

اختلاف الأئمة

The Differences of
THE IMĀMS

New Referenced Edition

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White Thread
P R E S S

Publisher's Note

The Differences of the Imāms, a translation of *Ikhtilāf al-A'imma* by Shaykh al-Ḥadīth Mawlānā Muḥammad Zakariyyā Kāndhlawī, was originally published in December 1997 (Sha'bān 1418) by Madrasah Arabia Islamia, Azaadville, South Africa, and was subsequently published in the UK in 1999. The author's popularity and his limpid writing style, coupled with the lucid English translation by Mawlānā Muhammad Kadwa and the then heightened interest in the work's subject matter, together contributed to the tremendous acceptance that the book received.

White Thread Press now presents an edited and revised edition of Mawlānā Muhammad Kadwa's translation, published for the first time in the U.S., with kind permission from Madrasah Arabia Islamia, Azaadville. White Thread Press has made every effort to produce this edition with total fidelity to the original work and the translation, but the following refinements were deemed necessary.

The translation has been reviewed alongside portions of the original Urdu text to ensure complete accuracy, and its language has been thoroughly edited for increased clarity. Chapter titles and subsections have been more clearly defined and other relevant headings added where deemed necessary. Part 2, Section 3 has been rearranged for clarity. References for the ḥadīths quoted throughout the books have been added (as of this second U.S. Edition). These were prepared by Shaykh

Niḥmatullāh of Dār al-ʿUlūm Deoband and graciously provided to us by Turath Publishing. Any other additions to the text made by the original translator or by the editors have been placed in brackets. The style and format of the book have been modified to conform to the standards of White Thread Press. A more standardized transliteration of Arabic terms has been adopted, with appropriate diacritical marks for more precise transliteration. A transliteration key has also been included to allow the reader easier reference to the original Arabic terminology. The glossary has been updated, and an index has been added. Finally, a more detailed biography of the author has been appended to the end of the book to give insight into his caliber as a scholar of the Islamic sciences in general, and in particular as a master of the science of ḥadīth, a subject to which he devoted over sixty years of his life, until his death in Madīna, the Illuminated City of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ.

May Allāh Most High accept this work that White Thread Press offers to the English-speaking world, and may He bless all who have assisted in preparing it and overlook any mistakes and shortcomings they may have made in doing so.

ABDUR-RAHMAN IBN YUSUF MANGERA

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not follow a traditional school in jurisprudence. He writes that a non-*mujtahid* has no retreat or option but to follow a *mujtahid* (*Ishā'at al-Sunna* 11:211). Mawlānā Batālwī further writes:

After twenty-five years of experience, we have become aware of the fact that those who, out of ignorance, totally relinquish following a school altogether (*taqlīd*) eventually relinquish Islam altogether. Some of them convert to Christianity while some of them become atheists. The most insignificant outcome of this freedom is flagrant violation of Islamic law (*Ibid.*, 11:53).

Reason 5

INTENTIONAL ACTION VS COINCIDENCE

At times, many groups of people witnessed the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ doing something. Some of them considered it coincidental and treated it as a natural and habitual activity of his. Others considered it intentional and willful, thereby narrating it as a *sunna* or *mustahab* (preferable) action. There are many examples of this nature in the books of ḥadīth. For example, on the occasion of the farewell pilgrimage, it is an accepted fact that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ camped at a place called Abṭaḥ (*Bukhārī* 1653; *Muslim* 3166). According to Abū Hurayra and ʿAbdullāh Ibn ʿUmar ؓ, this stay over was included in the rituals of ḥajj and it is *sunna* for a pilgrim to camp at Abṭaḥ (*Bukhārī* 1768; *Muslim* 3168). However, according to ʿĀ'isha and ʿAbbās ؓ, this stay over at Abṭaḥ was coincidental and it had nothing to do with the rituals of ḥajj. The servants pitched his tent at that spot; that is why he camped there. Plus, it facilitated easy departure toward Madīna Munawwara (*Bukhārī* 1765–6; *Muslim* 3169, 3172).

This is where the services of a *mujtahid* or a jurist are required to sift through the various narrations and views of the Companions ؓ and award preference to one opinion over the other. The imāms have

done accordingly on the basis of the following ḥadīth: “We will camp at Khayf Banī Kināna, where the polytheists had vowed to oppose Islam” (*Muslim* 3174). The imāms are of the view that this lodging was not coincidental but intentional. Allāh’s Messenger ﷺ intended to demonstrate the magnificence of Islam at the very spot where the disbelievers displayed their rejection of Islam. Together with this objective, if other reasons are found—for example, he camped there to facilitate easy departure—this does not mean that his stay at Abṭāḥ was not intentional.

