him. So those who sought to turn the people away from him set about their goal by manifesting the outrageous and scandalous murder of 'Uthmaan. And it was just as they said it was.

³⁷ [**Translator's Note:** We ask the noble readers to consider these precious words stated by the author and compare them with the likes of the situations we find today. No doubt the scholars of the Sunnah in these days are accused in such a manner. Such an example can be found in Imaam Muhammad Naasir-ud-Deen Al-Albaanee (*rahimhullaah*) and the lies and attacks that were launched against him by Hasan Saqqaf, Kabbani and their likes, who make themselves appear as though they're advising the Muslim ummah. But yet in reality they are doing no more than discrediting, defaming and belittling a scholar. And the claims that come from them are well known in that these scholars, such as Al-Albaanee, who warn against "blind-following" are labeled as deviants who hate the four Imaams and who want to do away with their teachings! May Allaah give us the ability to see through the false accusations of the ignorant and the unjust.]

But then they added to it that the one who conspired his murder and carried it out was none other than 'Alee ؓ. And this was a lie and a slander against him!

And 'Alee ؓ would swear and reaffirm his oaths in denying this accusation - and he was truthful and innocent in his oath, may Allaah be pleased with him. But they began to fight against him, claiming that their struggle was for the sake of the Religion and that it was pleasing to Allaah, and then they began to fight with his children. These individuals strove hard in publicizing this (lie), propagating it on the *mimbars* on the days of *Jumu'ah*, as well as on other occasions in which there were large gatherings. This continued until it settled into the hearts of their followers that the matter was as these individuals said it was, and that the tribe of Marwaan had more right (to the *Khilaafah*) than 'Alee and his children due to their closeness to 'Uthmaan, and that they had more right to avenge his ؓ death. So in doing this, they were able to unite the hearts of the people against 'Alee and his sons and to turn the people to fight against him and his children after him. This asserted the kingship for them and their rule became established as a result of that.

While in privacy, one of them would say to those he confided in, something with the meaning: "No one amongst the Companions was more restrained from (causing harm to) 'Uthmaan than 'Alee." So it would be said to him: "Then why did the people revile him?" So he would respond: "The kingship (i.e. end of the *Khilaafah*) would not be established if it weren't for that."

The meaning of this is that if they did not turn the people's hearts away from 'Alee ؓ and his children, and if they didn't attribute the injustice done to 'Uthmaan to them, the hearts of the people would not feel sympathy for them (later), due to what they knew of their beautiful attributes and honorable qualities, for they used to rush to follow them and pledge allegiance to them (in the past). And because of this, the Umayyah dynasty came to an end and the people ceased obeying them.³⁸

³⁸ See *Al-'Awaasim min-al-Qawaasim* of the Qaadee Ibn Al-'Arabee al-Maalikee (*rahimahullaah*) for in there is what is sufficient for one who seeks the truth about this subject, Allaah willing.

THE REMEDY

So if anyone is tested with this type of plotting,³⁹ then let him fear Allaah, seek His aid and have patience. For verily, the final good end is for *Taqwaa* (i.e. those who fear and are obedient to Allaah).

This is as Allaah, the Most High, says. After narrating the story of Yoosuf and what befell him from the different types of abuse he received from his brothers in their evil plotting and conspiracy (against him), He says:

وَكَذَلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوسُفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ

“Thus, did We establish Yoosuf in the land” [Surah Yoosuf: 21]

And Allaah says, reporting from him that he said to his brothers:

قَالَ أَنَا يُوسُفُ وَهَذَا أَخِي قَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْنَا

“I am Yoosuf and this is my brother (Benjamin). Allaah has indeed been gracious to us.” [Surah Yoosuf: 90]

And He, the Most High, tells us of story of Moosaa and what befell him and his people from the abuse they received at the hands of Pharaoh and his evil planning, and that he (Moosaa) said (to his followers):

قَالَ مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ اسْتَعِينُوا بِاللَّهِ وَاصْبِرُوا إِنَّ الْأَرْضَ لِلَّهِ يُورِثُهَا مَنْ

يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٢٨﴾

“Seek help in Allaah and be patient. Verily, the earth belongs to Allaah. He gives it to whom He wills of His servants. And the final (good) end is for those who have *Taqwaa*” [Surah Al-A'raaf: 128]

³⁹ Meaning he is tested by it at the hands of someone else.

Furthermore, Allaah informed us that the bad consequences of evil plotting fall back on the one who plotted the evil (in the first place), as He says:

وَلَا يَحِيقُ الْمَكْرُ السَّيِّئُ إِلَّا بِأَهْلِهِ

“But the evil plot encompasses only he who makes it.” [Surah Faatir: 43]

And Allaah says:

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَا فِي كُلِّ قَرْيَةٍ أَكْبَرًا مُجْرِمِيهَا لِيَمْكُرُوا
فِيهَا وَمَا يَمْكُرُونَ إِلَّا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ

“And thus We have set up in every town, great ones of its wicked people to plot therein. But they plot not except against their own selves, yet they perceive not.” [Surah Al-An’aam: 123]

Furthermore, the actual facts also bear witness to this. For indeed, if someone carefully investigates the information of the people and the history of the world, he will come upon occurrences where someone plotted against his brother, but the plot fell back onto him. And astonishingly that served as a means for his salvation and deliverance

And if we were to mention some of the events that did occur with regard to that, this book would be prolonged and the talk would be lengthened. Thus, Allaah is the One who grants what is correct and it is upon Him to explain the correct Way. And He is sufficient for us and the best of Guardians. May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon Muhammad, his family and his companions.

[End of the Treatise]