

# **The Future of Islam in the West ..**

## **How To Approach it?**

(مستقبل الإسلام في الغرب .. كيف نفكر فيه؟)

**Sheikh Muhammad Al-Ghazaly**

**Translation and Footnotes by: Jasser Auda**

## Translator's Notes

Sheikh Mohammad Al-Ghazaly, may God bless his soul, was one of the prime Muslim reformers of the past century who made historic contributions to Muslim thought. His methodology of understanding and propagating Islam relied primarily on two foundations, the Scripts (the Qur'an and the authentic sayings of Prophet Mohammad, peace be upon him) and an understanding of the contemporary world and its global changes. Sheikh Al-Ghazaly neither ignored the wealth of Islamic literature of the previous fourteen centuries, as many do, nor followed them blindly, as many others do. He respected the traditional Islamic opinions that are coherent with the Book of God and the authentic tradition of the Prophet, peace be upon him. Meanwhile, the Sheikh, God bless his soul, vehemently rejected all opinions that go against the moral and purpose-based spirit of Islam, however popular they are in the Muslim world.

On the other hand, the Muslim *Ummah* (nation) is now widespread all over the world. Today, Islam in the West has an unprecedented strong and growing existence and, in my view, a historical chance to reform itself in an all-new form! A Muslim community in any given western city is an incredible mixture of backgrounds. It is crucial, then, for these communities to have an understanding of Islam that is free from the 'cultural baggage' that Muslim immigrants might have brought with them from their original countries.

All the above motivated me to translate this book. It is a translation in which I took no liberty to drop any of the original work's phrases or ideas. However, it is not meant to be a literal word-for-word translation, but a representation –to the best of my knowledge– of the ideas that the Sheikh meant to convey.

The footnotes, which are mine, refer the reader to some original sources and provide additional references and background information necessary for an average English-language reader. I also explained the meanings of the few Arabic words that I preferred to use in a transliterated form throughout the text. The sources of translated meanings of the Qur'an are Yusuf Ali's, Pickthal's, and Shakir's. For each translated verse, I chose the translation that best fits the context of the paragraph and the specific word or words that Sheikh Al-Ghazaly refers to in the verse. Whenever Ali or Pickthal are quoted, modern-English versions of their words are used.

This book is an attempt to introduce a method of approaching Islam that is essential for Muslims who live in the West. The Sheikh, God bless his soul, wrote this book in the late eighties of the twentieth century, and hence is presenting a pioneer's view; a precious foundation that only calls for more research.

*Jasser Auda*

## Preface

I read in the Egyptian newspaper, *Al-Ahram*, in 10/1/1404 (Hijri) and in the Qatari newspaper, *Al-Rayah*, on the same day, that tens of thousands of French people, from different environments and backgrounds, embraced Islam. The newspapers added that those who newly embrace Islam are 'highly devoted to its teachings'.

The most popular Catholic newspaper, *L'Actualite Religieuse*, mentioned that most of those who revert to Islam belong to the most popular of the 'spiritual movements' or 'New Age'. Sufism and mysticism appeal to many in the West. Among those affected by sufism was the philosopher Roger Garaudy, who named himself Rajaa Garaudy after reverting to Islam. He was a main figure in the French Leftist Party and was nominated at some point to the presidency of the French Communist party. Among those who were part of this movement was Michelle Watts, who was, in fact, a scholar in Sufism. Also among these people were writers such as Maurice Bucaille, and interestingly enough, both white and blue collar workers.

The Catholic newspaper comments: 'Those people were attracted by the simplicity of Islam. It is a practical religion that is characterized by indifference to worldly pleasures and by contentment with one's providence.(!) A young Frenchman explained once to us that he found in Islam what he could not find elsewhere, and that he was delighted to discover that Islam requires no mediator between man and God. In another example, a young man expressed his passion for his newly found faith. It was evident in his description of how diligently he adhered to prayer times, how deeply he reflected on the Holy Qur'an, and how closely he abided to its teachings'.

It was not difficult for me to understand the reasons behind so many French people so enthusiastically embracing Islam. Modern civilization debased human beings by turning them into slaves for worldly goods. It deluded people into forgetting the hereafter by making them focus so zealously on the day. In so doing, people would work fervently for their immediate needs and gains and neglect thinking seriously about pleasing or serving their Creator. Moreover, technological advances have been misdirected in order to serve the lowest of lusts. The world is always in a state of war. People's desires and ambitions know no limits. They eat and never feel full. They drink, but their thirst is never quenched. This carnivorous state is pushing individuals and nations to savage wars over materialistic gains – it's a vicious cycle that eventually kills the human.

Islam is the only way of life that offers protection from all these dangers. Islam places humanity between fear and hope of its One Eternal Lord, 'He begets not, nor is He begotten, and none is like unto Him' (112:3,4). Islam lays down specific rules and regulations for the body, the spirit, the mind, the individual, the community, this life, and the Hereafter. These are regulations that any person with a pure innate nature would embrace and accept from the depth of his/her heart.

Islam asserts that there is only one true religion since the dawn of history. It is the religion that preaches the oneness of God, significance of purification, importance of good deeds, and necessity of preparation for the Day of Judgment. 'Whoever submits his whole self to God, and is a doer of good, has grasped indeed the most trustworthy hand-hold: and with God rests the End and Decision of (all) affairs' (31:22,23).

However, there are many obstacles in the way of explaining Islam to others. First, there is no spiritual or cultural authority that is concerned with introducing Islam's message to the world. Islamic callers are not functioning efficiently, especially since they lack the support of the Islamic state. People who are in desperate need of the truth are searching for Islam. But they find nothing but inaccurate information, or some people claiming to be Muslims who have very little understanding of their own religion. These people are, in any case, indifferent towards their own knowledge of Islam.

Secondly, the enemies of Islam are most diligent. They work relentlessly to spoil its reputation, hide its beauty, and exaggerate the faults of some of its followers.

I expected hardships to be thrown in the way of those new French Muslims. I did not expect their freedom of belief to be violated, because freedoms are respected in the West. But I expected that the enemies of Islam, from within and without, would endeavor to propagate their own false ideas about Islam and, thereby, stunt its new growth. And what I expected took place.

And it was destined that I read the article that motivated me to write this book.

In the name of Islam, I do welcome any friendly dialogue about what I write, and I wish guidance for all people.

*Muhammad Al-Ghazaly*

## Those French People Chose Allah!

The French writer, Terry De Beaumont, wrote an article on Islam in France under the above title.

There is a story behind my reading this article. My friend, the @@great historian, Muhammad Ali Al-Ghateet, was in France for medical treatment. While waiting in a doctor's office he found some French newspapers on a table. He grabbed one of them to entertain himself. When he read Beaumont's title, he became very interested in the article. He also found the article useful for the people in charge of the Islamic *Da'wah*<sup>1</sup> to read. He asked his son to translate it from French into Arabic and subsequently gave me the Arabic translation.

I read the article. The French writer has strong arguments. He is trying not to be biased in his research and conclusions and made several truthful comments. I also found him to be sarcastic at times. I corrected some mistakes in the Arabic translation – without altering the general context – and added some comments within square brackets. Here is what the French writer, De Beaumont, has to say:

The Cont [name omitted], in my opinion, symbolized old France, its kings, and the church. He is a far relative of mine. He used to work as a photographer for the Pope, John Paul the Sixth. He was highly interested in the doctrines of the trinity. He was also a collector of artifacts. He described to us the picture he drew of the Virgin Mary after completing it, and often described to us over the family dinner table how great was the history of the ancient Christian priests.

Suddenly, last year, while we were all sitting at the dinner table, the Cont shocked us with the following statement: 'Christ is the Son of God and Mary is the Mother of God. I cannot believe this any more! Come on! Forget about all this. God has no mother and no son. Moreover, he is not that man in the Bible who did miracles in Jerusalem two thousand years ago. God is NOT that man!'

We were all amazed at this incredible change, but we soon found out the reason behind what the Cont was saying. The Cont embraced Islam!

The Cont is not the only French man who became Muslim. Roget Garoudi also announced his conversion to Islam. He was a distinct French thinker and a senior member of the French Communist Party. General Costco also embraced Islam. Maurice Beggars became a *Shi'a* Muslim. Even Duran Solvang, the *Le Monde* reporter, embraced Islam. And Vincent Montello, the French researcher on Islamic Studies, is a new apostate [The writer, De Beaumont, means apostasy from Christianity]. There are dozens of French thinkers, artists, and researchers who converted from Christianity to Islam. Moreover, many average French young men and women embraced Islam in Morocco, India, and Pakistan. Those I heard about were all between the ages of twenty-five to thirty years old. They all decided to worship 'God, The One God'.

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<sup>1</sup> Call for Islam.

The pessimistic Church of Paris [These are De Beaumont's words] has some statistics on the French converts from Christianity to Islam. Their number was one hundred thousand two or three years ago, and this number is steadily increasing. Is it now twenty thousand or thirty thousand more? Who knows?

I was able to understand why some French would join strange movements, like the followers of Hang Yong Mong, Guru Maragie, and Harry Krishna. However, I was a hundred miles away from believing that a French man or woman would embrace Islam! Could this be a big lie or what?

I was so curious to know what happened to the Cont. So, I visited him in his apartment. It was like an ancient museum full of monuments. I saw wooden artifacts, antique furniture from the eighteenth century, and strange statues. I found a statue of Joan of Arc positioned so that she was pointing towards the corridor. I was so absorbed in my awe when he called me and said: 'Would you like to visit the room where I pray?' I followed him through a long dark corridor. We passed by a bathroom. He pointed to a really fantastic monumental tub made of tin and said: 'I wash here before I pray.' We then moved to a small room that was furnished with only a rug and one chair. I noticed a white line drawn on the wooden floor. I think it was pointing towards the *Qiblah*!<sup>2</sup> The Cont said: 'In this room, a group of scholars and pious elders meet. We pray here!'

I had a very strange feeling at this moment. I am no longer thinking about the savage Islamic extremists. I am now thinking of France embracing Islam from the inside, not through an external crusade! I went on imagining the calls for prayers, 'God is Great,' at dawn and in the afternoon and thousands of French men praying in lines on their rugs, bowing and prostrating. French women would cover their heads with scarves and have their own lines! Imagine if all France embraced Islam. What would happen? No drunks in the street. No more statues, pornographic commercials, or entertainment TV programs. Churches would be converted into mosques and painted white. Pork shops would be shut down! None of these ideas crossed our minds when we first saw those Muslim immigrant laborers prostrating while praying in front of the car factories they work at.

I woke up from my day dreaming at the voice of the Cont telling me: 'Here is my copy of the Holy Qur'an. Islam is the final of the major religions. It accepts Judaism and Christianity.'

It seemed that the Cont was so convinced with the religion he chose for himself. As for me – and I am talking seriously – I am wondering whether Islam really has answers to the questions I have. I only studied Christianity and when I was younger I had to attend Bible lessons. However, I never believed in Christianity. I never believed in the Gospel, miracles or the resurrection!

I thought that I should return to my research on religion that I stopped ten years ago. My colleagues who worked in politics gained nothing satisfying. I was lucky not to risk my future by working in politics. I can now return to my old research. I

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<sup>2</sup> The direction of the Sacred Mosque in Mecca, to which Muslims turn in their prayer.

am sure that I will not find in Islam what I disliked about the church. Worshipping holy statues and crosses is, for Islam, a serious form of idol-worship. Islam, moreover, does not differentiate between its followers; all Muslims are equal.

However, I do not believe in miracles [The French writer is still talking]. But maybe from the Islamic point of view miracles are merely stories that one should narrate. Perhaps believing in the divine power of God gives miracles some respect. [My comment is that miracles are signs that God supported His Prophets with. The age of prophets, as well as miracles, is over. We believe, however, in the authentic narrations that mentioned miracles and we indeed believe that God has the ultimate power over everything and God is capable of anything. Perhaps this is what the French writer is trying to say above. Perhaps what made him say what he said about miracles is that the European mind built a civilization based on the law of action and reaction and, therefore, it is hard for them to accept miracles. The following is what the French writer has written on his journey learning about Islam.]

I thought I should get myself a good translation of the Qur'an. I went to the Success Library on Eleventh Avenue in Paris. But I could only find books in Arabic. I heard in the background a tape of some Arabic Qur'anic recitation. I asked, 'Do you have a translation of the Qur'an?' The man answered, 'Ah! You must be Muslim, aren't you? We actually do not sell Qur'ans except to Muslims! It is a book that only the pure ones can touch!' The man was wearing a white *Jelbab*, a fur cap, and Arabic sandals. This is Muslims' traditional clothing [!]. Despite his combed beard, I was able to recognize his French face. I asked him, 'Are you Arab or French?' He replied, 'I am French. I embraced Islam twelve years ago in Pakistan. Do you want to embrace Islam?' I said, 'I don't know. I am researching it and I have my own doubts.' He said, 'You do not need to be baptized to enter Islam. Islam is very logical, like you when you're doing your research.' He told me that his name was Ayoub. Ayoub went on: 'I have some books that are translated from Arabic. I can give them to you as a gift. And after you read them, you can have your own copy of the Holy Qur'an.'

I returned home feeling a fever in my body. I read one of the books that he gave me with great excitement. It was published in Al-Dar Al-Bayda in Morocco. It explained the basic tenants of Islam that are necessary for anyone who wants to be Muslim: 1. To witness that there is no god but God and Muhammad is his Messenger. 2. To establish regular prayers. 3. To give the obligatory charity. 4. To fast the month of Ramadan. 5. To perform a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in one's life time, for those who can afford it.

After reading this book, I looked up the *Islam in France* magazine, issue number 1395, that I was recommended to read. It took me back to the seventh century A.C.E.<sup>3</sup> I found in it a story on how Prophet Abraham built the *Ka'bah* and how Arabs worshipped idols and forsook worshipping God.

This French magazine that De Beaumont referred to is published by some Christian historians. It is obvious that they mix truth with falsehood in their writings and that their

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<sup>3</sup> I prefer using A.C.E. (After Common Era)

hate for Islam is what compels them to spread misconceptions about the religion and its honoured Prophet (peace be upon him). It is a must, however, for a person who is considering embracing Islam to read a little on the *Ka`bah*. The location of the *Ka`bah* defines the direction in which that the believers pray. Some foolish people, however, thought that facing the *Ka`ba* while praying was a new form of idolatry! Anyway, let us return to the French writer who is looking for Islam and is seriously considering embracing it!



## Stories that Call for Reflection

The new Muslim, Ayoub, took Terry De Beaumont, the writer of the article, to one of the mosques in Paris to show him how to pray. Let us read about his feelings when he prayed for the first time.

I saw about fifty men who came to pray. Entering one after the other, they were handshaking, embracing and greeting each other warmly! I took off my shoes and stood beside Ayoub, waiting. The men then stood in rows guided by some white lines that were drawn on the carpet.

A brother advised me, 'Pay attention. The prayers are about to start!' The *Imam* recited some things that I did not understand. I was repeating the only Arabic sentence I know: *Ashhadu Anna La illaha illa Allah Wa Anna Muhammadan Rasul Allah* (I bear witness that there is no god but God and Muhammad is His Messenger). I was slower in bowing and prostrating than all the rest. When I touched the ground with my forehead for the first time, I realized the physical side of Islam [!]. I felt so energetic and yet at peace. That moment was out of any dimension of time. I took it as an opportunity to look at different sides of the truth.

The prayers were over and everyone stood up. The man right beside me noticed my hesitation. So he inquired, 'Have you been a Muslim for some time now?' I said, 'I am not a Muslim yet. I only know the *Shahadah*.' He said, 'Therefore, you are now a Muslim.' I asked, 'Is that it? Anybody can become a Muslim this way?' He said, 'That's correct.' He gave me a Qur'an and refused to take any money for it.

The warmth of those kind Muslims made all my doubts disappear. I felt that I had returned to the world of spirituality I had abandoned long ago. I wondered, 'Am I really going to convert to Islam? Would Ayoub succeed in recruiting me? I wanted to learn more about him and the stages he went through.' I felt a strong impulse to talk more with him, but he said, 'I can only spare a few hours for you. I made an intention to perform *Hajj*. I will travel tonight. I have an 8500 kilometers drive to Mecca ahead of me.' Confused, I inquired, 'Does it take months to perform pilgrimage?' He explained the rituals of *Hajj* to me and he showed me the clothing he was going to wear. It is an outfit without any stitches and he would have only one bag where he would carry his Qur'an. Then, Ayoub went on saying, with sadness in his voice, 'I divorced my wife.' I asked him, 'Why? Did she ask for divorce?' He replied: 'No. She goes to work every day without a head cover and I failed to convince her to dress appropriately. Men mix with her at work while our son at home requires more care. She refused to stay at home to take care of him. I tried to convince her to give our son all her time but she simply refused.' I asked him: 'Is she French, who like you reverted to Islam?' He answered, 'No. She is Muslim-born from Tunisia!'

Ayoub stayed silent for a moment and then started to tell me his own life story. He said:

George was a low-ranking employee in the Credit De Leone Bank. His law degree was useless as he was just working as a teller! He saved some money to go to Pakistan to study Oriental civilizations and learn Arabic. In Pakistan, he met some French people who were just working hard for their future and cared about nothing else in the world. Then, his destiny caused him to meet an American man who was working in Karachi. The American man took him to the Islamic school there. George liked the serious environment of the school and wanted to study there. He changed his field of interest from law to *Shari`ah*.<sup>4</sup> He later accepted Islam into his life and changed his name to Ayoub. Ayoub continued his serious study and the regular prayers at school. He studied Arabic, Qur'an and *Hadith*. Although classes would last for ten hours every day, he felt he found what he was missing in France.

One day, a fight broke out between some Muslims there and some transgressors. Ayoub defended his brothers in Islam by firing some shots from a gun to scare off the offenders. When he returned to school, he was received as a hero! However, one Pakistani advised him to return to his country and advised him that in France he will be more useful to Islam than in Pakistan.

Ayoub returned to Paris and then moved to Belle Ville to work as an *Imam*<sup>5</sup> in the mosque that Muslims built. He designed an Islamic curriculum for the Muslim children and worked as their teacher. He was also helping Muslim immigrants find jobs in France.

He, thereafter, met a Tunisian girl who came to France to establish her career. She was fed up with the traditions in her country and how women are treated there. She lived the modern French lifestyle. She started to wear miniskirts and attend dances. She finally found a job that she felt would offer her freedom and satisfaction. She liked Ayoub very much and achieved her dream of having him as a husband.

Reality shocked her and made her re-think her lifestyle. Ayoub was more sincere and practicing than the Muslim-raised. He consciously chose Islam and dedicated his life to it. He consciously avoided the crazy whims of his society.

One day, Ayoub asked his wife to stay at home and quit her job. He said that his income was enough for the family. She firmly refused and explained, 'Look at the European women. They never live in isolation. Work is freedom. But if you are so adamant about covering, I will wear a scarf when I go out.' Ayoub replied, 'I am sure that you will take it off once you enter your workplace. Divorce is better for me than accepting your non-Islamic dress.' Finally, they divorced and went their separate ways.

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<sup>4</sup> Literally, way. It is a term that encompasses all aspects of the Islamic Law.

<sup>5</sup> Literally, leader. He is the mosque's leader of prayers and regular speaker.

I think that this divorce was a disaster [Now it is De Beaumont talking]. I gave my farewell to Ayoub and made my way home with many thoughts going through my head. However, I still felt good about the spiritual experience I had in the mosque. I am realizing now that a human being is capable of feeling very intense spiritual feelings in the presence of God. I remembered standing, bowing, prostrating, and the words I recited. I still hear the echo of the Qur'anic verses I heard. The Islamic acts of worship have deep effects. But what Ayoub did with his wife is, to me at least, very cruel. I reject his extreme ideas and I think that he was in the wrong.

I adjusted my radio to channel 107.1 FM that always airs Arabic tunes. Instead of music I heard a hot debate on the status of women in Islam. I became even more confused about everything upon hearing this debate.

Madame Taqeyah, a representative of the Friends of Islam Group, presented the Muslim point of view. The one who was asking the questions was an average French woman who was interested in Islam and its position on women. I was very interested in the topic because half of the 200,000 French who embraced Islam are women.

A man is never chastised for liking a particular woman and asking her for marriage. Does Islam blame a woman for doing the same? And if a woman has a certain talent or career, is she banned from using them for her own or her nation's sake? Why wouldn't such a disallowance be placed on a man as well? How can a French woman deal with this? How can she embrace a religion that is accused of oppressing women?

Back to the debate: The question was: 'I find it difficult to love God through a man that I stand behind and lose my identity to. This is scary! What about my own mind, identity, and independence?'

Taqeyah queried: 'What do you mean by independence and identity?'

The woman answered: 'We, women, have our own personalities, desires, and hopes. Can anybody deny that we have physical and emotional needs? I refuse to allow anyone to take this away from me.'

Taqeyah answered: 'A Muslim woman is not submissive to her husband out of any physical male-female discrimination. If this were the case, I would not have agreed to it! This submission is a divine judgment that we are pleased to accept and through which we seek to express our love to God.'

I thought I should meet Madame Taqeyah. I met her at her apartment, which is furnished in an Arabic style. She, like Ayoub, turned out to be a westerner who embraced Islam. I relaxed on a mattress on the ground after taking off my shoes! I noticed a large picture on the wall that had the entire script of the Qur'an, written in very tiny writing. She was wearing a wide dress and was so calm in her look and her talk.

She began the conversation by describing the status of women who come to France with their husbands who come for work. She said:

These women come with a lot of hate in them for the traditions that have been controlling them their entire lives. They come with hopes of ridding themselves of such traditions, living in a free society, and attaining desperately needed self-fulfillment. However, their husbands, fathers and brothers deny them these hopes and insist that they practice the traditions of North West Africa or the Islamic countries in general. I wish these women could learn more about Islam and its true teachings before they accuse it of backwardness and cruelty and before they turn to non-Islamic lifestyles.

I think much of these women's problem is that they judge Islam based on some extreme cultural practices that are prevalent in some Muslim countries. A woman, who worked as a teacher in Arabia, told me, 'Women are not legally allowed to drive cars over there. They have lost so many other rights.' A woman coming from Iran told me, 'A woman would not dare to walk out her door without a *Hijab* that covers her whole body.' A young Algerian lady once told me, 'An Algerian woman who lives alone and insists on choosing her own husband for herself is considered a whore.' I have hundreds of complaints about the way women are treated in the Muslim world.

