

# Islamic Awakening between Rejection and Extremism

*by Yusuf al-Qaradawi*

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## Preface to the First Edition

The International Institute of Islamic Thought and American Trust Publications are pleased to present this book to our readers in the English language. We have chosen it because of our concern for the future of the Ummah, Islamic thought, and Muslim youth. The author, Dr. Yusuf al Qaradawi, is famous for *al Halal wa al Haram fi al Islam*, published in English by American Trust Publications under the title *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam*. Dr. al Qaradawi has extensive experience in the field of dawah and is recognized as an authority in Islamic aqidah (belief) and Shari'ah.

Allah (SWT) has entrusted this Ummah with a great mission to lead humanity to the right path of truth, justice, and progress. It is unfortunate that Muslims have been struggling but have not been able to fulfil this mission for the last few centuries. Allah (SWT) has been generous in bestowing upon Muslims tremendous human and material resources, but they have not been able to mobilize them effectively enough to influence the flow of current events in the direction of peace and prosperity for mankind.

The extraordinary pressures, internal decadence, and challenges of the modern age have tried the patience of Muslim youth. The great Islamic vision has become blurred, and the socioeconomic and political life of the Ummah has become fragmented and stagnated. Muslim youth have pride and confidence in Islam, but with their limited experience and knowledge they tend to take desperate and extreme courses of action. They are swayed by misdirected, short-sighted, and superficial slogans. The suffering of the youth has inflicted more suffering and pain on the Ummah, wasted their valuable energy, and undermined Islamic leadership still further. This is an outstanding work by an outstanding scholar, daiyah, and educator. It helps the youth to reconstruct the total picture of the history and the destiny of the Ummah. It deals with the Qur'an and Sunnah in a balanced and comprehensive manner and provides a very constructive approach for Muslim youth to study the Qur'an and Sunnah and benefit from them. This book helps to analyze systematically and objectively the causes of the crises faced by Muslim youth and presents the ways and means Muslims should adopt to seek solutions. The different aspects of the Ummah and the proper Islamic way to resolve its crises are clarified. From this book the reader can gain a wealth of experience and Islamic knowledge.

Furthermore, the book is a great help to Muslim youth in developing right approaches to the challenges and pressures of the modern age in order to achieve the Islamic goals and objectives. This is recommended reading for every Muslim youth, intellectual, and scholar.

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## Introduction

In Ramadan and Shawwal 1401 AH/1981 AC, *al Ummah* magazine published my two-part article on the awakening of Muslim youth. In this study I drew attention to the positive and negative aspects which concerned observers, duah and Muslim scholars attributed to the awakening. I also suggested that we should have a dialogue with and show paternal sympathy toward these young Muslims, and then channel their reawakening in order to strengthen rather than to impoverish Islam. The response to this study was so warm throughout the Muslim world that the study was translated into several languages. Furthermore, the youth in many Muslim universities tolerantly studied my views despite the fact that my views were critical of many of them.

I would like here to acknowledge with pleasure the attitude of the Islamic Group at the University of Cairo who adopted my study during their ninth camp in the summer of 1981 and printed and distributed it to all those interested. This indeed reflects a laudable awareness as well as a readiness to support moderation.

I shall not indulge here in discussing the recent events which occurred in some Muslim countries and which involved serious and bloody confrontation between the youth and the authorities, not only because I do not want to aggravate the matter further, but also because *al Ummah* magazine has always catered to the whole Muslim Ummah, not any particular group. What concerns us here is the prolonged and heated discussion aroused by these events on so-called "religious extremism, in which not only learned people participated but also those whose knowledge of Islam is characterized by ignorance and whose attitude is characterized by animosity, sarcasm, and cynicism.

I was also asked a few years ago by *al Arabi* magazine to write the subject of "religious extremism" with special emphasis on its nature and its characteristics. When the article appeared in the special edition of January 1982, some friends blamed me for contributing an issue where the truth, they believed, was being generally distorted in support of *batil*. Although my friends did not question either contents or the essence of the article, they were nevertheless suspicious of the motives and aims behind the campaign which has lately been launched against "religious extremism". They were not convinced that the campaign genuinely sought to resist extremism or to guide the extremism to the path of moderation, but rather that is sought to crush the Islamic reawakening before it could become strong and popular enough ultimately assume a significant political role. My friends noted that the authorities did not begin to pay attention to the religious youth until latter began to oppose, on religious grounds, some of the government's policies. This is supported by the fact that the people in power act, patronized certain religious groups which had demonstrated extreme trends in order to use them against other Islamic movements, then crushed the former when their appointed role was over. As such, my friends insisted, the reasons behind the confrontation between the authorities the Islamic groups could not be the emergence of extremism. They further believed that the authorities in our Muslim countries considered the Islamic movement a most dangerous enemy. Such authorities could, and did make alliances with either the extreme right or left, but with the Islamic movement. Sometimes a temporary truce was declared with this movement; at other times the authorities tried to involve, confrontation with their own political and ideological opponents. Eventually the authorities and the opponents discovered that they had affinity of aims and means than they realized, and therefore united against the Islamic movement. Allah (SWT) says in the Qur'an: "Verily the wrongdoers are protectors to one another, but Allah is the protector the pious who fear Him and avoid evil" (45:19).. Recent events support this very strongly. The emergencies of Islamic groups in Egypt was characterized by extremism. However, they eventually began to show a temperate and moderate attitude thanks to the efforts of a variety of Muslim thinkers and *duah* who managed to influence the thinking as well as the conduct of these young Muslims to the extent that temperance and moderation became characteristic traits of the majority of them. Surprisingly, the people in power kept silent when extremism was dominant, but crushed these groups when moderation prevailed.

I was not unaware of these disheartening considerations. In fact, they made me begin my article in *al Arabi* with the following:

Despite my conviction of the noble aim which motivated *al Arabi* to open a dialogue on what has come to be known as "religious extremism," and despite my unshakable belief in the importance of the issue and the gravity of its impact on our contemporary affairs, I will not conceal the fact that I hesitated at the beginning for fear that what I may write, especially these days, could be misinterpreted or even deliberately exploited to serve something contrary to my intentions or to that of the journal itself.

Moreover, "religious extremism" is currently in the dock and a target of accusations and criticism by writers and by orators. I do not like to side with the strong against the weak, and it is a fact that the authority is always in a stronger position than its opponents. suffice it to say that an Islamist does not even enjoy the right to defend himself. There is no freedom of expression in the media, nor can he even use the platform of the mosque for that purpose.

My hesitation was strengthened by the fact that for decades Islamists have been flooded with accusations by their opponents. They are labelled "reactionaries," "die-hard traditionalists," "bigots," "agents" of enemy countries, although no observer can fail to see that both the East and the West and the right and the left are united in their hostility to them and look for any opportunity to crush the Islamic awakening.

However, after much thought I concluded that the issue concern the whole Muslim world and not a single country; that silence is not a solution, and that refusal to contribute is, like fleeing a battle, un-Islamic. I have therefore put my trust in Allah (SWT) and decided to clarify the truth. The Prophet (SAAS) said in a hadith: "The reward of deeds depends upon intentions, and every person will get the reward according to what he has intended".

Many writers who are either ignorant driven by ulterior motives, who have no insight into the nature of the issue have felt free to voice their opinions. Such a situation inevitably invites all Muslim scholars to throw their weight behind the campaign and confront the issue in order to clarify the truth. My determination was further strengthened by my long interest in the issue of "religious extremism" A few years ago I published an article in *al Muslim al Mu'asir* on "The Phenomenon of Excessive *Takfir*. Another article, "The Reawakening of Muslim Youth", mentioned earlier, was published several months ago in *al Ummah*. In addition, I have had the opportunity to meet many young Muslims face to face in their camps and during their seminars, and also to discuss with them issues that focus on one theme-the call for moderation and the warning against extremism. However, what I wrote in *al Arabi* was limited to the specific topic required by the journal as well as the limited space allocated for it. For these reasons, I have for some time felt obliged to return to this issue, the phenomenon of "religious extremism", and to conduct an objective study of its reality, causes, and remedy within a genuine Islamic framework. My determination to go ahead will not be discouraged by the participation of those who seek to distort and exploit the issue. The Prophet (SA'AS) said: [The banner of Islamic] knowledge will be carried from one generation to the other by the moderates who defend it against the distortion of bigots, the claims of falsifiers and the misinterpretation of the ignorant." This hadith pinpoints the duty of the learned who should clarify, not conceal, the truth so that they may avoid Al's curse. But the responsibility extends to various other parties who are concerned directly or indirectly with the issue under discussion. It is neither just nor honest to hold only the young responsible for being excessive in thought or in conduct. Many others, especially those who have neglected their commitment to Islam and its teachings, share this responsibility, although they always try to exonerate themselves. Nominal Muslims, whether parents, teachers, scholars or others, have made Islam, Islamists, and *du 'ah* outcasts in Muslim lands. It is strange that we readily disapprove of extremism among the young but fail to recognize our own extremism, our negligence, and our laxity. We ask the young to show temperance and wisdom, to relinquish extremism and excessiveness, but we never ask the elderly to purify themselves from hypocrisy, lying, cheating, and all forms of self-contradiction. We demand everything of our youth, but we do not practice what we preach, as if we are naturally entitled to all the rights while the young must be burdened with all the duties. Yet we always emphasize that there are duties as well as rights for all. What we actually need is the unflinching courage to admit that our youth have been forced to resort to what we call "religious extremism" through our own misdeeds. We claim to be Muslims yet we do not follow the teachings of Islam. We recite the Qur'an but we do not apply its *ahkam*. We claim to love the Prophet Muhammad (SA'AS) but we fail to follow his Sunnah. We declare in our constitutions that Islam is the official religion but we never give Islam its due place in government legislation or orientation. Our own hypocrisy and self-contradictions have alienated the young, who have sought to understand Islam without assistance or guidance from us. They have found parents discouraging ulama indifferent, rulers hostile, and counselors cynical. Therefore, in order to rectify this situation, we need to begin by reforming ourselves and our societies according to Allah's decree before we can ask our youth to be calm, to show wisdom and temperance.

It may be worthwhile here to draw attention to a point on which those in authority, as well as some writers, usually concentrate: the duty and the role of the "official" religious establishments in eradicating extremism and in guiding the Islamic reawakening among our youth. Some hold these "official" religious establishments responsible for what has happened-and is still happening-as well as for all forms of extremism and deviation. It appears that despite their importance and deep roots, these establishments are now incapable of carrying out the mission entrusted to them unless the political authorities cease to manipulate and exploit them, using them as instruments of support and praise for official policies. The official religious establishments in the Muslim world could indeed play a positive role by giving guidance and genuine Islamic knowledge to the youth if they were free to manage their own affairs without interference from people in power. However, in the absence of that freedom they remain lifeless skeletons.

We must also remember that advice is meaningless unless the adviser enjoys the trust of the youth. In the absence of such essential mutual trust and confidence, every advice given is reduced to mere rhetoric. Our young people have no faith in these religious establishments or in their leaders who have been appointed by the authorities. There were circumstances and reasons which actually convinced the youth that these establishments do not reflect the teachings of Shariah but have merely become the mouthpiece of the regime. Such establishments can, therefore, exert influence only when they put their own houses in order: They should refuse to enter the ever-changing, vicious circle of politics; rather their activities should center on the upbringing of generations of *Fuqaha* well-versed in Islam, and fully conscious of, and having insight into, the problems of their age, i.e., "those who convey the message of Allah, and fear none save Him" (33:39). Our modern contemporary societies urgently need such righteous scholars who are blessed with insight and who can instruct our young people in their faith and give proper guidance to the Islamic awakening. Those who stand aloof and who are indifferent to the Islamic resurgence or who criticize it without sharing its sufferings or feeling its aspirations as well as its disappointments cannot play a positive role in its guidance. One of our ancient poets wrote: "None knows well the sting of craving, nor the pains of longing except he who suffers to no avail."

Those who do not live for Islam and for its spreading and do not share the suffering and the hardships that beset the Ummah are self-cantered. Such people have no right to tell those who believe in Islam and live by it that they are wrong and should change; and if they seize that right by force, no one will ever listen to them. In conclusion, my own advice to whoever undertakes to counsel the youth is to abandon his ivory towers, forsake his intellectual heritage, and come down to earth with the young. He should identify with their great expectations, warmth of affection, genuine determination, noble motivation, and good deeds. Furthermore, he must also distinguish between their negative and positive conduct and attitudes so that he can give advice based on insight, and make judgements based on evidence.

May Allah (SWT) guard us all against excessiveness and extremism and direct us toward the straight path.

***Yusuf al Qaradawi***  
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## Chapter One

### Extremism: The Accusation and the Truth

Logicians argue that one cannot pass a judgment on something unless one has a clear conception of it, because the unknown and the undefined cannot be judged. Therefore, we first have to determine what "religious ,extremism" means before we can condemn or applaud it. We can do so by considering its reality and its most distinguishing characteristics. Literally, extremism means being situated at the farthest possible point from the center. Figuratively, it indicates a similar remoteness in religion and thought, as well as behavior. One of the main consequences of extremism is exposure to danger and insecurity. Islam, therefore, recommends moderation and balance in everything: in belief, ibadah, conduct, and legislation. This is the straightforward path that Allah (SWT) calls al Sirat. al mustaqim, one distinct from all the others which are followed by those who earn Allah's anger and those who go astray. Moderation, or balance, is not only a general characteristic of Islam, it is a fundamental landmark. The Qur'an says:

Thus have we made of you an Ummah justly balanced, that you might be witnesses over the nations, and the Messenger a witness over yourselves.

