

A vertical red band on the left side of the cover features a complex, repeating geometric pattern of interlocking lines and stars, reminiscent of Islamic art.

INVITING TO ISLAM: ETHICS OF ENGAGEMENT

HISHAM ALTALIB

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ISBN 978-1-56564-659-9 *Limp*

Typesetting and cover design by Sideek Ali

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Inviting to Islam

Ethics of Engagement

Introduction

ISLAM as a religion is a living, dynamic set of principles, beliefs, practices, and a way of life that is embraced by close to two billion people today. For over fourteen centuries, the creed and traditions of Islam have spread the span of the world and it is still manifested strongly by those who adhere to it. The perpetual growth of the number of its adherents, as well as the revivalist spirit for the continuous renewal in understanding and manifestation of the faith, is testament to its true Divine nature and the positive impact of the faith on the course of humanity.

Islam is a universal message, and as Muslims we believe in spreading this message using the methods and ethics revealed in the Holy Qur'an, as well as emulating the example of the Prophet Muhammad (ṢAAS)* in inviting people to understand the true religion in its totality. Spreading the Divine message is a duty incumbent upon all Muslims. Thus, Muslims throughout history, and continuing today, have strived hard to disseminate a sound knowledge of Islam – its ethics, practices, message and objectives. It is in this context that this book finds its purpose.

The Arabic word *daʿwah* means an invitation to something (such as inviting someone to embrace a set of values, ethics and beliefs, or simply inviting someone for dinner or a celebration). In the context of religious calling, *daʿwah* is the vehicle through

*ṢAAS – *Ṣalla Allāhu ʿAlayhi wa Sallam*: May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him; said whenever the name of Prophet Muhammad is mentioned or whenever he is referred to as the Prophet of Allah.

which Muslims disseminate knowledge and invite others to adopt and practice holistic Islamic beliefs and practices. *Daʿwah* efforts are geared towards both Muslims, in an effort to strengthen or correct their understanding and beliefs of their faith, and non-Muslims, in an effort to spread correct knowledge of Islam and make the message available to all who wish to embrace it voluntarily.

A *dāʿiyah* (pl. *duʿāt*) is a person (male or female) who invites others to the true and authentic message of Islam (missionary). Essentially, every Muslim is a *dāʿiyah* in the sense that believing and practicing Muslims reflect both directly or indirectly the highly ethical *tawḥīdī* (monotheistic) message of Islam in their behavior. Moreover, there are individuals and groups within the Muslim Ummah who dedicate themselves to the practice of *daʿwah*, and it is these *duʿāt* (*daʿwah* workers) which this book addresses.

Covenant refers to a pledge or promise made by an individual or a group to fulfill certain responsibilities in an agreeable manner. In the context of this book, “Covenant” entails that a *dāʿiyah* conduct and perform the act of *daʿwah* wisely with good preaching by applying the principles, ethics and methods provided within this Covenant, as they are exhibited in the main sources of Islam – the Qurʾan and the authentic Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad.

This book calls on all Muslims, and individuals and groups involved in Islamic *daʿwah* activities in particular, to adopt and apply to the best of their abilities, the set of principles included in this Covenant, and to embody the values, morals and ethics espoused by it, and take a pledge of honor to promote, facilitate and encourage cooperation, tolerance, respect and understanding among all and to go forward with the purest of intentions and the sincerest of desires to serve *daʿwah* work in the manner that Allah has prescribed for His sake alone.

The principles of this Covenant are the culmination of my experience, gained over half a century of work, as well as my observations as an activist. They are the invaluable result of my

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constant involvement and interaction with numerous organizations, communities, and thought leaders across the world. During this time I have been actively taking notes, attentively listening to what they have been saying, and closely observing what they have been doing. I have kept my eyes and ears wide open attentive to almost everything around me, whilst constantly thinking of ways to introduce improvement and excellence (*iḥsān* and *itqān*) in this field. In addition, I have been striving to realize more effectiveness within myself and with others, as well as to develop greater cohesiveness and appreciation, so that we can all come together to achieve ultimate success. I have focused on the main character traits (moral, behavioral, social, political, and strategic) which each of us needs to deeply embrace, to help us reach our goal of a peaceful and just world. These are the issues that I attempt to address in this work, by proposing a set of principles for all of us to share. I believe these principles are vital factors in the service of Islam, reflecting its true spirit, and the means through which to realize an abiding success.