[The French writer interrupted Madame Taqeyah to ask her a question.] Did you ever cover your whole body outside the home with a *Niqab*?<sup>6</sup> She smiled faintly and said:

I embraced Islam eleven years ago, and since then, this is the first question people ask me! My answer is, yes. I used to wear a *Niqab* when I was in ... [Name of the country omitted]. My real name is Rosie. I knew nothing about Islam and went to work as an English teacher for girls in an Arab country. It was Ramadan at the time and I felt really sorry for my students who insisted on fasting. I decided to fast with them. They welcomed me, taught me the basics of Islam, especially prayers, and gave me a Qur'an as a gift. It was so hot there, so, I was wearing short sleeves and left my hair uncovered. One day, a man yelled at me in the street, 'You whore, cover your face!' I was so shocked. I hurried quickly to a friend of mine and borrowed a scarf to cover my hair and face! Then, I had a problem driving the car home. I had to constantly turn my whole body to be able to see the cars in the other lanes. The scarf fell off at last and I felt so bad. I parked my car and took a taxi home.

I then moved to Algeria for another job. However, I felt so lonely there. I had a deep desire to isolate myself from the world and give up my career, my family and the city life. Moreover, I wanted to avoid those men who swear at me in the street. I think that I felt that way because I was feeling out of place [I think that she is being defensive here]. If I had given myself

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<sup>6</sup> A veil that covers the face, a popular practice in Arabia and a few other Muslim countries.

a chance to cope with the environment, I probably would have had different feelings.

[The reality is, in my opinion, that this French young lady was depressed and traumatized. Her old religion did not provide her with any spiritual fulfillment and when she found a glimpse of hope in Islam, she was ill treated by Muslims! Here is the French writer narrating to us the rest of her story.]

Rosie resigned her job, locked up her apartment and took some clothes in an old bag, along with her Qur'an. She rented a cottage in a secluded spot on the shore of the Mediterranean. She had no neighbors except for a few fishermen. She felt comfortable in this isolated spot. She would see nothing but the sand, sea and some mountains in the distance. In the morning, she would jog by the shore and at noon, she would accompany the shepherds at a nearby mountain. She would spend her day in reflection. At sunset, she would return to her cottage after she would take some fish from the fishermen, which she lived on! She had no electricity, stove, or water. She would cook the fish in the fireplace and maybe light some candles when it became dark!

[I thought I should stop quoting the French writer here. He mentioned some things afterwards about this young lady that I am not sure whether were real, a dream, or just his imagination. However, I should probably continue with his quote anyway. Maybe this would give the reader a complete idea about how those people view us.]

Rosie created her own world - with countries of non-existence and countries of clocks! In the countries of non-existence, there is no sun or moon, only a turtle that moves on the space mountain. However, and despite the silence, there is the wisdom, and on top of the space mountain, there is the revelation! One day, the turtle went to the angel on top of the mountain and asked: 'What is beyond the countries of non-existence?' The angel answered: 'The countries of clocks. But I advise you not to go there. Otherwise, clocks will jump on your back and you will always be either early or late.' The turtle refused to heed to the advice. She traveled a long distance until she finally reached the countries of clocks. But what the angel said came true. Clocks started jumping on her shoulder, back, and stomach, and attacked her from all directions. The turtle cried for the angel to help her. But the angel responded: 'I warned you before. You cannot leave the countries of clocks unless you stop time!'

[De Beaumont comments as follows.] I think Rosie was telling me her own story. The countries of non-existence are the countries in which she lived in isolation and the countries of clocks are the modern civilization itself. The angel of revelation is Islam, the only religion that can stop time. [!] The turtle was Rosie herself.

Rosie decided to embrace Islam after much thinking. She found it was the only religion that could help her out of her crazy materialistic life. She joined the worshippers and they gave her the new name Taqeyah (the pure).

Then, Taqeyah came to know Ahmad. He was not French. He was an Arab Muslim. She thought he would make her a good husband. There was one

problem, however. Ahmad wanted to study medicine in Paris. What could she do? She did as he requested and returned with him to where she lived before - at the furthest point of the countries of clocks!

There are many overwhelming questions that I have now about Islam that I am unable to deal with, even after I quickly embraced it. I am curious to know the nature of relationships between married couples in Islam? I do not seem to find any other relationship except those in which man dominates, which is supposedly his right, and in which the woman submits - her duty. [!]

I asked Taqeyah: 'Where is love in this submissive relationship? Do you love your husband? Is this an atmosphere where love can grow and a solid marriage established?' Taqeyah answered [I think that her answer is above the level of the question, or maybe it is a mixture between a Sufi answer and *Fiqh*<sup>7</sup> rule], 'Islam is to love God through whom you love. I do not love my husband because of who he is, but because of his belief. His relationship with God is what attracted me to him. If he ever falls in love with another woman, I will never divorce him. I will remain his wife.' I said: 'But this is not fair. You cannot marry another man!' She said: 'I can ask for divorce if I wish and then marry another. I can even put this as a condition in my marriage contract.'

[Now De Beaumont is commenting:] The thing I respect the most in the West is romance. I am looking for a love that can overcome all obstacles, not the kind of love that is only used to build a family unit upon. [!] I don't want a love where you get to know who you love through religion, and therefore, love him/her only because he/she loves God. [!]

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<sup>7</sup> *Fiqh* is, literally, the understanding. It is the branch of Islamic sciences that deals with the Islamic practical rulings extracted from the scripts. The categories of rulings are lawful, forbidden, recommended, disliked, and obligatory.

## Back to the Muslim Cont

[This is the rest of the article, written by Terry De Beaumont.]

The Cont, who became Muslim and motivated me to study Islam, phoned me one day and asked, 'Are you advancing?' I answered, 'I am confused. I have not written one line on Islam yet!' He said, 'Come visit me. I want to talk with you.'

I visited him in his apartment in Saint German and sat with him in front of the fireplace. He showed me an old document of his family tree and asked me: 'Do you know that many French noblemen embraced Islam? And that many of our knights who participated in the crusades returned as Muslims? Islam did not spread widely only because of the bad political situation at that time. I have an idea. Why don't we found an association for the French noblemen who embraced Islam?'

He started to narrate related stories from Arabic and Persian sources. Suddenly, he asked me, 'Are you circumcised?' Stunned, I inquired, 'Is it a must?' He said: 'I am not circumcised either and I asked a senior Sheikh about it. He advised me not to get circumcised at my age. But you Terry are still young. So think about it.' We both laughed. He invited me to accompany him to visit Ustaz<sup>8</sup> Hamid-ullah.

[I would like to interrupt the article here and talk a little about Ustaz Hamid-ullah. I met him at the Islamic Thought Conference in Algeria. The first impression I had when I saw him was that he is one of the pious servants of God. He was slim, calm, and quiet and the effect of prayers was obvious on his looks. I noticed he was hiding his face with a piece of paper. He remained holding the paper in front of his face for hours. I asked a friend of mine why Ustaz Hamid-ullah was doing that. He answered: 'His opinion is that photographs are *Haram*<sup>9</sup>, and he does not want to commit a sin by allowing photographers to take any pictures of him.' I expressed my surprise and commented: 'Even if his opinion were correct, it is the photographers' problem, not his.' I started to doubt this man's level of knowledge even though I am sure he was a pious man. Piety and *Fatwa*<sup>10</sup> are two different things!

When Ustaz Hamid-ullah gave his lecture at the conference he mentioned the *Hadith* that considers the number of the Prophets to be in the thousands. This *Hadith* is, however, either weak or fabricated. I did not worry much about this mistake but I found myself obliged to make a public comment on his lecture when he mentioned *Nassee*' (postponing of the sacred month). He mentioned that Arabs used the solar calendar and that the Qur'an confirms this when God said: 'Postponement (of a sacred month) is only an excess of disbelief whereby those who disbelieve are misled; they allow it one year and forbid it (another) year, that they may make up the number of the months which God hath hallowed, so that they allow that which God hath forbidden. The evil of their deeds is made fairseeming unto them. God guides not the disbelieving folk.' (9:37). It is a well known fact that adding days to compensate for the lunar year is very different from

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<sup>8</sup> Ustaz is, literally, Mister. Often used with highly respected Muslim teachers.

<sup>9</sup> Forbidden according to Islamic rulings.

<sup>10</sup> A legal opinion, the Islamic ruling applied to a specific situation.

postponing the sacred months that Arabs used to do. The 'sacred months' are, of course, according to the lunar calendar and not the solar calendar.

So, Sheikh Hamid-ullah is a kind hearted and dedicated man. He also has a lot of information. However, he needs more *Fiqh* (understanding) and more knowledge in the science of narrations. But I wish I were like him in his worship and sincerity! This is the *Ustaz* that the Cont and the French writer visited. They even described him as 'the second best scholar in the Muslim World (!), who is always consulted by Muslim ministers and sought by Islamic organizations for conferences.' The following is the rest of the article.]

We entered a luxurious palace similar to what we hear about in Arabian legends. The Cont knocked on door number 25, but nobody answered. When we knocked again, an old man with a big beard opened the door. I realized that he was only using one of the small housekeeper rooms. His dark complexion and Indian face could easily give an impression of a temple monk! His books were all over the place, even under the bed. The Cont said to him: 'Let me introduce this young man to you. He is eager to learn about Islam.' The old man looked searchingly into my face and said, 'Well. What do you do for living?' I said, ' Photography.' He said, 'Do you know that Islam bans photographing people and animals? You can photograph plants and stones. [!] You can even specialize in this area.' [!]

I asked the *Ustaz* so many questions about Islam, but was not convinced with most of his answers. The elder *Ustaz* finally told me: 'I'm just a student learning the Qur'an. What do you expect of me?' He went on to talk about the old city of Clair Mont Furan, an ancient Catholic place. He said that although the Crusades started from this city in 1095 A.C.E. to invade Islamic countries, it is now the French city with the highest rate of people accepting Islam. He continued: 'Today only, fifty men and women from this city embraced Islam.'

[This was what Sheikh Hamid had to say to his visitors who are coming to ask about Islam! But it seems that the information he gave on Clair Mont city urged the writer to go visit it.]

On board the airplane that took me to Clair Mont, I summarized the information Sheikh Hamid-ullah gave me on Islam. I learned the following:

1. The Qur'an orders women to isolate themselves from men, but it is not important for the headscarf to cover the face. The purpose is chastity.
2. A Muslim woman cannot marry a Christian man, but a Muslim man can marry a Christian woman. It is better for a Muslim man to marry a Muslim woman. Children should be raised as Muslims anyway.
3. Islam opposes transgressing against others and is very strict about this.
4. When one embraces Islam, one is not forced to change one's name, unless intending to perform pilgrimage. [!!]
5. Circumcision is a recommendation and not an obligation.
6. Those who desert Islam should be killed. This is what some scholars claim, but it is not stated in the Qur'an.



I finally reached Clair Mont, the city of converts to Islam, and went straight to the mosque. [Mr. Terry De Beaumont started narrating some interesting stories about the new converts to Islam that he met. I will go ahead and quote them, despite the strange things he mentioned!]

The mosque at 45 Saint Helene Street was formerly a church. Some nuns offered this church to immigrant Muslims who were praying in a garage. Right after receiving it, they changed the shape of the dome, changed the glass windows into a non-transparent kind, painted everything in white, and wrote on the door the word 'Mosque' in Arabic and French. The mosque custodian led me to the prayer hall. It was previously the chapel, but they removed the chairs and carpeted the floor. The holes that the chairs left were obvious from the indentations all over the carpet. [!]

The *Imam* of the mosque was called Abdun Nur. He was also a French revert. But Abdun did not actually lead the prayers. The person who carried this responsibility was Sheikh Ali. He was also a French Muslim.

Sheikh Ali welcomed me. He was wearing an Arabic head cover and a white Arabic *Jelbab*. He was barefooted and carried a stick. [!] In a weak voice he began telling me his story. He said:

My name was Bernard. One day in May 1970, I returned home after I finished my military service. I was 19 but my father refused to support me. I was sitting at one of Clair Mont Cafes when I heard about excellent work opportunities in India. I decided to travel to India through Turkey and Iran. In Tehran, I tried to work as a laborer but failed. I was starving when an Iranian friend told me: 'If you want to wear a new pair of shoes and have a good meal, go to one of those religious authorities and tell him that you would like to embrace Islam.' I liked the idea and said quickly, 'Yes, I want to be a Muslim.' [!] They showed me where the mosque was, but the *Imam* asked me to come back the next day. In the morning, the *Imam* welcomed me and six other poor men. He was accompanied by a large group of reporters and photographers! The *Imam* gave a speech: 'My dear brothers. Those are spirits that are open to the truth. They are young European men, whose hearts God guided to Islam.' They took a lot of photographs while we recited the *Shahadah*.<sup>11</sup> Since then, I changed my name from Bernard to Ali. They made us a tea party afterwards and we ate a lot of cakes! After the party, I whispered in the *Imam's* ears a reminder of the pair of shoes I needed. He took me to a shoe shop and bought me a pair. I was so shy to the extent that I was walking on the other side of the road. Later, I decided to travel to Pakistan - by foot.

It was a tough trip. I had to cross jungle areas to get there. I joined a caravan of Muslims who were taking the same trail to visit the graves of some pious men. I was walking all day and reflecting upon the sky all

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<sup>11</sup> A sentence that one says to announce his/her acceptance to Islam: There is no god but God and Muhammad is His messenger.

night. I prayed to God in front of the graves. I had barely any clothes on and had very little food. I was so fatigued; I lost all sense of time.

In Pakistan I did not know what to do. A person noticed that I was a stranger and invited me for a cup of tea in a café. During our talk he asked me to show him my passport. When I showed him what was left of it, he arrested me and I was charged with spying. It was a serious accusation that could have cost me my life in prison.

I was thrown into prison with my legs chained. I was lashed and given barely anything to eat or drink. The treatment was so humiliating and I was unable to do anything to get myself out of the situation. I was terribly distressed. They didn't refer me to a trial for an entire year. My body was becoming weak and the wounds in my body were worsening. One day, a blind prisoner came to me and asked, 'Are you Muslim?' I answered, 'Yes. I announced my *Shahadah* in Tehran, but did not have a chance to learn how to pray.' He offered to teach me how to pray on the condition that I clean him, lead him to the bathroom when he wished and back to the cell.

[The French writer says:] In the middle of nowhere, Bernard lived through the strangest experience of his life. He helped the blind man and he also learned how to pray five times a day. He started to feel belief in his heart with the regularity of bowing and prostration. He felt he was really 'Sheikh Ali', the name that he almost forgot, with all what this Islamic name implies. Sheikh Ali's story continues:

One morning, in spite of my fatigue, I decided that I should convert this prison into a mosque! I stood up and made the call for prayer, just as I used to hear it in the streets of Tehran. Everybody thought that I went crazy. But I continued regularly with the call for prayer, day and night. Eventually, all prisoners prayed with me. I would hear them in their cells saying 'God is great' as I said it. Afterwards, I became sicker and I was not even able to talk for some time. The policemen pitied me, released me, gave me money and even welcomed me as a guest. I asked for a permit to stay in Pakistan and was given a temporary visa. I did that only to stay with the Pakistani friends that I made. Eventually, they refused to renew my visa and I decided to return to France. I was away from France for many years and here I am now walking to my family's house for the first time!

After some hesitation, Sheikh Ali knocked on the door. His father opened the door and quickly recognized him. He thought that his son had died, since he was away for ten years. He hugged him. Bernard speedily told him that he became a Muslim. 'Is that why you are wearing this carnival costume? In any case, Muslim and alive is better for me than Christian and dead,' his dad told him.

When the people of Mont Clair saw Bernard walking down the street with his strange outfit, they asked him many questions about his new religion. After one year, everybody got used to his clothes. He eventually met with Abdun Nur, the

person in charge of the mosque, who asked him to lead the prayers and sell books in the mosque. Sheikh Ali accepted the job and also sold bread that he baked at home.

The examples I met: Sheikh Ali, Ayoub, Taqueyah, the Cont, and other French people who embraced Islam, are deeper in their faith and more serious in their practice than the Muslim-raised, themselves.

I visited the Cont once just to follow up on them. He told me another story:

A meeting was held in the big mosque for converts to Islam. About fifty men and women, some of the women wearing scarves, showed up. The person in charge of the event said: 'I gathered you here to pose the following question: Do you think we should have an association for the French Muslims? Do you have any suggestions?' A man with quite a large family answered, 'We need lessons for our children that enable them to excel at school.' A mother said, 'We need stores that sell *Halal*<sup>12</sup> meat.' After a long discussion, a man said: 'Religion is a personal matter. No need to form groups!' And this was what the attendees finally agreed upon. [!]

The Cont asked me: 'And you, Terry. Where are you now in terms of religion? I suggest that you call yourself Nuruddin, which means the servant of the light.' [!!]<sup>13</sup> I replied: 'I do not know what to say. I was never able to write even one line on Islam. I do not know how all this is going to end?' The Cont retorted, and I think he was angry, 'The end on the day of judgment is well known, especially for a photographer.' I asked: 'Why especially for a photographer?' He answered: 'Yes. When you stand in front of God Almighty's court, He will ask you to blow a spirit into the photographs that you took throughout your lifetime. When you fail, and you will certainly fail, He will throw you into the hellfire!'

[This is the end of the translated article by the French writer, Terry De Beaumont. Before I detail my opinion in the following chapters, I would like to note quickly that the latest *Fatwa* is wrong. Those who are asked to 'blow a spirit' in the Hereafter are the statue-makers.<sup>14</sup> How can those who draw on paper blow the spirit into pieces of paper? The French Cont has his excuse, though. Some people who claim to be scholars give *Fatawa*<sup>15</sup> and talk about Islam without knowledge. They refuse to accept Islam from a photographer. What a world!

Some 'Islamic callers' teach their own whims and call it Islamic teachings, out of ignorance and arrogance. They prevent people from seeing the light of the Islamic belief, intentionally or unintentionally.]

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<sup>12</sup> Lawful.

<sup>13</sup> Nuruddin means the light of the religion.

<sup>14</sup> Prohibiting full statues is the opinion endorsed by the majority of Muslim scholars. The rationale behind this ruling is to cut idol worshipping at its roots. Some contemporary scholars, though, restrict the prohibition to nude statues or statues that are purposefully fashioned for worship.

<sup>15</sup> Plural of *Fatwa*.

## Illusions in the Way of Da`wah

I was really saddened and angered after reading this article. I felt that Islam was like a lost orphan. Not a single person in any of these stories was able to present Islam adequately; nor could any of these persons manage to clear out the misconceptions people hold about Islam.

I felt Islam was a religion that nobody cared about! Those who convert to it usually find it by accident. And because they have such a void in their hearts, they are quickly attracted to the religion. They would force themselves to make a compromise by accepting what they assumed to be drawbacks in Islam, simply because they recognize the pure core of Islam to be much more valuable and more logical than what they were familiar with before.

So, where are the transmitters of the message of Islam? Where are the great scholars to relate to the people how God has made Islam a fulfilling way of life? Where are the 'witnesses over the nations' (2:143)?

If they exist, they are not where they are needed the most. There are thousands of westerners who are searching for a religion that fulfills them spiritually and culturally, yet, they are unable to find it! And when they finally find someone to teach them about Islam, the first thing they are instructed to do, is to wear a white Arabic *Jelbab* or a Bedouin men's scarf. What is this? Is this a call for Islam or for the Arabian Desert uniforms?

I took some time to think about the things that Muslims demand from European and American women in order to accept their conversion! These women are familiar with the clothing nuns wear, which is, certainly, very appropriate. So then, what is wrong with asking these women to wear similar and even less uniform-like clothing, without having to shave their heads as the nuns do? This is the Islamic *Hijab*.<sup>16</sup>

Consider, for example, that man who yelled at Rosie in the street. Islam judges that a person, who says to a woman, 'You whore,' just because she is not covering her face, must be given 80 lashes by the law enforcement. Thereafter, he can never be accepted as a witness in any court of law.<sup>17</sup> Who among the scholars and the narrators of *Hadith*<sup>18</sup> ever claimed that covering the face is necessary for a woman to embrace Islam? These traditions are causing tremendous injustice to Islam.

Regarding Bernard, who named himself Sheikh Ali, and returned home with a 'carnival costume,' as his father mockingly exclaimed: What would he have lost if he simply returned in normal dress but demonstrated the morals he learned and the profound inner and outer cleanliness he acquired. Then, after giving his father his due respect, he would say, 'Dear father, I compared the Oneness of God and the Trinity and found out that the Oneness makes more sense. And I made the comparison between the Islamic view, that one is responsible for his/her own actions, with the idea of Jesus dying on the cross for our sins, and concluded that the Islamic view is fairer. Islam asserts: 'that no bearer of

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<sup>16</sup> Literally, a barrier. It is the headscarf that Muslim women wear.

<sup>17</sup> According to verse 24:4, 'And those who accuse chaste women but bring not four witnesses, scourge them (with) eighty stripes and never (afterward) accept their testimony – They indeed are evil-doers.'

<sup>18</sup> Saying of the Prophet (peace be upon him). The plural is *Ahadith*.

burdens can bear the burden of another; That man can have nothing but what he strives for; That the fruit of his striving will soon come in sight: Then will he be rewarded with a reward complete' (53:38-41). Dad, I hope that you do not have a problem with me or with the way of life I chose for myself.'

And what would Bernard lose if he made himself a career that earned him the respect of the people, instead of getting paid for leading the prayers and selling books. It would be better for him to volunteer leading the prayers.

The criterion that Islam uses to evaluate the excellence of a person is 'which of you is best in deed' (67:2). Islam is not and was never a competition between Arabic and western fashions!

Moreover, it is a major sin to display Islam as a religion that oppresses or humiliates women or considers them to be second-degree citizens. The European and American media aim to stereotype Islam in this manner by falsely attributing it with inequality in status among women and men.

I wished that Rosie, who named herself Taqueyah after Islam, would have kept her career as a schoolteacher and excelled in her field. I wished that she could have been an example of a competent, punctual, and beautiful teacher. Islam detests that a woman make herself a call for sexual desires, but it also objects that a woman make herself ugly and unfriendly.