As such, the Muslim Ummah is a nation of justice and moderation; it witnesses every deviation from the 'straightforward path' in this life and in the hereafter. Islamic texts call upon Muslims to exercise moderation and to reject and oppose all kinds of extremism: ghuluw (excessiveness), tanattu' (transgressing; meticulous religiosity) and tashdid (strictness; austerity). A close examination of such texts shows that Islam emphatically warns against, and discourages, ghuluw. Let us consider the following ahadith:

1. Beware of excessiveness in religion. [People] before you have perished as a result of [such] excessiveness. " The people referred to above are the people of other religions, especially Ahl al Kitab [the People of the Book]; Jews and Christians and mainly the Christians. The Qur'an addresses these people: Say: O People of the Book! Exceed not in your religion the bounds [of what is proper], trespassing beyond the truth, nor follow the vain desires of people who went wrong in times gone by who misled many, and strayed [themselves] from the even Way".

Muslims have therefore been warned not to follow in their steps: he who learns from the mistakes of others indeed lives a happier life. Furthermore, the reason behind the above hadith is to alert us to the fact that ghuluw may crop up as an insignificant action which we then unwittingly allow to continue and develop into a menace. After reaching Muzdalifah-during his last hajj-the Prophet (SA'AS) requested Ibn 'Abbas to gather some stones for him. Ibn 'Abbas selected small stones. Upon seeing the stones, the Prophet (SA'AS) approved of their size and said: "Yes, with such [stones do stone Satan]. Beware of excessiveness in religion". This clearly indicates that Muslims should not be so zealous as to believe that using larger stones is better, thus gradually allowing excessiveness to creep into their lives. Al Imam Ibn Taymiyah argues that this warning against excessiveness applies to all forms of belief, worship, and transaction, and notes that since the Christians are more excessive in faith and in practice than any other sect, Allah (SWT) admonishes them in the Qur'an. "Do not exceed the limits of your religion" .

2. "Ruined were those who indulged in tanattu'" And he [the Prophet (SA'AS)] repeated this thrice. Imam al Nawawi said that the people referred to here, "those indulging in tanattu:" i.e., those who go beyond the limit in their utterance as well as in their action. Evidently the above two ahadith emphatically assert that the consequence of excessiveness and zealotry will be the complete loss of this life and of the hereafter.
3. The Prophet (SA'AS) used to say: "Do not overburden yourselves, lest you perish. People [before you] overburdened themselves and perished. Their remains are found in hermitages and monasteries. Indeed, Prophet Muhammad (SA'AS) always condemned any tendency toward religious excessiveness. He cautioned those of his companions who were excessive in ibadah, or who were too ascetic, especially when this went beyond the moderate Islamic position. Islam seeks to create a balance between the needs of the body and those of the soul, between the right of man to live life to its full, and the right of the Creator to be worshipped by man; which is also man's raison d'etre.

✦ Indeed, Prophet Muhammad (SA'AS) always condemned any tendency toward religious

## 1. Defects of Religious Extremism

All these warnings against extremism and excessiveness are necessary because of the serious defects inherent in such tendencies.

**The first defect** is that excessiveness is too disagreeable for ordinary human nature to endure or tolerate. Even if a few human beings could put up with excessiveness for a short time, the majority would not be able to do so. Allah's legislation addresses the whole of humanity, not a special group who may have a unique capacity for endurance. This is why the Prophet (SA'AS) was once angry with his eminent companion Mu'adh, because the latter led the people one day in salah and so prolonged it that one of the people went to the Prophet and complained. The Prophet (SA'AS) said to Mu'adh: "O Mu'adh! Are you putting the people on trial?" and repeated it thrice.

On another occasion he addressed an imam with unusual anger: "Some of you make people dislike good deeds [salah]. So whoever among you leads people in salah should keep it short, short because amongst them are the weak, the old, and the one who has business to attend to.

Furthermore, when the Prophet (SA'AS) sent Mu'adh and Abu Musa to the Yemen, he gave them the following advice: "Facilitate [matters to people] and do not make [things] difficult. Give good tidings and do not put off [people]. Obey one another and do not differ [amongst yourselves].

Umar ibn al Khattab (RA'A) also emphasized this by saying: "Do not make Allah hateful to His servants by leading people in salah and so prolonging it that they come to hate what they are doing."

**The second defect** is that excessiveness is short-lived. Since man's capacity for endurance and perseverance is naturally limited, and since man can easily become bored, he can not endure any excessive practice for long. Even if he puts up with it for a while he will soon be overcome by fatigue, physically and spiritually, and will eventually give up even the little he can naturally do, or he may even take a different course altogether substituting excessiveness with complete negligence and laxity. I have often met people who were known for their strictness and extremism; then I lost contact with them for a while. When I inquired about them after a period of time, I found out that they had either deviated and taken the opposite extreme, or had, at least, lagged behind like the "hasty one" referred to in the following hadith: He [the hasty one] neither covers the desired distance nor spares the back [of his means of transport]."

So is the Prophet's guidance embodied in another hadith: "Do those deeds, which you can endure, as Allah will not get tired [of giving rewards] till you get bored and tired [of performing good deeds]...and the most beloved deed to Allah is the one which is done regularly even if it were little."

Said Ibn 'Abbas: "A female attendant of the Prophet (SA'AS) used to do siyam during the day and spend the whole night in iqamah. The Prophet (SA'AS) was informed of this, and he said, 'In every deed [or action] there is a peak of activity followed by lassitude. He who in his lassitude follows my Sunnah is on the right path, but he who in his lassitude follows another [guidance] has [erred and] gone astray. 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar said: "The Messenger of Allah was told of men who were exhausted by 'ibadah. He said, 'This is the maximum of Islam and peak of its activity. Each maximum has a peak of activity, and each peak of activity is followed by lassitude...he whose lassitude is in tune with the Book [the Qur'an] and Sunnah is on the right path, but he whose lassitude is for disobedience will perish."

How superb is the Prophet's advice to all Muslims not to overburden themselves in 'ibadah and to be moderate so that they may not be overcome by fatigue and finally fail to continue. He said: "Religion is very easy, and whoever overburdens himself will not be able to continue in that way. Be right [without excessiveness or negligence], near [perfection], and have good tidings [in being rewarded for your deeds].

**The third defect** is that excessive practice jeopardizes other rights and obligations. A sage once said in this respect: "Every extravagance is somehow bound to be associated with a lost right."

When the Prophet (SA'AS) knew that 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar was so absorbed in 'ibadah that he even neglected his duty toward his wife, he said to him: "O 'Abd Allah! Have I not been correctly informed that you do siyam daily and offer 'ibadah throughout the night?" 'Abd Allah replied, "Yes, O Messenger of Allah!" The Prophet (SA'AS) then said: "Don't do that, but do siyam and then break your siyam, offer 'ibadah during the night but also sleep. Your body has a right on you, your wife has a right on you, and your guest has a right on you..."

The incident between Salman al Farisi (RA'A), the eminent companion, and his devout friend Abu al Darda' (RA'A) is another case in point. The Prophet (SA'AS) made a bond of brotherhood between

## 2. The Concept of Religious Extremism

A correct expose and definition of-and an insight into-extremism is the first step toward outlining the remedy. There is no value for any judgment or exposition not based on genuine Islamic concepts and the Shari'ah, but on mere personal opinions of individuals. The Qur'an says in this respect: "If you differ on anything among yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger, if you do believe in Allah and the Last Day". Throughout the history of the Ummah there has always been an ijma Referring differences between Muslims to Allah (SWT) and to His Messenger means referring them to His Book, the Qur'an, and to the Sunnah of the Prophet (SA'AS). Without such authentication based on Shariah, the Muslim youth-who are accused of "extremism" will never pay any attention to the fatawa of this or that Muslim scholar, and will deny and refuse to accept such accusation. Furthermore, they will themselves accuse others of ignorance and of falsification.

It is reported that al Imam Muhammad ibn Idris al Shafi was accused of being a rafidi. Outraged by such a cheap accusation, he defiantly read a verse of poetry which is paraphrased as follows: "If love for all ahl al bayt' is rejectionism, let the humans and the jinn bear witness that I am a rejectionist "

A present-day Muslim daiyah said, on hearing that he had been branded a reactionary: "If adherence to the Qur'an and Sunnah is reactionism, I wish to live, die, and resurrected as a reactionary."

In fact it is very important to define accurately such common terms as "reactionism:" rigidity "extremism" "bigotry 'etc., so that they may not constitute ambiguous concepts which can be hurled randomly by one group of people against another, or be interpreted differently by various intellectual and social forces whether on the extreme right or left. Failure to define and comprehend "religious extremism" and to leave the issue to the whimsical desires of people will lead to discord among Muslims. The Qur'an says:

If the Truth had been in accord with their desires, truly the heavens and the earth and all the beings therein would have been in confusion and corruption!.

I would like at this point to draw attention to two important observations. **First:** The degree of a person's piety as well as that of the society in which he lives affect his judgment of others as far as extremism, moderation, and laxity are concerned. A religious society usually produces a person sensitively aversive to any deviation or negligence, however slight it may be. Judging by the criteria of his own practice and background, such a person would be surprised to find that there are Muslims who do not offer 'ibadah during the night or practice siyam. This is historically obvious. When examining the deeds and practices of people, the nearer one gets to the time of the Prophet (.SA'AS), his companions and the Tabiun the less worthy seem the deeds and practices of the pious among the later generations. Hence the gist of the saying: "The merits of those nearest to Allah are but the demerits of the righteous."

This reminds one of what Anas ibn Malik (RA'A) used to tell the Tabiun of his contemporaries, "You do things you consider trifling. But during the time of the Prophet (SA'AS) these same actions were seen as mortal sins."

The same attitude was expressed by Aishah (RA'A), who used to recite a line of verse by Labid Ibn Rabi'ah, the well-known poet, which laments the disappearance of those people who provided exemplary patterns of righteous living, thus leaving people to the mercy of the stragglers, whose company is as contagious as a scabby animal. Moreover, she always wondered how Labid would have felt had he lived to witness the practices of a later generation. 'Aishah's nephew, 'Urwah ibn al Zubayr, also used to recite the same line of verse and wonder how both Aishah and Labid would have felt had they lived in his own age.

On the other hand, a person whose knowledge of and commitment to Islam is little, or who has been brought up in an environment which practices what Allah (SWT) has forbidden and neglects Shariah, will certainly consider even minimal adherence to Islam a kind of extremism. Such a person-who quite often feigns godliness-would not only question and criticize, but would even deny the validity of a certain practice. He would also accuse those who are committed to Islam, and initiate arguments on what is haram and what is halal. His attitude would, of course, depend on his distance from the fundamentals of Islam.

Some Muslims-those who are influenced by alien ideologies and practices-consider adherence to clear-cut Islamic teachings concerning eating, drinking, beautification, or the call for the application of Shariah and the establishment of an Islamic state as manifestations of "religious extremism." For such a person, a young Muslim with a beard or a young girl wearing hijab are both extremists! Even the commanding of the common good and the prohibition of evil are regarded as forms of extremism and

### 3. Manifestations of Extremism

**The first** indications of extremism include bigotry and intolerance, which make a person obstinately devoted to his own opinions and prejudices, as well as rigidity, which deprives him of clarity of vision regarding the interests of other human beings, the purposes of Shariah, or the circumstances of the age. Such a person does not allow any opportunity for dialogue with others so that he may compare his opinion with theirs, and chooses to follow what appears to him most sound. We equally condemn this person's attempt to suppress and discard the opinions of others, just as we condemn the similar attitude of his accusers and opponents. Indeed, we emphatically condemn his attitude if he claims that he alone is right and everybody else is wrong, accusing those who have different ideas and opinions of ignorance and self-interest, and those with different behaviour of disobedience and *fisq* as if he were an infallible prophet and his words were divinely revealed. This attitude contradicts the consensus of the Ummah, that what every person says can be totally or partly accepted or rejected, except, of course, the *ahadith* of Prophet Muhammad (SA'AS).

Strangely, though some of these people take liberty in exercising *ijtihad* in the most complicated matters and issues and pass notional and whimsical judgments yet they would deprive the contemporary expert 'ulama' singly or collectively-of the right to exercise *ijtihad* regarding statements which contradict theirs. Some of them never hesitate to give ridiculous opinions on, and interpretations of, the Qur'an and Sunnah; opinions which are contradictory to those handed down to us by our forefathers, or subsequently arrived at by contemporary ulama' This indifference is due to their presumption to be on an equal footing with Abu Bakr, 'Umar, Ali, and Ibn Abbas (RA'A). This presumption might be less grave if these people admits that their contemporaries who uphold different views or approaches are also capable of *ijtihad* like themselves; but they would not.

Bigotry is the clearest evidence of extremism. An extremist seems to address people in this way: "I have the right to speak, your duty is to listen. I have the right to lead, your duty is to follow. My opinion is right, it cannot be wrong. Your opinion is wrong, it can never be right."

Thus, a bigot can never come to terms with others. Agreement is possible and can be reached when people hold moderate positions, but a bigot neither knows nor believes in moderation. He stands in relation to people as the East stand in relation to the West-the nearer you get to one, the further you move away from the other.

The issue becomes even more critical when such a person develops the tendency to coerce others, not necessarily physically but by accusing them of *bidah*, laxity, *kufr*, and deviation. Such intellectual terrorism is as terrifying as physical terrorism.

