



## 22. The Reform of Religious Discourse

Delivered by His Eminence  
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6 Jumaadaa al-Aakhirah 1441h (31 January 2020)

Indeed, all praise is due to Allaah. We praise Him, seek His assistance, ask His forgiveness, and repent to Him. Allaah is perfect in every way and He deserves praise that is abundant, sincere, and filled with endless goodness. People’s hearts are enlightened by His wisdom, and their tongues find enjoyment in mentioning Him. He is the One you must seek, attain knowledge about, and adhere to. When you do those things, You would find sound guidance, and the guidance that Allaah provides always suffices those who have love for Him. I bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped except Allaah alone, without any partner. He continually raises the rank of those who call upon Him. I further bear witness that our Muhammad is Allaah’s worshipping servant and Messenger. May Allaah grant an abundance of His commendation and protection to His Messenger who had the purest of origins, as well as to the Messenger’s immaculate family and righteous Companions who diligently spread all that was correct, and to all who continue following their path until the end of this world.

Servants of Allaah, you must continue to observe taqwaa of Allaah (i.e. by fulfilling His commands and avoiding His prohibitions). Taqwaa is what fills the heart with light, and enables the limbs to do what is right. “People of eemaan, observe taqwaa of Allaah and continue to maintain your eemaan in Allaah’s Messenger. If you do so, Allaah will grant you a doubled portion of His mercy, grant you a light by which you would be guided, and forgive your sins. Allaah certainly forgives His servants who repent to Him and He bestows His mercy upon them.”<sup>1</sup>

Dear Muslims, in times of strife and turmoil, and in the midst of major events over the course of time, there are certain important foundational matters that appear and require careful thought. They require contemplation in order to properly conceptualize aims, beginnings, means, and ends. That is to be done so that individuals who care about their Islaam and give importance to it, do not end up suffering and being affected adversely. This is because those foundational matters may end up becoming the subjects of ideological battles involving sides that seek to impose upon communities of Islaam certain understandings and terms that have nothing to do with Islaam’s teachings. Among the foundational matters alluded to earlier, there is one of major significance, and it becomes all the more significant when thoughts and words of extremism, sectarianism, hatred, and spite begin to spread. May Allaah grant all of you His protection. That foundational matter of major significance is the reform of religious discourse.

Dear Muslims, the teachings we have in Islaam are ones that fill our world with justice, wisdom, ease, and mercy. They are teachings which even address matters that require independent reasoning, and those which may be unprecedented. Islaam’s teachings are not ones of stagnation, and they are not archaic or outdated. On the contrary, they are adaptable and always applicable. They do not oppose taking advantage of contemporary methods, tools, and technologies; remaining up-to-date with development and resources; or balancing between constants and variables, or roots and modernity.

One of the basic principles held by Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamaa‘ah<sup>2</sup> is that Allaah blessed human intellect with the innate ability to recognize good as good, and bad as bad; yet even with that being the

<sup>1</sup> Soorah al-Hadeed (57):28.

<sup>2</sup> Those who adhere to the path of the Prophet Muhammad (may Allaah mention him with commendation and grant him protection) as well as his Companions, and remain united by doing so.



case, there still remain things about which people on their own cannot determine what the best and most balanced approach concerning them would be. This is especially the case regarding major unprecedented events, as well as issues that affect our Ummah as a whole. Consequently, when faced with matters of that nature, it is absolutely necessary to refer back to the directives that Islaam prescribed concerning them.

This, in fact, is the first principle to be borne in mind regarding the reform of religious discourse: using the texts of Islaam as a basis. Allaah, the Most Exalted, said,

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنكُمْ فَإِن تَنَزَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِن كُنتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا﴾

“People of eemaan, you must obey Allaah, obey the Messenger, and those in authority among you. If you ever dispute about something, refer it back to Allaah and the Messenger if you truly have eemaan in Allaah and the Last Day. That is best and would produce the most advantageous outcome.”<sup>3</sup> Al-Imaam ibn Taymiyyah (may Allaah have mercy upon him) remarked that whenever anyone advocates a religious cause that has no basis in the Book of Allaah or the Sunnah of His Messenger (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection), that person is actually advocating bid’ah<sup>4</sup> and misguidance. When a person adheres to the Qur’aan and Sunnah in his outlook regarding himself and regarding others, Allaah would guide that person to the correct course. The teachings of Islaam prescribed by the Qur’aan and Sunnah are like the ship of the Prophet Nooh, in the sense that those aboard attain salvation while those not aboard drown.<sup>5</sup>

