



113676 - The difference between the Bohras and the Rafidis; are the followers of these two groups regarded as disbelievers?

the question

I hope that you can tell me how the Bohra Shi`ah and the Rafidi Shi`ah differ in religious terms, and are they worse than the Ithna `Ashari Shi`ah? Because they say “O `Ali, grant help” and “O Husayn”, and some of the Bohras prostrate to their imam, so are they committing major shirk? So what is the ruling on describing them as disbelievers? Can we say that they are all disbelievers (kafirs), or can we say that in principle they are not disbelievers; rather they are misguided and their beliefs contain some elements of disbelief (kufr)? In order to describe a particular Bohri as a disbeliever, does it require presenting them with proof that leaves them with no excuse to persist in disbelief, which is something that only great scholars can do?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

The Rafidi Shi`ah and the Bohra Shi`ah are regarded as being among the groups that have gone astray and deviated from the religion of Allah – if we assume that they were originally Muslims.

The scholars who study different sects regard the Bohras as esoteric (batini) Isma`ilis, who are one of the sects of the Shi`ah. They went to great extremes regarding their imams, to the extent that even the Rafidis regarded them as disbelievers!

There was dissent and dispute between the Imami Rafidis and the Isma`ilis regarding the order of succession of the infallible imams after Ja`far as-Sadiq died. The order according to the Ithna `Ashari Imami Rafidis is: Ja`far as-Sadiq, then his son Musa al-Kazim, whereas according to the Isma`ilis, it is: Ja`far as-Sadiq, then his son Isma`il, then Muhammad ibn Isma`il.



Secondly:

The beliefs of the Ithna `Ashari Imami Rafidis include elements of heresy, heterodoxy and idolatry. Their most prominent beliefs include the following:

1. Belief that the Quran has been distorted.
2. Regarding the Sahabah (may Allah be pleased with them) as disbelievers except for a few of them.
3. Belief that their imams are infallible and protected against errors and forgetfulness, let alone protected against sins and bad deeds, and belief that they have absolute knowledge of the unseen.
4. Veneration of graves and shrines.

Ibn Kathir (may Allah have mercy on him) said in his commentary on the verse

{Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, and those who are with him are firm and unyielding towards the disbelievers, compassionate towards one another. You see them bowing and prostrating [in prayer], seeking the grace and pleasure of Allah. Their mark is on their faces from the effects of prostration. Such is their description in the Torah, and their likeness in the Gospel is that of a seed which sends forth its shoot, then makes it strong; then it grows thick and stands straight on its stem, delighting the sowers – so that He may infuriate the disbelievers through them. Allah has promised those among them who believe and do righteous deeds forgiveness and an immense reward} [Al-Fat-h 48:29]:

From this verse, Imam Malik (may Allah have mercy on him) concluded – according to one report from him – that the Rafidis, who hate the Sahabah, are disbelievers. That is because they (the Rafidis) are infuriated by them (the Sahabah), and whoever is infuriated by the Sahabah is a disbeliever, based on this verse. A number of the scholars agreed with him on that. The hadiths which speak of the virtues of the Sahabah and the prohibition on speaking ill of them are many, and it is sufficient to note that Allah praised them and is pleased with them. (*Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, 7/362).



Al-Qurtubi (may Allah have mercy on him) said: Malik was right in what he said, and his conclusion based on his understanding of the verse is correct. So whoever criticizes any one of them or rejects the reports narrated from any one of them has rejected what Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, said concerning them, and he has regarded the teachings of Islam as false. (*Tafsir al-Qurtubi*, 16/297).

Ibn Hazm (may Allah have mercy on him) said, refuting the Christians:

As for the Rafidis' claim that the Quran has been altered, the Rafidis are not Muslims; rather they are sects, the first of which appeared twenty-five years after the death of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). It started with some people whom Allah, may He be Exalted, caused to go astray and respond to the call of one who was scheming against Islam, and this group is similar to the Jews and Christians in terms of lies and disbelief. (*Al-Fasl fil- Milal wan-Nih@al*, 2/65).