**The second** characteristic of extremism manifests itself in a perpetual commitment to excessiveness, and in attempts to force others to do likewise, despite the existence of good reasons for facilitation and the fact that Allah (SWT) has not ordained it. A person motivated by piety and caution may, if he so wishes, choose a hard-line opinion in some matters and on certain occasions. But this should not become so habitual that he rejects facilitation when he needs it. Such an attitude is not in keeping with the teachings of the Qur'an or Sunnah as is clear from the following verse: "Allah intends every facility for you; He does not want to put you to difficulties".

The Prophet (SA'AS) also said in *ahadith* already quoted: "Facilitate [matters to people] and do not make [things] difficult."

He also said: "Allah loves that His dispensations [to make things easier] be accepted, as He dislikes [to see people] committing disobedience.

It is also reported that "[whenever the Prophet \(SA'AS\) was given a choice between two options, he always chose the easiest unless it was a sin.](#)"

Complicating matters for people and causing constraint in their lives are contrary to the most outstanding qualities of the Prophet Muhammad (SA'AS). These qualities have been mentioned in earlier scriptures and later revealed in the Qur'an:

He [Muhammad] allows them as lawful what is good [and pure] and prohibits them from what is bad [and impure], he releases them from their heavy burdens and from the yokes that are upon them.

This is why the Prophet (SA'AS) used to prolong his *salah* only when he was alone. In fact, he used to offer *salah* throughout the night until his feet were swollen. But when leading people in *salah*, he used to shorten it, taking into consideration the circumstances of his followers and their varying levels of endurance, He said in this respect, "If any of you leads people in *salah*, he should shorten it, for among them are the weak, the sick, and the old; and if any of you offers *salah* alone, then he may





## Chapter Two Causes of Extremism

Extremism does not originate haphazardly. It must indeed have causes and motivation. Like living organisms, events and actions do not come out of the blue and cannot germinate without seeds. Rather, they are governed by the law of cause and effect-one of Allah's sunan-in His creation. Knowledge of the causes in this respect is essential to enable us to define the remedy which, medically speaking, must always be preceded by diagnosis. But diagnosis is impossible-at least extremely difficult-when causes are not known. With this in mind, we endeavor to examine the causes and the motives which have generated extremism-a term which has become synonymous with ghuluw, i.e., excessiveness in religion.

We must realize at the outset that no single cause is wholly responsible for the spread of extremism. It is a complex phenomenon with numerous interrelated causes, some of which are direct, others indirect, some found in the distant past, others in the present. Consequently, we should not focus on one cause and totally ignore the others, as do people who advocate some schools of thought. Psychologists, and especially psychoanalysts, for instance, attribute all behavior to certain subconscious psychological causes. Meanwhile, sociologists point to man's helplessness vis-à-vis social and environmental influences; for them, man is simply a lifeless puppet whose strings are in the hands of society. The advocates of historical materialism emphasize economic forces which, they argue, create events and change the course of history. On the other hand, others who hold a more comprehensive and balanced view believe that the causes are complex and interrelated, producing various effects which, although differing from one cause to another, have their undeniable impact in the final analysis. It is important that we should not concentrate on one cause of extremism, as its causes are varied and could be direct or indirect, manifest or latent. The causes of extremism may be religious, political, social, economic, psychological, intellectual, or a combination of all of these. The main cause may be in the extremist himself, in his relationship with the members of his family, or-if deeply analyzed-may be found in his society and all its contradictions between faith and behavior, ideals and reality, religion and politics, words and actions, aspirations and achievements, the secular and the divine. Naturally, if these contradictions are tolerated by the old they, cannot be tolerated by the young. If some young people do tolerate and bear contradictions, they do so only temporarily.

Extremism may also be initiated by the corruption of regimes, i.e., the despotism of rulers, their egotistic pursuits, their adherence to the views of corrupt counsellors and advisers as well as various foreign enemies of the Ummah, and their total disregard for the rights of their peoples. These practices have severed the bond between religion and the state.

Undoubtedly, one of the main causes of extremism is a lack of knowledge of-and insight into-the purposes, spirit, and essence of din. However, such a lack, which does not imply total ignorance, does not lead to extremism or excessiveness, but rather to their opposites, i.e., degeneration and laxity. It implies, however, semi-knowledge. A person may presume-and sometimes genuinely believe-that he knows all there is to know; that he is a scholar, a faqih. But actually he has no more than a hodgepodge of undigested and unassimilated "knowledge" which neither enhances insight nor clarifies vision. A person possessing such "knowledge" concentrates on marginal and trivial issues only, and thereby fails to see the relationship between the parts which form the whole (and the whole itself) or between the categorical and fundamental texts vis-à-vis the allegorical ones. Further, this person cannot synthesize or give preponderance to evidence over mere considerations. Aware of the danger of such semi-knowledge, Abu Ishaq al Shatibi' (RA'A) discussed it in his book al I'tisam. He argued that self-presumption and conceit are the root causes of bid'ah as well as the disunity of the Umma, and could lead to internal schism and gradual disintegration. He asserted that when a person unduly presumes himself or is presumed to be knowledgeable in religious matters and capable of exercising ijtihad, and when he acts accordingly, claiming that he has the right to present different opinions and interpretations, whether the verdicts and opinions pertain to minor aspect or to major aspect of din, thus he cites major aspects, to pull down major ones; he is indeed a mu'tadi' In the following hadith, the Prophet (SA'AS) warned against such a person:

Allah does not take away the knowledge by taking it away from [the hearts of] the people, but takes it away when none of the 'ulama' remain, and people will take as their leaders ignorant persons who when consulted will give their verdict without knowledge. So they will go astray and will lead the people astray. Some of the learned infer from the above hadith that people are never led astray by genuine 'ulama: but in the absence of the latter people turn to semi-'ulama' who lead them astray by giving incorrect advice. Thus it has been said that a trustworthy person never betrays a trust, but the traitorous one does. We add to this: a genuine 'alim never innovates, but a semi-'alim does.

## 1. Occupation with Side Issues

Intellectual shallowness and lack of religious insight also manifest themselves in an intense interest in marginal issues at the expense of major ones—those which could affect the existence, identity, and destiny of the whole Ummah. There is excessive and unnecessary talk about growing a beard, wearing clothes below the ankle, moving of the finger during reading the tashahhud in prayer, acquisition of photographs and so on. Unfortunately, such time-wasting arguments persist and occupy our thinking at a time when we are being confronted by the unrelenting hostility—and infiltration—of secularism, communism, Zionism, and Christianity, as well as deviationist groups in the Muslim world. Christian missionaries are waging a new crusade against the Ummah with the intent of undermining its historical and Islamic character. Muslims are being mercilessly slaughtered in various parts of the world; Muslim *du'at* are being subjected to the worst forms of intimidation and aggression.

Strangely—and indeed tragically—I found that those who emigrated to the United States, Canada, and Europe in pursuit of knowledge or to earn a living have actually brought with them such conflict and controversies on marginal issues as are prevalent in their societies. I have often witnessed—or heard about—violent debates and stormy arguments which have succeeded in creating disunity among Muslims on issues that are subject to extrapolation and *ijtihad*, some of which I have already outlined, and on which jurists will continue to differ and people are unlikely ever to agree. Instead of such futile wrangling, it would be far better for these Muslim expatriates to concentrate their efforts on disseminating true adherence to Islam among themselves, especially among the young, committing them to the obligations, and helping them to avoid major prohibitions. If Muslims in these countries succeeded in accomplishing these things, they would realize a great hope and open up new opportunities for the dissemination of Islam. It is a pity that those who initiate and encourage these confrontations are well known for their negligence of essential religious duties, i.e., kindness to parents, cautious investigation of what is permissible and what is prohibited, execution of their own tasks, and respect for the rights of their spouse, children, and neighbors. However, instead of improving themselves, they derive great pleasure from initiating conflicts which eventually lead them to take either a hostile or a hypocritical position.

Such wrangling is the subject of the following hadith: "People going astray after guidance are bound to be argument-stricken."

It is also not uncommon to find people warning Muslims not to eat animals slaughtered by the People of the Book (the Christians and Jews) although there are many past and present *fatawa* which have legitimized this. Yet, if we examine the attitude and behavior of these people with regard to other more serious matters, we find that they engage in some definitely forbidden practices. This reminds me of a man living in the United States who, I was told by trustworthy brothers, spoke in full-throated clarity against eating the meat of animals slaughtered by Jews or by Christians, yet he did not mind eating with others at the same table while they were drinking alcohol. Nonetheless, he unreservedly takes this extreme stand against uncertain and controversial matters. Such contradictory behavior of some Muslims once outraged 'Abd Allah ibn 'Ijmar (RA'A) when a man from Iraq asked him—following the murder of the great Muslim martyr al Husayn ibn 'All (RA'A)—whether it was *halal* or *haram* to kill a mosquito. Ahmad related in his *musnad*:

As I was sitting with Ibn 'Umar, a man came and asked him about the blood of a mosquito. (In another version of the hadith, the man asked about a pilgrim killing a mosquito). Ibn 'Umar asked the man: "Where are you from?" The man answered, "From Iraq." Then Ibn 'Umar said: "Look at this man! He is asking me about the blood of mosquitoes when they [the Iraqis] killed the Prophet's grandson (i.e., al Husayn ibn 'All (RA'A)). I heard the Prophet (SA'AS) saying: they [al Hasan and al Husayn] are my two sweetest-smelling flowers of this world."

## 2. Excessive Extension of Prohibitions

One of the indications of this shallowness, of the lack of a thorough knowledge of Islamic jurisprudence and of Shariah, is making things difficult through an invalid extension of prohibitions despite the very clear warnings against this in the Qur'an and Sunnah: But say not?for any false thing that your tongues may put forth: "This is lawful and this is forbidden," so as to ascribe false things to Allah. For those who ascribe false things to Allah will never prosper.

The Prophet's companions as well as the early righteous forebears never prohibited anything unless they were sure that it was categorically so. Otherwise, they used to recommend against it, or express their abhorrence of it, etc, but never categorically declared it haram. Extremists, however, hastily prohibit without reservation, out of piety and cautiousness, if we take them to be well-meaning, or possibly out of other motives known only to Allah (SWT). If there are two opinions in Islamic jurisprudence about a certain issue, one declaring it mubah and the other makruh, the extremists abide by the latter; if it is declared makruh by one and haram by another, they also favor the latter. If there are two opinions, one which facilitates while the other makes things difficult, they also follow the latter. They persistently adhere to Ibn 'Umar's hard-line opinions, but never accept Ibn 'Abbes' facilitations. This tendency is largely due to their ignorance of the point of view which avails facilitation.

To illustrate this point, I would like to relate the following incident which I myself witnessed. One day, an extremist saw a man drinking water while he was standing. The extremist roughly asked him to sit down because such an action was a deviation from the Prophet's Sunnah. Confused, the man remained standing. He was then told that if he were a true Muslim, he would immediately induce vomiting to purify himself. At this point I gently intervened, telling the extremist: "The matter does not deserve this harshness. Standing is a minor controversial issue which does not deserve outright condemnation or harshness." The extremist then said that there is a haith which categorically forbid it, and require "whoever absentmindedly does so to induce vomiting." My reply was: "But the ahaith which permit drinking while standing are more authentic and were therefore cited by al Bukhari in a chapter in his Sahih entitled "Drinking While Standing, but he cited none of the a, hadith which forbade it. Furthermore, al Tirmidi as well as others, reported several a hadith which testify to this. It is also true that the Prophet (SA'AS) drank water while standing during his farewell hajj. Moreover, it is narrated that 'AIi ibn Abu Talib (RA'A) drank while standing and said "Some people dislike drinking while standing, but I saw the Prophet (SA'AS) doing it, just as you see me doing it now.

Al Tirmidi also reported the permissibility of drinking while standing, basing this on the sayings and practices of a number of the companions of the Prophet (RA'A). According to al Tirmidi, Ibn' Umar said:

"During the time of the Prophet (SA'AS) we used to eat while walking and drink while standing"

Kabshah also said: "I came once upon the Prophet (SA'AS) and saw him drinking from a suspended waterskin."

The interpretations handed down to us by the most reliable scholars of the hadith show that although there is a clear encouragement to drink while sitting, there is no prohibition of drinking while standing. These scholars argue that the a, hadith which encourage the former were revoked by other ahaith, and that this was confirmed by the practice by Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman end 'Ah (RA'A). Therefore, in such an entangled issue, it would be totally wrong to forbid a person to drink water while standing.

Similarly, many young people today engage in speculations about the proper Islamic dress. Such speculations are based on the following sound hadith: "The part [of the garment which hangs] below the ankles is in the fire." In their desire to adhere to this hadith, many young people wear above-the-ankle garments and also seek to impose a similar style on people around them. Such pressure on others engenders ill-will on both sides, and charges of extremism or nonadherence to Islamic norms will certainly be levered by both parties against each other. The ahadith which warn Muslims against wearing garments below the ankle, are qualified by other ahadith which, upon a deeper reading, reveal the reason for this prohibition. Below-the-ankle garments were once seen as manifestations of pride, arrogance, and extravagance.

For example, the Prophet (SA'AS) answered: "Allah will not look, on the Day of Resurrection, at the person who drags his garments [behind him] out of conceit.

Abu Bakr (RAA) once said to the Prophet (SA'AS): "My iz.ar hangs low if I do not take care of it," and the Prophet (SA'AS) answered: "You are not of those who do so out of conceit."