These principles, if followed wholeheartedly and applied with strong commitment by those involved in Islamic activism, will lead to success in *daʿwah* worldwide, and will also facilitate the spread of true Islamic values and morals. These principles embody true Islam (as opposed to extremist and exclusivist Islam) by which I mean the Islam emphasized in the Qur'an and the example of the Prophet Muhammad, which unequivocally prescribes justice, righteousness, compassion, understanding, peace, and kindness. False Islam is that which has been hijacked by a band of extremists, or that which is fraudulently projected by a biased media, or by politics and politicians, or by those who wilfully misuse its teachings and/or misinterpret its essence to further their own misguided agendas.

The principles of this Covenant are categorized under three main themes:

- a) Fundamentals of *Daʿwah*
- b) Ethics of *Daʿwah*
- c) Methods of *Daʿwah*

Note, the Covenant as a whole does not promote the agenda of any particular party, block, movement, *daʿwah* school, juristic interpretation, or regional allegiance (and neither do any of its principles). Nor does it disparage any of them. All the principles stem from a wholly Islamic frame of reference, that is obtained directly from the Qurʾan and Sunnah of the Prophet, and form part of a set of standards we have been encouraged to embrace and practice holistically in the service of humanity.

Goals of the Covenant

This Covenant aims to delineate a number of essential principles, which – it is hoped – will be understood, adopted and applied by all those involved in *daʿwah* efforts. These principles are intended to engender the spirit of love, understanding (*litaʿārafu*), cohesion and trust among activists by bringing all the formal and popular forms of *daʿwah* work into harmony. They will also help decrease the likelihood of disagreement while significantly increasing the opportunity for coordinated efforts. It is hoped that shortly thereafter, a greater and deeper sense of co-operation, collaboration and tolerance will be achieved, and the acceptance of constructive criticism will become the norm, thereby setting a long-term foundation for unified and effective *daʿwah* efforts.

This Covenant will expand our horizons and widen the scope of our reformation and creativity. Ultimately, these principles will guide us toward a balanced moderation and temperance, and keep us away from extremism and excess. They will help activists to shift their emphasis and attention onto fruitful accomplishment and productivity, to improve (*iḥsān*) the state of our communities, organizations, and humanity at large.

The objective of addressing the set of Islamic *daʿwah* principles through a Covenant is to present a holistic approach towards *daʿwah* practices that encompasses the foundations upon which all *daʿwah* work is based. The principles also underscore the ethics (*al-kuluq al-ʿaẓīm*) that each Muslim, and

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in particular *daʿwah* workers, ought to exemplify, not only on a personal level, but to present *daʿwah* in a sound and proper manner, on both individual and institutional levels, through accomplished methods of organization and collaboration in the practice of *daʿwah*, which are in accordance with the highest requirements of the faith. Islam is based on the ultimate and fundamental basis of *tawhīd* (the belief in the One and only God). From this premise, it is hoped that this Covenant will serve as a unifying source of inspiration and guidance for *daʿwah* efforts everywhere, and further, help to ensure that the diverse methods and tools of *daʿwah* efforts are all united under the banner, and in the service of, *tawhīd*.

Foundations of the Covenant

This Covenant provides an intellectual, moral, educational and practical constitution for those involved in *daʿwah* work. It strives for accuracy, objectivity, honesty, clarity, and simplicity. It is hoped that fervent activists not only apply this Covenant but also use it as a launching point for creative techniques to inspire new generations of activists. We hope this Covenant reaches those who are calling non-Muslims to know Islam, as well as those who are calling Muslims to become better Muslims.

As stated, the principles are based on and have been derived from the Qurʾan and the Prophet's authentic Sunnah. They are founded on the following convictions:

- Islam is the source of our inspiration and happiness in this life and in the hereafter.
- We proudly and humbly belong to the worldwide Muslim community, (Ummah).
- *Daʿwah* work is the noblest of all tasks, being the very task carried out by all of Allah's prophets and Messengers.
- The future generations of *daʿwah* activists will make fewer mistakes and will make better decisions if they adhere to sound fundamentals, ethics, and correct methods of *daʿwah*.

We pray that Allah Almighty guide us to the straight path and purify our intentions for His Sake alone, and shower His peace and blessings upon the beloved Prophet Muhammad, his family, all his companions, and the Muslim Ummah as a whole.

