

“Defending the Religion”

Al-Imam an-Nawawi [d.AH 676] said, “Backbiting ¹ has been made permissible in certain situations in order to achieve an Islamically legislated objective in which there is no other way to achieve that objective except through backbiting; from those situations is warning against an open innovator... (An-Nawawi 1147)” ²

Abdus-Salaam as-Suhaymi ³ wrote that Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah [d.AH 728] said, as he was explaining the permissibility of backbiting an [open] innovator, that two conditions should be fulfilled before doing so:

1. Knowledge

2. Sincerity

Ibn Tamiyyah said,

A person who takes up the task of backbiting an [open] innovator should be knowledgeable and sincere. If a person takes part in backbiting an [open] innovator, but the cause of his backbiting is to raise his status in the eyes of the people, or to cause corruption, it doesn't matter if he is speaking the truth. He is like a warrior who goes out to fight in a fit of rage [due to his lack of knowledge], showing off [due to his lack of sincerity]. On the other hand, if he is backbiting an [open] innovator, sincerely for the sake of Allah, he is like the inheritors of the Prophets (the Scholars), the successors of the Messengers, [honorably] fighting in the path of Allah...

Ibn Tamiyyah also said, “It is obligatory to criticize innovation. All Muslims have unanimously agreed that innovators and their writings that contradict the Qur'an and [authentic] Prophetic traditions must be warned against. [The purpose in] warning against them and their writings is to make clear their conditions (As-Suhaymi 66, 79).” ⁴

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¹ On the authority of Abu Hurayrah [d.AH 58], “The Messenger of Allah, prayers and peace upon him, said, ‘Do you (the Companions) know what backbiting is?’ They (the Companions) answered, ‘Allah and his Messenger know best.’ So he, prayers and peace upon him, explained: ‘Backbiting is to mention something distasteful about your brother behind his back...’ [Saheeh Muslim]

² An-Nawawi, Abu Zakariyyah Yahyaa. Riyaadh as-Saaliheen. Riyaadh: Dar as-Salaam, AH 1419/1998

³ Dr. Abdus-Salaam as-Suhaymi is a teacher in the Department of Fiqh at the Islamic University of al-Madinah.

⁴ As-Suhaymi, Abdus-Salaam. Be Serious About Your Salafiyyah. Riyaadh: Safeer Publishing House, AH 1428/2007