Thirdly:

As for the Bohras, they are a mixture of various deviant beliefs; they are an esoteric group, part of the Isma`ilis, who are one of the Shi`ah sects, but they went to greater extremes in exaggerating about their imams than other Rafidis. There follow some of their beliefs:

1. They venerate their imams to the extent that they worship them, and what they call ad-Da`i al-Mutlaq (the ultimate calle?) is the ultimate authority, the one to whom they refer regarding all matters, and they prostrate to him when they approach him.
2. They have some innovated prayers, such as a prayer that they offer on the twenty third night of Ramadan, which consists of twelve rak`ahs, in which they say "O 'Ali" seven times, "O Fatimah" one hundred times, "O Hasan" one hundred times, and "O Husayn" nine hundred and ninety-seven times.
3. They appear outwardly to be Muslim, but inwardly they follow deviant beliefs. So they pray, but their prayer is offered to the hidden imam of the Isma`ilis, who is one of the descendants of at-Tayyib ibn al-Amir. They go to Makkah to do Hajj like other Muslims, but they say that



the Ka`bah is a symbol of the Imam.

4. They venerate graves and shrines like their fellow Rafidis. One of their well-known actions in the modern era is the renovation of the shrines of Karbala and an-Najaf. They have also built a golden dome above the alleged tomb of al-Husayn in Cairo.

The scholars of the Permanent Committee said:

Based on the way in which you describe the senior Bohra scholars and their followers in your question, they are to be regarded as disbelievers, because they do not believe in the fundamentals of Islam, and they do not follow the guidance of the Quran and Sunnah. It is not far-fetched to suggest that they may even mistreat and persecute those who sincerely believe in Allah and His Book, and in His Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and his Sunnah, just as the disbelievers in every nation mistreated the messengers of Allah whom He sent to them to guide them.

Shaykh `Abd al-`Aziz ibn Baz, Shaykh `Abd ar-Razzaq `Afifi, Shaykh `Abdullah ibn Ghadyan, Shaykh `Abdullah ibn Qa`ud.

Fatawa al-Lajnah ad-Da'imah, 2/390.

For more information about the Bohras, see the book *Athar al-Fikr al-Gharbi fi Inhiraf al-Mujtama` al-Muslim bi Shibhi al-Qarah al-Hindiyyah* by Khadim Husayn Ilahi Bakhsh.

In the answer to question no. 107544 there are more details about the Bohras.

Fourthly:

With regard to describing these two groups as disbelievers, there is no doubt that all of the Bohras are disbelievers, both their scholars and their ordinary people, because they are an esoteric sect, and all esoteric sects are undoubtedly deemed to be disbelievers.

As for the (Ithna `Ashari) Rafidis, there was a difference of scholarly opinion as to whether they are disbelievers.



a.. Some of the scholars think that they are originally disbelievers and they never entered Islam in the first place, because the way in which they understand the twin declaration of faith (ash-shahadatayn) is different from the way in which Muslims understand it, and they never believed in the Quran or in the religious teachings that the Sahabah transmitted to us, which they regard as nothing other than disbelief and misguidance. According to the scholars who favour this view, there is no difference between their ordinary people and their scholars, and the ruling on their ordinary people is like the ruling on the ordinary Jews and Christians. One of the most prominent modern scholars who favour this view is Shaykh `Abd al-`Aziz ibn Baz (may Allah have mercy on him).

What we see of their attitudes and practices, their deviant beliefs and their misguidance supports this view.

b.. Other scholars are of the view that we should differentiate between their ordinary people and their scholars. They say that their ordinary people cannot be regarded as disbelievers except after presenting evidence to them. As for their scholars, they are to be regarded as disbelievers, because proof has already been established against them since they have knowledge of the texts of the Quran and Sunnah. One of the most prominent scholars of the past who favoured this view is Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him), and in modern times this view was favoured by Shaykh al-Albani (may Allah have mercy on him).