Reason 6 UNDERLYING CAUSES

At times, contradictions appear due to the contradictory underlying causes found in the ḥadīths. For example, it is mentioned in a ḥadīth that Allāh’s Messenger ﷺ was once seated when the bier (*janāza*) of a disbeliever passed by. He immediately stood up. According to some narrations, he got up in honor of the angels accompanying the bier (*Nasā’ī* 1931). If this is the case, there is even more reason for the people to stand for the passing of a Muslim bier. The narrators who consider this to be the underlying principle of the ḥadīth do not even mention the word “disbeliever” in their narrations. They do not consider it necessary because it is immaterial whether the bier is that of a Muslim or a disbeliever, due to the presence of the angels.

However, we learn from other narrations that Allāh’s Messenger ﷺ stood up so that the bier would not pass above the heads of the Muslims, as this is a form of humiliation to them (*Nasā’ī* 1928). If this is the underlying reason for his standing up, then the practice of standing up for a *janāza* will be restricted to the bier of a disbeliever only. Hence, in this case, the word “disbeliever” must be mentioned in the ḥadīth by the narrator.

Similar is the case of another ḥadīth. Rāfiʿ ibn Khadij ؓ says, “We used to hire out our lands on the basis of temporary sharecropping (*muzāraʿa*). This was very beneficial to us, but Allāh’s Messenger ﷺ prohibited us from it. Obedience to Allāh Most High and His Messenger ﷺ precedes all benefits” (*Muslim* 3945). ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar ؓ says, “We used to hire out our plots on a temporary sharecropping basis and regarded it as beneficial and permissible. However, since Rāfiʿ ibn Khadij informed us that Allāh’s Messenger ﷺ prohibited it, we abandoned this practice” (*Muslim* 3935).

In another narration, Rāfiʿ ibn Khadij ؓ says, “My uncle and other family members used to hire out their lands on a temporary sharecropping basis. The land owner and the farmer would agree that crops growing around the water supply drains or any other pre-specified area will belong to the land owner while the remainder will belong to the farmer. Allāh’s Messenger ﷺ prohibited them from this.” Rāfiʿ ibn Khadij ؓ was then asked, “If the land owner lets his land on a specified rental?” He replied, “That is quite in order” (*Bukhārī* 2346).

In contrast to these narrations, ʿAmr ibn Dīnār relates, “I told Ṭāwūs to desist from hiring out his land on the basis of sharecropping because the Companions ؓ prohibited people from doing this. Upon this Ṭāwūs replied, ‘The most learned of the Companions, ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbbās ؓ, informed me that Allāh’s Messenger ﷺ did not actually prohibit this practice altogether. What he actually meant was that it is better for a person to lend his plot of land to his Muslim brother for purposes of cultivation instead of letting it to him in exchange for something’” (*Bukhārī* 2330; *Muslim* 3957).

So, according to Ibn ʿAbbās ؓ, the underlying cause for the prohibition was merely to ensure that people maintain good conduct with their fellow Muslim brothers. This prohibition was not a juridical injunction. However, according to Rāfiʿ ibn Khadij ؓ, the underlying cause of this ban was to demonstrate its prohibition and nothing else.

There are many other examples of this nature in the books of ḥadīth. We do not wish to go over them all, nor is it our objective to do so.

In short, the narrators differ in the underlying cause for the injunction expressed in a particular ḥadīth. Each narrator will narrate the ḥadīth according to his own understanding of it. Hence, we consequently have two apparently conflicting ḥadīths.

Nevertheless, one who is confronted with both ḥadīths and is cognizant of the principles of ḥadīth is bound to grant preference to only one narration and attempt to reinterpret the other. This can only be carried out by a person who knows many ḥadīths on a given subject and also knows the actual texts of the various ḥadīths. However, in the case of a person who only knows the translation of one ḥadīth on a particular topic, has no knowledge of a contrary ḥadīth, and is not aware of the principles of awarding preference to some ḥadīths over others, will he ever be able to understand which ḥadīth is awarded preference over the other and why?

Reason 7

WORDS HAVE MULTIPLE MEANINGS

One of the other reasons for the apparent contradictions in the ḥadīths is that there are many words that are sometimes used in the literal sense and other times in the technical or figurative sense. Allāh's Messenger ﷺ used to say something using a particular word in one context, while some of the Companions ﷺ considered the usage in a different context. There are not a few, but thousands of instances of this nature.

To give one example, the word *wuḍū'* is quite common in its technical sense [of ritual ablution before prayer]. However, literally, the word *wuḍū'* means cleanliness, purity, and washing of the hands. In a narration of the *Shamā'il* of Imām Tirmidhī, Salmān ﷺ once told Allāh's Messenger ﷺ that according to the Torah, *wuḍū'* after meals brings about blessings (*baraka*) in one's food. Allāh's Messenger ﷺ added, "*Wuḍū'* before as well as after the meal is a source of blessing in