What would she have lost if she, in addition to excelling in her job, asked her colleagues, men and women, not to believe misconceptions about the Qur'an such as it is hateful towards women. It would have been better for her to tell them that the Qur'an states that men and women are created from a single source: 'O mankind! Reverence your Guardian-Lord, who created you from a single soul' (4:1) and 'O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other' (49:13).

Noah was better than his wife, but the wife of the Pharaoh was better than him, and Mary, the mother of Jesus (peace be upon him), is better than almost all of mankind. There might be some social or economic rulings that seem to differentiate between men and women. These rulings are only meant to organize the Muslim family and protect the society in certain ways. However, by no means do these rulings contradict with the original basic rule of gender equality, which the Qur'an articulated in the following way: 'I will not waste the work of a worker among you, whether male or female, the one of you being from the other' (3:195).

I don't have space here to elaborate on all such rulings. But I will give one example. Under the Islamic law, a woman inherits half of what a man inherits because she is not obliged to support the family, but he is. She is not asked to pay a dowry, but he is. So, what she inherits stays in her possession while what the man inherits is spent on the family and dowry upon marriage. On the other hand, I think that compelling women to support themselves and their families in Europe has caused major social crises.

Back to the status of women in Islam: It is so unfortunate that pre-Islamic Arabic traditions are still predominant in some Muslim countries. Some of those traditions

despise the birth of female offspring. 'When news is brought to one of them, of (the birth of) a female (child), his face darkens, and he is filled with inward grief!' (16:58). What can you do to some people who disobey their Lord and dislike their own children?

This hate was unfortunately incorporated into some Islamic traditions. A journalist asked me if in Islam women are allowed to be judges. I said: 'The Islamic law is not implemented in this age. So, if a woman desires to become a judge and reinstates Islamic law, then, Islam welcomes her as a judge.' A traditional Islamic scholar, who overheard my answer, hastily countered: 'What did you say?' I answered: 'I said what you heard.' He said: 'No. I prefer that the Islamic law be devoid over being implemented by a woman.' (!) I told him: 'You are a man with *Jahiliyah*<sup>19</sup> in you. The *Hanafi*<sup>20</sup> School supported women to become judges because they act as witnesses in court. Moreover, the *Zahir*<sup>21</sup> School allowed women to be witnesses in court for everything. I prefer applying any of the above valid Islamic opinions to nullifying the Islamic law. You are a women-hater out of your own traditions. These traditions have done great injustice to Islam.'

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<sup>19</sup> Literally, ignorance. *Jahiliyah* or 'The days of ignorance' is mentioned in the Qur'an (48:26) in reference to the age before Islam.

<sup>20</sup> An Islamic school of thought named after Imam Abu-Hanifah (80-150 Hijri).

<sup>21</sup> An Islamic school of thought named after the phrase *Zahir-un-Nass* (the apparent meaning of the Script). The scholars who founded this school are Imams Dawud Al-Asbahani (202-270 Hijri) and Ibn Hazm Al-Andalussi (384-456 Hijri).

## Filtering our Knowledge before presenting it to People

Islam considers hating the female gender a crime, or a remnant of *Jahiliyah*, as I just said above. People are evaluated according to their good deeds, not gender. A woman like Indira Gandhi who supported fair elections, in which she herself lost, is much more respected than a big tall man who ruled a Muslim country, forged its elections, and then, appeared on TV as an innocent and upright man. The reality is, he created a complete disaster.

I am not calling for violating the scripts. In fact, I fight against those who violate the scripts. And, I insist on fighting the lie that says that the Qur'an puts down women and judges that they have no rights. I have to say that these are sick ideas and warped traditions that are, unfortunately, becoming increasingly popular in the Muslim world. These ideas and traditions, which have no basis in the Book and the *Sunnah*,<sup>22</sup> contributed to the backwardness of Muslims and resulted in their defeat on every front.

We say in an Arabic idiom regarding grammatical mistakes: 'a forsaken correct expression and a popular mistake.' If we think deeply, we will find that this saying is most truthful in the areas of *Fiqh* and social and political traditions. The difference is that a grammatical mistake has a limited effect, but the other mistakes have an immeasurable effect.

One main cause of the *Fiqh* mistakes is the interpreters of the scripts. In many cases, the script says something and the interpreter says the opposite!! Consider the following misinterpretations made by some of our scholars.

This is an authentic *Hadith*: 'The one who is killed while defending his money is a martyr.' It is obvious that the Prophet (peace be upon him) is teaching us bravery and the responsibility of self-defense. Now look at the interpretation that states: 'He is a martyr in case he does not find a way to escape his offenders. If he can escape his offenders, then he has an obligation to run.' (!) The author of *Subul Assalam* (The Ways of Peace)<sup>23</sup> said:

I am not sure why it is an obligation to run? The opinion I take is that it is not an obligation to defend your money. You are permitted to complain to the authorities. As well, the Scholars of *Hadith* have almost reached a consensus that if the offender is the Sultan, he is an exceptional case (!). There are scripts that order us to be patient with the Sultan. Scholars have inferred from them to mean that we are not to prevent him from taking our money if he so wishes.

Is it clear just how far the interpretation went? I have no doubt that this interpretation could only be caused by a cowardly fear. Moreover, making it a matter of 'consensus' allowed the tyrant kings and sultans to steal people's properties and put unjust taxes on them, without any fear of opposition or civil unrest.

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<sup>22</sup> Literally, the tradition. It is a term that encompasses all sayings, actions and endorsements of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

<sup>23</sup> The author of the book is Al-San`ani and it is a popular reference for the Shafi'i-school.

An Islamic Fatwa that teaches the masses to accept oppression (!) is actually teaching them cowardliness. This was one of the reasons behind Muslim nations subduing themselves to colonization while other nations were struggling to defend their life, honour, money, and establish constitutions that guarantee freedoms. This means that the human innate nature to defend oneself was nurtured in these non-Muslim countries while this same innate nature was destroyed through the adherence to misinterpreted scripts in Muslim countries.

Another example is the misinterpretation of the verse, 'Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error' (2:256). An incapable and misinformed interpreter said, 'No. There is compulsion in religion. This verse is abrogated.' My question is, 'You poor soul. Who abrogated it?'<sup>24</sup>

Actually, the governmental and non-profit Da`wah systems in place to educate the people are in fact highly dysfunctional. That is why this man dared to declare that the sword replaced media and force replaced logical arguments. This is the biggest lie because the Messenger of God never forced anybody to believe! What happened is that some ignorant Sultans came to power without knowledge about the mission of the *Ummah*.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, those Sultans were obsessed with invading others and usurping more power and they found some scholars who were willing to help them in their ambitions.

Here is another similar example of misinterpretations from our age. Some Islamic speakers are so obsessed with the idea that a leader is not obliged to make *Shura*<sup>26</sup> with people. It is a well-known fact that our *Ummah* is declining for centuries now because of political oppression. However, a misguided interpreter would interpret the verse, 'who (conduct) their affairs by mutual Consultation' (42:38), as 'On condition that the leader keep his right to decline using consultation'. (!) This is ill advice. Such interpretation is exactly what pleases the tyrants who wish to lead their people like cattle. And, in turn, Muslims are oppressed and deeply humiliated in their own countries. Now, those who refuse to be humiliated in Muslim countries can only gain their individual and public rights in non-Muslim countries!

The most amazing example of misinterpretation of scripts is what some scholars said about the *Hadith* – which is authentic according to all narrators – in which Umm `Atteyah says: 'Girls and all women were ordered to attend the `Eid<sup>27</sup> prayers to witness the performance of good deeds and supplications. Women who have their periods were ordered to attend but stay out of the prayers area.' So, the reason for ordering girls and women to attend the `Eid prayers is mentioned right in the *Hadith* - to witness the performance of good deeds and supplications.

However, Al-Tahawi and some other scholars commented: 'This *Hadith* is abrogated.' My question is: Why! Did God or His Messenger abrogate it? There is nothing in the

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<sup>24</sup> *Naskh* or abrogation is mentioned in verse 2:106. A ruling is abrogated when God or His Messenger ends the validity of a certain rule and replaces it with another. For example, the *Hadith* that says, 'I have ordered you not to visit the graves. Now, you can visit them.'

<sup>25</sup> Literally, nation. All Muslims are one nation according to verse 2:143.

<sup>26</sup> Consultation, mentioned in verse 42:38.

<sup>27</sup> The Muslim festival. There are two Islamic festivals a year, one which ends the month of fasting, Ramadan, and one at the end of the pilgrimage to Mecca.



Qur'an or the *Sunnah* that is against this *Hadith*. The claim of abrogation is fabricated! But Al-Tahawi said: 'This was only in the early days of Islam. Women were ordered to go out to increase the number of attendees so that the enemies would fear Muslims. Then, it was abrogated after Islam became strong.' (!)

I have to say that the above interpretation is nonsense! It is an unacceptable argument through which he seeks to replace the well-known Islamic teachings with clearly unIslamic traditions. There are traditions which aim to isolate women from 'witnessing the performance of good deeds and supplications' as the Prophet wanted. People in some Arab countries still believe in this false custom and are even calling others to its practice - in the name of Islam.

I ask the Muslim *Ummah* to revise its traditions, accept the traditions that are compatible with Islam and abandon the traditions that are not. Presenting corrupt traditions, instead of Islam, to the world is truly a serious crime.

For over one thousand years Muslim women were banned from education because of a fabricated *Hadith* that obliged women to be illiterate. Is this a life Muslims want to call people to? Nowadays in some 'conservative countries,' as they are called, women are banned from attending the collective prayers in the mosques. Is this what these countries wish to call people for? The Prophet (peace be upon him) made a special door for women to the mosque and organized their lines for prayer himself. He was never seen preventing a woman from prayer in the mosque. I do not know how they came up with a ruling that bans women from mosques!

Some people claim that there are *Ahadith* that state that women's prayers done in the home are better than in the mosque. Ibn Hazm's opinion was that those *Ahadith* were fabricated. I personally do not agree with him, but I put them in the context where a woman has a husband and children. It is not appropriate for a mother, especially if she has a large family, to attend prayers in the mosque all day and night. She will certainly not be able to provide adequate care to her husband and children. That is why it is wholly acceptable that she prays at home. However, if she is able to fulfill her family obligations and pray in the mosque, then nobody can prevent her from that. Islam, in fact, desires that women pray in the mosque, but in keeping with the family coming first. Therefore, to lock them up at home and claim that they are not allowed to go to the mosque, to start with, is clearly a violation of the Book and the *Sunnah*.

Because of the above misinterpretations and similar ones, western women often associate overbearing and oppressive concepts with the word Islam. They understand the word to be synonymous to a dictator who strikes against all attempts towards the establishment of women's rights and identity. And only we are to blame for the spread of such an idea.

There are so many wise men and women in the West who recognize their social problems, especially permissiveness. However, they don't know that an alternative exists? The real alternative is Islam – if they only knew the true Islam! All the people of the West see of the East are the Eastern traditions. They cannot respect these traditions and recognize that they are really masks for hiding social problems that are, in some cases, worse than those they have in the West! It makes me so sad when I hear Muslims telling non-Muslims that eastern traditions are in fact Islam.

There are about five Million Muslims in England today. They were in a position to guide so many people, clear popular misconceptions about the religion, and build bridges between the East and the West for cooperation. People in the West are in great need of a guide to belief and morals, especially through issues related to racism. However, unfortunately, this never happened. Those immigrants who went to England and other western countries to work or for whatever reasons, still think that their personal advancement is not equal to that of the builders of modern civilization. They still hold the assumption that they can only be followers and not leaders.

And I do not think the Muslims' backwardness is in the areas of civil development, military machinery, or technology. It is mainly in the areas of intellectual abilities and psychological makeup. There is an obvious deficiency in the Muslim personality that hinders Muslims from being the leaders of and witnesses over the world, as Islam urges them to be.

Muslims coming from all ethnicities in Asia and Africa are not good examples of the Islamic creed and what it is supposed to build: strength, chastity, bravery, and precision. They are not good examples of humans who benefit others, not harm them and give to others, not beg from them. They are not good examples of people who are not obsessed with lusts and respect others' right to life, money and honour. They are not good examples of those who 'establish prayers, give charity, enjoin good and forbid evil.'<sup>28</sup>

Our Muslim forefathers amazed the East and the West with their morals, worship, sense of brotherhood, and mutual advice. Their strong impact made people rid themselves of their traditions and languages for a new way of life and the language of the Qur'an. New Muslims from non-Arabic origins eventually took over the Muslim leadership in all fields, even in the field of the Arabic language.

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<sup>28</sup> He is referring to verse 22:41.

## The Personality of the Contemporary Muslim: Is it Useful for Da`wah?

Muslims of today are strikingly different from their forefathers who traveled throughout the world to call for Islam! In our time, Muslims travel to Europe and America to make money, seek refuge from their oppressive regimes, seek knowledge and learn how people of the West built their modern civilization, or, in many cases, to have fun and enjoy scandalous lifestyles in these free societies.

Western social systems enable these people to do whatever they please. Those systems, thus, also allow a great opportunity for the Islamic Da`wah, if Muslims wish to propagate a good Da`wah. There are no limits put on freedoms in the West. However, you cannot give what you do not have. Muslims in 'Islamic' countries themselves are not practicing their religion. So, how can one expect them to call for the religion when opportunity arises?

The image the Westerners have about us is embarrassing. Wealthy Muslims who go to the West for pleasure are the reason behind this image. Muslim wealth is wasted on western nightclubs, gambling casinos, and the various ways of seduction beyond imagination!

Westerners are not stupid. They certainly wonder, 'Isn't there any accounting for this wasted money? How did these people earn it? And how can they spend it like that?' They know very well that so many Muslims die of hunger and famine every year and the impoverished still hanging onto life look like skeletons! They must be wondering, 'Where is the benevolence that they talk about? Where is cooperation? And above all, where is the fear of God that should enable those young and old Arab men to refrain from such insatiable covetousness and lustful behavior?'

The truth is that the image of Muslims in the West does not invite people to consider embracing Islam! If modern civilization were not teaching its people to investigate and reflect, nobody in the West would endeavor to understand what the real Islam is and embrace it.

Certainly, there are practicing Muslims in Europe and North America who succeed in keeping their identity. However, it is also true that many of those are carrying the misconceptions that are popular in their countries of origin. In Britain I met some brothers who were calling people for the Naqshabandi Sufi group! Some brothers translated *Al-Mowatta*<sup>29</sup> by Imam Malik<sup>30</sup> into English, for the only reason that it is the popular school of thought in North Africa! Some Muslims in America spend all their time contesting the building of domes on top of graves, which happens only in the East anyway! Some others insist on relating the message of the Oneness of God with covering the face. Others make the white long shirt the symbol of Islam, as if they are still living in the Arabian Najd desert! Some brothers shave their head and mustache and grow a big ugly messy beard. One day I saw one of those brothers and wondered why

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<sup>29</sup> A traditional reference for *Fiqh* and *Hadith*. *Al-Muwatta of Imam Malik Ibn Anas: The First Formulation of Islamic Law*. Translated by Aisha Abdurrahman Bewley. London: Kegan Paul International, 1989.

<sup>30</sup> The founder of the Maliki Islamic school of thought (93-179 Hijri).

he didn't just simply shave his eyebrows off as well so that his ugliness would be complete? I did not ask him why he did that to himself because I know his answer: 'This is the *Sunnah*.' (!) What would he have lost if he combed his hair and beard nicely and put on some cologne? If he did this and so looked handsome, he is also making himself a good appearance for Islam. All meaning is lost if a person is void of intellect. The current Muslim generation needs a lot of psychological and intellectual education to deserve to be the leaders of the world, as were their forefathers.

I repeatedly noted that Westerners care about principals and not minor issues. They evaluate civilizations according to their materialistic and intellectual outcomes. They do not care if the Japanese people eat rice with sticks or even pencils! But they admire them when they develop new technology or even copy Western technology accurately and then develop it.

On the contrary, many Muslims nowadays have organized the sections of belief in an obscured way. They magnify minor issues and diminish the principal ones. They give precedence to what should come last and delay what should come first. They forget some sections that are important and approve some innovations that God never revealed. The result is that they distort the image of Islam and make it something that now has to be totally rejected! Many westerners who have rejected the faith did so not because of Islam but because of Muslims themselves and their personal opinions.

As I am talking about the Islamic Da`wah and personal opinions, I would like to stress an important concept. The Holy Qur'an is the beat of our hearts and the joy of our eyes. It is impossible to reject even one character of it. Also, every *Hadith* narrated by the Messenger (peace be upon him) is a precious wisdom that we must welcome and practice. Our religion is revealed from heaven; it did not emerge from Earth. Nothing is obligatory unless God demands it and nothing is forbidden unless God forbids it. And we cannot label some action as obligatory or forbidden without a confirmed and authentic script. Obligations include so many actions in the areas: creeds, morals, worship and rulings. The forbidden also includes many types of sins. Any authentic ruling that is confirmed to be part of the religion cannot be compromised.

Based on all of the above, we should not allow personal opinions of scholars or interpreters to be equated with authentic or confirmed rulings that all mankind be required to abide by. No. The opinions of any school of thought are subject to acceptance or rejection. It is an ugly boldness for a man to make his personal opinion or view as sacred as The Script.

I seek refuge from God that what I am saying would ever be misunderstood as denigration to our scholars. What I am saying is that those scholars themselves never claimed their opinions to be the absolute truth and never forced anyone to accept them.

Some people present Islam through the mistakes that some scholars have made in their interpretations. Most of the 'Islamic' opinions that westerners are skeptical about are related to these misinterpretations and unIslamic traditions proliferated by the ignorant. The following are examples of such opinions on the Islamic political system.

When I was teaching in one of the Shari`ah faculties a student once asked, 'Does Islam allow defining a term for presidency?' A young man in class answered quickly: 'No. This

is an innovation in the religion (*Bid'ah*). This is *Haram*.' I said, 'Why is it *Haram*? If the consultation (*Shura*) system judges that there is a benefit in defining a term for presidency, what is wrong with that? Nothing should be labeled *Haram* without evidence from the Script. Moreover, not every new idea or system is a *Bid'ah*. Study the rules of *Maslahah*<sup>31</sup> first.'

Another student asked, 'Does Islam allow a multiparty system of government?' Another young man in class retorted, 'No. This is an innovation coming from the West.' I said, 'Islam does not prevent us from having different opinions and methodologies of reform.'

When it comes to these kinds of issues, we are absolutely free to choose for ourselves whatever we think is most beneficial. Islam did not put any limits on this area. 'You know your worldly affairs better than me,' the Prophet (peace be upon him) said. This applies to all means that we invent to achieve Islamic objectives when no other approaches are specified in the *Shari'ah*. Examples of these objectives are developing the *Ummah* intellectually and morally, facilitating individual and social justice, or empowering our military machine. These objectives, most integral to the advance of our society, can be achieved through a variety of means. That is why it is natural to have different opinions about these issues and perhaps have different political parties, which endorse one opinion or the other.

There is an important question that is subject to different answers and, thus, indicates a need for multiple parties in the Islamic political system: How can we extract specific rulings from fundamental scripts? Over the past one thousand years, many schools of thought emerged to answer this question in different ways; all schools are equally valid. The western multiparty systems are very similar to the multi-school system that we have in our Islamic thought.

Some would say, 'We should not adopt western ideas.' My answer to that is knowledge and human findings have no nationality. Islam is advising us to seek the words of wisdom wherever they are. Yet, others would say, 'Parties divide the *Ummah*.' This is actually a most ludicrous argument! Evil desires divide the *Ummah*, not different views for reform. Compare the multiparty Israeli system with the Islamic system to see the difference! The multiparty system did not destroy western countries and its absence did not benefit the Communist countries. To discuss this issue in terms of *Halal* and *Haram* is a sort of nonsense.

It is amazing how the modern Muslim generation has wasted its time with pointless issues and hindered its advance with different kinds of obstacles that its people themselves have put. These obstacles have harmed Islam most severely.

Islam should be spread with its foundations and definite rulings. Nevertheless, there are people who persist in adding to the 'foundations' the following:

A ruler should not abide by the *Shura* (consultation) legally or politically. Wearing western suits is *Haram*. Uncovering a woman's face is *Haram*. Singing is *Haram*.

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<sup>31</sup> Literally, benefit (of people). The majority of scholars judge that whatever brings benefits or prevents harm, in terms of a person's soul, faith, offspring, mind, or money, should be considered an Islamic ruling. Some scholars, though, do not approve any ruling without direct evidence from the scripts.

Music is *Haram*. Photography is *Haram*. Wearing perfume is *Haram*. Building high rises is *Haram*. Going to the *Masjid* is *Haram* for women.

How can Islam advance when it is presented to people together with these disastrous additions to its foundations?

If this continues, Islam will entirely lose its ground instead of gaining ground.

## Back to the Original Sources of Our Knowledge

We always blame the scholars of *Fiqh* who know more opinions of the scholars than the *Ahadith* of the Prophet. However, I think that the scholars of *Hadith* who do not have adequate knowledge of the Book of God are clearly more blameworthy.

The Holy Qur'an is the first source of the *Shari'ah*. The person who reflects upon it gains a high level understanding in Islam and definite answers for the questions he or she may have. It is inevitable that interpreters of *Hadith* fall into bizarre or odious mistakes when they limit themselves to their narrations and not pay enough attention to the Qur'an. The following are examples.

I studied the *Hadith*, narrated by Ibn Omar, in which the Messenger of God (peace be upon him) forbade making a vow (*Nathr*). Upon studying *Fiqh* I learned that this *Hadith* is forbidding a specific intention behind a vow, in which a person intends to *compensate* God for something He gave him. Another interpretation is that the *Hadith* is only talking about the vow to gods other than God.

But the author of *Subul Assalam (The ways of Peace)* said, 'The *Hadith* speaks in general terms. The least that can be said is that it is detested (*Makrooh*).' (!) I was surprised at how this excellent scholar (Al-San`ani) forgot the verse that describes the righteous ones by saying, 'They fulfill (their) vows, and they fear a Day whose evil flies far and wide' (76:7).