Need for the Covenant: The Context of the Islamic Awakening

The Muslim world is witnessing a sweeping revival, which has been aptly termed ‘the Islamic Awakening’. This is a positive phenomenon that testifies to the fact that the Ummah has awakened to shake off its indifference. The Ummah has become aware of its innate worth. The Ummah has come to pride itself on its faith, while realizing that it is time to make every effort possible to overcome backwardness. The Ummah has also started applying many of the principles provided in this Covenant to deal with the oppression and injustices that Muslims have been facing for several decades.

The increased integration of world societies with the advancement of technology, communications, media, and travel renews the need for a holistic and universal concept of the Muslim Ummah’s message. These advancements ought to be utilized to strengthen *da‘wah* work and reinforce the universal Muslim identity. We need to propagate the true objectives of Islam as a universal religion, perpetual, and applicable in every time and every place, transcending all forms of barriers between peoples of the world.

The need for a Covenant of *da‘wah* stems from the realization that Muslims worldwide ought to grasp the opportunity that has been created by the Islamic awakening which began in the 20th century and continues on to today. The revival of Islam and its practice on an individual and collective level is mainly attributed to the genuine efforts of *du‘āt* who worked earnestly to overcome the shackles of prevailing oppressive conditions to carry out the perpetual duty of *da‘wah* and build upon the collective legacy of *da‘wah* efforts throughout Islamic history.

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The context of this awakening provides workers with a frame of reference and source of inspiration to further advance *da'wah* efforts. The harsh conditions during which the awakening evolved constitute historical underpinnings based on certain pivotal events that demonstrate why such a Covenant of *da'wah* is sorely needed. In essence, adoption of the Covenant's principles will further enhance, support, and bring greater success for a perpetual Islamic revival and awakening.

We understand that the Awakening came about as a result of many factors and countless individual and group efforts, organized and arbitrary, formal and informal, official and unofficial. Above all, it is a spontaneous, natural and genuine expression of the Ummah's self-dignity and its desire to revert to its true nature and it is a phenomenon that was destined to occur. The Awakening is evidence that Islam continues to be an effective influence in the daily life of many millions all over the world.

From an inspirational perspective, the Awakening draws its motivation from and is encouraged by the law of competition (*tadāfu'*) as stated in the following Qur'anic verse:

...And if God had not enabled people to defend themselves against one another, corruption would surely overwhelm the earth: but God is limitless in His bounty unto all the worlds. (2:251)

Drawing on this divine law spurred the Muslim Ummah and *du'āt* to act, because it gave them clear instruction, guidance and a responsibility to prevent stagnation and corruption. It reminds us that the true Master of the universe is Allah the Almighty. This recognition of Allah's Omnipotence strengthens Muslim hearts and resolve, as well as those of the *du'āt*, and increases Muslim confidence, security and hope.

How the Islamic Awakening Shaped Da'wah

From a historical perspective, every *dā'iyah* and every group that embarked on *da'wah* work have been influenced and motivated by a set of prevailing conditions that prompted in

them the need for this work. Such events and conditions vary depending on time and place, and in this context, I would like to highlight some of the pivotal events that have impacted my own course and impetus in my *da'wah* journey. As I present these factors, I invite readers to ponder on the events and existing conditions that stimulate and encourage them in their own journey to embark on and advance their *da'wah* efforts. I wish every single *da'wah* worker to respect and appreciate every other worker in this esteemed and honorable task.

As an Arab Muslim, one of the major events that shook my own worldview and stimulated in me the desire to dedicate my efforts to *da'wah* was the 1967 defeat of the Arab armies by Israel. The loss in the 1967 war represented a psychological, intellectual, political, and social setback, and gave rise to a new and unfamiliar reality in the Middle East. Not only did many governments fail to deliver on their lofty promises, but they brought new and foreign revolutionary, secularist, socialist, nationalist and Bathist ideologies that began to take a foothold in the region. Turning away from such ideologies many Muslims embarked on a serious search for a better alternative, because they knew that these ideologies were test grounds and did not offer them the right solution, and in many cases were in direct contradiction to their way of life, morals, ethics, core beliefs, culture and religion. Eventually, Muslims turned to Islam, inevitably a natural choice, considering its centuries' long presence in the region and the fact that the overwhelming majority of Arabs are Muslim. It is also in human nature to turn to one's faith and core belief in times of distress and tribulation, and in a time when one is searching for guidance, alternatives, and answers. For the majority of Muslims, Islam was the only right and natural choice because it was tried and tested, it promised them solutions, helped them solve their problems, and provided them with a common basis of understanding. Indeed, the aftermath of the 1967 military defeat demonstrates that the Ummah endeavored to overcome this setback.