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said regarding the Rafidis:

As for deeming them to be disbelievers and that they will abide forever in Hell, there are also two well-known scholarly views regarding that, both of which were narrated from Ahmad, and these two views applied to the Kharijis, the deviant Haruris and the Rafidis and their ilk. The correct view is that these beliefs that they have and know that they are contrary to what the Messenger brought are to be regarded as disbelief (kufr), and the same applies to their practices which are similar to what the disbelievers did to the Muslims. I have quoted the evidence for that elsewhere. However, deeming a particular individual among them to be a disbeliever and that he will abide forever in Hell is a matter that depends on meeting the conditions for deeming someone to be a



disbeliever, and it is also required to determine that there are no impediments to that, because we interpret the texts which promise Paradise and warn against Hell, and those which speak of the actions for which a person may be described as a disbeliever or an evildoer, as being general in meaning, and we do not deem a person to whom the general meaning of the verses applies to be a disbeliever or an evildoer until it becomes clear beyond any shadow of a doubt that this ruling is applicable to him. I have discussed this principle in detail in the general guidelines on deeming someone to be a disbeliever. Hence the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) did not describe as a disbeliever the one who said: "When I die, burn me and then scatter my ashes in the sea, for by Allah, if Allah gets hold of me, He will punish me in a way in which He has never punished anyone," even though he doubted the power of Allah and His ability to bring him back to life. For this reason the scholars do not describe as a disbeliever one who regards something prohibited as being permissible because he has only recently entered Islam, or because he grew up in a remote area. A person can only be deemed to be a disbeliever after the message reaches him, and many of these people may never have heard or read the religious texts which prove that their view is wrong, and they may not know that the Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was sent with these teachings. Thus we regard what he says as disbelief (kufr), but he can only be deemed to be a disbeliever after proof is established for him, for which the one who denies it is deemed to be a disbeliever, and no one else. And Allah knows best. (*Majmu` al-Fatawa*, 28/468-501).

But here we should point out two important matters:

1. There is a difference of scholarly opinion regarding reviling of the Sahabah, but the scholars did not differ regarding those who believe that most of them were evildoers, or that they were disbelievers, or that they were all disbelievers except for a few of them. Whoever among the Rafidis believes such things is undoubtedly a disbeliever; in fact, whoever doubts that they are disbelievers also becomes a disbeliever.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

As for the one who goes beyond that and says that they all apostatized after the death of the



Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) except for a few, slightly more than ten of them, or believes that most of them were evildoers, is undoubtedly a disbeliever, because he is rejecting what the Quran says in more than one place, that Allah is pleased with them and praised them. In fact, the one who doubts that the one who believes such things is a disbeliever is himself a disbeliever, because this view implies that the ones who transmitted the Quran and Sunnah were disbelievers or evildoers. [cxns here? Attempted paraphrasing ahead>>>] The Quran says: {You are the best community ever brought forth for [the benefit of] humankind } [Al `Imran 3:110], and the best of them were the first generation. But believing that most of them were disbelievers or evildoers implies that this ummah is the worst of nations and that its early generations were the worst of them, and the fact that this notion constitutes disbelief is something that is known and well established on the basis of the religious texts.

As-Sarim al-Maslul `ala Shatim ar-Rasul, 1/590.

Shaykh Ibn `Uthaymin also said something just like this, which we have quoted in the answer to question no. [95588](#).

2. Slandering `A'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) by accusing her of that of which Allah declared her innocent constitutes disbelief that puts a person beyond the bounds of Islam. It was narrated that there was scholarly consensus regarding that, and we have mentioned the views of some of the Sunni scholars about regarding those who slandered her as disbelievers in the answer to question no. [954](#).

And Allah knows best.