Another example that illustrates an even graver mistake is the interpretation of the *Hadith*, narrated by *Abu Hurayrah*, in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, 'It is *Haram* to eat any wild animal with a canine.' The scholar who interpreted this *Hadith* insisted on making it a general rule, even if authentic narrations confirmed that many of the companions and their students did not apply such a general ruling. The evidence of those companions and their students is in the verse: 'Say: I find not in the message received by me by inspiration any (meat) forbidden to be eaten by one who wishes to eat it, unless it be dead meat, or blood poured forth, or the flesh of swine, - for it is an abomination - or, what is impious, (meat) on which a name has been invoked, other than God's' (6:145). But the interpreter said: 'This verse is revealed in Mecca and the *Hadith* is said in Madinah after the migration. Therefore, the *Hadith* abrogates the verse, according to those who allow the *Sunnah* to abrogate the Qur'an.' (!)

Sheikh Abdul-Aziz Al-Khouli refuted the above argument in a professional way. He said, 'The two verses in *Al-Baqarah* and *Al-Ma'edah* are revealed in Madinah. They restrict the forbidden meat to the four types mentioned. This is similar to other two verses in *Al-An'am* and *Al-Nahl*, that the interpreter mentioned, which were revealed in Mecca. Therefore, abrogation or restriction cannot be correct. The four mentioned verses are definite and clear. Perhaps the narrator of this *Hadith* was narrating the *Hadith* according to the meaning he understood, which was incorrect.'

The above interpretation is accusing a narrator of inaccuracy. However, it makes more sense than using a single chained *Hadith* to abrogate four verses! The author of *Al-Manar*<sup>32</sup> explained this issue in detail. Refer to it if you wish.

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<sup>32</sup> Sheikh Rashid Reda, *The Lighthouse Interpretation (Tafseer Al-Manar)*, published in Arabic.

Hence, I advise the callers to Islam who work in Korea not to give *Fatwa* that dog meat is *Haram*. Koreans are accustomed to eating dogs and we do not have any definite script that forbids that. Let us not put more obstacles in the way of the call for the Oneness of God and the other fundamentals of Islam.

While in Europe I saw some brothers from the *Tableegh* (Propagation) Group insisting on eating on the ground, all out of one plate, and using only their hands! I am sure that the Europeans who saw them assumed this to be a necessary Islamic ritual. They must certainly abhor Islam and so would never accept it. I told some of those brothers, 'God said: 'there is no blame on you, whether ye eat in company or separately' (24:61). So, if Europeans are used to eating from separate plates and using certain utensils, on what basis can we imply that this is not acceptable? We are calling for Islam, which is revealed from heaven, not for the Bedouin Arabic traditions!'

Another example is the interpretation of the *Hadith*, 'Do not drink while standing.' Again, the author of *Subul Assalam* (The Ways of Peace) said, 'This is an evidence that it is *Haram* to drink while standing' (!). Again, Sheikh Abdul-Aziz Al-Khouli said, 'It is preposterous to assume the instruction in this *Hadith* implies forbiddance. There are authentic narrations that the Messenger of God (peace be upon him) drank while standing. The Messenger of God does not forbid us from a sin while at the same time doing it!'

Pessimistic people are obsessed with forbiddance and making things difficult! Those people hurt the *Da`wah* for Islam badly. Callers for Islam are instructed: 'make things easy and do not make things hard and attract people and do not repel them.' When people refuse to accept hardship they are rejecting pessimism and hate, not Islam.

All of the above flawed interpretations originate out of either the evil desires of some leaders or the traditions of laypeople. Even if we assume any truth behind these interpretations, we can only consider them as opinions that nobody can force others to follow and everyone has the right to reject.

Nevertheless, there remain people, who insist on following the interpreters, even if they are clearly wrong! The following is an example. I have always begun my lectures with the greeting of peace, '*Assalamu `alikom*.'<sup>33</sup> One day, a female undergraduate student said, 'The professor who teaches us the *Sunnah* told us that it is *Haram* to greet women with peace.' (!) I replied quickly, 'This is not correct. I read in the books of the *Sunnah* that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was greeting women with peace. Al-Bukhari dedicated one chapter in his authentic collection<sup>34</sup> for, 'men greeting women and women greeting men.' In any case, I will check this with your professor, my colleague. Perhaps there is a misunderstanding!'

I met with my colleague, who is a pious man and a scholar in the Sciences of *Hadith*. I explained to him what happened. He said: 'Yes. I taught the female students that greeting them is forbidden. The *Ahadith* that you mentioned has the following interpretation: This is either a special license to the Prophet (peace be upon him) (!),

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<sup>33</sup> Peace be with you.

<sup>34</sup> Muhammad Ibn Isma`il Al-Bukhari (810-870), *Sahih al-Bukhari, The translation of the meanings of Sahih al-Bukhari: Arabic-English*, by Muhamad Muhsin Khan, Bairut, Dar al-Fikr, 1979.



when people are secure from *Fitnah* (mischief) (!), or when the women are elderly. Greeting beautiful girls is forbidden.'

I replied: 'It is obviously incorrect that this is a special license to the Prophet (peace be upon him). Moreover, the context in Bukhari's authentic collection implies that greeting women is lawful without a need to check them out, whether they are beautiful or not!! I have no idea how the interpreter came up with all what you mentioned?' He said: 'We have to respect the interpreter's conclusions and follow them.' (!)

Here is another example of misinterpreting Al-Bukhari's authentic *Ahadith* regarding women. The Prophet (peace be upon him) confirmed that every woman should go out for the *`Eid* prayer. He even said that a woman who does not have a dress should borrow a dress from her neighbor. He also clearly included, 'girls and young women staying at home.' Ibn `Abbas narrated that the Prophet asked his wives and daughters to attend the *`Eid* prayers.

Despite all the above, the interpreter of Bukhari's authentic collection noted that those who were allowed to attend the *`Eid* prayers are the elderly women. (!) He goes on to say that the younger women who attended the *`Eid* prayers did that after their husbands' permission and that they were wearing 'the housekeeping uniforms'. He meant the attire that women wear for cooking and cleaning. (!) Why did he have to make it such a complicated issue? And whom should we follow, the Prophet (peace be upon him) or the interpreter?

Many interpreters eventually agreed that it is preferred that women do not go out at all. Do you see how the Arabic traditions are defeating the Islamic teachings?

I would like to make an additional note. The scholars and callers of Islam who restrict themselves to interpreters' opinions are utter failures! Does this mean that the *Sunnah* has failed or that those who misunderstood the *Sunnah* have failed? Islam seems to really have bad luck thanks to these warped minds.

Those who deny the whole *Sunnah*, and whom I vehemently oppose, are perhaps driven to this by the way of thinking of some scholars who specialize in the *Sunnah* sciences. Many *Sunnah* specialists demonstrate an obvious deficiency in relating the *Sunnah* to the Qur'an with its general and flexible instructions.

Do not think that I went away from the topic of the Islamic Da`wah in France. I am talking about the core of this topic itself! The French writer analyzed and even mocked some of the Muslims he met because of the way they dealt with women. He implied to his readers that Islam humiliates women and always positions them on the defensive. That is why I had to give the above examples to illustrate the difference between the Scripts and the interpreters regarding women's issues.

There is a big difference between the methodology of Da`wah practiced by our great forefathers and that of our current generation in this miserable era of our history! Looking only at the tail of an animal and forgetting its body is humorous. But presenting Islam through its most minor issues is sad.

The fundamental value in our religion is the Oneness of God and a huge system of other values is based on it. These values affirm the brotherhood, equality, and freedoms of

humankind and reject oppression, cruelty, and hardship. With these values, a human being deserves to be the master of the universe. The verses of the Qur'an are speaking this truth. Why do we ignore them?

The Prophet (peace be upon him), who was the ultimate example for mankind, has a tradition that glows with honour and good morals. His instructions to the individual and the society cure people from selfishness and negligence and make them at the level of angels. How can we ignore these traditions?

The acts of worship in Islam are means for enhancing one's spirituality and strengthening one's relationship with the Lord. A believer should, then, feel God's presence, live for Him and cooperate with likewise believers to make the whole earth a place of worship where His name is mentioned. How can we ignore these acts of worship and restrict them to empty talk on *Fiqhi* issues that are normally affected by individuals' personalities and society's cultures?

If westerners cannot accept covering a woman's face by any means, then let us forget about the face cover and free the way for the Oneness of God to spread. And if they hold strong to women being judges or ministers, then how can we not accept their Islam because some of our scholars disagree with that? Let westerners accept Islam and let us forget about these false obstacles blocking their way!

And who said that a Muslim has to adhere to a specific *Fiqhi* School of thought? There are callers to Islam who preach that every Muslim has to adhere to one and only one school of thought and even fight for it! Such people are actually diverting people from Islam.

Sadness overwhelmed me after witnessing a quarrel in one of Canada's mosques. The brothers were literally fighting over whether it is lawful to read a *Surah*<sup>35</sup> before the Friday prayer or not! See how those immigrants to the new world carried with them the rotten problems of their old world! It is natural that they remain affected by their old cultures. However, didn't they ever wonder why their countries of origin are so backward?

There is a big void in the Muslim soul that can easily be filled with anything, even a big worthless balloon! But if this soul were full of belief, morals, and the core acts of worship, there would be no room for trivial matters. When this happens, I am sure that the Muslim minorities in Europe, North America and Australia could be solid bridges over which Islam can pass over from the East. There is a great need and potential for Islam in these countries – if only Muslims were ever able to learn and represent Islam correctly.

But to fight until death over photographs or *Niqab*, let alone natural women's rights, will make us gain nothing but failure.

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<sup>35</sup> One chapter of the Qur'an.

## Arabs Should Know Who They Are and What Their Mission Is

Arabs have their own psychological and intellectual characteristics. They also have their own culture. However, I do not believe that a nation's generations pass down all characteristics and traditions. I think that nations change over time. I can confidently say that Arabs at the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) formed the nation that most deserved to host and carry the message.

The verse, 'God knows best with whom to place His message' (6:124) includes both the prophets and the nations they are sent to. The strong characteristics that the Arabs had at the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him) allowed them to carry the mission and penetrate the terrifying barriers that the Romans and Persians erected to protect their false whims.

The carrying of a mission is much more a responsibility that is excruciatingly demanding and tiring, than simply an honour. Reflect upon God's description to the messengers 'who had patience' (46:35): 'And remember We took from the prophets their covenant: As (We did) from thee: from Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus the son of Mary: We took from them a solemn covenant' (33:7). What a huge responsibility and what a tough accounting for it! Fulfilling this obligation takes people to the top and falling short to do that takes them to the bottom!

It is a well-known fact that Arabs are from the Semite race. It is the race that led the world with the revelation over a vast span of time. A branch of this race is the Jews. Were the Jews, all over their history, comparable to their forefathers who carried the revelation? No. Many of their generations went astray and God repeatedly advised them, 'O Children of Israel! Remember My favour wherewith I favoured you and how I preferred you to (all) creatures' (2:47). They were never guided. Their unchecked desires led them very far away from moral leadership positions. Honour cannot be inherited. One rises or falls according to one's effort.

The earlier Arabs supported their great Prophet in his mission to erase *Jahiliyah*. After he passed away, they carried on the mission to fight evil. They succeeded in ending the ancient colonization and its two big empires that oppressed the masses for centuries.

Only because of Islam, Arabs entered the annals of history and became known in all continents. If it were not for Islam, Arabs would never have left their peninsula nor had anything to offer to the world. Only a blatant liar could deny Islam's historical effect on the Arabs.

Romans became Christians in the fourth century A.C.E. However, nothing changed about them. Their power was established before and after Christianity. Similarly, the Greeks did not change upon embracing Christianity. They remained the owners of a distinct philosophy and advanced thought.

But Arabs without Muhammad would have remained a bunch of tribes running after their daily needs. When Muhammad came with the message, they were changed into completely different creatures. They were pulled out of the depths of darkness into light

and then they, themselves, in the middle ages, led mankind out of the depths of darkness into light!<sup>36</sup>

Arabs are not able to build a successful state except on a foundation of prophethood and religion. This is a fact that the great scholar Ibn Khaldun proved after an in depth study on the Arabic personality.<sup>37</sup> He further followed up on the political development of Arabs with the expansion of Islam and the Islamic State. Ibn Khaldun concluded that belief in the One God is the only way to nurture the Arabs' talents, organize their energies, unite their word, and make them builders not destructors.

Let us exemplify this by studying the racial characteristics of Arabs. Arabs have very high self-esteem. They are also very proud. These are characteristics that enable them to do great works and achieve difficult objectives. However, these very characteristics might turn into arrogance and aggression.

This is illustrated through Arabic poetry. Amr Ibn Kulthum mentions in one of his famous poems how when his tribe drinks clean water, others have to drink mud! Amr said in another poem that when a baby from his tribe reaches weaning, people have to prostrate to him. Is it not clear just how arrogance made him so crazy?

Muhalhal said in one of his poems that he will never lay down his sword as long as there is day and night. Why this incessant armament? Was it to fight against Persians and Romans who occupied the eastern and northern parts of Arabia? No. It was for a tribal conflict that lasted forty years over a camel! Their pride was a destructive instead of a productive force. But strangely enough many Arabs still insist on the practice of many traditions that are motivated by this arrogance.

Arabs abhor shame! It is actually a good trait. Nevertheless, no one likes shame. But Arabs, in their vicious attempts to avoid shame, would loathe the birth of baby girls and thus were driven to kill them! Their rationale was not to let their daughters fall into shame of captivity when they grow up.

That is how Arabs converted good traits into the most evil sins! Islam is the only guide out of this. That is why God told them, 'Then, is it to be expected of you, if ye were put in authority, that ye will do mischief in the land, and break your ties of kith and kin?' (47:22).

The Messenger of God (peace be upon him) told us how Arabs would continue holding to some of their negative characteristics from the days of *Jahileyah*. Tribal pride was among those characteristics.

Tribal and ethnic roots pretty much govern the Arabic traditions. Some scholars even considered 'tribal competence' as the basic criterion for the competence of a man or a

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<sup>36</sup> The Islamic civilization contributed a great deal to the Renaissance. It is a sad fact, though, that this contribution is not generally recognized. Muslims not only preserved the main Greek works through translating them into Arabic, but also made numerous breakthroughs in all areas of the arts and sciences.

<sup>37</sup> Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406 A.C.E.) is known in the Muslim world as 'the father of Sociology'. His book, *Al-Muqaddimah, The Introduction*, is the first book that discussed social organization and societal development. It is translated into all major languages. A suggested English translation is: *Al-Muqaddimah; An Introduction to History*, translated from Arabic by Franz Rosenthal. New York: Pantheon Books [1958].

woman for marriage. (!) I do not know why the Islamic competence based on piety disappeared?

In some countries, there are people who have formed 'syndicates' for those whose family roots go back to the Prophet (peace be upon him)! I was under the assumption that syndicates were meant only for professionals and laborers, not for tribes. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, 'The one who is slow because of his/her evil deeds will never be fast because of his/her lineage.'

The Arabic traditions – I mean the immoral ones – have overruled the teachings of Islam in several areas. There are Arabs who still find it a shame to work as farmers, traders or laborers. They would, then, enjoy eating on their dinner tables, even though they neither produced the food nor manufactured any cutlery or furniture. They only excelled in their eating and bragging!

Islam is the only way out of all this and forsaking Islam is the fastest way to destruction. The Islamic motivation behind the Algerian Revolution against the French occupation, not Arabic nationalism, is what kept this revolution on the right path. Now, Islamists are the ones supporting the movement for the Arabic language, which aims to restore this Muslim nation's language, culture, and distinct identity. Islam also protected Algeria from divisions, preserved the warmth of belief, defined the true enemies, and scared off the hypocrites and the indolent.<sup>38</sup>

What I am concerned about are some other revolutions that put aside all Islamic banners, and used Arabic nationalism banners instead. Years later, they gained nothing but enormous losses.

Arabs should always be conscious of their Islamic identity and guard against those who attempt to wipe out this identity in the various ways. The rest of this article shows how those enemies are attacking at the present time and how Arabs fail to fight back.

I made use of several opportunities to tour Arabia and the Gulf countries. One day, while on one of the islands there, I viewed an ancient building on the shore. I quickly recognized that it was an old castle standing proudly at the shore. My companion told me, 'During the Middle Ages our forefathers would stand on guard in this castle against invaders.' I asked, 'Did the invaders reach this spot?' He answered, 'Yes. The Portuguese arrived here and tried to build a colony, but they were kicked out.' I remembered the Crusaders. They were defeated after two centuries of continuous fighting although, afterwards, they had several economic victories. They discovered the way around Africa to India and Columbus discovered America. Some history researchers have proven that Columbus was only trying to reach India, without having to cross Muslim land, when he discovered America. Also, the missionary Magellan reached his destination, after being guided by an Arab fisherman. History says that he was later killed while trying to raise the flag that carried the cross.

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<sup>38</sup> The Sheikh is referring to the Algerian revolution against the French occupation (decades ago) and the Islamic motivations behind this revolution. The more recent violent conflicts in Algeria all started when the military government forcefully denied the Islamic Front's victory in the general elections in 1992 and arrested the Front's leaders. Uncontrolled violence followed from both sides.

The voice of my companion jolted me out of my thoughts. He said, 'Colonization is over. This castle is just a remnant of an ancient past.' I said, 'No. The ambitions of the strong ones to strip people of their beliefs and rip people off of their money are still alive. I do not think that they will ever die out. The ancient colonizers are back, but with different means and more highly developed weapons.'

Colonization, which now takes a new form of 'globalization,' is also responsible for the fanaticism and hate that are increasing by the day. It is, furthermore, supporting the occupation of Palestine.

The following is an example of what the Zionists do in our land. They are occupying Palestine in the name of the Old Testament, in which, amazingly, they strongly believe!<sup>39</sup> We, on the other hand, act as if we are hearing the Qur'anic revelation from a very far distance and not even paying attention to it.

A man who came from Al-Khalil city narrated this story to me:

Arabs killed a young Jewish man who was a member of one of the Jewish extremist groups. This young man was always challenging shop owners in the market area that they will soon be kicked out of a land that they do not belong to!

The Israeli authorities revenged severely. They bombed several houses, destroyed all shops, shot tens of Palestinians in the streets and arrested hundreds. The whole Arab district was destroyed.

After weeks, the house arrest for the entire city was over. An Arab shop owner was trying to find the remnants of his shop. He found it with difficulty and resolved to rebuild his shop. While working hard to rebuild his shop, a young Jewish man, who was passing by, asked him, 'What are you doing?' He answered, 'As you see. I am trying to rebuild my shop.' The young man answered proudly, 'But this is not your shop.' He asked him, 'Whose shop is it then?' He replied, 'My forefathers owned this shop and I am the heir. If you decide to use this space, then you have to pay me rent.' (!) The Arab man did not answer because he knows what the consequences would be!

This young Jewish man overlooked thirty centuries of Jewish absence from this land and suddenly considered himself to be the only heir of the land and its shops as well! He is debating and fighting in the name of his Holy Book! Arabs should know that only Islam could break this arrogance.

Arabs who are not happy about being Muslims or are neutral towards Islam will never be victorious. The enemies of the Arab nation, themselves, know this as a historical fact. They are extremely pleased to see an Arab generation that ignores its religion and mission and seeks pride in its lineage and blood ties.

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<sup>39</sup> The Sheikh, and Muslims in general, disapprove of the belief in the Old Testament because of the alterations that have occurred to it over history. Muslims believe that the Old Testament is different from the Torah, which was revealed to Moses (peace be upon him) and praised by the Qur'an as a major of the holy books.

Pride about lineages is a serious problem with Arabs. To start war in the Arab region, all one needs to do is remind Arabs of their tribal origins before Islam. The rest will automatically follow! The sons of Adnan will start calling to fight with the sons of Qahtan and the resulting war will destroy them both.<sup>40</sup> The whole region will be cleared, then, for any new order!

With globalization comes the manipulation of the pan-African dream into something called the African nationality! I had to laugh when I heard such a ridiculous joke. The many African nationalities contributed to the development of civilization. Therefore, the world has been indebted to Africa throughout its ancient, middle, and modern history. However, there is an obvious intention to dilute the Islamic identity in all ways. And this now includes inculcating an African nationality! The aim is to make Muslims forget who they are and fall into a coma, where they do not know what their mission is or even think about their religion.

At the same time Arabs are busy with their nationalities and lineages, thousands of missionaries are arriving in Africa from Europe and America to convert Muslims to Christians under the cover of human relief. If those missionaries eventually succeed in converting five or even three percent of the population of any of those African Muslim countries, the media will suddenly expose them as 'an oppressed Christian minority'. They will help them by all means to eventually control everything in this given country. Then, Muslims will be labeled 'extremists' if they ever object.

The amount of plotting against Islam in this age is incredible. More incredible, though, is how Muslims do harm to themselves by denying their Islamic identity.

The person who denies what his parents did for him does not deserve respect. Islam is like a parent to Arabs who did them an infinite number of favours. They earned a status in history, as I mentioned before, which they would have never reached without their forefathers' dedication to the mission of Islam, its rituals, and Law.

I am surprised at how some Arabs deny their Islamic identity or give precedence to other identities while the Zionists are proud of their Israeli identity in front of the world. I am amazed at how Israelis force the international organizations to overlook the crimes they commit. They have a record of crimes, not only against Arabs, but also against the main figures in international organizations as well! The following is just one example.

In 1948, Cont Bernadette, the UN envoy to Israel, was killed. It was a big scandal and it was well known that the Zionists killed him because they didn't like his suggestions! Last year, the Swedish newspaper, *Aftonbladet*,<sup>41</sup> published a report after a long investigation that proves through documentation, that Isaac Shamir, the former Israeli Prime Minister, was one of the three Zionists who shot Bernadette. Furthermore, this report disclosed that Mannheim Begin, the former Israeli Prime Minister, participated in the killing plan! The newspaper quoted the Swedish Prime Minister, Palma, saying, 'Sweden will never forget that the current Israeli External Affairs Minister (Isaac Shamir, who was later elected as Prime Minister) was behind the assassination of Cont Bernadette.' The newspaper added that Shamir confessed to the Israeli government in 1948 that he and his group decided to get rid of the Swedish diplomat because he was pro Arab!

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<sup>40</sup> Adnan and Qahtan were two brothers, whose offspring formed two major Arab tribes.