For this reason al Nawawi and other Muslim scholars contend that wearing such a garment is makruh

### 3. Misconceptions

Such aforementioned examples of confused thinking and blurred vision of the fundamentals of Islam, its shari'ah and the aims of its message have led to many misconceptions in the minds of Muslim youth. Such misconceptions need to be fully explained and carefully defined as the form the basis of relating to others judging and reforming them. Some of the most important misconceptions include concepts like Islam, iman kufr nifaq and jahiliyah etc. Linguistic complexities or a lack of mastery of the Arabic language by some people have led to confusion and misunderstanding. The complexities of language escape the non-experts. Consequently, they become unable to differentiate between the figurative or metaphoric and the literal meanings, thereby confusing matters. They are unable to realize, for instance, the difference between absolute (or perfect) iman and limited (or nominal) iman; between perfect Islam and limited (or nominal) Islam between major kufr leading to non-Islam and the kufr of disobedience between major shirk and minor shirk; between hypocrisy of belief and hypocrisy of action. They also equate the jahiliyah of ethics and behavior with that of belief. The following is a brief clarification of these concepts with a view to preventing dangerous consequences.

Absolute (or perfect) iman combines what a person believes, say and does. This is the kind of iman referred to in the following Quran verses:

For, believers are those who, when Allah is mentioned, feel a tremor in their hearts, and when they hear His signs rehearsed, find their faith strengthened and put [all] their trust in their Lord. Successful indeed are the believers, those who humble themselves in their prayers .

Only those are believers who have believed in Allah and His Apostle, and have never since doubted, but have striven with their belongings and their persons in the cause of Allah: Such are the sincere ones .

The same concept of iman is also expressed in the following ahadith:

Anybody who believes in Allah and in the Last Day should keep good relations with kith and kin...he should say what is good or keep silent.

In another, iman is defined by negating what is not:

None of you will have iman until he wishes for his [Muslim] brother what he wishes for himself.

The Prophet (SA'AS) in another hadith defines iman:

When an adulterer commits fornication, he does not have iman at the time he is doing it; when somebody drinks alcoholic drink, he does not have iman at the time of drinking; and when a thief steals. he does not have iman at the time when he is stealing.

It is important to notice that in the last two ahadith iman is defined by negation. This means that the reference here is to absolute or perfect iman not to iman as when you say: "He who does not practically apply his knowledge is not a scholar." Negation here is of perfect knowledge rather than limited knowledge. Perfect iman is also referred to in the following hadith: Iman consists of seventy branches [i.e., parts] and haya is part of iman."Abu Bakr al Bayhaqi in his book al Jami li Shuab al Iman likens iman to a tree. The trunk symbolizes the fundamental articles of faith which represent religious observances, manners, ethics, and transactions. Just as a trunk is essential to the existence of the tree, so are the fundamental articles of faith essential to the believer. Conversely, since the tree could survive even in the absence of some of its branches, so a believer's status in the fold of Islam is in proportion to what remains of the branches of his iman. The basic iman was defined by Angel Jibril: "Iman is to believe in Allah, his angels, books, messengers and the divine destiny."

Al Hafiz ibn Hajar wrote in Fath al Bari:

Our righteous forebears said: "iman is a belief in the heart, an utterance by tongue, and a practice of the fundamentals of faith." They meant that translation of iman into practice is a requisite for its perfection. In this sense, they believed that iman can increase or decrease. The Marjiyah contended that iman is a belief and an utterance only; the Karamiyah believed that utterance is enough; the Mu'tazilah believed that it consists of practice, utterance, and belief. The difference between them and the righteous forebears is that the former considered practice as a necessary condition for the truthfulness of iman, while the latter considered it as a necessary condition for its perfection. But perfection is only Allah's; for us, declaration of iman in utterance is sufficient. Once this is done, the person is to be judged in accordance with the Shari'ah but cannot be considered a kufir unless he commits an action of kufr, i.e., prostrates himself before an idol, which shows that he is still an unbeliever. If a person commits an act of sinfulness, short of apostasy or blasphemy, he may or may not be considered a believer depending on his utterance of iman; a person may be judged as a non-believer according to the concept of perfect iman. If a person is accused of kufr he is to be judged by

#### 4. Emphasis on Allegorical Texts

It is important to point out here that a root cause of extremism and of misunderstanding of religious matters, in the past as well as in the present, is emphasis on allegorical texts and disregard of the categorical ones: the allegorical ones are those with implicated and unclear meanings; the categorical are those whose meanings are clear, manifest and defined. Laying emphasis on allegorical texts cannot be the attitude of those with knowledge and insight, but of those who cherish deviation in their hearts. The Qur'an states:

He it is Who has sent down to you [Muhammad] the Book: in it are verses basic or fundamental [of established meaning]; they are the foundation of the Book; others are allegorical. But those in whose hearts is perversity follow the part thereof that is allegorical, seeking discord, and searching for hidden meanings, but no one knows its true meanings except Allah.

Extremists and innovators of old used such allegorical texts as their final evidence, neglecting and overlooking the fundamental categorical ones. Extremists today do exactly the same: using the allegorical to define and determine important concepts which result in serious and grave consequences when used as bases for judging individuals or groups, for assessing their behavior, and for classifying them as either friends or enemies, believers or kuffar who must be fought.

Such shallowness in understanding and hastiness in making judgments, without careful investigation or comparison (since the fundamental, categorical texts were neglected, and only the allegorical considered) caused the Khawarij to fall into the trap of takfir, considering all Muslims but themselves as kuffar. On the basis of strange "religious" notions and delusions, they fought the great Muslim 'Ali ibn Abu Talib (RA'A), although they were among his followers and soldiers. The main reason for their disagreement with 'Ali (RA'A) was his decision to accept arbitration to settle his differences with Mu'awibn Abu Sufyan in order to maintain the unity of his army and to save the lives of Muslims on both sides. The Khawarij, however, rejected any arbitration because of their misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the Qur'anic verse: "...the command is for none but Allah", and accused 'Ali (RA'A), one of the first Muslims to give in the cause of Islam his essential support, of deviation. 'Ali replied to their citing of the above verse with his famous saying: A word of truth twisted to serve basil [falsehood]."

The fact that the command and all authority in all matters are for Allah (SWT) alone does not mean that human beings are forbidden from arbitrating and judging subsidiary issues within the framework and injunctions of the Shariah. Abd Allah ibn 'Abbas, who had deep insight into and knowledge of Shariah, debated the Khawarij on this issue and refuted their arguments, citing and referring to verses in the Quran which sanction various types of arbitration.

The following verse, for instance, sanctions arbitration to settle differences between a husband and a wife:

If you fear a breach between them twain, appoint [two] arbiters, one from his family and the other from hers. If they wish for peace, Allah will cause their reconciliation. Another instance of arbitration can be seen in the discretion that the arbitrators can exercise in judging a pilgrim who hunts and kills while in pilgrim garb:

O you who believe! Kill not game while in the sacred precincts or in pilgrim garb. If any of you does so intentionally, the compensation is an offering, brought to the Ka'bah, of a domestic animal equivalent to the one he killed, as adjudged by two just men among you; or by way of atonement, the feeding of the indigent, or its equivalent in fasts, that he may taste of the penalty of his deed.

Some people who do not carefully examine and contemplate the Quran and Sunnah and consider them in their entirety, seeking balance between the affirmed and the negated, comparing the specific with the general or the absolute with the limited, believing well meaningfully in the categorical and the allegorical; All such careless people will inevitably go astray, lose clarity of vision, and make haphazard judgments.

This is the trap into which those who nowadays hasten to brand others with kufr have fallen, and into which the Khawarij of old fell. According to al Shatibi, the fundamental cause behind this extremism is ignorance of, and undue presumptions about, the purposes and meanings of Shariah, which cannot be the practice of a person who is versed in Islamic knowledge.

It is worthwhile to reiterate the case of the Khawarij to whom reference has already been made. Is it indeed instructive to contemplate how they "slipped out of religion as an arrow would slip out of its kill," which testifies to the Prophet's description of them as those 'who recite the Qur'an but [its teachings] never touch their hearts.' This probably means-and Allah (SWT) knows best-that their

## 5. The Need To Acknowledge and Respect Specialization

One of the causes of the extremists' shallowness and lack of insight is that they never listen to people who hold different views, never accept any dialogue with them, and never imagine that their own views could be tested in the light of others and be either contradicted or refuted. Many of them have not been taught by reliable Muslim ulama' specialized in the field. Rather, they have received semi-knowledge directly from books and newspapers without any opportunity for revision or discussion which could test the learner's understanding and analyze the depth of his knowledge. They simply read, "understand," and then deduce what they wish. However their reading, understanding, and deduction may well be wrong or deficient.

There might be someone somewhere who opposes their opinions on stronger and more valid foundations, but they are not aware of that because nobody has drawn their attention to such a possibility. These devout young people have ignored the fact that if they want to study Shariah, they must seek the help of reliable Muslim scholars. They cannot venture into this extensive and sophisticated discipline without the guidance of such reliable scholars who can interpret and explain obscurities, define terms, and point out similarities and the relationships between the parts and the whole. Those who venture into it alone will meet with the same catastrophic results which would certainly befall the unskilled swimmer who into deep waters. Proper knowledge of Shariah cannot be perfected without practice and close contact with the experts, especially in those areas where opinions diverge, evidences seem to contradict each other, and certain matters seem to be confusing. This is why our forebears 'ulama' have warned us not to seek to study and understand the Quran through a person who has only memorized it without any knowledge of its contents, nor to seek knowledge through a person who has acquired his own "knowledge" from reading books and journals only, without being properly tutored by reputable and qualified scholars.

Seeking knowledge of Islam alone and only through books reflects the young people's complete loss of confidence in the professional ulama and learned scholars, especially those patronized by the authorities, because they believe that such people have lost the courage to disagree with rulers who go astray. Not only are the religious scholars silent about rulers, atrocities and their negligence of Shari'ah, but they too often-and quite hypocritically-glorify and commend them for such deplorable actions. It would be better for such ulama' to at least keep silent rather than to support batil (falsehood).

It is not surprising therefore, that young Muslims have decided that they can only trust past rather than present-day ulama and consequently have sought the former's books for knowledge and guidance. When I once asked one of these devout young Muslims why they do not try to seek knowledge through learned ulama: he said to me: "And where do we find the 'ulama we can trust? There are only those who are puppets in the hands of rulers; those who unscrupulously give fatawa to permit or to prohibit in accordance with the whims and wishes of rulers; those who bless socialism and consider it Islamic should the ruler happen to be a socialist, but should he happen to be a capitalist then capitalism is blessed and considered Islamic! Those 'ulama who declare that peace with the enemy is haram and munkar when a ruler decides to wage war, but quickly give support and blessings for such peace when the ruler's policy is changed; those who '...make it lawful one year, and forbidden another year.; those 'ulama who have equated between the mosque and the church, between Muslim Pakistan and pagan India!"

My reply to this was: "We should not generalize. There are indeed 'ulama' who have condemned batil, stood up against oppression, and refused to compromise with or support dictators, in spite of all intimidations and temptations. Many of these 'ulama' were imprisoned, subjected to all sorts of torture, and even fell martyrs for the cause of Islam. "The young man-though admitting that that is true-insisted that the power to guide, advise, and give fatawa is still in the hands of the former instead of the latter, i.e., the deviant so-called "eminent" 'ulama.'

One however cannot but admit that there is a great deal of truth in what the young man claimed. Most of the "eminent" 'ulama' who are entrusted with leadership and guidance have become mere pawns in the hands of those in authority, who direct them as they wish. Such 'ulama' need to know that keeping silent about the truth is synonymous with uttering batil; both are Satanic evils. In a debate on Egyptian television on "family planning" and "birth control" from the point of view of Shari'ah, one of the speakers, a well-known Muslim scholar, asked-to the astonishment of the chairman-whether the aim of the debate was to advocate or oppose "family planning", so that he could be on his guard! May Allah (SWT) bless the preceding generation of 'ulama', one of whom courageously addressed a very influential member of the regime in Egypt in the past saying: "He who stretches his legs to look for work does not need to stretch his hands to beg.". One wishes that the contemporary scholars who

## 6. Lack of Insight into History, Reality and the Sunan of Allah

In addition to the lack of insight into the true teachings of Islam, we could add the lack of insight into reality, life, and history as well as into Allah's sunan in His creation. In the absence of such insight, some people will continue to seek or demand the impossible and unavailable. They will imagine what does not or cannot happen, misunderstand occurrences and events, and interpret them on the basis of certain latent illusions which are not related in any way to Allah's sunan or to the essence of Shariah. They want to change the whole fabric of society: its thought, traditions, ethics, systems; they also want to change its social, political, and economic systems by illusory means and imaginary methods. To realize these unrealistic objectives they show the courage, daring<sup>7</sup> and sacrifice to brave death and disregard any consequences for or against them, so long as their intentions and goals are for Allah's sake and for His message. Hence, it is not surprising that such people venture into actions which others refer to as either "suicidal" or "crazy", in total disregard of the numbers that fall victims thereof.

