Framework for evaluating opinions

Encounter new opinion

What are they saying?

Ask the following questions

What is the scriptural basis for this view?

Where did they get it from?

Who has said this before?

Who said it?

Is the person qualified?

Is the person an upright example?

What is the answer to these questions?

YES

Qawl mu'tabar —this view meets basic criteria to be worthy of consideration

NO

Qawl ghayr mu'tabar —this view fails to meet criteria to be worthy of consideration

Fundamentals —is it consistent with the mainstream understanding of the foundational beliefs and practices of Islam, i.e., 6 pillars of faith, 5 pillars of Islam?

Unequivocal statements (qati’yyat) —does it uphold the definitively established teachings of the religion?

Core values —does it agree with the basic understanding of justice, mercy, sincerity or honesty embedded in the fitrah?

Clarity —do they draw upon the clear meaning of Qur'anic verses without distorting the language?

Relevance —is the Qur'anic verse or hadith being cited relevant to the argument?

Authenticity —are the hadith cited verified as authentic? Are they from recognized collections? (e.g., six works)

Description (akhbar) —have interpretations of scripture been referenced to a recognized work of tafsir of Qur'an or sharh of hadith?

Rulings (ahkam) —have they referred to the relied-upon authorities in the four schools of fiqh or other early justice views in the tradition?

New views —does the discussion relate to a contemporary ruling, a societal change, or a novel question wherein new interpretations are needed, and have these interpretations been provided by contemporary authorities?

Description (akhbar) —have interpretations of scripture been referenced to a recognized work of tafsir of Qur'an or sharh of hadith?

Rulings (ahkam) —have they referred to the relied-upon authorities in the four schools of fiqh or other early justice views in the tradition?

Credentials —do they have formal degrees or ijazah’s that are relevant?

Peer recognition —have other scholars in the community vouched for them or given them a platform?

Contribution —have they produced academic works or quality material in Islamic studies?

Conduct —does their behavior and speech seek to model that of the Prophet ﷺ?

Concerns —do they focus their attention on the matters of greatest spiritual benefit and significance to the ummah?