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.aftonbladet.se>

Nevertheless, the assassination of the UN high official passed silently without any reaction. Why? Because of the great influence of the Jews in media, science, economy, and arts, their enemies are forced to remain silent. Furthermore, with their strong influence in the UN and in many countries they have enabled their religious inclination to be seen as civilized, while they have portrayed Islam as backward.

They worked hard, took advantage of their available means, and thus eventually succeeded. We Muslims neither worked hard nor made use of available means, and that is why we failed! If you ask me for a case in point: there are two million Muslim British citizens in the United Kingdom as opposed to two hundred thousand Jews. However, Muslims have no power in the UK, whereas the British Jewish community is known to have enormous influence in society. Muslims, despite their large numbers, do not have a single Muslim representative in the British parliament!

The Jewish expertise in every field consequently earned the Jews top positions in the world. They worked very hard to develop this expertise as they place great importance on preserving and strengthening a respectable identity. Most Muslims, and Arabs specifically, are reluctant to experience any pride in a Muslim identity. The few Muslims who are proud of their identity do not work adequately for its causes that Islam proscribes. This has to change if we want to be victorious, let alone survive.



## Towards the Success of Our Call

The weakness or absence of Islamic media and educational systems in Muslim countries has produced generations lacking principles and a sense of direction. Hence, they eventually went astray. Pure secular education in Muslim countries has also contributed to this crisis. On the other hand, non-Muslim minorities in Muslim countries have been strict in their faith and traditions. Now we have a generation of Muslim youth who are lost and a generation of non-Muslim youth who are strongly inclined towards their religion and traditions.

The strangest incident I heard is about an Arab man who lives in one of the Muslim countries. He married a woman and had two children with her. One day he returned home to find that she and the children left. She left him a letter saying that she is actually Jewish and that she decided to live in Tel Aviv. She took the boys with her but gave him the right to come live with them if he wished. This lost husband had always been under the assumption that his wife is Muslim! Did he ever see her praying? No. Did he ever see her reading Qur'an? No. Did he himself ever pray or fast? No. Did he ever feel a gap between his belief and way of life and hers? No.

Modern civilization succeeded in producing many lost souls like this person! Now if any of them becomes a governor or high official, how do you expect him to deal with Islam and those who are practicing it, let alone those who are calling for it?

I heard a prominent leader of a Muslim country saying, 'Muslim scholars eat a good meal at the capitalists', and then they issue a *Fatwa* for their own benefit.' Another leader said, referring to a scholar who criticized him, 'Now he is thrown into prison like a dog.' (!) I never heard anywhere else on earth a leader calling his country's religious scholars such bad names!

I am mentioning those incidents of degradation to demonstrate how the majority of the Arabic nation has lost its Islamic identity or its interest to protect it.

So, who will carry the mission of the *Da`wah* for Islam?

When secular Muslims, like those I mentioned above whether leaders or lay people, travel to the West they do nothing for *Da`wah*. If they ever form some cultural association in the West they employ part-time workers from the Muslim community who really do not care about doing anything for the sake of *Da`wah*. These paid Muslims mostly aim only to make a living and are rarely ever willing to confront or struggle. There is in actual fact no comparison between those administrators and the thousands of missionaries, orientalists, politicians, professors, and media specialists, who work day and night for the other religions.

I am saddened to say that Al-Azhar is paralyzed in this ugly atmosphere and, thus, incapable of carrying the *Da`wah* mission. Al-Azhar's scholars are idle. For thirty years now Al-Azhar's standard of education is steadily on the decline and its leaders are nothing but rings on the President's fingers. I taught in the different faculties of Al-Azhar University for over twenty-five years. I monitored what is happening there from the bottom to the top and I gave up hope!

Conversely, those who describe themselves as the 'Salafi Movement'<sup>42</sup> have a different set of problems than Al-Azhar's that, also, make them incapable of carrying the mission of *Da'wah*. However, it is only fair to recognize their obvious inclination and respect to Islam and its callers. I worked for almost ten years in a Salafi environment. The Muslim World League<sup>43</sup> sent me on a mission to Sri Lanka. The Saudi University of King Abdul-Aziz sent me on missions to the U.K., Canada, and the United States. I did my best to serve Muslims in all of these countries and I praise God that the brothers who gave me these opportunities did not find a problem with my preaching. To be a 'Salafi' is an honour because it means that one is relating oneself to the best centuries of our history and opposing the whims that were popular in the centuries of weakness and defeat.

However, the current *Salafi* school is, by definition, unable to achieve its *Da'wah* objectives! There will never be fruits for this school unless it makes the changes that I am outlining in the following paragraphs.

The study of Humanities is flourishing in the modern civilization. They are filling an obvious gap in Christianity, which is dominating this civilization. The Christian doctrine cannot lead humanity, especially in this stage of advanced and rapid development. That is why research is flourishing in disciplines of psychology, sociology, economics, law, ethics, political science, history, etc.

The Humanities reveal the depth of the human soul and the cultures of the human ethnic groups. These studies cannot simply be ignored. There are many Humanities studies that coincide with Islamic teachings. However, today's *Salafis* do not acknowledge them. I think that there is no point fighting against these studies because in many cases they have nothing to do with religion. What is the value of fighting against these studies?

On the other hand, some Humanities studies contradict with the belief of every Muslim, as well every person with a religion.<sup>44</sup> In these particular cases, we must prove these studies are false by using scientific arguments. We have to convince people, not terrorize them. In Islam we are only allowed to use logic, regardless if we have military power or not.

As a matter of fact, the Humanities, especially Philosophy, already have a stronghold in the Muslim land. So what is the point behind banning Muslims from studying them?

Ignoring Humanities studies have a negative effect on the Islam missionary. 'Islamic speeches', as people like to call them, are becoming really boring. Nobody cares about them except for the simple-minded people. An objective and cultured person would honestly think that these speeches were replicas of ones perhaps given during Middle Ages, certainly not meant for today's world! This backwardness is harming Islam. It has caused Islam's unpopularity among the cultured.

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<sup>42</sup> *Al-Salaf* is literally the forefathers. The Salafi is a modern non-organizational school/trend that calls for a return to the Book and the Sunnah as understood by the Muslim forefathers. The founder of this movement is Imam Muhammad Ibn Abdul-Wahhab (1704-1792 A.C.E.) who was the teacher of Abdul-Aziz Al Saud, the founder of Saudi Arabia. Refer to Abdul-Wahhab's famous book, *Kitab Al-Tawheed, The Book of the Oneness (of God)*, translated to English by Sameh Strauch, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: International Islamic Publications House, 1998.

<sup>43</sup> An international Saudi-based Muslim organization.

<sup>44</sup> For example, Humanities studies which promote atheism.

Ustaz Muhammad Al-Mubarak, may God bless his soul, and Ustaz Abdul-Wahhab Solaiman, may God cure him, put sincere efforts into researching the Islamic point of view in the Humanities. However, two men are not enough for this undertaking, even if they are geniuses.

The leaders of the Salafi thought will never find an audience in the West as long as they ignore Humanities, particularly philosophical and spiritual studies. A western leader like Rajaa Garoudi was not interested to read Ibn Al-Qayyim's books, all except for his *Madarij Assalekin* (The Stairs the Travelers are Ascending) and *Tareeq Al-Hijratain* (The Way of the Two Migrations).<sup>45</sup> Of all Ibn Al-Qayyim's collection of writings, most *Salafis* do not accept both of these books. They, in fact, restrict themselves only to his *Fiqh* books! The reason which was behind Garoudi's interest is a terrible spiritual poverty! So, why don't the Salafi brothers realize the needs of people in our age and work seriously for the success of Islam? Why do they force people to accept their spiritual dryness and lack of knowledge? And when people refuse to accept them why do they ridicule them! *Salafis* must study the Humanities if they are sincere in serving Islam!

They must also study the basics of modern science. The following is an example of how the lack of knowledge in this area can negatively affect *Da'wah*.

When I attended the Islamic Thought Conference in Algeria, I listened to Maurice Bucaille's highly emotional lecture on Islam. He is a French physician, who was interested in Orientalism. He was amazed to learn that the Qur'an is speaking so accurately about the stages of embryonic formation in the mother's womb. This was his proof for the heavenly source of the Holy Qur'an, as how otherwise could Muhammad (peace be upon him) come up with all these scientific facts in the seventh century A.C.E.? He also noticed that the Qur'anic story of the creation of the universe does not contradict with contemporary scientific facts. The Old Testament, however, is full of such contradictions. Bucaille's doubts about religions, that the 'Holy' Bible caused, disappeared when he read the Qur'an.

Now some callers to Islam, who are affiliated with the *Salafis*, wrote books that claim that there are more than forty verses in the Qur'an that confirm that the earth is fixed and the sun revolves around it. (!)<sup>46</sup> What would happen if Bucaille, and other westerners, read these books? Such callers are spreading ignorant and arrogant lies that only deviate people from Islam and greatly harm the Muslims' Holy Book! If a Bedouin persists in believing in these lies, let him live or die with them, if he so wishes. However, to spread these writings in the name of Islam and deny the basic scientific facts would only repel

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<sup>45</sup> Ibn Al-Qayyim Al-Jawziyah (1292-1350 A.C.E.), a renowned Islamic scholar who was the student of Ibn Taymiyah (1236-1328 A.C.E.). Many scholars considered Ibn Taymiyah to be the reformer of the *Ummah* in the seventh century Hijri. From the rulings (*Fiqh*) point of view, they both represent a more modern version of the *Hanbali* school of thought. Ibn Taymiyah had problems with the Sufi groups of his time and challenged their *Sheikhs* in several debates. Ibn Al-Qayyim, however, had a Sufi upbringing. Thus, his writings show more Sufi tendencies, especially the books that Sheikh Al-Ghazaly is mentioning here. Both Ibn Taymiyah and Ibn Al-Qayyim are major references for the modern Salafi School.

<sup>46</sup> The verses, that those writers are referring to (for example, verse 36:38), are only mentioning that the sun is 'moving,' but never state that the sun is revolving around the earth. The motion of the sun is a true scientific fact that is not related by any means to the false ancient belief that the sun is revolving around the earth.

people from Islam. People will certainly think that Islam is a remnant of the ignorance of the Middle Age.

Therefore, studying physics, chemistry, biology, and geography, as well the basics of astronomy and geology is crucial for the callers of Islam. We do not want a mad person to speak in public and deny that the Americans reached the moon!

Back to the Salafi movement that Muhammad Ibn Abdul-Wahhab founded two centuries ago: Every effort the Salafis make to protect the belief in the Oneness of God should be appreciated and every effort they make to purify the Muslim creed from innovations should be respected. We all cannot agree with people who fear or worship men, whether dead or alive. I do not know a sane Muslim who does not agree with this. However, if Muhammad Ibn Abdul-Wahab's followers had more wisdom, he would have conquered multiples of land of the like he had conquered before. The callers to Islam who are narrow-minded, accusation oriented, and argument obsessed, do cause more harm than good. I am certainly not defending the ignorant and foolish traditions that the Wahhabis<sup>47</sup> fought against. I am just trying to convince my Salafi brothers, who are among the callers for the truth, to learn how to plan and present their message. I do not want them to be like a physician who kills his patient by prescribing the wrong medicine.

Among the most Salafi teachings – after protecting *Aqeedah*<sup>48</sup> from innovations – is the rejecting of blind following of the schools of thought (*Madhahib*)<sup>49</sup> and the returning to the original sources, the Book and the *Sunnah*. This is a good teaching theoretically. However its application needs some careful consideration. Salafis themselves never ceased from following Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal and giving precedence to his school! It is everybody's right then to follow other Imams!

Furthermore, the extracting of *Fiqhi* rules from the Scripts is not a task any person is capable of doing. I know of some people who cannot read one page of writing in Arabic correctly. Yet, they claim to be capable of concluding rulings from the Scripts. They end up issuing rulings that serve only to repel people from Islam.

I have based the above notes on my personal experience in the field of *Da`wah*. I hope that they are useful.

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<sup>47</sup> Followers of Muhammad Ibn Abdul-Wahhab.

<sup>48</sup> Creed, faith.

<sup>49</sup> The Islamic schools of thought (*Madhahib*) are named after renowned scholars who, independently, put distinct sets of rules/theories for concluding Fiqhi rulings from the original sources of legislation, the Book and the *Sunnah*. The founders of the schools of thought did not create the Islamic Law, as some Western writers understood. These scholars, rather, explained the Law and applied it to their environments. The most popular of these schools are four: the Maliki School, named after Imam Malik Ibn Anas (711-795 A.C.E.), the Shafi'i School, named after Imam Ahmad Ibn Idris Al-Shafi'i (767-820 A.C.E.), the Hanafi School, named after Imam Abu Hanifah No'man Ibn Thabit (699-767 A.C.E.), and the Hanbali School, named after Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (781-856 A.C.E.). In addition to those scholars' brilliance, the popularity of their schools is also due to several historical and political reasons, for example, the support that the Ottoman Empire gave to the Hanafi School, etc. Most Sheikhs learn and follow only one of these schools in rulings. A well-educated scholar, though, is expected to be capable of assessing all the different opinions of these schools (as well as other valid opinions), regarding a certain matter, and choosing the opinion that achieves Islam's main objectives.

Now let me turn to the heated Salafi-versus-Sufi discussions. I will narrate some personal experiences in this area and analyze some points of differences and their effect on *Da`wah*.

I was in Uganda in the days of Aidi Amin. A person invited me to give a talk at the celebration of the Prophet's birthday. I was surprised, because we were in the month of *Sha'ban*! I told the man, 'I think we are in *Sha'ban*, aren't we?' He replied, 'We celebrate the Prophet's birthday throughout the whole year.' (!) I said, 'Well I will come with you.' The undersecretary of Al-Azhar, who was on the same mission with me questioned, 'What are you doing?' I answered, 'Those people are gathered to hear a speech on Islam and to mention God's name. They call this a celebration of the Prophet's birthday. There is nothing beyond that in their intentions.' He replied, 'In Egypt they accuse you of being a *Wahabi*.'<sup>50</sup> I said, 'And *Wahabis* accuse me of being a *Sufi*. I do not care about these classifications. I am a seeker of knowledge who only desires to serve Islam. Pleasing God is my intention.'

I addressed the large crowd on a topic I can no longer clearly recall. My goal was to keep the fire of faith glowing. I talked about the Oneness of God in order to provide the audience with some immunity against the Trinity ideas that the Christian missionaries spread in this area. I mentioned many *Ahadith* that call for belief and morals. In the midst in the stream of *Ahadith* I said, 'Muhammad is greater than a celebration that lasts for one day, or even one month. The message of Muhammad (peace be upon him) is a message that the devils of humans and Jinn are opposing. We have to defend this message. We have to carry this mercy to the worlds in order for everybody to benefit from it.' I also gave them glad tidings of Paradise, because of their love to the Messenger of God. And finally, I promised I would meet them once again to talk about how to follow Muhammad (peace be upon him) and revive his teachings. I told them that I hope for a much larger turnout the following day, as I would be talking about the sections of belief.

Afterwards, my companion exclaimed: 'You did not tell them that celebrating birthdays is an innovation.' Another person, who is supposedly a scholar, told me, 'And neither did you talk about the myth of *Tawassul*.'<sup>51</sup> I answered them, 'The true teachings I gave, will silently kick out innovations as water kicks out air from a bottle and takes over the volume. My mission is teaching, not accusing, judging, and meeting them in hellfire. I am a teacher, not an attorney general.' Another man said, 'Didn't you notice that most of them put their arms straight by their sides while praying.' I answered:

Let them follow the *Maliki* school on this issue. God will not punish them for putting their arms this way while praying. I warned them from a serious enemy,

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<sup>50</sup> Wahabis/Salafis are against all practices and forms of Sufism since they believe it is 'an innovation within the religion.' I believe that Sufism is a major trend that includes a broad variety of scholars and ideas. Some Sufi scholars adhere to both the Book and the Sunnah and some not. Some Sufi scholars, like Al-Junaid and Abdul-Qadir Al-Jilani, contributed excellent works in education and spirituality to the Islamic literature. However, some contemporary Sufi groups endorse serious non-Islamic innovations, like the building of mosques around graves and the celebrating around and praying to those graves.

<sup>51</sup> *Tawassul* is literally seeking means of access. It is a common Sufi prayer where one refers to some pious person and says, 'I ask you God by this person.' Sufis cite several narrations that prove that the companions used this prayer. The Salafi scholars, though, consider this prayer a serious forbidden innovation. According to most scholars, it is a matter of a minor difference in opinion that has nothing to do with the fundamentals of Islam.

which is colonization. I also revealed to them colonization's plans to occupy their land and wipe out their faith. Islam is already vanishing from this area and other vast areas in Africa and this is the issue that we should talk about. Talk to people about the most important issues. Warn people about the most serious dangers. Postpone talking to people about your immediate concerns and talk to them about the foundations of beliefs, morals, and acts of worship.'

I was extremely saddened when I visited Uganda years later. I realized to what extent Muslims had come under great threat from their non-Muslim enemies. Meanwhile, the callers to Islam who were preaching there preoccupied their audience merely with the very issues I had intentionally avoided during my previous visit. Those callers, along with the cunning non-Muslim missionaries, defeated Muslims and threatened Islam's future survival in this land.

Islam's bad luck in the middle of Africa is the same bad luck in the West. If you are wondering why this is happening, the reason, again, is the lack of knowledge and common sense of the callers to Islam in these areas. They put people in hardship instead of at ease. They repel people away instead of inviting them. These callers convert the actions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) only out of being an Arab, and not out of being a prophet, into fundamental obligations.<sup>52</sup> And so, they ask of people what God does not require! If there are two opinions on a particular issue, one saying that that which is in question is lawful and the other saying that it is detested, they prefer to make it detested, no matter what. And if the two opinions are detested and forbidden, they prefer to make it forbidden, no matter what.

Another example for their malfunction is the following. European countries suffered greatly under the impact of wars. Thus, its people rightly developed a desire for peace. Meanwhile, the enemies of Islam spread rumours that Islam was spread by the sword<sup>53</sup>. Now those foolish callers to Islam come and confirm these rumours that Islam is all about violence and wars and that Muslims are required to fight people until they convert them to Islam!

Another example of bad *Da`wah* in the West is the following. Some callers to Islam refuse to approach the western soul with what it needs the most - spirituality. Spirituality stops the lusts that suffocate the growth of the human soul in the West. Islam nurtures in us love for the sake of God and love for God. It teaches us to strive for God's reward. Sufis stress the importance of spiritual emotions and qualities, which are best illustrated by Ibn Al-Quayyem in his book, *The Guide for the Spirits to the Land of Happiness*. Ibn Al-Quayyem encourages every human being to strip him/herself of the burdens of a materialistic lifestyle in order to gain the high ranks of paradise in the Hereafter. However, some people hate everything related to Sufism, what is correct, as well as

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<sup>52</sup> Scholars divided the Prophet's actions into three categories: what he did as a prophet for us to follow (i.e. prayers and morals, etc), what he did as a leader of the Muslim state for us to follow only in principle (i.e. digging the tunnel around Madinah before the battle of *Al-Khandaq*, which connotes protecting one's city or state with all possible means), and what he did as an Arab who lived in Arabia in the seventh century (i.e. living in a tent, wearing long white dress, and using certain Arabic utensils and remedies).

<sup>53</sup> It is true that most of the nowadays-Muslim countries were ruled by the Muslim State after being conquered by the Muslim army after the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him). However, the Muslim rulers were never reported to have forced the people to accept Islam. It was totally left to their free choice. The taxes that non-Muslims had to pay to the Muslim State were roughly equal to the *Zakah*, the Muslims' obligatory charity collected by the Muslim government.

what is incorrect, Sufis who are guided, as well as Sufis who are misguided. They end up depriving the West of the spirituality it yearns. Moreover, they present the religion in terms of 'rulers need not abide by consultation' and 'women are second class citizens.' (!) I have never seen failure, inadequacy, and falsehood worse than this.

Quite truly, western men and women who reverted to Islam will be rewarded the most for their research and individual efforts to learn about the truth. Some of them learn about Islam from those incapable callers to Islam; however, they accepted it because they still found it purer and more logical than what they previously knew of other religions. There are so many religious people in this world who are skeptical of the teachings of their forefathers. They would most readily accept Islam if they saw a glimpse of its true light.

After mentioning incapable callers to Islam who are highly prejudiced towards their opinions and schools, it is only fair to commend those who aspire to find middle grounds between different schools of thought and between different Islamic groups.

An example for finding a kind of middle ground between schools of thought is the following. There is a transformation that has taken place in formal Islamic education in Egypt, Syria, and Northwest Africa. About half a century ago they started to add Ibn Taymeyah and Ibn Al-Quayyem's books to their curriculum and started to implement many of these scholars' opinions in their daily lives and practices. Before that, Ibn Taymeyah and his student, Ibn-Quayyem, were not popular in these countries because they represented a different school of thought.<sup>54</sup> I believe this positive change was the result of the academic struggle of Sheikh Muhammad Rashid Ridha and his teacher, Muhammad Abdu.<sup>55</sup> However, Al-Ash`ari and Abu-Hamid Al-Ghazaly are still not popular in Saudi Arabia as they represent a different school of thought!<sup>56</sup>

The following is an example for finding a middle ground between Islamic groups. The Islamic groups in North Africa, like Al-Ikhwan Al-Muslimun (Muslim Brotherhood)<sup>57</sup> and Hizb Al-Tahrir (The Liberation Party)<sup>58</sup>, recently decided to adopt some Salafi principles. I witnessed the Algerian Scholars Association, which is the Tahrir Party's spiritual and practical foundation, and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Syria, using the Salafi

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<sup>54</sup> Ibn Taymiyah and Ibn Al-Qayyim represent the Hanbali School, whereas North Africa, Egypt and Syria follow either the Shafi'i, Hanafi, or Maliki schools of thought.

<sup>55</sup> Sheikh Muhammad Abdu was the former head of the Egyptian Religious Fatwa Authority. He is considered to be one of the early founders of the modern Islamic revival. His writings in the early 1900's inspired several influential Islamic figures that appeared after him, such as Rashid Reda, Hassan Al-Banna, and Muhammad El-Ghazaly. Rashid Reda spread Abdu's ideas on a wider scale. He authored a full interpretation of the Qur'an called *Tafseer Al-Manar (The Lighthouse Interpretation)*, which became very popular

<sup>56</sup> Imam Al-Ash`ari represents a school called *Al-Aqeedah Al-Ash`ariah* (the Ash`ari Creed). This school differs from the Salafi School in how it describes God's attributes. The difference is actually a matter of terminology and has nothing to do with the fundamentals of Islam. Imam Abu-Hamid Al-Ghazaly represents both the Shafi'i and the Sufi schools, which are different from the current Saudi Salafi/Hanbali school.