If such Muslims would but contemplate for a moment and heed the Sunnah of the Prophet (SA'AS), they would surely find their guidance. We need to be reminded that the Prophet (SA'AS) spent thirteen years in Makkah instructing and calling people to the message and even performing Salah and ,tawaf at the Ka'bah, although it was surrounded at the time by more than 360 idols. Aware of the insignificance of his physical power as compared to that of his enemies, he never decided on a commando attack to destroy the idols. He was perceptive enough to realize that to do so was to endanger himself as well as his followers. Moreover, the physical destruction of the idols-which could easily be replaced-would not blot out the polytheism which was ingrained in the minds and hearts of his fellow tribesmen. He therefore endeavored to liberate their minds and thought from the fetters of superstition and paganism. Thus the Prophet (SA'AS) ignored the idols and concentrated his efforts on teaching monotheism and on purifying the pagan heart through piety, so that those who embraced the message would constitute a nucleus of believers who knew what they were fighting for; a group sure of success through patience and perseverance; a group that would neither be intoxicated by victory nor despondent over defeat. Indeed, there was a time when his companions, outraged by the brutalities which the pagans had inflicted upon them, requested his permission to fight back, but he always refused, realizing that the time was not yet ripe and that they had to endure until Allah (SWT) gave the permission for fighting.

One day, the Prophet (SA'AS) came upon 'Ammar ibn Yasir (RA'A) and his parents being tortured by the unbelievers. All that he did at the time was to encourage them to endure patiently, and to give them good tidings about their assured place in Jannah. Things continued in this manner until the Muslims were permitted to fight in defense of their freedom and religion:

To those against whom war is made, permission is given [to fight], because they are wronged- and verily, Allah is powerful for their aid- [They are] those who have been expelled from their homes in defiance of right, [for no cause] except that they say, "Our Lord is Allah.

But this permission was only given after the Prophet (SA'AS) and his companions had managed to establish a home for themselves and increase their power and authority. Thereupon they were allowed to fight their enemies. They gained one victory after another until Allah (SWT) granted them<sup>4i</sup> of Makkah from which the Prophet (SA'AS) had emigrated under the pressure of persecution), destroying the idols therein and reciting the following Quranic verse:

And say: "Truth has [now] come, and falsehood perished: for falsehood is [by its nature] bound to perish" .

This is the pattern of history which Jamaat al Tahir wa al Hijrah group in Egypt (since the late 1960's), strangely enough, considers unworthy to accept or emulate. Such a strange and absurd attitude is the cause of the difference between two of the leading men of the group, 'Abd al Rahman Abo al Khayr and Shaykh Shukn, its founder. In his "Reminiscence," Abo al Khayr records that the group's "lack of confidence in and reliance on Islamic history" was the fourth aspect of the difference between him and Shaykh Shukn, who considered Islamic history a series of unauthentic events." History, for Shukri, consists only of the stories narrated in the Quran, and therefore he prohibited any interest in or study of the periods of the Islamic caliphate.

Reflect on such an unreasonable, narrow-minded, and shallow conception, one which considers-on "religious grounds"-the study of Islamic history haram. A history of a nation, with all its positive and negative aspects, its victories and defeats, is a rich mine upon which that nation draws in order to reconstruct and redirect its present. A nation which neglects its history is like a person who has lost his memory; or like a nation without roots or sense of belonging or direction. How could any group make such an unhealthy and abnormal condition the basis of its survival? Further, history is the mirror in which Allah's sunan are reflected in the whole universe in general and in human life in particular. This

## 7. Two Important Sunan

Hasty enthusiastic Muslims usually overlook two important sunan, i.e. gradation and that achieving goals requires the allowance of due time.

**First:** Gradation is clearly manifest in the process of creation as well as in legislation. Allah (SWT) is able to create the heavens and the earth in less than the twinkling of an eye: "Be, and it is". Yet he created them in six of his days, i.e., in stages, known only to Him because they are different from our concept of "day." Gradation is also apparent in the creation of all living organisms which grow in stages until they reach maturity. The same process can also be seen in dawah, which began with the inculcation of monotheism to liberate minds from the fetters of paganism and superstition. When that was firmly established, wajibat and muharramat were then gradually introduced, as in the case of salah, siyam, zakah, and the prohibition of alcohol, etc. And in this we see the difference between Makh and Madan texts.

'A'ishah (RA'A), describes the process of gradation in the introduction of Shariah and the revelation of the Qur'an: "The first Quranic verses to be revealed were those in which Jannah and Jahannam were mentioned [Later], when people embraced Islam, verses dealing with halal and haram were revealed. If verses prohibiting drinking alcohol and practicing fornication were revealed first, people would have said, 'We would never give up drinking or fornication.'"

Hence those who call for the return to the Islamic way of life and the establishment of the Islamic state must take into consideration the necessity of gradation for the realization of their goals, taking into account the sublimity of the goal, their own means and potential, and the multiplicity of impediments. This brings to mind the example set by the righteous Caliph, 'Umar ibn 'Abd al 'Aziz, who successfully reconstructed life on the model set up by the Rightly-Guided Caliphs. But the process of reconstruction was not easy. Even his own son, 'Abd al Mailik, a very devout and enthusiastic Muslim, thought that his father was too slack in his attempts to eradicate all traces of deviation and aggression. He once addressed his father saying: "O, father, why don't you implement [reforms swiftly]? By Allah, I would not care if you and I perish for the sake of the truth " But 'Umar replied: "Do not be hasty my son. Allah condemned alcohol twice in the Qur'an and prohibited it only on the third time. I fear if I force all the truth on people [at once] they would reject it all at once. This may cause fitnah."

**Second:** The second of these sunan is complementary to the first, i.e., everything has an appointed term during which it reaches ripeness and maturity. This applies to the material as well as the moral. Nothing should be harvested before its appointed time; crops cannot be harvested before they have ripened. Rather than being useful, unripe fruit and vegetables can cause harm. And just as crops need time-sometimes a long time-to mature, the true meanings and values of great actions become apparent only after many years. The longer actions take to mature, the greater they are. The endeavors of one generation often materialize in the following one, or even much later. There is indeed no harm in this if everything takes its planned natural course. During the Prophet's early days in Makkah, the unbelievers used to mock him whenever he warned them of the punishment awaiting them if they persisted in rejecting Allah (SWT), and therefore they asked him to hasten this punishment, not realizing that it must take its course and could neither be delayed nor hastened:

They ask you to hasten on the punishment [for them]: had it not been for a term [of respite] appointed, the punishment would certainly have come to them: and it will certainly reach them, of a sudden, while they perceive not!

And: Yet they ask you to hasten on the punishment! But Allah will not fail in His promise. Verily, a day in the sight of your Lord is like a thousand years of your reckoning.

At this stage Allah (SWT) advised the Prophet (.SA'AS) to persevere just as the earlier prophets had done and not to hasten in invoking Allah's punishment on them:

Therefore patiently persevere, as did [all] the messengers of inflexible purpose; and be in no haste about the [unbelievers] .

Allah (SWT) reminded the Prophet (SA'AS) and his followers of the unflinching perseverance of earlier prophets in the face of hardships, the prolonged struggle, and the difficulty of awaiting victory: Or do you think you shall enter the garden [of bliss] without such [trials] as came to these before you? They encountered suffering and adversity and were so shaken in spirit that even the Messenger and those of faith who were with him cried, "When will the help of Allah come?" Verily, the help of Allah is [always] near. Indeed, Allah's ordained victory is near, but it has an appointed time known only to Him, for He does not hasten things as His creatures do. For this reason, the Prophet (SA'AS) used to advise his

## 8. Islam: A Stranger in Its Homeland

Perhaps the most alarming and unbearable factor for any ardent, committed Muslim, especially the young, is the lack of adherence to the teachings of Islam in Muslim countries where perversion, corruption, and falsehood are rampant. Marxism and secularism are being propagated openly and publicly. The contemporary "crusaders" plan and act to infiltrate everywhere without fear. The media, in addition to clubs and "heaters, spreads obscenities and misconduct. Half-naked, drunken women roam the streets tempting and provoking; drinking alcohol is legally available and common. Every aspect of distraction or sensual entertainment in the form of obscene literature, songs, plays, films, and pornographic material is being designed to corrupt and to deepen ignorance of Islam and to hamper faith.

In addition, the committed Muslim observes daily that the legislation-which is supposed to embody the beliefs and values of the Ummah in the forms of laws upholding its morals and punish those who transgress-endorse all that is forbidden by Shariah and advocates corruption, because existing legislation does not derive from divine guidance but from secular philosophies. No wonder, then, that it sanctions as lawful what Allah (SWT) has prohibited and prohibits what He has made permissible. It also neglects obligations ordained by Allah (SWT) and renders the specific punishments assigned to prohibited deeds by Allah (SWT) or the Prophet (.SA'AS) inoperative. Moreover, the young witness daily the deviation of most of the rulers of Muslim countries-those who were entrusted with this responsibility. They unashamedly make friends with the enemies of Allah (SWT) and show hostility and enmity towards those who fear Him and who endeavor to call for the divine truth; the former enjoy the rulers favoritism and protection, the latter their wrath and oppression. Islam is seldom mentioned, except on national and "religious" occasions to deceive and beguile the masses

Furthermore, the young constantly witness clear social injustices and great disparity between the poor and the rich, between those who can hardly exist and those who waste millions on gambling and women; they see mansions which cost millions but are only occasionally- if ever-used while millions of Muslims remain unsheltered; they hear of fortunes smuggled abroad to be kept in secret foreign accounts, while millions of Muslims are content with the little that is still denied them, those who can hardly feed their children or buy medicine for the sick and old. Yet, if those who usurp oil revenues, or those who have benefited from the policy of economic cooperation with the West, or the agents of big international companies, donated but a portion of the wealth thrown away on gambling or on women, it would relieve a great deal of poverty as well as feed and shelter tens of thousands. Countless riches and public funds are being usurped in broad daylight; bribery and favoritism are deeply rooted. Those who commit these thefts always escape justice. but those who commit relatively insignificant misdeeds are harshly and severely punished. Such injustice has created bitter feelings of envy, hatred, and malice between the various sectors of the community. The advocates of destructive ideologies exploit these feelings of bitterness to kindle the fire of class struggle and social hatred, and manage to create an atmosphere where their imported alien ideologies can be accepted as alternatives In that atmosphere the advocates of such ideologies find a large number of people willing to listen to them, not because of a rational acceptance of their ideas but as a reaction to and hatred for prevailing conditions.

There is nothing enigmatic about the root cause of this tragic condition. Islam, as a way of life, with all its comprehensiveness, vision, justice, and balance is almost absent from the scene, a stranger in its homeland. It has been removed from public life, from the economic and public affairs of the state, from legislation and from international relations, and has been cornered in a private relationship between the individual and his Lord-a situation akin to that of Christianity during the period of its decadence. Islam has been made a din without Shariah, a religion without a state, a Quran without authority.

Islam has been made to suffer the consequences of a past alien to its own history and to its Ummah. The history of the Catholic church in the West was rampant with disasters and negative attitudes in which the church aligned itself with despotism, with unjust monarchs and feudal lords against the helpless masses. It initiated the Inquisition, which persecuted and tortured men of knowledge and new ideas; scholars and scientists were burnt alive; ignorance and aggression were forced on societies in the name of religion, i.e., of Christianity. It is no wonder then that the masses revolted against it and sought to liberate themselves. There is no reason, however, that Islam should bear the consequences of this black and alien history, only to be banished from any influential place in legislation and in guidance of the Ummah and to be confined to the conscience of the people or to the mosque-a tongue-tied "mosque" which is always under secret service surveillance. Even there, Islam is not allowed to command the common good and forbid that which is evil and undesirable.

## 9. The Impediments Imposed on Da'wah and Du 'ah

Another cause of extremism pertains to the freedom - indeed duty- to call people to Islam. It is a truism that Islam teaches a person not only to be pious and righteous but also to endeavor to reform others. This is the purpose of the obligation to call people to righteousness, to command the common good and forbid that which is evil and undesirable, to join together in mutual teaching of truth and of patience. From the Islamic point of view, every Muslim is required to call to Islam to the best of his or her ability. The following verse is addressed to every Muslim: "Invite [all] to the Way of your Lord. . . Furthermore, every follower of the Prophet (SA'AS) is a daIyah, as the following verse makes clear: "Say: This is my way. I invite unto Allah-with evidence as clear as the seeing with one's eyes-I and whoever follows me".Henceforth, the motto of the reformers: "Make yourself righteous, and call others to righteousness." The Qur'an says: "Who is better in speech than one who calls [men] to Allah, works righteousness, and says, 'I am of those who bow in Islam'".

Islam does not want a Muslim to work alone. The Prophet (SA'AS) said: "Allah's hand [of support] is with the group,' end also: "A believer to another believer like a building whose different bricks enforce one another." Cooperation in kindness and in commanding righteousness not only a religious obligation but a vital necessity. It is no wonder, therefore, that collective work in the field of dawah is an obligatory duty, because that without which a wajib (obligation) cannot otherwise be completed is in itself a wajib. The fact that non-Muslim ideological forces work collectively in the form of blocs, parties, and associations makes it incumbent upon Muslims to counter these forces by similar techniques. Otherwise, we will continue to lag behind, totally unable to do anything while others achieve progress. For this reason, the gravest sins committed by some of the governments in Muslim countries are the censorship of the freedom to call people to Islam as a din and a system of beliefs and a way of life, and the intimidation of du'ah and those who call for the application of Shariah, the establishment of the Islamic state, the unity of the Ummah, the liberation of Muslim land, and the support of all Islamic causes. This pressure on da'wah and du'ah, and the restriction of all forms of Islamic work, especially the collective one, is one of the main causes that generates extremism. This is especially so since the adherents of secular philosophies and ideologies are allowed to organize themselves in groups and to disseminate their ideas with complete, freedom and support and without any interference or restriction. It is illogical to grant complete freedom-in Muslim land-to the advocates of secularism, Marxism, liberalism, and so on, to establish parties, organizations, newspapers, and magazines, and alone censor Islam and its du 'ah, who speak for the majority of the people.

