

The True Position According To Allah

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Scholars of Islamic Law have paid close attention to the question of which opinion on a particular issue in Islamic Law would be the true and accurate opinion in the sight of Allah (azza wa jal). It is believed that the reliable Imams of ijtihad (qualified scholarly analysis to derive legal rulings) and jurisprudence (Imam Abu Hanifa, Malik, Shafi'i, Ahmad, etc – RAA) are all dependable and trustworthy, and that their opinions can be adopted by those who follow their schools of thought. It is also asserted that their rulings concerning the various issues of Islamic Law are correct and accurate in themselves.

The question we face is: are conflicting views between the Imams simultaneously correct and in agreement with what Allah has decreed as the truth (haq), or is there only one view from among them that is the truth according to Allah? If there is only one truly correct position on a given issue in Islamic Law, then we must admit that we do not know which position, according Allah, is the truth (haq).

The following – an excerpt from Imam Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Shaybani's (ra) work Bulugh al-amani – sheds light on this issue and explains how only one ruling can be the truth (haq) in the sight of Allah:

Ibn Abi'l-'Awam narrates from Imam Tahawi and Sulayman ibn Shu'ayb that Shu'ayb al-Kasani said, **"Imam Muhammad dictated to us that whenever people are in conflict with one another regarding a particular issue (i.e., when one jurist among them judges a thing to be unlawful [haram] and another judges it to be lawful [halal]) – and the situation is such that both judges possess the competence to undertake ijtihad – even then, the opinion which is the truth according to Allah is still one, whether it be the one judging the thing to be unlawful or the one judging it be unlawful. It is not possible that one thing be lawful as well as unlawful at the same time according to Allah.**

It is the responsibility of the mujtahid to attempt his utmost in exercising his jurisprudential capabilities to infer the ruling which he deems to be the truth according to Allah. If a jurist attains the truth (i.e., the true ruling according to Allah), he has the right to act according to his judgement and has also fulfilled his responsibility. On the other hand, if a jurist does not attain the truth (the true ruling according to Allah), he has still fulfilled his responsibility (of endeavouring to uncover the truth) and is therefore also rewarded.

It is not correct for a person to conclude from two conflicting opinions that both can be the truth (haq) according to Allah. For instance, one Imam may judge a certain woman to be unlawful (in marriage) for a particular person whereas another Imam may judge her to be lawful for him. In this case, only one of these rulings can be the truth according to Allah.

However, since both Imams have fulfilled their responsibility, in making a sincere attempt to arrive at the correct ruling, both will be permitted to act according to their individual judgements,

even though, in reality, one of them has certainly erred in his judgement. The reason for this is that, according to Allah, there can only be one true answer for any particular issue in Islamic Law.”

[Imam Muhammad then concludes:] **“This is the opinion of Imam Abu Hanifa (ra) and Abu Yusuf (ra) and this is our understanding of the issue.”** [Mufti Muhammad Shafi’ in his Kashkol 101]