Another event that helped shape my impetus towards *da'wah*

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work was the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991, and its defeat shortly before that in Afghanistan. The collapse of the Soviet Union and its communist ideology gave fresh impetus to the Islamic Awakening. The communist ideology, which had oppressed all religions and caused misery to many millions of Muslims, Christians and Jews, came to an end. Its collapse brought forth a great opportunity for *da'wah* to spread and prosper in the former Soviet Union regions, and in the Muslim countries that had been impacted by communism.

Also, the unthinkable tragedy of September 11, 2001, came as blaring wakeup call. It jolted the Muslim Ummah as well as its course of awakening and put everyone on a serious path of rethinking and evaluation. The criminal attack of September 11 and ensuing invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq and the global war on terrorism brought into question and scrutiny every facet of the Muslim faith, belief, morals, and ethics. Muslims came under intense scrutiny and anything and everything that had anything to do with Islam and Muslims, whether political, economic, religious and/or cultural came to be questioned, analyzed, probed, and interrogated. Islam was on the defensive worldwide, not only in the West, but also by its own adherents. Muslim lives changed dramatically. Islamophobia spread and many spoke negatively about Islam, the Qur'an, and the Prophet Muhammad and his household. This was done in bad faith or out of ignorance; and not enough people presented Islam in a fair-minded way. Popular misunderstanding of Islam has placed Islam in a difficult position; at the same time it has offered a great opportunity for *da'wah* workers to present true Islam to the public in the right manner.

More recently, an event in Tunisia by a commoner in December 2010 sparked what has come to be known as the "Arab Spring," the Muslim world's widest and most far reaching political upheaval in modern political times. Dictatorships in Tunisia, Libya, Yemen and Egypt have fallen and millions of Muslims and non-Muslims in the Arab world are calling for freedom and dignity. The remaining governments in the region

started to change their policies, began to move toward meaningful reforms and relax their strong hold on the media, political and economic fronts. For *daʿwah* workers, the Arab Spring brings with it new opportunities, and has spawned new vision, hope and created more freedom. Rather than being persecuted, jailed or tortured, because of their beliefs and faith, reformers can now speak out and formally organize. Fear and intimidation have been replaced with courage, and the crushing of dissent has been replaced with freedom of speech to openly express ideas. *Daʿwah* workers, working in cooperation with non-practicing Muslims, liberals, nationalists, Islamists, and socialists, are now better able to reform their societies to improve their social, economic, and political conditions. It is difficult at this juncture to judge the success or failure of Arab uprisings, especially as the region witnesses counter-revolutions that aim to curb and crush the spirit for freedom and justice. It remains, however, that the events that sparked in December 2010 and continue to today in the Arab world are a testament to the dire need for change and reformation of the Muslim Ummah.

This new sense of awakening in the Ummah has also impacted Muslim communities throughout the West. A major component of this awakening was that many workers realized the importance of and the need for organized, collaborative institutional work to address and solve their problems. The Awakening also helped *daʿwah* workers understand that capitalizing on the freedoms provided to them in the West allowed them to apply many of the principles outlined as part of this Covenant; which they were not able to apply in their home countries due to the lack of freedom. Through the hard work and dedication of many *daʿwah* workers, Muslim communities have successfully established organizations that provide guidance in religious matters, and a myriad of other institutions that address educational, political, social, economic and cultural needs. These better-organized communities have been able to progress, and realize major accomplishments far beyond the pioneer dreams of the initial founders of these communities.

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The results and effects of the Awakening can be clearly witnessed in many ways and have taken countless forms, for example, the establishment of community centers and mosques throughout the world, full-time and weekend Islamic schools, the birth of many Islamic investment companies and financial institutions, housing loans projects, the publication, translation, and literature distribution of numerous magazines and newspapers. From a socio-political perspective we have witnessed many populations around the world demanding their freedoms, human dignity and civil rights, and a movement to liberate Muslim lands from autocratic dictatorship and occupation.