<sup>57</sup> The oldest and largest of the present day Islamic groups. It was founded by Hassan Al-Banna of Egypt in 1928 and spread throughout the Muslim world. It calls for the reform of the Muslim *Ummah* on the individual, family, community and state levels. Refer to: Abu Haaris, *The Brotherhood: Marching through the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, Trends, 4, and Charles Wendell, *Five Tracts of Hassan Al-Banna (1906 – 1949)*.

<sup>58</sup> A modern International Islamic group that calls for the return of the *Khilafah* (Muslim State), under which the Islamic Law (*Shari`ah*) prevails.

school as their criteria to judge their social activities. Both groups succeeded in converting theoretical belief into positive emotions and actions. Recruitment to both groups was based upon a strong bond of brotherhood/sisterhood that fostered love for the sake of God, a principle adopted from Sufi groups. This acceptance of a correct mixture of Salafi and Sufi ideas is similar to Ibn Taymiyah's attitude when he praised Al-Jilani and Al-Junaid, the major Sufi scholars. It is the same attitude that Ibn Al-Qayyim, Ibn Taymiyah's student, expresses in his book, *The Way of the Two Migrations* and other books. In short, all of the above Islamic groups and scholars adopted a version of Sufism that is governed by *Fiqh*. They followed the rulings, as the Salafis advocate, but detested rigidity and coldness, just as the Sufis do. This is a good compromise, especially since we are an *Ummah* that has suffered enough from divisions. More Sufi-Salafi divisions will only please our enemies who are presently attacking from all directions.

There are those, who unfortunately, remain obstinately unwilling to make compromises. Here is an example. One person asked me about Al-Busairi's poem,<sup>59</sup> in which he praises the Prophet (peace be upon him) by saying that the Prophet knows all that is destined. I answered, 'It is not lawful to say that the Prophet knows all that is destined. It is the kind of praise that is not permissible in Islam. I think that Al-Busairi erred in his expression. There are better ways to praise the Prophet.' He said, 'No, this is *Shirk*,<sup>60</sup> and Al-Busairi is an apostate.'(!) I said, 'When you meet him in the Hereafter, accuse him of apostasy and he will certainly accuse you of lying. God, the Knower of the Hidden, will judge between the two of you. As for me, I do not want to waste my time on this issue, because I have more important issues regarding Islam and Muslims.'

Calling names does not solve problems. Moreover, praising the Prophet in such a way or defending the Oneness of God in such a way does Islam no good.

There are more important and practical steps one should take. Our enemies, who succeeded to defeat our mission, have already taken these steps. I hope that what I have to say in the next chapter on these practical steps will be of benefit.

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<sup>59</sup> Al-Busairi wrote a poem entitled, *Al-Burdah (The Cloak)*, one of the most popular Arabic poems praising the Prophet (peace be upon him).

<sup>60</sup> *Shirk* is literally partnership. It is associating other partners as gods with God.



## Two Different Attitudes

The defeat of the Crusaders during the Middle Ages was final. After two hundred years of occupation, they evacuated the area completely and returned to their homeland. But those people learned from their defeat and we did not learn from our victory. That is why our victory turned into a defeat a few centuries later.

How did they learn from their mistakes? They avoided confrontations and directed their energies into several other areas, such as the discovery of new lands and the improvement of technology. They were the winners in the long run! Meanwhile, Muslims have continued to stumble in their mistakes. They cripple their spiritual development by indulging in forbidden lusts and stunt their intellectual advancement by ignoring the importance of its development.

Europeans discovered the way to Asia around Africa and so did not need to pass through Muslim land anymore. This resulted in an economic crisis in the Muslim countries.

Then Europeans made more discoveries. Columbus was trying to reach India, without having to cross Muslim land, when he discovered America. The Vatican supported Columbus' trips.

The Christian victories continued after the discovery of land. The natives of North and South America eventually adopted the religion and languages of the explorers. At that time, Muslims were doing nothing – just watching others with sadness and amazement. Their Islamic thought was and still is dominated by some trivial issues!

The Europeans crossed over to another continent – Australia. Naturally, its people adopted the faith and language of its discoverer. Yet, some Arabs who migrated there contribute to instigate Australians to reject anything related to Islam.

A period of military defeats experienced by the Europeans ended with sudden victories, which can be attributed to their geographic discoveries. But there is another factor that, in my opinion, contributed to the European glory more than the geographic discoveries. After the wars of the Crusades, Europeans studied the victorious Muslim society and decided to copy its best characteristics. This was obvious in the following two areas.

1. Religious reform: the Protestant sect emerged and the Pope's spiritual and political power shrank significantly. I read an in depth research on this, written by Sheikh Al-Khouly. Sheikh Al-Khouly is a 'rational researcher' and, therefore, Islamic emotions are definitely not behind his theory. Any neutral, reasonably minded researcher cannot deny the conclusion he reached: Islam had a great impact on European religious reform movements.
2. The Renaissance: under the influence of Islam the European mind woke up after over ten centuries. The Renaissance pioneers succeeded due to the experimental methodology, which prefers facts to whims and which Muslims established. The European priests knew very well how Islam affected the

Renaissance. They were concerned that the Renaissance might eventually lead to the popularity of Islam itself in Europe. That is one of the reasons why the priests fought harshly against the enlightenment of the masses.

During the Renaissance scientists were killed. The church took harsh measures to eliminate their thoughts. However, the tide of science was higher than the church itself, and science won the fight. As a result, religion lost its credibility in the West.

However, the church leaders quickly revised their calculations and decided to compromise with the victorious science for the sake of the church. They eventually offered colonization great services and helped the ambitions of the secular governments who monopolized power in the West.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century A.C.E., around 14<sup>th</sup> century Hijri, Muslims were in their worst shape and their quality of living was rapidly decreasing! The moral, social, and political diseases, that caused the loss of Jerusalem one thousand years ago, were returned. The killing of masses of Muslims, as if Muslim blood is worth nothing, was repeated. The defeated Muslims were controlled by intellectual and civil stagnation while others were invading space.

Christian missionaries achieved another victory that is worth mentioning here. The Catholic and Protestant carried out successful missions. The Christian Orthodox was left out at first. However, the Orthodox eventually participated. They began by attending the major Christian summits as visitors and were eventually offered their share of war spoils. They were allowed to preach in South Sudan and Middle Africa. The Egyptian priest, Samuel, who was eventually assassinated with Anwar Sadat, was seen preaching in Uganda! Perhaps this was during the same time when some Muslims were fighting over whether it is allowed to celebrate the Prophet's birthday or not!

The unconscious *Ummah* was attacked and so it started to withdraw from both sides; from the former Russian Republic in the East and the Balkans in the West. It is amazing how Communism swallowed Albania, which has a majority of Muslims, without a single word of protest from any Arab or Muslim. But then, Arabs concerned themselves entirely with the caprices of nationalism!

Islam was also aggressively pushed out of the rest of Europe. Now there are plans to wipe out Islam from the Southern part of the Mediterranean, North and South of the Sahara. Islam is now fighting for dear life day after day in these areas. If we move from the West to the middle of the Muslim *Ummah* we will find the occupation of Palestine and the evil politicians that seek to convince Muslims that this occupation is acceptable! If we move to the Far East, we will find that four fifths of the Philippines are lost. The killing of the surviving one fifth is underway. The remaining Muslims in Indonesia are also fighting for their lives against several forms of invasions.

Some political forces are currently redrawing the South Asian map! Singapore was almost a Muslim country because of its large Muslim population and the power the Muslims held in government. Now the Chinese community in Singapore, which is reproducing very rapidly, is practically ruling Singapore. Muslims in these areas and in other countries are given *Fatawa* from some corrupt scholars that say that *Shari'ah* is urging them not to increase in numbers!

The above political and military defeats were the result of a terrible decline in the Muslim educational systems. The current Islamic curricula do not purify hearts, stimulate minds, or motivate group work. Moreover, the present Arabic language curricula do not encourage students to write neither articles nor poems! Muslims do not realize that there are natural laws that govern this universe. They are unable to discover the treasures hidden in the earth under their own feet. The Islamic teachings are virtually absent from the political and economic life of the *Ummah*. The Islamic Da`wah systems are idle since a few centuries ago. There is no planning or follow up.

Now when some laborers and students went to Europe and North America for money and knowledge, they became shocked to find a totally different world – one that is characterized by hard work and intelligence. They realized the major difference between this new world and the idle masses and lost governments they left behind. How can those immigrants present Islam? Are Westerners able to recognize the true Islam if they reflect upon the Muslim countries' situation? There is no way non-Muslims would be able to discover Islam without seeing a true application of it or being able to get involved in interesting talk about it. If our application is wrong and repelling and our talk is full of mistakes, how can anyone understand Islam or embrace it?

Moreover, the main victory that the western world claims to possess is freedom. Whether this is true or not, its people respect and seek freedom anyway. How can anyone accept Islam if he or she hears that Islam does not allow political parties and allows the authorities to ignore and oppress the masses?

Israel kicked out of office a Prime Minister who inadvertently made a wrong economic decision. The decision was made out of misjudgment, not out of an act of corruption. How can we defend our 'Islamic governments' that are lead by people who, before being leaders, were miserable, and after being leaders, are wealthy? Have we ever accounted any of them for the illegal money they made?

If the Jews were able to transform their scattered groups into an advanced state and the Christians succeeded to transform their defeat into victory, why can't we learn lessons from our long history and take from others' experiences in order to reach any similar success?

I have been talking about this issue over and over. I hope you excuse me. I will now move to another topic regarding Islamic rulings and the differences in opinion about them.

Can the haphazard advice establish deep-rooted and everlasting morals? Can the empty rituals establish a firm faith that is able to deal with life's crises and complicated problems? Can any of the *Fiqhi* points of view, whether the strong or weak ones, be considered as the one and only existing Islamic ruling? In other words, can the minor branches replace the fundamentals? Also, can we preach that our traditions in the way we dress, celebrate happy occasions or commemorate sad occasions are the sections of faith and the milestones of Islam?

Here is a story that illustrates a point I would like to make regarding different scholars' opinions on minor issues.

A man asked me, 'Why do you endorse Ibn Taymiyah's opinion which does not accept the *Bid'i* divorce?'<sup>61</sup> I answered, 'For two reasons: the first reason is his strong evidence. The second is that not counting this as a divorce is kinder to people and more conducive to the strengthening of family ties.' He said, 'Forget about the second reason....' I interrupted him saying, 'No! Great consideration must be given to the people's *Maslahah* (welfare) when one has to accept or reject an Islamic opinion. God, blessed be His names, made the main characteristic of the truth be that it benefits people, 'Then, as for the foam, it passeth away as scum upon the banks, while, as for that which is of use to mankind, it remaineth in the earth. Thus God coins the similitudes' (13:17).

So if one Imam gives an opinion that would cause psychological or social problems, I have the right to reject it and choose one among other Islamic opinions. Accepting the *Bid'i* divorce caused a lot of disasters for many Muslim families. Why then should I accept it?

The above is one example. However, there are tens of thousands of other similar economical and political issues. I understand that there is no room for different opinions if the script is clear about a certain issue. But I also understand that if we do not have a clear ruling from the scripts, then we might apply any of the valid opinions. Importantly, a valid opinion is not necessarily an opinion from one of the four famous schools of thought. This is the same criterion that the *Islamic Fiqh Encyclopedia* used to choose among the different opinions regarding controversial branch issues.

On the other hand, as far as the Islamic *Da'wah* is concerned, there are so many beliefs, acts of worship, and morals that scholars were in consensus over. Why do we ignore their areas of consensus and concentrate on preaching controversial issues? I think that Muslims in this age should reflect upon the sources of their culture. I will now outline the basic characteristics of the callers to Islam that are up to the level of the great Islam.

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<sup>61</sup> There are two conditions for considering a divorce a 'Sunni' (or correct) divorce: The first condition is that the woman does not have her period at the time of the divorce. The second condition is that the husband and wife did not have physical contact since the wife's last period. A divorce that violates any of the above two conditions is considered a *Bid'i* (innovation) divorce. Most scholars say that the *Bid'i* divorce is 'a forbidden action but the divorce counts.' Some scholars, like Ibn Taymiyah, consider it 'a forbidden action and the divorce does not count.'

## Reflection Upon Our Islamic Culture – Who Are We?

When I graduated from Al-Azhar University I thought I had an adequate amount of knowledge in the religious and language sciences. Then when I went on with my life and was subjected to many intellectual streams I realized that my knowledge was very limited and that I needed more knowledge about language and religion, and more knowledge about life in general.

I have some opinions about Islamic culture in general that I would like to share with others. I really hope that these opinions will correct some mistakes and complete areas that are lacking in some way or other. I hope that the new generations will benefit from the experiences of the older generations for the sake of improvement.

We are an *Ummah* with a mission. Islam united us many centuries ago. It grew with us and we grew with it. Our history and Islam's history are mingled. We left long lasting footprints on this earth. Our effect will always be strong and noticed, even though we are stumbling at this time. This is neither the first nor the last stumble. The best thing we can do now is to revise our knowledge and reevaluate our situation.

Who are we? And what is our mission? Are we able to answer these two questions?

We Muslims fill a vast area of this earth that falls between the Pacific Ocean to the East and the Atlantic Ocean to the West and between Siberia to the North and South Africa to the South. We obviously did not start that big. Our great Messenger (peace be upon him) passed away while Islam was still within the Arabic Peninsula. However, he told us that his *Ummah* would reach where the day and night reach. In other words, it would cover the surface of the earth with its beliefs and laws and 'be proclaimed over all religion' (61:9). This did not happen out of nothing. It all happened because of a great intellectual background and distinct human achievement. I would like to ask myself and my brothers and sisters three questions, which are related to the history of the Islamic world. If we can answer these questions, then certainly we know who we are.

1. How did our Islamic *Da`wah* history evolve? I mean, how did Islam enter every country of our vast Islamic world until we reached what we have now?
2. How did our Islamic civilization evolve? We ruled the whole world at some time, intellectually and militarily, and changed its logic of understanding and reasoning. We put the foundations of a civilization that was much greater than the previous Greek and Roman civilizations. We transformed the intellect, on the international level, from a useless canal into a fantastic river. Then, we fell into a coma as deep as death and forgot who we are.
3. How did our political history evolve? What were the stages of its rise and fall up to this century?

But then how can we answer the above three questions when we have never studied our history?

Regarding the first question on the Islamic *Da`wah*, its history, and how it entered every country, I have never come across any historical account for this except what Thomas

Arnold, the British Orientalist, wrote.<sup>62</sup> However, the book he wrote needs to be revised, completed, and expanded. Who can carry this burden?

Regarding the second question on the history of our civilization, the writings by Muslims, Arabs, and non-Arabs are few. Those who really cared about the Islamic civilization are some honest European historians, who told us about ourselves and how they are indebted to our forefathers! The latest book I read under this topic is *The Sun of Islam Rises on Europe*, by Sigrud Hunger, the German writer. I remember reading, by accident, a booklet written by Dr. Abdul-Azim Al-Deeb on Abul-Qassem Al-Zahrawi, the first surgeon in the world. I was shocked and dismayed that I had never read anything in Arabic sources about this man, Al-Zahrawi, although he is one of Islam's great men who greatly benefited Europe and was even commended by European historians in their books.

Traditional Islamic institutions in the Muslim world teach nothing on the history of the Islamic civilization! How then can the students who study in these institutions teach this history to others?

Regarding the third question, the lack of knowledge in our Islamic political history is beyond belief. How can one not be amazed at a nation that does not know its history? Imagine that the desert ate one of the Nile's major branches of water and after a while people forgot that there was life in this area. Thus, students in schools began to learn that the Nile never had branches in this area! This is a metaphor for what we did to ourselves or, as to avoid facing the full truth as usual we say that this is what colonization did to us!

The Netherlands occupied Indonesia, which was home to one hundred million Muslims. However, this is not mentioned in any Islamic political history book. Similarly, the Crusaders occupied what was later called the Philippines, and this is also never found in any Islamic history book. The colonization of the major Islamic countries in Middle and West Africa and Middle and South Asia, South of Europe, and the shores of the Mediterranean and Black Sea were also never mentioned in Islamic history. The second half of our history is unknown. And the first half has more myths than facts! We cannot continue to ignore studying our political history if we want to survive. There are so many missing chapters in our own history!

Our major traditional Islamic institutions do not understand the scientific and Islamic value of studying Islamic history or world history in general. This is a major drawback. God said: 'Does it not teach them a lesson, how many generations We destroyed before them, in whose dwellings they (now) go to and fro? Verily in that are Signs: Do they not then listen?' (32:26). I do not understand why we ignore the teaching of this verse?

Back to the question that I asked at the beginning of this chapter – who are we?

We are Muslims. Islam is the religion that we chose to live with and to carry the mission of to the world. We have to know, then, how can we learn Islam and how can we apply it in our life? I noticed that the Islamic issues are taught as separate and unrelated chapters. For example, there is a chapter on marriage and divorce, one on custody and a different one on inheritance. Each chapter is trying to outline the rulings of the *Shari'ah*

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<sup>62</sup> Sir Thomas W. Arnold, (1864-1930), *The Legacy of Islam*, Oxford Clarendon Press, 1931.

in a specific issue. However, all of the above chapters can be put under one title, which is 'The Family System in Islam'. Therefore, if we make this title the theme of our research, we will avoid so many mistakes by seeing things in their correct context. We will then avoid many irrelevant issues and will be able to understand the wisdom behind the rulings.

There is a big difference between watching a car as a whole and watching tires, lamps, and seats. Under the title of 'The Family System in Islam' we would be able to talk about the free choices that the family members have, the limits of guardianship, competence in marriage, children, and family support. We would be able to make a clear comparison between the Sunni divorce and the *Bid'i* divorce. We would be able to judge witnessing on divorce and remarriage. We would be able to eliminate the nonsense situations that scholars discussed before, like 'I divorce you half of a divorce' and the like. We would be able to research the will for those who have inheritance rights and those who do not have inheritance rights. Having a major theme for a big group of scattered rulings is much better than studying each ruling by itself in separation from all the other rulings.

If we leave the family system to the ruling system, choosing leaders, consultation and its people, the rulings of enjoining good and forbidding evil, guarding the truth in the society, and cooperation for righteousness. All of these items are studied separately, although they are all parts of what can be called 'The Islamic Government System'. Studying these issues in this scattered way resulted in ambiguity in understanding the role of the Islamic government and in understanding the importance of each issue. Therefore, we found some people understand consultation in a frame of dictatorship and some others understand enjoining good and forbidding evil as if it is all about giving speeches. Some others understood guarding truth in the society as yelling at people who commit a certain *Bid'ah*. Some scholars thought that cooperation between the consumers and the producers is an innovation coming from non-Muslim countries. We misunderstood hundreds of scripts from the Book all because of these incomplete and false narrow views. We ended up being incapable of fighting against the smart cultural invasion that introduces itself according to a very modern program. I was so pleased when I heard that some scholars put an international Islamic declaration of Human Rights that was based totally on the Book of God and the *Sunnah* of His messenger.<sup>63</sup> I appreciate the effort that our brother Ustaz Salim `Azzam and his colleagues put in this declaration.

Some people would say that it doesn't take a genius to make a discovery. But I think that the intelligence of those who make the discoveries has benefited people greatly through those discoveries. Narrow-minded and shortsighted people are doing great injustice to Islam because they only approve what they know and they simply deny what they have no knowledge about. A farmer thinks that the whole world is green. A sailor thinks that the whole world is blue. And a Bedouin thinks that the whole world is yellow. The dimensions of the real world are much broader than all of these narrow views. I was not surprised when I heard that a major *Fiqh* scholar denied space invasion and thought that it is a blatant lie. I understand that his world is not more than irrelevant details in some acts of worship and nothing more. Centuries have past while Muslims have been asleep in a prison. Now after waking up they found themselves to be total strangers in the world as well to the religion itself. However, we have to work for the success of the current Islamic survival. Those who desire this revival to be stamped out are many. Therefore,

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<sup>63</sup> The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), Declaration of Human Rights in Islam, Cairo, 1990, printed in CIBEDO, Frankfurt, 1991.

we have to rebuild the new generations on a solid basis of religious and cultural knowledge.

The most important knowledge is the knowledge of *`Aqeeda*. I recommend my books, *Science Calls for Faith* and *God is Obvious in the Age of Science*,<sup>64</sup> in addition to a selected group of verses and *Ahadith* that represent the foundations of *Iman* as understood by our forefathers. I feel compelled to declare my hate to most of the philosophical studies that have been written on *`Aqeeda*. A smart teacher should only select a little bit of these studies and ignore the rest.

The knowledge of morals and education comes next. It is a very important branch of knowledge that aims to build the Muslim soul in a way that allows it to be a servant to God. It also aims to base the relationship of a Muslim with others on honesty, humility, love, and mercy. People in this age, including Muslims, are not living up to these values. Materialistic philosophies are becoming very popular. The education that I dream of endorses both psychology and logic. For this education I recommend some chapters of *The Stairs the Travelers Are Ascending*, by Ibn Al-Qayyem, *The Revitalization of the Sciences of the Religion*, by Abu-Hamid Al-Ghazali, *Capturing the Thoughts*, by Ibn Jawzi, *Thinking Is an Islamic Obligation*, by Al-`Aqqad and *Religion and Science*, by General Ahmed Ezzat.<sup>65</sup>

We also have to present to people the Islamic social welfare system. The speaker who demonstrates that should make sure to address all the concerns of the current social systems and make people feel that they do not need them. Research in the relationship between economy and the society is new and it has to address many ethical, social and political issues. A researcher in this area has to study the role of the government and non-governmental organizations, a research that requires a lot of wisdom. I recommend studying selections from the book on *Fiqh of Zakah* (The Rulings of Charity), by Yusuf Al-Qaradawi,<sup>66</sup> which reveal how Islam prevents suffering and poverty.