Dear Ummah of Islaam, a second principle is acquiring sound knowledge. Having that knowledge is what protects a person from misguided ideas and destructive inclinations. It instills correct Islaamic awareness regarding many important issues. However, that knowledge is not properly attained without remaining with reliable scholars of Islaam and referring back to them. Those scholars are the inheritors of the Prophets, and they are the source from which light can be attained to see through the darkness. They are the individuals to be referred to for edicts, and during pivotal circumstances; not individuals who lack knowledge and are merely in the process of learning about Islaam. When a person does not have knowledge about something, he is to refer back to those who do have that knowledge. He is not to haphazardly take on the matter by himself. Allaah, the Most Majestic and Exalted, said,

﴿وَإِذَا جَاءَهُمْ أَمْرٌ مِّنَ الْأَمْنِ أَوْ الْخَوْفِ أَدْعَاؤُهُمْ وَلَوِ رَدُّوهُ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ وَإِلَىٰ أُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْهُمْ لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنبِطُونَهُ مِنْهُمْ﴾

“When the people receive information concerning public safety or fear, they spread it. However, had they referred it to the Messenger or those in authority over them, the individuals who were fit would have understood it and determined the correct course of action to take based on the information.”<sup>6</sup> Allaah, who is perfect in every way, also said,

﴿فَسْأَلُوا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِن كُنتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ﴾

“Ask the people who have knowledge if you do not know.”<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Soorah an-Nisaa’ (4):59.

<sup>4</sup> Something invented and claimed to be part of Islaam.

<sup>5</sup> See Dar’ Ta’aarud al-‘Aql wan-Naql (1/234).

<sup>6</sup> Soorah an-Nisaa’ (4):83.

<sup>7</sup> Soorah an-Nahl (16):43, Soorah al-Anbiyaa’ (21):7.



A third principle to bear in mind is preserving the basic foundations of Islaam, since they are not open to modifications, and because they are precisely what give Islaam's teachings the remarkable distinction of being applicable for every time and place. Allaah stated,

﴿ إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ ﴾

“It is indeed We who sent down the Qur’aan and it is indeed We who most certainly preserve it.”<sup>8</sup> Modification and reform only apply in the case of issues that arise which have no text that explicitly addresses them, and nothing like them was addressed by the foremost generations of Islaam, may Allaah be pleased with them.

A fourth principle to keep in mind is that reform must aim to correct existing deviations regarding beliefs, ideas, actions, and morals. It is Islaam alone which gives adequate concern to both the soul and the body. Other laws and systems of belief either devote concern to the body at the expense of the soul, which leads to degradation of morals; or they devote concern to the soul at the expense of the body, which leads to degradation of ideas and actions.

Dear people of eemaan, reform of religious discourse is only true reform when it takes place without encroaching upon Islaam's basic foundations. In addition, reform taking place does not imply that prior discourse had some sort of flaw. Rather, the reform being referred to is called for due to the changing of times and the advances in available tools. It takes place in how the discourse is imparted, not in the soul or message of the discourse itself. With this in mind, it can be understood that the reform being discussed is something desirable according to Islaam's teachings. It is an issue that gives society vitality so that it surpasses obstacles that could lead to regression. It does not hinder the heritage of our Ummah; rather, it produces continuity and it opens doors to contemporary methods and tools.

Thus, the purpose of the reform being referred to is reviving and spreading the defining features of Islaam – in terms of both beliefs and deeds – by preserving its authentic texts; ensuring that what is part of the religion is distinguished from what is not; keeping the religion's teachings free from any deviations that appear among people which are ideological, practical, or ethical; and imparting the correct methods of reading Islaam's texts and deducing things from them, so that those texts can be comprehended in the same way they were understood by our righteous Salaf (the foremost generations of Islaam), may Allaah be pleased with all of them. Doing the aforementioned is what brings the state of any Muslim community closer to the exemplary state of the community that existed among the foremost generations of Islaam. Solutions based on Islaam's teachings are to be devised for all new and unprecedented issues that arise, the teachings prescribed by Islaam are to be enacted in all realms of life, and sound guidelines should be made and followed regarding how benefit can be drawn from any civilization in general, all in light of the texts of the Qur’aan and Sunnah as understood by the Salaf of our Ummah, may Allaah be pleased with all of them.