Dawah to Islam, as a positive and comprehensive din and a way o life, faces censorship and suppression in many Muslim countries. The only form of Islam allowed is that upheld by the dervishes and the professional traders in religion; the "Islam" of the ages of backwardness and decadence; the "Islam" which only celebrates occasions, supports despotic rulers, and prays for them to have a "long life." It is an "[slam" based on "Divine pre-determination" and "no-choice" in belief, sanctions Islamically condemned bida (innovation) in 'ibadah (worship), permits passive ethics and intellectual rigidity, and encourages emphasis on minor rather than major and vital issues. Those who follow and promote this "Islam" are patronized by corrupt and despotic rulers. Even the irreligious, secularist rulers bless this form of religiosity, show respect and support to its advocates in order to enable them to lull the deprived masses and induce them to the status quo, and engage the youth in a web of illusions, symbols, terms, and trivialities. In this way, they sabotage their zeal for jihad, their determination to fight against injustice, perversion, and corruption. Perhaps this is what led Marx to claim that "religion is the opiate of the people."

But the authentic original Islam, which is contained in the Quran and the Sunnah-understood and practiced by the companions of the Prophet (SA'AS) as well as the Tabi'un-as the embodiment of truth and power, honor and dignity, sacrifice and jihad, is - as we have mentioned earlier-rejected by those in authority because it kindles the spirit of revolt against injustice and darkness, and teaches its adherents to emulate the practice of " . . .those who preach the messages of Allah and ,fear Him, and fear none but Allah".

In this conviction and clarity of vision, they believe that since sustenance and the duration of a person's life are determined by Allah alone, there is no reason to fear or to seek support from anyone except Him. In contemporary Turkey, a Muslim country, which had been the headquarters of the caliphate for several centuries, the leader of a popular party-who was deputy premier at the time-was led from his ministry into prison. He and his followers were brought to court, accused of calling for the application of the Shariah in a country where 98% of the population are Muslims! The prosecution brought fifteen charges against them, all of which centered on their endeavor to change Turkey from an irreligious secular state that opposed Islam (the religion of the Turkish people) to a state that



## Chapter Three

### Toward a Remedy for Extremism

After throwing light on the so-called "religious extremism," pointing out aspects of its true nature and characteristics and revealing its most important causes, motives, and stimulants, we now need to outline a remedy for it, its means, and methods. It should be emphasized at the outset that the remedy is inseparable from the causes and must, therefore, be as varied and complex as the causes themselves are. Needless to say, no magical touch can put an end to extremism or bring back the extremists to the line of moderation. The malaise afflicting the soul and mind of mankind is far more deeply rooted than we think, and consequently more difficult to treat. Extremism is essentially a religious phenomenon with a variety of psychological, social, and political dimensions. As such, all of these aspects must be tackled from an Islamic point of view.

I do not agree with the determinists who hold either society alone or the prevailing economic conditions responsible for the causes of the phenomenon, while they ignore the actions and behavior of the young, whom they consider to be totally helpless. It is unjust to hold the young alone responsible and to exonerate the society, the regime, and its governmental departments especially those in charge of education, guidance, and the media. The responsibility is in fact mutual, and each partly played an important part. The Prophet (SAAS) said: "All of you are guardians and responsible for your wards and the things under your care."<sup>1</sup> Therefore, we intend to discuss in the following part the duties that should be played by society in order to overcome extremism, as well as the duties of the youth to resist this destructive tendency.

## 1. Duties of Society

I have already pointed out that the inner contradictions and the chaos which characterize present-day Muslim societies, as well as the estrangement of these societies from Islam, have significantly contributed to the birth and spread of extremism. Therefore, these societies must play a positive role in the remedy. The initial step for a Muslim society is to acknowledge and confirm its genuine commitment to Islam. This cannot be achieved through a verbal declaration or expression, or through a set of slogans or a clause in the constitution stating that "[Islam is the official religion of the state," but only through true adherence to the teachings of Islam.

Islam is a comprehensive system of life. It invests its divine character in life and guides it along an ethical direction; it sets up the framework, the landmarks, and the limits which govern the movement and goals of life, always keeping it on the right path, protecting it from pitfalls or from straying. For this reason, Islam consists of beliefs which can enrich the mind, of 'ibadat which purify the heart, of morals which purify the soul, of legislations which establish justice, and of manners which beautify life. To be really Islamic society must commit itself to Islam in its totality, unlike the Israelites who adopted only parts of the Torah but ignored the rest. Consequently, Allah (SWT) admonished them in the Quran: Then is it only a part of the Book that you believe in, and do you reject the rest? But what is the reward for those among you who behave like this but disgrace in this life? And on the Day of Judgment they shall be consigned to the most grievous penalty.

Furthermore, for a society to be Islamic it must be willing to apply Allah's injunctions and the Sunnah of His Prophet (SA'AS) on all the affairs and aspects of life: social, economic, political, or intellectual. This is the requisite of iman: But no, by the Lord, they can have no [real] faith, until they make you judge in all disputes between them, and find in their souls no resistance against your decisions, but accept them with the fullest conviction .

And:

The answer of the believers, when summoned to Allah and His Messenger, in order that He may judge between them, is no other than this: they say, "We hear and we obey." It is such as these that will attain felicity .

Our societies must endeavor to eliminate this obvious contradiction we believe in Islam both as a divine creed and a Shariah, but we have abandoned its Shariah and disregarded its guidance and moral teachings.

These we have replaced with imported systems and alien ideologies from both the East and the West yet we still claim to be Muslims!

Our rulers must understand and realize that they are in a Muslim land and are ruling Muslim peoples who are entitled to be governed in accordance with the teachings of their religion. Constitutions, laws, educational systems, etc., must all reflect and express the people's beliefs, values, and traditions, which must also be guided, consolidated, and disseminated via the media. The economic and social policies-at local and international levels-must be formulated within the framework of these beliefs and must serve their goals. The failure of the rulers in Muslim countries to live up to these legitimate expectations is utterly unacceptable and is in stark contradiction to Islam.

Indeed, these rulers' defiance of the conscience of Muslims in most Muslim countries has become intolerable. Some of them openly reject Islam and express their commitment to an Eastern or a Western ideology. Moreover, they deprive Islam of any form of expression. Even the mosque and its religious activities are manipulated to express support for regimes and rulers. Those who dare to object are harshly and severely punished. Other rulers in Muslim countries profess to be Muslims, but their concept of Islam is a version of their own coinage and satanic whims. They pick and choose, accepting that which serves their own egotistic pursuit, and discarding that which does not appeal to them! What they themselves "believe" and declare to be "Islamic" is the "truth," and what they reject is "bat l." In this contention, they disregard all the interpretations of the venerable forebears, as well as their renowned successors and contemporaries. They unscrupulously disagree with the whole Ummah, ignoring the established traditions of the companions of the Prophet (SA'AS), the jurists, the interpreters of the Quran and Hadith. They see no need or reason to consult any of these. Such a ruler considers himself to be a faqih, an interpreter, a narrator, a mutakallim, and a philosopher.

Such a ruler claims to be that one man to whom there is no second. He does not see any need to learn anything even from the Prophet Muhammad (SA'AS) himself, claiming that he relies on the Qur'an alone, forgetting that the Prophet (SA'AS) is the interpreter of the Qur'an. In this respect Allah (SWT) says: "He who obeys the Messenger, obeys Allah". Nevertheless, some of these rulers allow the

## 2. Duties of Young Muslims

The first duty of the Muslim youth is to rectify their views and thoughts with a view to knowing their din on the basis of clear evidence and Understanding and according to a proper methodology. The right start is acquiring the proper methodology of comprehending Islam, and of dealing with themselves, people and life.

Historically, Muslim scholars have established certain principles and methods which have enhanced the proper comprehension, and deduction of matters and issues whether supported by texts or not. This led to the establishment of the science of *usul al fiqh*: a discipline which studies the methodology of deriving laws from the sources of Islam and of establishing their juristic or constitutional validity. Thus, they established the principles of the controlling and controlled evidence, the subject and object of controlling aspects of evidence: the main and the subsidiary, the imperative and the negative, the general and the particular, the absolute and the restricted, the pronounced and the comprehend. They also established the total aims of the Shariah, such as safeguarding people's welfare, counteracting evil and harm; they divided needs into: essential, necessary and comforts. This is indeed a unique science of which there is no equal, and of which Muslims have the right to be proud. In addition, there are other principles and rules of *fiqh* which may not be available in the books of *usul* but are found in various books on *usul al tafsir* and Qur'anic sciences, as well as *usul al hadith*, and Hadith sciences. In addition to these, there are various rules and principles scattered in books of beliefs, hadith interpretation, and jurisprudence which can be observed by those who have acquired an insight into the purpose of Shariah and its innermost recesses.

What is required, therefore, is not a shallow understanding of the texts but rather a deep knowledge and a genuine comprehension of the purposes of Qur'anic verses and the *ahad'ith*. The *fiqh*, the awareness, and the knowledge required must take the following into consideration

**First:** Knowledge of and insight into Shariah cannot be complete without considering all the particular aspects in relation to the general context of the entire truth of Islam. To issue a judgment a Quranic verse or a hadith must be interpreted in the light of other *ahadith*, the Sunnah of the Prophet (.SA'AS) as well as the practice of the companions (RA'A), and must be understood in the light of the Qur'an and the general context and purposes of Shariah. Otherwise there will be a defect in this understanding, and a confusion in deduction and derivation which could create contradictions in Shariah and subject it to ridicule and to calumniation.

For this reason, Imam al Shatibi set two conditions for *ijtihad*: **(1)** understanding the purposes of Shariah in its totality, and **(2)** the ability to derive and to draw conclusions on the basis of this understanding.' This can only be fulfilled when there is a deep and wide knowledge of the texts, especially the *ahadith* and the traditions, in addition to an insight into the reasons, the events, the circumstances, and the purposes of each text, as well as an ability to distinguish between the eternal and unalterable and those formulated to meet a temporary need, an existing custom or tradition, or certain transient circumstances which can be changed when the latter change.

One day I was lecturing on proper Islamic dress for women, according to the Qur'an and Sunnah, when a person in the audience said that the hijab mentioned in the Qur'an must include an additional outer covering. I replied that the hijab is not an end in itself, but rather a means for decently covering those parts of the body which the Shariah prohibits to be exposed. In this sense, it can differ from one place and time to another. But the man shouted furiously that the garment required is very clearly specified in a Qur'anic text, and we therefore have no right to change it. He cited the following verse:

O Prophet! Tell your wives and daughters and the believing women, that they should cast their outer garments over their persons (when abroad). That is most convenient, that they should be known (as such) and not molested.

I replied that the Qur'an sometimes specifies certain means and methods that were suitable and common at the time of the revelation, but were never meant to become permanently binding if better or similar ones are found. The following example is sufficient enough to demonstrate my point. Allah (SWT) said:

Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war, to strike terror into (the hearts of) the enemies of Allah and your enemies.

The steed is specifically mentioned above because it was?at the time of revelation-one of the most powerful means known at the time. But there is indeed no reason why Muslims in our times and in earlier days should not use tanks and armored vehicles to achieve the end referred to in the above verse, i.e., to strike fear into the hearts of the enemies of Allah (SWT) and of the enemies of Muslims.

### 3. Knowledge, Values, and Actions

Knowledge of, and fiqh in, din help in the assessment of the value as well as the status, in the Shariah, of actions and duties which have their specific place in the scale of the commandments and the prohibitions. Such knowledge prevents any confusion regarding status, variations, or similarities concerning the juristic value of actions. Islam has given a specific value to each specific action according to its positive influence on life or according to the degree of damage and negative effect which it may create.

Among the commandments there is the *mustahabb*, (the commendable) action, the neglect of which is not punishable but the performance of which is rewardable. There is also the confirmed Sunnah of the Prophet (SA'AS) such as things which he always did, never neglected, but did not categorically command others to do. The companions (RAA) used to neglect some of these to prove that they were not *wajib*. For this reason, both Abu Bakr and 'Umar used to refrain from offering *dhabihah* (animal sacrifice). Another type of *wajib* according to some *madhahib*, is that which is commanded but not categorically ordained. *Fard* is that which is categorically and unequivocally obligatory and whose performance is rewarded and negligence punished; failure to observe it is *fiṣq*, sinfulness, or iniquity; failure to believe in it is *kufr*.