Moreover, Islam is both a religion and a state. It can never be restricted to an individual relationship between man and God. The state in Islam serves, on equal basis, the mission that it represents and the *Ummah* that carries this mission. In carrying these duties, the state leaders should be purified from selfishness and arrogance, supported by an authentic, not forged, *Shura*, and dedicated to human rights that protect humans from all sorts of oppression.

In a Muslim state, the loyalty is to Islam not to any particular race! Islamic brotherhood is the first tie among Muslims, even if they live in different places or during different times. Non-Muslims in the Muslim state have all the rights and obligations that Muslim citizens do.

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<sup>64</sup> Not yet translated into English.

<sup>65</sup> As of now, only Abu-Hamed Al-Ghazali's book has been translated into English, and in fact several times, for example, Ghazali (1058-1111 A.C.E.), *Worship in Islam*, a translation, with commentary and introduction, by Edwin Elliot Calverley, Madras, Christian Literature Society for India, 1925.

<sup>66</sup> Not yet translated into English. But refer to <http://www.qaradawi.net> for Sheikh Qaradawi's *Fatawa on Zakah*.



The guided Caliphs<sup>67</sup> gave us a model of how a good Islamic ruling system should be. This model can certainly be extended to fit nowadays world while still achieving the major and constant Islamic objectives. A religious state, for Muslims, is not a cover for a theocracy or a dictatorship. It is based on a *Bay'ah* (covenant) that the citizens give to the leader with their free choice. The opinions that result from *Shura* (consultation) are abiding to the leader. The state is based on some clear Islamic ideals. An Islamic state is not to serve an individual, whoever he/she is. On the contrary, all individuals, including the leader, serve the state. Moreover, the individuals and the state are all to serve the Word of God and to spread His teachings. These teachings protect one's soul, money and dignity and enjoin to do good deeds. I authored many books on the Islamic ruling system but I think that the book, *The Shura*, by Dr. Abdul-Hamid Al-Ansari, presents the above ideas in the clearest way.

Our *Ummah's* cultural symbols and materialistic achievements have been ridiculed for centuries. It is obvious that omitting Islam and its *Ummah* is an objective of the adherents of many ideologies! And since it was impossible to wipe out Muslims from earth, they decided to spoil Islam's reputation and deviate the world from its teachings. This endeavor necessitates a double effort from us in order to preserve our history and our identity. We are not supposed to help our enemies bury our historical milestones. Therefore, we must revise the information we have on our scientific, civil and political history and to make these areas of study mandatory and not just recommended.

However, on Islamic civilization, there are comprehensive books written in Arabic by Al-'Aqqad, Kurd Ali, Mahmoud Muntasir and Adel Mazhar. These books should be thoroughly studied in all our universities.<sup>68</sup> The Crusades and their effect on the Muslim world are not thoroughly discussed, out of naivety or some kind of conspiracy. The Crusaders have been attacking the Muslim *Ummah*, in different forms, throughout its history,<sup>69</sup> starting with Mu'tah and Tabbuk,<sup>70</sup> during the fall of the Turkish Khilafah, and until now. Why don't we highlight these enmities when we teach history to our students? For whose sake are they put of out sight? The modern military colonization was accompanied by a huge missionaries' and orientalist's activity that cannot be ignored. Omar Farroukh and others have authored valuable books that illustrated these issues. These books should be widely distributed so that we guard ourselves from more cultural attacks!

I think that we should also revise our traditional Islamic knowledge and how we teach it. The interpretation of the Qur'an, for example, should include *Al-Tafseer Mawdu'ee* (contextual interpretation)<sup>71</sup> along with the interpretation through *Fiqh*, language,

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<sup>67</sup> A term that is used for Abu Bakr, Omar, Othman, and Ali, the first four leaders of the Muslim State after the death of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

<sup>68</sup> And translated as well.

<sup>69</sup> In Arabic history and literature, the term '*Al-Saleebiyeen*' or 'The Crusaders' is used for all Christians who waged wars against Muslims throughout the Islamic history (7<sup>th</sup> Century A.C.E. until now), including the Crusaders who invaded the Islamic State from Europe between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Century A.C.E.

<sup>70</sup> Battles between Muslims and Christians of the Roman Empire at the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

<sup>71</sup> The school of contextual interpretation studies themes and topics across verses or *Surahs*. It is different from the traditional school, which studies each verse individually and focuses on grammar and the historical reasons behind the revelation, etc. There are four main styles of contextual interpretation: surveying a certain topic across the whole Qur'an, studying relations between consecutive *Surahs* in a

narrations, and basics of belief. I wish I have the opportunity to write a *Tafseer Mawdu'ee* for *Surat Al-Tawbah* and analyze its teachings on the Muslim society and the Islamic state international relations.<sup>72</sup> I also wish that Muslim researchers come up with new studies in the *Seerah*<sup>73</sup> and the *Sunnah* and reclassify the *Ahadith* under contemporary themes. I also noticed that the traditional Arabic Grammar books are full of evidences that cite ancient and complicated phrases to prove the correctness of grammar rules. We no longer need those proofs. We should only use ancient phrases that are clear with modern phrases as illustrative examples for the grammatical rules. New examples should also be created and spread so that people could become familiar with correctly spoken and written Arabic.

The above are very quick and general thoughts about our Islamic knowledge. Specialists should work on the details in order to achieve reform in our modern cultural life.

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unified and global context, defining main themes for the whole Qur'an, and analyzing each *Surah* within a group of inter-related sub-parts, each sub-part serving a certain theme.

<sup>72</sup> Sheikh Al-Ghazaly did, in fact, achieve this wish and published a contextual interpretation for the whole Qur'an. His book, *Towards a Contextual Interpretation of the Qur'an*, is published (in Arabic) by The Egyptian Darul-Shuruq in 1992.

<sup>73</sup> The life story of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

## Differences That Have Impacts

Belonging to Islam is a fixed obligation that should be given priority over all what people in all ages care about. When Arabs put their race or motherland before Islam, they commit treason against God and His Messenger and they lose their identity and the reason behind their existence. 'Whoso denieth the faith, his work is vain and he will be among the losers in the Hereafter' (5:5).

However, when Arabs carry the flag of the Oneness of God and call to Islam smartly and enthusiastically, they will certainly earn honor in this life and the other one as well. The desired *Da`wah* is not an overwhelming burden or a big puzzle. It is only about sincerity to God and giving up the desires of one's soul and, then, going on in the way of *Da`wah* with open eyes and an opened mind. This is the real challenge, in my opinion!

There is no problem in Islam itself. Any reasonable mind and decent character will accept Islam. The problem is with many of those who call for Islam. They themselves are ignorant about Islam and their psychological and mental qualities are really bad. They cannot be callers for Islam, to start with, similar to the disabled who cannot compete in a normal running race!

I reflected upon the Zionists' ways of serving their cause and I realized huge differences from Muslims! Sincere and smart people are supporting falsehood while incapable and ridiculous people are failing to support the truth.

Take for example what happened in Palestine. The Jews were fighting for their existence based on their religious identity. On the other hand, Arabs were fighting while disliking Islam and avoiding associating themselves with it! Reflect upon how the Jews started their struggle to return to the Promised Land, as they say. Ustaz Darwish Mustafa Al-Far wrote the following article titled, *Chemistry and Politics*.

November second is the memory of the promise given by Arthur James Belford (1838-1930), the former Great Britain's External Affairs Minister. In the name of politics, this promise was a gift for chemistry presented by the Zionist Russian Hayem Wiseman (1874-1952).

Wiseman was a Professor of Chemistry in Manchester University, UK. In 1916, he invented a way of deducing liquid Acetone from corn flour. This invention was crucial for the Allies, who needed huge amounts of Acetone to make Cordite, an explosive material they used in bullets and bombs.

Wiseman refused to receive a money reward that would have enabled him to buy a nice luxuriously decorated mansion. His belief in the Zionists principals, even if they were false, called him to sacrifice everything for their sake. He insisted that his reward be 'just a promise' from the government of Great Britain to 'establish a national residence for Jews in Palestine without compromising the rights of the original non-Jewish residents'.

Wiseman knew that fixed laws, similar to the laws of Chemistry, govern social changes all over history. Chemistry also taught him that the natural laws give no

room for lying and self-deception and that there is definitely no magic catalyst that transfers sheep metals into gold.

This 'promise' that he got was a well-planned chemical reaction that, eventually, will lead to big results. All what is needed is to be persistent in following the appropriate procedure.

The First World War was not yet over when Wiseman asked for this promise from Great Britain, presented by its External Affairs Minister, Belford. The victory of the allies was not certain. On the other hand, there were others who were trying to get the same promise from the Germans and their allies. The two groups never had a conflict.

Belford smartly mastered politics as Wiseman smartly mastered chemical reactions. Belford certainly agreed and expected a lot of political gains for Britain by giving this promise. He foresaw the sequence of events that would eventually take place over the next century.

This promise that the Arabic and the Islamic nations are living its sad consequences was the idea of a chemist who learned enough how to achieve political gains....

You have seen how this Jewish professor served his people and belief. He preferred to serve his people over himself and to serve his belief over any materialistic gains. He used his ingenious mind to gather his scattered nation.

What was happening on the other front? There were worshipers of power who wanted to be leaders on the expense of destroying the *Khilafah*. There were also students of Islamic studies who only cared about making money for themselves and for their offspring. Nowadays there is another type of students of Islamic studies who can hardly be convinced that chemistry is an important science and that mastering it is one of the best ways to serve Islam. They preferred to talk about what type of gold is *Haram* for women to wear, whether it is mandatory to read the *Fatihah*<sup>74</sup> behind the Imam and whether it is mandatory to renew the *Wudu*<sup>75</sup> after touching any woman!

If you convince one of those students to study chemistry he would only be convinced to take a degree, whether by working hard towards it or cheating. However, he would never fall in love with research, investigation and invention. Meanwhile, you will see him wearing a white *Jelbab*, as if he is getting ready for a Jinn party as they do in the Egyptian countryside. On top of that he is making outrageous claims that this is the *Sunnah*.

The European mind is the nearest to Islam, especially after it lost its confidence in its ancient spiritual and civil knowledge. However, this mind cannot accept to be opened to some people who teach nonsense in the name of Islam. Europeans sacrificed a lot of blood to gain their freedom. Can any of them accept the Oneness of God if it is associated with dictatorships, the ridiculing of political opposition, or the denial of the

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<sup>74</sup> The Opening, Chapter One of the Qur'an.

<sup>75</sup> A special wash before prayers, mentioned in verse 5:6, 'O you who believe! when you rise up to prayer, wash your faces and your hands as far as the elbows, and wipe your heads and your feet to the ankles.'

voice of the masses? The Muslim who presents his religion in any of the above ways is not a caller for Islam. He is simply an ignorant man who wants to infect people with diseases that God already protected them from. A similar foolish speaker would present the faith in the Oneness of God, associated with putting a *Niqab* on women's faces! Who would listen to him? How dare he present an eastern tradition, or even one of the opinions given by some scholars, as if it is Islam and nothing but Islam?

We have so many pieces of garbage in the minds of our youth. One religious university student told me, 'A scholar gathered seventy evidences that *Niqab* is part of Islam.' I answered, 'And I just read a similar book that contains more than forty evidences that the earth is fixed and the sun is revolving around it.' There is a conspiracy behind this mess in the academic religious field. We have to purify this field most expediently so that Muslims may be rescued from a clear and definite disaster. There are today many groups that travel to the capitals of the West for the purpose of calling to Islam. I feel very uncomfortable with the style of life that these groups live and the kind of speeches they give. I do not expect a real outcome from these immature and random activities. We have gained one hundred thousand French and one hundred thousand Britons! But is this equal to the millions we lost in the Balkans, the Mediterranean Islands, Asia, the Philippines, and Andalusia?

The coma that the Muslim *Ummah* fell in several centuries ago is still governing its nervous and motor systems, polluting its cultural sources and corrupting its political life. Subsequently, the *Da`wah* systems are idle and there is no study or follow up, as if our *Ummah* forgot that it has a mission to carry to people or even that it used to have this mission some time ago.

The teachings, which we should call people to, are the agreed upon fundamentals and the clear scripts. However, what is subject to several understandings is not *Da`wah* material. Muslims, themselves, are at ease to choose from these different understandings. And there is a rule that states, 'an opinion cannot refute another opinion.' Therefore, how can we force non-Muslims to take a single opinion or school? We are consciously putting obstacles in the way of Islam when we ask people to follow our traditions in the government, economy, society, and family. Most of these traditions have no evidence in the Scripts and were created in the ages of deviation and backwardness.

After those who asked about Islam embrace it, we should give them the freedom to choose among the equally valid opinions in minor issues. We are calling for Islam, not for a certain group of Muslims! We are calling for the Book and the Sunnah, not the tradition of a nation that accepted oppression on itself and was not fair to the knowledge it inherited. The religion of God is worthy of being followed, but our traditions our worthy of criticism!

## With the Immigrants From Muslim Countries

Muslims in the West have pains and crises that cannot be ignored. I am not attempting to solve all the problems for those who migrated from the Muslim countries to an unknown future. To appreciate how complex and diverse the problems of the immigrants are, consider the following categories of Muslim immigrants to the West.

- Those who escaped political oppression and sought refuge in Europe or North America, at least for now! Some of them were hunted down and assassinated in their new land by the oppressors, from whom they tried to escape.
- Those who gave up their initial citizenship and preferred to carry the citizenship of the countries they migrated to. Most of those forgot their religion or are not practicing it.
- Those who are building good careers and never gave up the religion or lost love for their motherland. However, all of their time and energy is wasted on making money.
- Those who gave up their Muslim names and identity, just to get a job. I heard about a person who was called Muhammad, who held the belief that Canadians hated this name and would never give him a job if he kept it. So, he decided to take on another name and, afterwards, decided to live a completely different life.
- Those who have totally deviated, whereby they live for their lusts. They found it easy in the West to run after their desires, so they turned into hungry animals.
- Those who immigrated with their bodies, but their minds are still in their homeland. So they are continuously homesick.
- Those who arrived in the West as students in renowned universities. Previously, in their home countries, they were not practicing Islam. But when they came to the West they started practicing Islam and its teachings.
- Those who are dedicated to Islam and aware of the problems that exist in other religions. So, they continuously debate with non-Muslims and every now and then succeed to attract people to Islam.

Some immigrants remain single and some get married. Some have children and raise them according to Islamic principles and others lose their spouses and children and finally drown, etc. etc.

I would be mistaken if I said that Islam has not lost a great deal because of these immigrations. Islam has actually lost quite a lot in the West. But are Muslims aware of this? I mean Muslims who are living in the Muslim countries? Do they have ministries or NGO's that keep updated with the happenings of Muslims in the West? No. They are deep in sleep.

It is a fact that those Muslim immigrants – and they are in the millions – are not only free to practice Islam in the West, but spread it as well. However, this cannot happen unless the Muslim *Ummah* has the will to do this and work for it. For example, Muslims in the West need help to build schools that teach Islam and Arabic to raise generations that are loyal to Islam. I cannot understand why the Muslim countries did not fulfill this crucial obligation by funding these schools in the West. We are causing people to lose their religion by falling short of our obligations. I witnessed some families in the West who have girls in the age of marriage. Simply because of the western customs, they would

allow those Muslim girls to marry non-Muslim men. (!) The outcome of such a marriage is known, and it is a shame.

I gave a *Fatwa* that an immigrant who is certain and sure that his/her stay in a non-Muslim country will jeopardize his/her religion or the religion of the children, should return immediately to his/her Muslim country. Otherwise, he/she carries the sin of apostasy, if it should occur. My rationale is that a person who stays in the deep water while fully aware that he/she is unable to swim is clearly committing suicide, and so carries its sin. It is an authentic saying that the Messenger of God (peace be upon him), said, 'Immigration (to Muslim countries) should never stop.' Therefore, the Muslim immigrant who feels that he/she will lose his/her faith in any given country should not stay in this country. He/She should plan to go to any Muslim country where he/she feels secure with his/her faith and family. Perhaps, the wayfarer would return home and the immigrant will return to his/her country if he/she thinks there is no longer a reason for his/her travel.

However, I would really love to see strong Muslim communities in the West that would act as bridges between Islam and all the different continents on Earth. However, this requires the effort of both the Muslim governments and the Muslim people. These efforts should be sincere, conscious, and productive. What is called the Islamic centers in European and North American countries is not producing a valuable outcome. Islam cannot be spread through part-time Islamic workers. Islam requires sincere callers who seek God's pleasure privately and publicly. Mos'ab Ibn Omair almost converted Madinah to Islam even before the migration of the Prophet (peace be upon him). He was successful in conveying the message of Islam to every house in Madinah.

I think that the main foundations in these desired Muslim communities in the West are Islamic schools. These schools should present the Islamic knowledge and Arabic language in a moderate way that provides those immigrants with correct beliefs, culture, and acts of worship. Therefore, they will not feel any significant change in their Islamic environment, except for the place. I suggest that the language of instruction in these schools be in Arabic and that the regular prayers be an obligatory part of the curriculum.

After that comes the role of the mosque, the association, or any community center that Muslims can use to meet and know each other. Families should get together and the community should meet in an Islamic atmosphere that is laden with brotherhood/sisterhood feelings, and love for the sake of God. That is how Muslims can intermarry and individuals can be protected from dissolving into the materialistic environment.

Moreover, it is really strange that books are rarely found in Muslim homes, although, historically, Muslims were the ones who taught the world how to read and be cultured! Our homes should contain many books on science, literature, history and religion. Books, in all languages, should be our real ambassadors to the world's capitals. Also, Muslims in the West, themselves, are in great need of an excellent selection of Islamic books that connect them to their fellow Muslims everywhere and remind them of their great history and their mission in the world. Muslim magazines and newspapers should also play the same role.

Muslims worldwide have another motivation to support Muslims in the West. There is a possibility, which scares me sometimes, that Muslim minorities in the West become

subjected to oppression similar to what has been happening to Muslim minorities elsewhere, like in the Philippines, in India, the Balkans, etc. In the Balkans, after the Turkish surrender, the Muslim population went down to half the number because of all the massacres and extensive missionary work that took place over half a century. However, as Arabs say, 'What is left after a massacre grows quickly'. God has judged that those who are oppressed increase in number, as opposed to becoming wiped out. Young marriages among Muslims in Eastern Europe, motivated by chastity, will eventually cause them to outnumber non-Muslim Russians and non-Muslim ethnicities in the Balkans.

A similar increase in number of Muslims is occurring all over the world! Would all non-Muslims accept that? In Western Europe there are already some political parties that are calling to expel the 'strangers'. (!) The extremists among The People of the Book hate Muslims and one cannot rule out the possibility of abuse against Muslims. Therefore, it is important to foster the ties between the Muslim population in the Muslim countries and the brothers and sisters in faith who are scattered everywhere. It is not lawful to leave them to face an uncertain future. We can do a lot if we want, should we wake up. What is the value of brotherhood/sisterhood if brothers/sisters do not support each other?



## The People of the Qur'an and the People of *Hadith*

These miserable days have brought us groups with weird thoughts that the *Ummah* has never heard of in its long history. These ideas do not agree with the nature of the eternal mission of Islam, according to its fundamentals, branches, sources, the agreed upon opinions and even the controversial issues!

Among these groups is the group that called themselves, *The People of the Qur'an*. (!) Those people deny the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (peace be upon him) in all general and specific terms. They claim that the *Qur'an*, and the rules that we deduce from it, are the only valid Islamic sources. I met some of them and quickly realized that they have no *Fiqh* (understanding). I also became skeptical of their true intentions! Their ideas have clearly taken them out of Islam!

This group's falsehood can be refuted in two ways:

1. The main Islamic acts of worship are discussed in general terms in the Qur'an while only the authentic *Sunnah* gives the details. We cannot pray properly unless we refer to the *Ahadith* that teach us in detail how to move, at what time we have to pray, the number of *Rak'at*, etc. One who claims to invent acts of worship on one's own is certainly foolish. Moreover, denying the authenticity of the *Ahadith*, which are at the *Mutawaater* (very famous) authenticity level, leads us to deny the Qur'an itself, which has the same degree of authenticity.
2. Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the best person to explain the revelation, which was revealed to him to begin with. He is the most worthy to learn about in terms of sayings, actions, rulings, endorsements, morals and life story! If we are to ignore Muhammad (peace be upon him), then we have to ignore all other great men who ever lived on this earth, and never mention their names! Muhammad cannot be compared to average prophets, let alone leaders and pioneers whom people admire, study and follow. He is a horizon that is way further than any horizon, as the Arabs say!

That is why the *Ummah* is in consensus to consider the Book and the *Sunnah* as the two main sources in Islam. If some people are calling to reject the *Sunnah*, they are actually calling to deny the Book and Islam as a whole.

I will move on to discuss another group. These days it is a fact that there is much criticism against blind imitation of schools of thoughts and there is a sincere desire from the wise men to follow early scholars of Islam. However, this does not justify all what a group, which called itself The people of *Hadith*, say and do, although they are becoming popular these days. Those people most certainly do not deny the Qur'an; however, their experience with it and their reflection upon it are limited. Their understanding of its expressions and its objectives are even more limited.

I heard one of them saying, 'We follow the two revelations'. I said, 'What do you mean by the two revelations?' He said, 'The Book and the *Sunnah*'. I demonstrated that I was not impressed with what he said and replied:

The Prophet (peace be upon him) is protected from committing any sin and it is an obligation to follow his instructions. However, the *Sunnah* comes after the Qur'an. In order to know the status of the *Sunnah* relative to the Qur'an, you have to realize the following two important facts:

1. Every letter of the Qur'an is absolutely authentic. However, in the *Sunnah*, there are narrations that are authentic, at different levels, and weak, also at different levels. There are also narrations that are totally rejected by scholars and some narrations that are just fabricated. So, to consider all of the above categories as 'revelation' is certainly not acceptable.
2. The Qur'an was never narrated by the meaning because it is the absolute Word of God. On the other hand, it is very common to find *Ahadith* that are known to be narrated by the meaning and not literally. Yet, the level of authenticity of a *Hadith* is not affected if it is narrated by the meaning. However, when a narrator narrates by the meaning, he/she is giving us the story according to his/her own understanding, which can very well differ from person to person. That is why scholars have to compare the different narrations of the same story and try to come up with a comprehensive description of the context.