With that being said, it should be clear that the role of those involved in reform involves removing from Islaam anything that people may have incorrectly attached to it since such things tarnish its actual brilliance. Reform further involves leading people to the praiseworthy understanding and practice of Islaam that existed during its foremost generations; and returning back to the basic foundations of Islaam, as well as the methods by which its texts are to be read and used as evidence, so that they can be accurately comprehended just the way they were when Allaah first sent them down and they were explained by His Messenger (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection). Abud-Dardaa' (may Allaah be pleased with him) narrated that Allaah's Messenger (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection) said, “I have left you upon a path so clear and bright that its night and

<sup>8</sup> Soorah al-Hijr (15):9.





day are the alike.” This was collected by ibn Maajah.<sup>9</sup> A similar hadeeth was collected by al-Imaam Ahmad in his Musnad from ‘Umar ibn al-Khattaab (may Allaah be pleased with him). He narrated that the Prophet (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection) said, “I swear by the One in whose hand my soul lies that this path I have brought you is clear and bright.”<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, the aforementioned reform is what can be understood from the statement of the Prophet (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection), “Every hundred years, Allaah will certainly send people for this Ummah who will revive major elements of its religion that may have become obscure to some.” This was collected by Aboo Daawood and al-Haakim with an authentic chain of narration.<sup>11</sup>

Dear people of eemaan, calling to Allaah – the Most Exalted – cannot take place by a religious discourse that contains extremism. It only takes place with the balance and moderation which are the most outstanding defining features of this pristine religion. It is that same balance and moderation which allows for progress without any sort of stagnation. It is that balance and moderation which builds life properly upon the foundations of Islaam’s teachings, all of which address the needs of the Ummah throughout all times and circumstances. Allaah, the Most Exalted, said,

﴿وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا﴾

“Thus, We made you an Ummah that is best and most moderate in order for you to be witnesses over all people, and for the Messenger to be a witness over you.”<sup>12</sup>

Be pardoning and do not always seek to exact all of your rights from others, since a truly high-minded individual does not seek after absolutely everything to which he may be entitled. In addition, do not go to extremes in any matter; rather, remain moderate. The extremes of excessiveness and negligence are both blameworthy.<sup>13</sup>

Proper religious discourse is constructive not destructive, it unites and does not divide, it promotes progress not regression, and it builds things instead of breaking things down. Its defining features are compassion and pardoning, and its core is one of dialogue and coexistence. That was the course of moderation followed by the scholars of the Salaf, may Allaah be pleased with all of them.

Al-Imaam al-‘Izz ibn ‘Abdis-Salaam (may Allaah have mercy upon him) said, “In summary, a person should not say or do anything unless it brings about good or averts harm, while also maintaining moderation which lies between excessiveness and negligence.”<sup>14</sup> Al-Imaam ibn al-Qayyim (may Allaah have mercy upon him) said, “In all things, shaytaan tries to promote two extremes: either excessiveness or negligence. However, what is correct is moderation, and it lies between those two extremes.”<sup>15</sup> Al-Imaam ash-Shaatibee (may Allaah have mercy upon him) said, “The directives of Islam are themselves moderate and just, and they do not lean to either of the extremes. Therefore, if you carefully examine any one of Islam’s comprehensive principles, you would clearly see that it leads to moderation. This is the foundation that is to be used as a point of reference.”<sup>16</sup>

Thus, the teachings of Islaam are ones of guidance, steadfastness, moderation, balance, compassion, pardon, safety, stability, prosperity, and peace. Allaah said,

﴿وَأَنَّ هَذَا صِرَاطِي مُسْتَقِيمًا فَاتَّبِعُوهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ﴾

<sup>9</sup> Sunan ibn Maajah (5). Graded hasan by al-Albaanee.

<sup>10</sup> Musnad al-Imaam Ahmad (15156). Graded hasan by al-Albaanee in Mishkaatul-Masaabeeh (177).

<sup>11</sup> Sunan Abee Daawood (4291). Graded saheeh by al-Albaanee.