It is common knowledge that *fard* is classified into two categories: *fard kifayah* (collective obligation), and *fard ayn* (individual obligation). The individual obligation has to be performed by each Muslim. The collective obligation, on the other hand, entails no punishment on those who have not participated in it if others have done so. Individual obligations are further classified. The most important are those *fara'id* which are considered in Islam fundamental articles of faith: the *shahadah*- i.e., the act of witnessing that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is His Prophet, Servant, and Messenger, the verbal content of that act-*salah*, *zakah*, *siyam*, and *hajj* for those who can afford the journey. There are other *fara'id* of a lesser status than the aforementioned, but they are still absolutely compulsory. There is no doubt that Islam gives precedence to *fard ayn* over *fard kifayah*. Thus kindness and submission to parents, which is *fard ayn* has precedence over *jihad*, as long as it is *fard kifayah*. A son is therefore not allowed to participate in *jihad* without the prior consent and permission of the parents. This is enshrined in authentic *ahadith*. Moreover, a *fard ayn* which is connected with the rights of the community has precedence over another *fard ayn* which is connected with the rights of an individual, or a number of individuals, like *jihad* and devotion to parents. Therefore in the case of foreign aggression against a Muslim land, *jihad* becomes *fard ayn* with a precedence over the rights of parents. Further, *fard* has precedence over *wajib*, *wajib* over *sunnah*, and confirmed *sunnah* over *mustahabb*. Islam also gives precedence to acts of common social nature over those which concern individual kinship, and prefers acts which benefit more than one person to those which only benefit an individual. For this reason Islam prefers *jihad* and *fiqh* over personal '*ibadah*, reconciliation between warring parties over voluntary *salah*, *siyam*, and *sadaqah*. Similarly, "a just ruler is rewarded more for his adherence to justice for a single day than he is for his performance of voluntary '*ibadah* for sixty years".

Some of the grave mistakes committed by Muslims during the period of decline and decadence are outlined below:

1. **They neglected-to a great extent?the collective duties of concern to the whole Ummah such as scientific, industrial, and military advancement and excellence, without which Muslims cannot attain strength or power. They neglected *ijtihad*, inference of *ahkam*, *da'wah*, and the opposition to unjust rulers.**
2. **They also neglected some individual *fard ayn* obligations, or at least underrated their value, such as the obligation on every Muslim to command the common good and to prohibit evil and the undesirable.**
3. **They gave more attention to some of the fundamental pillars of faith at the expense of others; thus they paid more attention to *Siyam* during Ramadan than *Salah*. That is why those who offered *Siyam* were more than those who performed *Salah*, especially among the women. There were indeed those who never prostrated before Allah (SWT) in prayer.**

**Moreover, there were those who gave more attention to *salah* than *zakah*, although Allah (SWT) combined both in twenty-eight places in the Quran, which made some of the Companions (RA'A) said that "The *salah* of a person who does not give *zakah* is invalid.' And it is for this reason that Abu Bakr al Siddiq swore to declare war on those who failed to equate between *salah* with *zakah*.**

4. **They attached more importance to some *na'afil* (supererogatories) than they did to**

#### 4.Sympathetic Understanding of the Abilities, Limitations, and Circumstances of Others

Another aspect of fiqh lacking in extremists is to cherish a sympathetic understanding of and a deep appreciation for the varying levels of individual abilities limitations and circumstances which may hinder other Muslims in coping with the requirements of ideal Islamic life. It would be a great mistake to expect or demand all people to become martyrs like Hamzah ibn Abd al Muttalib (RA'A) by firmly standing up against the perpetrators of oppression, injustice, and exploitation, and to sacrifice everything for the cause of da'wah. This is a virtue which none but the exceptionally persevering few can aspire to or actually realize. Some people may be content with only quietly voicing the truth; others may even resort to complete silence out of their conviction that the prevailing conditions have reached such a dominance that it is futile, and probably dangerous, to object openly or try to change things. Others may believe that reform must begin from the bottom, not from the top, and thus direct their efforts towards individuals who they believe are capable of effecting the desired change and reform after being armed with clarity of vision and purpose, though the eradication of Westernized and secular regimes and systems cannot be realized without a deep-rooted and longterm collective struggle led by a popular Islamic movement and based upon clear-cut objectives, well-designed methods, and fortitude.

However, the Shariah justifies -even requires- silence on seeing munkar(evil), if it will lead to a greater munkar. This is in keeping with the Islamic axiom that a Muslim can choose to endure a lesser evil lest a greater one may result thereof. Such a choice is sanctioned by the Qur'an, and is especially obvious in the story of Musa ('AS) and his brother, Harun ('AS), who were commissioned to preach the divine message to Pharaoh and his people. Musa ('AS) ascended Mount Sinai and left his people with Harun ('AS) as deputy. But as soon as Musa ('AS) had left, the Israelites began to worship a golden image of a calf, as was suggested to them by the Samiri, and refused to listen to Harun's dissuasions against such deviation.

Harun had already, before this said to them: "O my people! You are being tested in this: for verily your Lord is Most Gracious: so follow me and obey my command." They had said "We will not abandon this cult, but we will devote ourselves to it until Musa returns to us.

Finding them adamant, however, Harun ('AS) kept silent. When Musa ('AS) returned and discovered the deviation of his people, he was angered and full of grief, rebuked Harun ('AS) and was very rough with him:

"O Harun! What kept you back, when you saw them going wrong, from following me? Did you then disobey my order?".

Harun ('AS) replied:

"O son of my mother! Seize [me] not by my beard nor by [the hair of] my head. Truly I feared lest you should say: 'You have caused a division among the children of Israel, and you did not respect my words!'" .

Harun ('AS) considered the preservation of the unity of the community until its leader returned so that he would not be accused of taking a hasty decision and of initiating-discord, a good reason for his silence. This is relevant to the hadith, mentioned earlier, in which the Prophet (.SA'AS) said that he would have destroyed the old Ka'bah and rebuilt it on the foundations laid down by Ibrahim ('AS) but for his consideration of the fact that his followers had only recently abandoned their paganism.

Other examples are to be found in the Prophet's command to Muslims to endure the injustice of their rulers if they do not have the power to oust them and replace them with righteous ones, lest this should create an even greater fitnah and discord and lead to catastrophic results, such as the shedding of Muslim blood, the loss of property, and instability without having achieved any tangible result. Such rulers may therefore be tolerated unless, of course, the condition reaches a clear-cut deviation and kufr or riddah. The Prophet (SA'AS) said in this respect: "Unless you witness open kufr for which you have evidence from Allah."

Both instances clearly demonstrate the importance of maintaining unity in the face of an uncertain success. On the other hand, it is instructive to the dreamy idealists who want Muslims either to be absolutely perfect in observing Islamic teachings or to leave the fold of Islam altogether. For them there is simply no midway. In the opinion of such idealists physical force is the only method which should be used to change munkar overlooking the other two ways: with words and with the heart, and that all this depends on the ability and circumstances of the individual. They seem to have forgotten the fact that Islam does not sanction overburdening people whose different abilities and circumstances must always be taken into consideration. The Shariah has certainly taken into consideration different

## 5. Knowledge and Insight into the Sunan of Allah's Creation

Islam is the religion of rational and critical minds. This is why one of its fundamental goals is to make man aware of the paramount significance of gradation, fortitude, and maturity. Haste is an inherent characteristic of man in general, and of the young in particular. Indeed, haste is an outstanding characteristic of our own age. It has made our youth eager to sow the seeds today and to harvest the next day. But Allah's will in His own creation does not allow that: a tree goes through stages of growth, short or long, before it bears fruit. The very creation of a human being illustrates this very clearly:

Then We made the sperm into a clinging clot; then of that clot We made a [foetus] lump; then We made out of that lump bones and clothed the bones with flesh; then We developed out of it another creature. So blessed be Allah, the best Creator.

A child is born, breastfed and weaned, then he/she gradually grows from childhood to maturity. Similarly, life gradually moves from one stage to another until Allah's sunan (patterns) are realized. Islam began as a simple *sunna*, then gradually the obligatory duties were introduced, the prohibitions prescribed, and legislative matters detailed. Gradually, the structure took full shape, and Allah's favors and blessings were diffused everywhere. Then the following verse was revealed:

This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favor upon you and have chosen for you Islam as your religion. Such development and stages are plain enough", but they are rarely, at all, observed or acknowledged.

The enthusiastic young people are outraged by the corruption that surrounds them as they witness, and daily live, the rapidly worsening condition of the Islamic Ummah. The common concern initiates group meetings; they undertake to put things right, to salvage what is worth keeping. But in their haste and enthusiasm, they lose clarity of vision, they begin to daydream and build castles in the air, believing that they can blot out all forms of corruption and falsehood in addition to; establishing the ideal Islamic state overnight. They underestimate or

disregard the incalculable obstacles and pitfalls that exceed their means and potential. Their dilemma is like that of the man who asked Ibn Sirin to interpret a dream for him: he dreamed that he was swimming on dry land, flying without wings. Ibn Sirin told him that he too was a man of too many dreams and wishes. 'Ali ibn Abu Talib (RA'A) warned his son: ". . .and beware of relying on wishes, for they are the goods of fools"

It is common knowledge that corrupt realities cannot be changed by immature strategies based only upon good wishes and intentions. It is pertinent here to draw attention to an invaluable book: *Hatta Yughayyiru Ma fi Anfusihim* (Until They Change That Within Their Souls) written by the Syrian scholar Jawdat Sa'id. The book discusses the "patterns of change of the soul and of society" and its title is derived from the following two Quranic verses:

Verily, never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change it themselves [with their own souls].

And:

Because Allah will never change the grace which He has bestowed on a people until they change what is in their [own] souls. True to its title, this book is a deep social and psychological study in light of the teachings of the Quran. One of the best parts of the author's introduction is the following:

There are those among young Muslims who have the readiness and the determination to sacrifice their lives and wealth for the cause of Islam. Unfortunately, there are only a few among them who choose to spend their lives pursuing a serious research in order to perfect a particular discipline or clarify an obscure truth. For example, problems such as the dichotomy between belief and behavior, between what is professed and what is actually done. Such issues pose questions which badly need objective and well-informed answers without which any constructive reform is impossible. The sluggishness of existing studies is due to the fact that the Islamic world has not yet fully realized the importance or the necessity of research due to its common belief that: "The sword is mightier than the pen" rather than "Think before you leap." These different perceptions remain in total confusion: neither the real relationships nor the natural order in them were studied or comprehended.

Moreover, the conditions of iman have not yet been carefully studied in the Muslim world. This does not mean that Muslims have not learned the fundamentals of iman and of Islam. But by this we mean the psychological conditions, i.e., that which must be changed within the soul, because this change brings about the fruition of iman, that is, the condition of conformity between action and belief.

It is still believed that self-sacrifice and sadaqah are the highest of virtues without serious

## 6. A Dialogue on the Sunan and Conditions of Victory

Below is the dialogue which took place between a young Muslim enthusiast and myself. He asked and I answered:

**Q: Are we not following haqq (truth) and our opponents following basil (falsehood)?**

A: Yes, indeed.

**Q: Has not our Lord promised us that haqq will triumph over basil, and iman over kufr?**

A: Yes, and Allah (SWT) will never break His promise.

**Q: So, what are we waiting for? Why do we not wage war against batil?**

A: Our religion instructs us that victory is governed by certain sunan and conditions to which we must adhere. Had it not been for such considerations, the Prophet (SA'AS) would have declared war on paganism at the beginning of the Makkan period. He would not have tolerated performing ,salah at the Ka'bah when it was surrounded by idols.

**Q: What are these sunan and conditions'**

A: First, Allah (SWT) does not make haqq triumphant simply because it is so; but He makes it victorious through the united body of the righteous and brotherly people who believe in Allah ta 'ala. This is clear from the following verse: He it is that has strengthened you with His aid and with the believers, and has put affection in their hearts.

**Q: But what about the angels who descended to aid ,haqq against batil, such as those who aided the believers during the battles of Badr, al Khandaq, and Hunayn?**

A: The angels are there and will come to the rescue of the believers when Allah (SWT) so wills. However, they will not descend in a vacuum: there must be true believers down here on earth who strive to make ,haqq prevail and who need aid from heaven to strengthen them. The Qur'an is clear on this issue as is clear in the following verse which was revealed during the battle of Badr: Remember your Lord inspired the angels [with the message]: "I am with you. Give firmness to the believers. I will instill terror into the hearts of the unbelievers".

**Q: If there are true believers, would that ensure victory?**

A: They have to spread Islam to the best of their abilities, multiply their numbers, and conduct dialogues with their opponents in the hope of convincing them of the truth of their claims. In this way they will obtain the power to encounter their enemies. It would be irrational for one single person to attempt to stand up against a hundred or a thousand. The maximum number mentioned in the Qur'an of unbelievers that a true believer full of vigor and determination could stand up against is ten: O Prophet! rouse the believers to fight. If there are twenty among you, patient and persevering, they will vanquish two hundred; if a hundred, they will vanquish a thousand of the unbelievers .

But in times of weakness, the numbers are different:

For the present, Allah has lightened your [task1 for He knows that there is a weak spot in you: But [even so1, if there are a hundred of you, patient and persevering, they will vanquish two hundred, and if a thousand, they will vanquish two thousand, with the leave of Allah For Allah is with those who patiently persevere.

**Q: But our adversaries are always on the alert; they have excelled in sabotaging our endeavors to spread the divine word.** Q: But our adversaries are always on the alert; they have excelled in sabotaging our endeavors to spread the divine word.

A: This certifies the claim that there is an indispensable condition without which no victory can be guaranteed, i.e., patience in the face of suffering, perseverance in the face of defiance and provocation. The Prophet (SA'AS) told his cousin 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abbas that "Patience is a prerequisite of victory." This is also the advice of Allah (SWT) to His Prophet (SA'AS):

Follow the inspiration sent unto you, and be patient and constant until Allah decides, for He is the Best to decide .

And in another verse:

And be patient, for your patience is but from Allah, nor grieve over them, and do not distress yourself because of their plots, for Allah is with those who restrain themselves and those who do good.