That is why I would like to advise those 'People of *Hadith*' that they have to be careful not to mix all the different levels of authenticity of the *Sunnah*. They also have to master understanding the Book before they try to understand the narrations of the *Sunnah*. They have to know that it is impossible to find that the Book, for example, allows a certain action while the *Sunnah* bans it, otherwise the authenticity of the narration of the *Sunnah* itself would be at question. In the olden days, the *Khawarij* sect went astray because they judged many Muslims to be apostates according to some *Ahadith* that they, simply, did not understand. Similarly, the *Murje'ah* sect went astray because they rejected several Islamic fundamentals according to some *Ahadith* that they also misunderstood.

The following are examples of misunderstood *Ahadith*. There are one hundred and twenty verses that urge that Islam be spread only with kind and clear advice and totally reject the forcing of anyone to accept the faith. However, some people of the *Hadith* falsely give precedence over all of those verses to the single Hadith that says, 'I am sent with a sword at the end of time'. The level of authenticity of this *Hadith* is weak. However, even if it were authentic, it would have meant that Muslims might use force only when there is a need for it! Islam is the religion of mercy, whenever appropriate, and struggle, whenever appropriate. Similarly, some of those people cite the *Hadith* that says, 'I am ordered to fight those people until they declare that there is no god but God ...'. There is a consensus among scholars that this *Hadith* is talking about a certain group of people, not *all* people.

The problem with those people of *Hadith* is that they understand the narration in a certain way and claim that what they understood is exactly what the Messenger of God (peace be upon him) meant. Then, they blatantly accuse of disbelief, defame, and even fight anybody who disagrees with them.

When those people started to work as preachers, they caused a big mess inside and outside the Muslim countries, as the examples in the previous chapters reveal. It would have been better for them if they, first, studied both the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* deeply

and understood the rules of interpretation that were precisely put by the major and diligent scholars and interpreters. I wish that they had have done that and I wish that they would do that now to end the big mess in the current Islamic revival movement.

I find it useful to make a long quote from Sheikh Muhammad Al-Khodary's book *Tareekh Al-Tashree` (The History of the Legislation)*. I will comment on it, afterwards, to make the point clearer.

1. *Hafiz Al-Zahabi* says in his book, *Tazkirat Al-Huffaz* (Reminder for the Scholars): Ibn Abu Malikah narrated on his own authority that the Saint (Abu Bakr) gathered people after the death of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and said, 'You are narrating *Ahadith* about the Prophet (peace be upon him) in different ways. People who will come after you will have even more differences in their narrations. So, do not narrate stories about the Prophet (peace be upon him). If you are asked about something, say that the Book of God is the judge for the lawful and the forbidden'.
2. Al-Zahabi also says that Sho`bah and others narrated on the authority of Bayan that Qirzah Ibn Ka`b said: Omar sent us to Iraq and, before that, he walked us to the borders of Madinah. He asked, 'Do you know why I sent you?' We said, 'To honor us.' He said, 'Yes. But when you reach the town where people read Qur'an day and night, do not make them busy with the *Ahadith*. Focus on the Qur'an and minimize your narrations about the Prophet (peace be upon him). I will support you then.' So, when Qirzah was asked afterwards to narrate, he would say: 'Omar asked me not to narrate.'
3. Al-Zahabi narrated that Muhammad Ibn Omar said that Abu Salamah said that he asked Abu Hurayrah, 'Were you narrating that much in the days of Omar?' He answered, 'No, otherwise, he would have beaten me up!'
4. Al-Zahabi narrated that Malik Ibn Abdullah Ibn Idris said that So`bah said that Saeed Ibn Ibrahim said that his father said that Omar imprisoned Ibn Mas`ud, Abu Al-Darda' and Abu Mas`ud Al-Ansari because they narrated too much on the Prophet (peace be upon him).
5. Al-Zahabi narrated that Ibn `Alyea that Raja' Ibn Abu-Salamah said that Mu`aweyah said, 'Take the *Ahadith* that were only narrated in the days of Omar because he used to warn people not to narrate too much narrations'.
6. Al-Suyooti said in his book *Tanweer Al-Hawalek (Brightening the dark)*, 'Al-Harawi narrated in his book *Al-Kalam (Talk)* on the authority of Al-Zuhari that `Urwa Ibn Al-Zubair said that Omar Ibn Al-Khattab thought of documenting the *Sunnah* of the Prophet and consulted the companions of the Messenger (peace be upon him). Most of them advised him to do it. But he was not sure about it and spent one month praying to God to guide him to a correct decision. One morning, he said with certainty, 'I told you about my idea to document the *Sunnah* but then I remembered how the People of the Book wrote their own accounts although they had the Book of God. Then, eventually, they ignored the Book of God and made themselves busy with their books. By God, I will never cause any diversion from the Book of God.' So, Omar decided not to document the *Sunnah*. Ibn Sa`d in *Al-Tabaqat (The Generations)* narrated a similar narration.
7. Al-Bukhari narrated that Al-A`mash said that Ibrahim Al-Taymi said that his father said that Ali said: 'I do not consider any book except the Book of God and this script.' Ali showed people that script, which included some *Ahadith* that he relates to the Prophet (peace be upon him), such as the *Hadith*

defining the borders of Medina and how God curses the ones who cause mischief in this city, the *Hadith* on how every Muslim has the right to give asylum and that whoever scares a Muslim is cursed by God, and the *Hadith* that warns from violating treaties.

8. In the life story of Abdullah Ibn Mas'ood, it is mentioned that he only narrated a few *Ahadith* and was very careful with the narrations he made. Abu-Amr Al-Shaibani said that Ibn Mas'ood would talk for a year without ever saying, 'The Prophet said.' When he would say, 'The Prophet said ...' he would tremble and say, 'or maybe in similar wordings.'

A pre-mature conclusion one might draw from the above is that those companions and scholars disliked narrating the *Ahadith* because they did neither adhere strictly to the *Sunnah* nor consider it an integrative part of the Shari'ah. However, if we consider other narrations that prove how much they appreciated the narrations, we will understand the wisdom behind disliking narrating too many *Ahadith*. Here are examples of such narrations:

1. *Hafiz* Al-Zahabi mentioned in his *Reminder for the Huffaz* that Ibn Shihab said that Qubaysah Ibn Zu'aib said that a grandmother came to Abu Bakr and asked for her share of inheritance from her grandson's wealth. Abu Bakr said, 'I neither find in the Book of God a ruling for this nor did I learn that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said anything about that.' Then, he consulted people in the mosque. Mugheerah stood up and said: 'I heard that the Prophet (peace be upon him) gave her one sixth'. Abu Bakr asked, 'Do you have any other witness with you?' Muhammad Ibn Maslamah seconded Mugheerah. So, Abu Bakr gave that grandmother her share.
2. Al-Jareeri narrated that Abu Nudhrah said that Saeed said that Abu Moussa greeted Omar three times while standing outside Omar's house and when he heard no answer back he left. Omar sent someone after him to ask, 'Why did you leave?' Abu Moussa answered, 'I heard the Messenger of God (peace be upon him) saying, 'If you greet someone three times from behind a door and did not hear anything back, then, leave.' Omar said to Abu Moussa, 'You must either prove this narration to me or I will punish you.' Saeed said, 'Abu Moussa came to our gathering with concern showing on his face. We exclaimed about what happened. He asked us whether anyone of us has heard what he heard the Prophet (peace be upon him) saying. We all replied that we remember hearing this *Hadith*. One of us went with him to witness to Omar that we heard it'.
3. Hisham narrated that his father, Al-Mugheerah Ibn Sho'bah, said that Omar consulted his council about the compensation for a pregnant woman whose pregnancy has been terminated by an accident another person is responsible for. Mugheerah said that the Prophet (peace be upon him) judged that the person responsible compensates her with a slave or maid. Omar said: 'If you are saying the truth, seek some other person's witness.' Muhammad Ibn Maslamah supported Al-Mugheerah's narration.
4. It was narrated that Omar asked Obbay for an evidence for a *Hadith* he related. Obbay consulted a group of Ansar. They said, 'Yes, we heard this *Hadith* from the Prophet (peace be upon him).' Omar said to Obbay, 'I did not doubt your truthfulness, but I just wanted to confirm the narration.'
5. It was narrated that Othman Ibn Al-Mugheerah Al-Thaqafi said that Ali Ibn Rabi'ah said that Asma' Ibn Al-Hakam Al-Ghizari heard Ali saying: 'I would

immediately apply any *Hadith* I heard from the Prophet (peace be upon him). However, when somebody else narrates a *Hadith* to me, I ask him to give an oath before I accept his narration. Abu Bakr narrated to me, and he is truthful, that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, 'A Muslim who commits a sin and, then, makes *Wudu*', prays two *Rak'ah*, and asks God for forgiveness will certainly be forgiven.'

The above narrations prove that those leaders and Imams preferred narrating fewer narrations about the Prophet (peace be upon him) only to avoid mistakes in the narrations. That is why they would insist on seeking witnesses for the narrations. Abu Bakr asked Al-Mugheerah for a witness and Omar asked Al-Mugheerah, Abu Moussa, and Obbay for witnesses, even though all of those companions were among the best and trustworthiest of the companions. Ali, on the other hand, would ask the narrator to give an oath. Then, when the *Hadith* was confirmed to be authentic, they would all abide by it to the letter.

So, in that stage of history, the companions would accept a narration only when it was confirmed and when there was a need for this narration to deal with a certain event.

Sheikh Al-Khodari's argument and conclusions are excellent. The above quote shows how the *Ummah* was dealing with the Book and the *Sunnah* in the dawn of its history. In the midst of the struggle to build the state and the wars in the east and the west, to occupy Muslim's minds with too many details or side issues was unacceptable.

The Book of God and the authentic narrations that explain it are enough for people in that it nurtures belief, moral values and dedication to acts of worship. However, the Book of God is the primary source that implants willingness to sacrifice, hope for martyrdom, and patience with struggle. It also provides the best representation for this religion and its callers. 'These are verses of the Qur'an, -a book that makes (things) clear' (27:1). There is no good in those who do not believe in this!

If the callers to Islam are going to spend their days and nights talking about the actions that the Prophet (peace be upon him) did as a result of his own Arabic environment (*Sunan Al-'adat*) or insist on following and bringing others to a certain opinion, then they are not callers to Islam. Rather, they are deviating people from Islam. When they call people around the world to follow their version of Islam, they actually encourage them to arrogantly reject Islam as a whole.

The contexts behind single-chain *Ahadith* involve many unknown details. Thus, it is natural to interpret them in many different ways. These *Ahadith* should be discussed only in scientifically conducted research circles, among Imams who are well experienced in *Fiqh*. These narrations are not for lay people to extract rulings from, let alone present to non-Muslims as what Islam is all about. Otherwise, we would be playing with our religion!

What does Islam gain when in their *Da'wah* in the West some people ban photography or ban western styles of clothing suitable in a western environment, where it is totally inconvenient to wear any other style!

Here is another example for topics that some people use for *Da`wah*. I will quote Sheikh Manna` Al-Qattan<sup>76</sup> (my comments are between brackets):

Scholars have four different opinions about the children of the disbelievers who die. The first opinion says that they are in paradise because the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, as narrated by Al-Bukhari, 'A child who dies is in paradise.' Al-Bukhari also narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) saw a dream in which the children of the believers and the children of the non-believers were with Prophet Ibrahim in paradise. Scholars have different opinions regarding whether the children of the disbelievers would be normal residents in paradise or servants for others (??). The second opinion is that they go with their parents to hellfire (!). Ahmad narrated in his collection (!) that the Messenger (peace be upon him) said, 'The disbelievers' children follow their fathers.' The third opinion is that we do not know where they are going to be because the Prophet (peace be upon him) was asked, according to Bukhari and Muslim, about the children of the disbelievers who die and he (peace be upon him) said, 'God knows what would they have done had they lived' (!). The fourth opinion is that they are tested in the Hereafter by asking them to do something. Whoever obeys will go to paradise and whoever disobeys will go to hellfire (!). The way they are tested, as explained by some other *Ahadith*, is that they will be asked to jump in a fire. The ones who jump in the fire will be saved and the ones who will refuse will be punished (!).

This is an issue related to the Hereafter about which we have no knowledge. Who cares which opinion one takes? And can we consider one of the above opinions the truth and nothing but the truth and start fighting over it? In any case, the real disaster that I see here, and I always warn from it, is that the Muslim mind becomes occupied with useless issues and pays no attention to the major political and economical conflicts of today's world. Some people are calling for a wrong understanding of Islam that the average reasonably minded human being would naturally reject, especially when those people add to Islam that a king is the shadow of God on earth and is not accounted for anything he does!

Both the Book and the *Sunnah* are the primary sources of Islam. But we should only accept the people of knowledge to talk about them. I do think that neither the People of the Qur'an nor the People of the *Hadith* are qualified for this job. The only group of people, who is qualified to be callers to Islam, is the group of scholars who have much experience with both sources – those who know the definite rulings versus controversial matters, core issues versus side issues, and scripts versus the opinions of men.

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<sup>76</sup> A popular Saudi Arabian contemporary scholar.

## A Final Word

There are so many things that we can do if we truly want to serve Islam in spreading its message and making others aware of the values we have.

We can teach the language of the Qur'an to others and work to make it an international language. We should be creative in finding ways to make non-Arabic speaking people learn to speak and write Arabic. It takes several research councils to define a vocabulary that can be dealt with through the application of easy to understand and straightforward rules and, at the same time, fulfill the materialistic, social and spiritual needs of people. But Muslims, and Arabs specifically, feel bad about themselves. They do not feel up to teaching their language to the world. Moreover, they do not have enough means to teach their language to others, let alone learn it themselves. They are too apathetic to modify their language to suite modern civilization, or to make it appeal to 'more knowledgeable' nations!

There is another project that we need to work on. Muslims, after their latest defeat by globalization, have suffered from the effects of Muslim preachers who have reversed the order of the sections of belief, thus making some fundamentals disappear altogether, and blowing minor issues completely out of proportion. We need to correct these misunderstandings.

We also have to study the nations of the world, their history, their traditions, their likings, and their needs to be in a position to talk directly to their innate natures, and thus, more easily guide them to Islam.

Hence, the callers to Islam should perfect the languages of others and, then, preach the fundamentals of Islam in these languages. This is another mission that requires several research councils. Having different languages on earth is a fact and a sign of God's power. And since we are carrying an international message from God to mankind, there is no meaning in keeping it written in one language only - the language in which the message was revealed! Laziness and apathy are no excuses. Money is no excuse either because one percent of the money that Arabs possess can finance all of the above projects. Our poverty is not in money but in good intentions and talents. I fear God's punishment will be severe on us over that.

When we start the international struggle for the sake of Islamic *Da`wah*, masses of Muslim men and women will join us. They will surely be ready to put efforts into several non-governmental and cultural organizations. Politics and economy will certainly play a role in this *Da`wah*. But if we know who we are and what our mission is, we will be able to direct all means to reach our Islamic objectives.

I read an article by Dr. Hassan Al-Ma`ayergi about the importance of founding an international Islamic council for translating the Qur'an. There is a big mess in the field of translating the Qur'an that has to stop! Some translations falsely and intentionally lead the readers to dislike and misunderstand Islam. Dr. Al-Ma`ayergi said:

Islam is expanding continuously since the time the message was given to Muhammad for all humankind. Muslims are more than one billion in number and

spread over an area of about quarter the area of land on earth (about 37 million kilometers square out of 136 kilometers square). Moreover, one third of Muslims live as minorities under Communist, idolist, Christian, or Jewish governments.

The number of languages in which the Holy Qur'an is translated is about 124 languages. This number is less than the number of languages Muslims themselves use! Many Muslim nations do not have a printed translation of the Qur'an in their language, though some African nations have handwritten documents that they memorize by heart!

When Islam spread in the early *Hijri* centuries, it was on parallel terms accompanied by a spread of the Arabic language. That is why the need for translations of the Qur'an did not exist. The earliest translation of the interpretation of the Qur'an appeared in 310 Hijri when Al-Tabari's interpretation was translated into Farsi. In 734 Hijri, the same book was translated into Turkish. The first translation of the Qur'an into Urdu appeared in 1190 Hijri by Maulana Shah Rafe'uddin. The translations of the Qur'an and its interpretation were accomplished by trusted Muslims who were only keen to convey the message of Islam and the meanings of the Qur'an to those who did not know Arabic.

After the Islamic victories in Europe and Spain and the age of the Crusades, Christians began translating the Holy Qur'an. They wanted to learn more about 'The Book of Muhammad' or 'The Turkish Law', as they called it! The monks of Cologne's Monastery in 508 Hijri translated it into Latin. This translation was only for the monks who conducted research on Muslims. It was later published in 950 Hijri and then, using the Latin translation, other translations appeared, for example in French, German and English. Translators did not know Arabic and found the Latin language easier to translate from.

Then, Europeans fought several wars against Muslims, including the Crusades, and Orientalists started to attack Islam viscosly. The Crusaders burned down numerous libraries in Spain and stole many others. They also started to translate the Qur'an with an intention to spread misconceptions about it as much as possible. So, they used their translations of the Qur'an to deviate people from it, especially Muslims who lived as minorities under non-Muslim rule. For example, the German missionary A. H. Hoppe and his team translated the Qur'an into the Bulgarian language for the Bomack Muslim nations. It was such a false translation that the missionaries celebrated when it was published! Similarly, Priest G. Dell made a Swahili translation and distributed it over missionary centers and Sunday schools in East Africa so that they would have enough knowledge to debate with Muslims. That is how the enemies of Islam used the translations of the meanings of the Qur'an to fight against Islam itself.

Dr. Hassan Al-Ma`ayergi concluded his comprehensive paper by the following suggestions:

1. Surveying the available translations of the Qur'an in all languages.
2. Gathering copies of all of these translations in one library and making them available for researchers.
3. Revising all of those translations, publishing the accurate ones, and warning people from the inaccurate or ill-intentioned ones that exist.



4. Selecting the best translations in the world's main languages and making them available for non-Arab Muslims everywhere.

Dr. Hassan's final suggestion was motivated by the large number of non-Arabic speaking Muslims, who now comprise four-fifths of the international Muslim population, and who do not have enough knowledge about Islam. Arabs neither taught them Arabic nor translated enough Islamic books into their languages! So, what are Arabs busy doing? Why do they wait for people to ask them to learn their language and are reluctant to put an effort into going to where those people are, and speak to them in a language they understand? Isn't this a betrayal towards the trust of *Da`wah* and, moreover, a sin? What have Arabs gained when they spend their lives fighting over the false leadership positions they adore? They have gained nothing on the level of *Deen* or the level of *Dunya*!

I have in front of me the following two strange printed pieces of news; each has its own implications (and my comments are those in brackets).

1. The great British economist, Christopher Chaumont, announced that he embraced Islam. He said, 'I found what I was looking for in Islam. The Qur'an has a solution for every problem on earth (!). Islam talks to the human mind, puts it on the right path, and grants it happiness in this life and the Hereafter (!). I only read six chapters of the Qur'an so far, but I am certain that Islam has the means for civil and scientific development. Muslims, however, are living in snail shells (!), away from the guidance of their religion. That is why other nations surpassed them. Early Muslims, on the contrary, were not backward (!). They were the first to advance in the ways of civilization and development in all scientific, social, and economical fields.'

(This piece of news proves that Islam is making its future through its own values, even if Muslims fall short of carrying its mission. I reconfirm that the European mind will be the fastest to accept Islam once it learns about it in a correct way. This economist's bright mind cannot be a mind of an atheist because atheism is a psychological problem, not a revolution! Moreover, a strong European mind cannot accept the ideas of multiple gods, human manifestation, or many contradictions that the other heavenly or earthly religions preach! The Islamic faith is simple, clear and bright. A human being with a pure innate nature cannot overlook this!)

2. The authorities in Washington, the capital of the United States, closed the mosque in the cultural Islamic center (!).

(Do not think that they closed the mosque because they are against the preaching of Islam? No. Those people allow all preachers to preach whatever they want! What happened is the following:)

The Muslims who attend the mosque had their own divisions to the extent that they had dangerous quarrels. The American authorities decided to relieve the community from problems by closing down the mosque (!).

After reading the above news clippings, I wondered what caused those Muslims to dispute until they had the mosque closed! Some people told me that it was a fight between the followers of the *Salafi* scholars and the followers of contemporary scholars!

I imagined what happened: Perhaps the Imam was a follower of the *Shafi'i* school and did read 'in the name of God' out loud before reading the *Fatihah*. Or maybe he made a *Du'a* in the second *Rak'ah* of the *Fajr* prayer. So, perhaps one of the attendees ordered him to change his opinion because he is supposedly committing an innovation and 'every innovation is in hellfire'. Then, the followers of the other school tried to enforce their opinion and they had a quarrel! Now the non-Muslims in Washington were concerned that this conflict might develop into an uncontrolled war so they decided to close down the mosque!

Or perhaps the conflict was over whether one should mention God out loud or quietly after the prayers. Or maybe it was over whether it is lawful or not to read *Surah Al-Kahf* before the Friday prayer or maybe some other *Surah*! Why didn't they just simply refer their huge conflict to the United Nations? But who knows, maybe the Russians would intervene and use their veto power to give victory to one group over the other!!

On a more serious note, as I previously mentioned in this book, Muslims migrating to the New World brought with them their cultural baggage and moral diseases. These things already contributed to their backwardness in their countries! But do you think Islam would be able to achieve any victory in the West on the *Da'wah* level through these people and their way of thinking? I don't think so. Why don't we just agree to deal with the minor issues later and tolerate disagreements about them for the time being? Why don't we all cooperate to serve the many fundamental Islamic beliefs, morals, and acts of worship that nobody disputed?

After a lot of experience with these types of people, I realized that they are only concerned about themselves and their pride. They argue only to prove themselves correct under a cover of Islam and the name of God! They lack the merit of forgetting their immediate desires for the sake of God, the welfare of Islam, and Muslims. Those people are in desperate need of moral education, self-purification, and remembrance of the Hereafter.

The labels of '*Salafi*' and 'contemporary' are worthless. Islam requires both good intentions and deep understanding. Islam will neither spread through a sincere-hearted, but foolish, caller; nor a smart, but evil-hearted, scholar!