<sup>12</sup> Soorah al-Baqarah (2):143.

<sup>13</sup> This paragraph is the meaning of Arabic poetry that was cited.

<sup>14</sup> See al-Qawaa’id as-Sughraa (1/36).

<sup>15</sup> See ar-Rooh (1/257).

<sup>16</sup> See al-Muwaafaqaat (2/279).



ذَلِكَمُ وَصَّيْنَاكُمْ بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٧﴾

“This is My straight path, so follow it and do not follow the other divergent paths, as they will lead you astray from Allaah’s path. This is what He has commanded you in order for you to observe taqwaa.”<sup>17</sup>

May Allaah bless all of us by His two revelations, and may He enable us to glean direction from the guidance of His Messenger who was the leader of all people. I say this much and I beseech Allaah to forgive all the sins of myself, you, and all who submit to Him in Islaam. Furthermore, you should also ask His forgiveness and repent to Him since He is continually forbearing and forgiving.



Allaah deserves praise that fills our hearts with light and hope. I bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped except Allaah alone, without any partner, and I bear witness that our Prophet Muhammad is Allaah’s worshipping servant and Messenger. May Allaah grant His commendation, protection, and blessings to His Messenger, as well as to the Messenger’s family and Companions, and all who continue to follow their path until the Day of Recompense.

Servants of Allaah, you must continue to observe taqwaa of Allaah. That was the instruction Allaah gave all earlier and latter generations. He said,

﴿وَلَقَدْ وَصَّيْنَا الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَإِيَّاكُمْ أَنْ اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ﴾

“We most certainly commanded the people of the scriptures prior to you, as well as you yourselves, to observe taqwaa of Allaah.”<sup>18</sup>

Dear Ummah of eemaan, the aims of reforming religious discourse are preserving the basic foundations of our Ummah so that they are not exploited or manipulated; removing any ignorance, misguidance, falsehood, or extraneous elements that people may have attached to any of Islaam’s teachings; standing against bigotry and division that result from blameworthy manifestations of following others, or incorrectly ascribing to certain schools of fiqh; providing the Ummah with well-equipped scholars who are thoroughly grounded and versed in fiqh, and capable of deducing rulings based on established principles as well as addressing unprecedented matters with balance and moderation; and effectively highlighting the merits of Islaam’s directives to Muslims and even to non-Muslims so that perhaps they would accept the guidance that Allaah’s religion contains by being apprised of its true teachings which bring about goodness and justice for humanity as a whole.

Reformation of religious discourse is to take place regarding young people in order to keep them close, protect them, engage in dialogue with them, provide them with encouragement, and doing that all so that they are not swept away by the storms of opposition that rage against sound thinking, remaining balanced, and having wisdom. Reformation of religious discourse is to take place regarding women in order to provide them with the true empowerment that Islaam gives them to serve their religion, nation, and society.

Religious discourse must be purged of any sort of prejudice, hatred, disunity, sectarianism, and bigotry. Amidst the various types of discourse fostered through the contemporary means by which people interact, you can certainly find instances that are an affront to values, dignity, and sound principles. Much of that takes place by way of thinly disguised agendas amidst a battle of electronic

<sup>17</sup> Soorah al-An’aam (6):153.

<sup>18</sup> Soorah an-Nisaa’ (4):131.



warfare and technological terrorism directed against the societal wellbeing and ideological stability of our Ummah.

This blessed land of the Two Holy Mosques – which Allaah has made a focal point for Muslims and the issues of concern to them – strives to continue its practice of reform while following a sound course. It does that by maintaining a deep sense of awareness, especially during times of crisis. Under the auspices of this blessed nation's leadership, the Makkah Declaration (2019) was previously issued by the Muslim World League's council of scholars from all throughout the Ummah of Islaam. The Declaration contained beneficial recommendations concerning proper reformation of religious discourse, as well as the effects that would have for people and the world at large. That would come about by advocating dialogue, promoting communication between civilizations, combating ideologies of hate and extremism, and spreading thought that is moderate and balanced.

The preceding are brief points concerning the issue of reforming religious discourse, and we implore Allaah to guide us all to what He loves and is pleased with. We further implore Allaah to protect the Land of the Two Holy Mosques, as well as all lands of Muslims, against all ills and evils. Allaah is certainly near and He responds to those who call upon Him.