Also:



## Chapter Four

### Advice to Muslim Youth

#### Facts For Muslim Youth

At the end of my previously mentioned study published in al U'mma, in which I discussed the positive as well as the negative aspects of the " Reawakening of Muslim Youth" I emphasized two facts:

#### **First:**

That this resurgence signifies a natural, healthy phenomenon which is clearly indicative of a return to *fitrah* (inborn nature), to the roots which-for us in our Muslim homeland-is simply Islam: the beginning and the end, into which we seek refuge from difficulties, and from which we derive a strength of spirit, of hope, and of guidance. Our Muslim communities have tried solutions imported from either the West or the East, but all have failed to bring about any spiritual elevation material prosperity, goodness, or social welfare in any Muslim country On the contrary, the adoption of these imported alien systems has involved us in a labyrinth of difficulties which have generated disunity and disintegration in the Muslim communities. As a result, public opinion now firmly believes in the inevitability of the Islamic solution, i.e., the application of Shar'iah in all aspects of life. It is not surprising, therefore, that the role of young Muslims in this endeavor is characterized by courage, determination, and resolve.

#### **Second:**

The manifestations of rigidity and strictness in some of our youth cannot be rectified by violence, threats, or allegations which will be counterproductive and may lead to more severity and stubbornness. None of us can doubt the good intentions and sincerity of the youth towards Allah (SWT) and themselves. Therefore, such manifestations can only be remedied by identifying with the young, by understanding their attitudes and thinking, by showing goodwill toward their intentions and aim by bridging the gap between them and the rest of society, by conducting patient intellectual dialogues with them in order to clarify conceptions, to clear up misunderstandings, and to identify similarities and differences.

In pursuance of such dialogues, I have given much advice to Muslim youths. In doing so, I sought nothing but Allah s pleasure. Believers - the Prophet (SA'AS) taught us - should always consult with and advise one another, commanding the common good and forbidding evil and undesirable things with patience and with perseverance. These are necessary requisites for achieving success in this life and rewards in the hereafter. My advice however, is intended to be a landmark which will in shaa Allah, lead us toward our goal, enable us to avoid pitfalls and deviation, and ensure the continuity of our march. Below are some extracts:

## Some Extracts

The young are advised to respect specialization. We live in an age in which specialization has become essential; excelling in one discipline does not necessarily mean excelling in another. Just as a physician cannot be consulted on engineering matters, or a physician on law, it is wrong to consider Shar'iah open to the interpretation of all people by claiming that knowledge of fiqh and Islam, cannot be monopolized by a special group of people, and that Islam, unlike other religions does not recognize the existence of a class of clergy, or rijal al din. It is true that Islam has never known such a class as the Christian clergy, but it fully recognizes the role assigned to scholars specialized in religious matters and referred to in the following Qur'anic verse:

Nor should the believers all go forth together. If a contingent from every expedition remained behind, they could devote themselves to studies in religion, and admonish the people when they return to them, that thus they [may learn] to guard themselves [against evil].

The Qur'an and Sunnah teach us to refer matters of which we have no knowledge to the learned and the experienced:

Before you, also, the messengers We sent were but men to whom We granted inspiration. If you realise this not, ask of those who possess the Message.

And:

When there comes to them some matter touching [public] safety or fear, they divulge it. If they had only referred it to the Messenger, or to those charged with authority among them the proper investigators would have tested it from them [direct]

Also:

Ask then. about Him of any acquainted [with such things].

In another verse He says:

And none [O man!] can tell you [the Truth] like the one who is acquainted with all things.

The Prophet (SA'AS) also said, when he was informed that a wounded man was given a fatwa that he must wash the whole of his body before performing ablution and salah which resulted in his death: "They caused his death, may Allah cause their death [as well] Should not they have asked if they were not sure. . .?"

It was indeed shocking to discover that there are people who, even though totally unqualified, are only too ready to give fatawa on the most serious and complex issues: fatawa which may contradict those of both earlier and contemporary 'uluma' Such people may never hesitate to dismiss as wrong the fatawa of other scholars whom they accuse of ignorance, claiming that the gates of ijtihad are not exclusive to a special few but are open to all. This is true, but ijtihad requires certain requisites of which such people possess none. Our predecessors have criticized even some of the learned who hastened to give fatwa without careful consideration and knowledge of the matter saying: "Some people hastily give fatwa on matters which, if referred to 'Umar ibn al Khattab, would have caused him to consult all the people [who took part in the battle] of Badr," and also, "The most daring among you in giving fatwa is the most daring [to commit sins which will cause them] to [be sent to] the Fire."

Despite the profound depth of knowledge of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, they used to consult and be consulted by their learned companions when confronted with critical issues. Out of the body of fatawa which were made collectively emerged the ijma'(consensus) in the first Islamic era. When consulted, some companions refrained from making any comment, and others simply used to say that they did not know. 'Utbah ibn Muslim reported that he was once Ibn 'Umar's companion for a period of thirty-four months. During that time, Ibn 'Umar was asked about various important issues and he often replied that he did not know. Ibn Abu Layla related the following about at least companions of the Prophet (SA'AS), most of whom were from among the Ansar and were his contemporaries:

When one of them was consulted on a certain issue, he would refer the questioner to another, who in turn would refer him to another and so on until the questioner finally returns to the first person whom he had approached first. They wished to be spared the reporting of a hadith or giving a fatwa in answer to a question.

Furthermore, 'Ata ibn al Sa'ib said that he observed many of his contemporaries tremble whenever giving fatwa. Among the Tabiun Sa'id Ibn al Musayyib-who excelled them all in fiqh rarely gave fatwa But when he had to, he used to pray to Allah (SWT) to save him if I was unintentionally wrong and to save those who would follow his fatwa.

## Tendency to Make Matters Easy

The tendency to make matters easy is more urgently needed at this time than ever before. We live in an age which is immersed in materialism, lost in distractions, full of evils so overwhelming that the person who sticks to his religious principles faces a great deal of difficulty and stricture. This is the reason why the fuqaha' have approved of facilitation in times of hardships and trying calamities.

In calling non-Muslims to Islam and when conducting dialogues with them young Muslims are advised to follow the approach which has already been outlined for them. Several verses can be cited in this respect:

Invite [all] to the Way of your Lord with wisdom and nice preaching, and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious.

Evidently, the above verse commands not only "nice preaching" but also "the most gracious." Therefore, if there are two ways to conduct a dialogue, the best should be adopted in order to win people's hearts and to bridge gaps. One of the best ways is that on which points of agreement are first mentioned and discussed leading to the points of disagreement. The Qur'an states:

And dispute not with the People of the Book, except with means better [than mere disputation], unless it be with those of them who inflict wrong [and injury]. But say "We believe in the revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you. Our God and your God is one, and it is to Him that we bow [in Islam]".

Any remaining points of disagreement will be judged by Allah (SWT):

**If they wrangle with you, say: "Allah knows best what it is you are doing. Allah will judge between you on the Day of judgment concerning the matters on which you differ".**

If this is the way a Muslim is required to conduct a dialogue with a non-Muslim, how then should a Muslim talk to his Muslim brother with whom he shares this great ~n? Some of our Muslim brothers confuse frankness and harshness in expressing the truth, although the two are unrelated. A sagacious daiyah is he who conveys and communicates the message to others in a gentle manner and in the "most gracious" terms without, of course, compromising the content of his message. Factual evidence should teach us that the content, no matter how great it is, is likely to be distorted and lost through a harsh approach. This is why it was said: **"He who commands the common good should do it with common sense."**

Al Imam al Ghazah wrote in his book, Al Amr bi al Ma'ruf wa al Nahi, an al Munkar: "A person commanding the common good and forbidding that which is evil and undesirable should show compassion, sympathy, wisdom, and knowledge." To demonstrate this he related the story of a man who came upon al Ma'mun, the prominent 'Abbasi caliph, and started to "counsel" him about vice and virtue in a rough and crude manner with no consideration for his status. Al Ma'mun, who had a good knowledge of fiqh, addressed the man: "Speak more kindly. Remember that Allah has sent someone better than you to a ruler worse than me, and commanded the former to speak mildly; he has sent Musa and Harun, who were better than you, to Pharaoh, who was worse than me, and commanded them:

'Go, both of you, to Pharaoh, for he has indeed transgressed all bounds, but speak to him mildly. Perchance he may take warning or fear [Allah]'.  
'

Thus, al Matmun was able to give his critic a significant advice. Moreover, Allah (SWT) has also taught Musa ('AS) that his message to Pharaoh should be delivered in such a mild gentle way: Go to Pharaoh, for he has indeed transgressed all bounds; and say to him, would you want to be purified [from sin]?- and that I guide you to your Lord, so you should fear Him?.

Further examination of the dialogue between Musa (AS) and Pharaoh?as related in the Qur'an- reveals that the former has carried out very carefully Allah's advice, despite the latter's tyranny, arrogance, insults, accusations, and attacks, as evident in Surat al Shuara .

A study of the Prophet's life and his Sunnah which pertains to this theme also reveals kindness, mercy, and mildness, which allows no place for roughness, cruelty, or hardheartedness. The Quran describes the Prophet's attitude in this regard:

Now has come unto you a Messenger from among yourselves. It grieves him that you should perish and ardently anxious is he over you. To the believers he is most kind and merciful . It also describes the Prophet's relationship with his companions:

It is part of the mercy of Allah that you deal gently with them. If you were severe or hardhearted, they

## Several Relevant and Important Points in the Ethics of Da'wah

I would like here to emphasize several relevant and important points in the ethics of da'wah and dialogue:

1. Parental and kinship rights must be observed. Neither parents nor brothers and sisters should be treated with coarseness or disrespect on the grounds that they are transgressors, innovators, or deviants. These failings do not cancel their rights for kind and lenient treatment. Parental rights in particular are categorically expressed in the Qur'an:

**But if they strive to make you join in worship with Me things of which you have no knowledge, obey then not; yet bear them company in this life with justice [and consideration], and follow the way of those who turn to Me [in love] .**

Similarly, one can learn a great deal from prophet Ibrahim's gentle and persuasive approach-as illustrated in the Qur'an-in trying to lead his polytheist father to the Truth. Ibrahim persevered in his tender solicitude despite his father's brusque and repellent tone. What then if the parents were Muslims and kind? Even if they violate some injunctions of the Shariah, they are still entitled to parental as well as Islamic rights.

2. Islam teaches the equality of all human beings, but this should not be confused and misunderstood. There are certain differences, such as age, which must be observed and which require us to show politeness and respect. We must indeed observe the rights of relatives, spouses, neighbors, and rulers. Islamic ethics teach us that the young must respect the old, that the old must show compassion toward the young. There are many ahadith which command such attitudes: "Respect for an old Muslim is a glorification of Allah and: **"A person who does not show compassion to the young, respect to the old, and gratitude to the learned is not one of us."**

3. Consideration must be given to those people who have rich experience and who were very active in the field of dawah. If-for one reason or another-they become slack and lose their enthusiasm, we must not forget their contribution annot defame or discredit them. This is the Sunnah of the Prophet (SA'AS), as evident in the story of Hatib ibn Abu Balta'ah, who sent a message to the pagans of Quraysh requesting protection for his children and relatives left behind in Makkah in return for information about the Muslims' strategy and weaponry being prepared to conquer Makkah. When the message was intercepted and Hatib confessed, 'Umar ibn al Khattab (RA'A) was so outraged with this treachery that he requested the Prophet (.SA'AS) to let him cut off Hatib's head. But the Prophet (.SA'AS) refused, saying: **Consideration must be given to those people who have rich experience and who were very active in the field of dawah. If-for one reason or another-they become slack and lose their enthusiasm, we must not forget their contribution annot defame or discredit them. This is the Sunnah of the Prophet (SA'AS), as evident in the story of Hatib ibn Abu Balta'ah, who sent a message to the pagans of Quraysh requesting protection for his children and relatives left behind in Makkah in return for information about the Muslims' strategy and weaponry being prepared to conquer Makkah. When the message was intercepted and Hatib confessed, 'Umar ibn al Khattab (RA'A) was so outraged with this treachery that he requested the Prophet (.SA'AS) to let him cut off Hatib's head. But the Prophet (.SA'AS) refused, saying: "How do you** "How do you know; perhaps Allah has looked at [the deeds of] the people [who fought in the battle] of Badr and said to them: Do whatever you please for I have forgiven you [your past and future sins]." Hatibs early embrace of Islam and his courage and struggle during the battle of Badr made the Prophet (SA'AS) accept his excuse. thus reminding his companions?and indeed all Muslims?of the special status of those who fought in the battle of Badr?the first battle between the Muslims and the kuffar.

4. advise the young to abandon their daydreams and their unrealistic idealism. They must come down to earth and identify with the masses, those who live from hand to mouth in the downtrodden parts of the big cities and in the impoverished and totally forgotten villages. In such places one can find the uncorrupted sources of virtue, simplicity, and purity in spite of "necessity s sharp pinch." There one can find the potential for social change. the opportunities for effort. struggle, movement, help, and reconstruction: there one can mix with the masses and show kindness and compassion towards the needy. the orphaned, the brokenhearted, the weary, and the oppressed. The realization of such objectives, which is in itself a form of 'ibadah, requires collective effort. the formation of committees dedicated to eradicating illiteracy. diseases, unemployment, lack of initiative, and harmful habits. i.e., addiction to smoking, alcohol. and drugs; and on the other hand, to exposing and fighting corruption. deviation. oppression. bribery. and other practices. The struggle to relieve the suffering of the poor and to provide them with proper guidance is indeed a suitable form of 'ibadah, the significance of ..