Indigenous Muslims in the West have achieved a great deal in terms of Islamic learning, human and civil rights, identity awareness, and an appreciation and understanding between them and their immigrant brethren coming from the Muslim world. This progress in many ways is based on a realization that things need to develop in a certain way, reflecting in essence the values, morals, and ethics presented in the principles of this Covenant. We become more aware, as we move forward, that more work still needs to be done, and many of these efforts need evaluation, guidance, improvement and fine-tuning. We have to stress that we need creative strategies because we exist in a constantly fast changing environment. We need to be successful in moving from the twentieth to the twenty-first century, with a clearer Muslim identity and a better understanding of how to manifest and apply Islam in its true essence in the contemporary world.

What is also grasped clearly is that *daʿwah* has a role and place within this ongoing Awakening and can make significant contributions, and that at the same time it will be challenged by its dynamic nature. It will undoubtedly be called upon to provide answers to and solutions for many of the pressing issues brought to the forefront. As *duʿāt*, we need to be prepared for these challenges and be ready, willing and able to provide relevant, actionable and intelligent solutions brought forth by the Awakening. As we all know, *daʿwah* is an ongoing process,

it will never cease and will by no means come to an end. It may undergo periods of weakness, strength, challenge, rethinking, regrouping, re-evaluation, and adjustment of strategies, but it will labor on regardless. Clearly, this Awakening faces threats and challenges not only from without but also from within its numerous factions. The internal threat is normally far worse and has far more detrimental effects than the external one.

If external threat comes in the form of Islam's myriad and many types of opponents, internal threat will have at its source certain Muslims themselves, in the form of erroneous concepts, wrong reasoning, fanciful tendencies, rashness, and an idealism divorced from reality.

Some of those involved in *da'wah* though sincere in their efforts may be doing work lacking relevance and soundness, as they incorrectly prioritize goals or misallocate their time and resources. Some individuals active in the *da'wah* field may not have a comprehensive perspective on issues, causing them to commit silly mistakes and take damaging risks, which could either harm themselves and/or other citizens, such that people may come to even hate them (the workers) and fear Islam itself. So, good sense and judgment are key. Such negative impacts are clearly manifested in the political arena, where *da'wah* workers have made many sacrifices, but are easily prey to unscrupulous political powers resulting in a backlash against them and others. The mixing of *da'wah* work with politics is a dangerous combination, detrimental to both. It is crucial therefore to address the two areas of activity independently each with its own rules, plans, and specific issues. While Islam is undoubtedly a total, comprehensive way of life encompassing *all* aspects of human beings, including the spiritual and political, the institutions of political parties however must be kept independent from the institutions of *da'wah*. This separation is good for all people involved in the two spectrums of *da'wah* and politics.

The Muslim world will continue its path of awakening and new challenges will undoubtedly emerge. *da'wah* workers need therefore to adopt and keep implementing the principles outlined

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in this Covenant, guided by the Qur'an and the Prophetic Sunnah. They also need to realize that more in-depth analysis and new strategies are necessary to achieve the goals set.

Finally, summarized below are several important facts and realities which *da'wah* workers need to be aware of in relation to their work, and when adopting and applying the principles of the Covenant:

- The opportunity to successfully introduce Islam to others today will slip by if qualified sincere callers to Islam fail to present and represent true Islam wisely.
- Divine laws do not automatically grant Muslims victory just because they profess Islam.
- Intelligent and devoted Muslims need to continuously improve their work by proactively detecting shortcomings in *da'wah* processes and practices and implement the appropriate steps toward corrective action.
- Muslims need to effectively deal with challenges and critical situations through effective crisis and damage control mechanisms.
- *du'at* must continuously explore and identify creative and fresh means for conducting *da'wah*.
- The effectiveness of *da'wah* activities needs to be constantly critiqued, and evaluated to ensure that *da'wah* becomes more successful and relevant to the time and place where it is practiced.
- Emphasis must be placed on highlighting the shared and common goals, as well as to reduce areas of differences, to ensure that *da'wah* workers collectively empower each and every *dā'iyah* by harnessing and employing all their knowledge, skills and abilities.

The time has come for the Ummah to free itself from the shackles of intellectual subordination and all other forms of subjugation that have hindered its progress. It must renew its sense of self-worth and freedom. In this context, this Covenant is humbly presented as part and parcel of the contemporary Islamic Awakening, and is aimed to provide guidance for sound and methodological *da'wah* efforts worldwide.

The Principles of the Covenant

SPREADING *daʿwah* is a trust (*amānah*) and a message (*risālah*), and is a fundamental aspect of our vicegerency (*istikhlāf*) on earth. Embracing the principles set forth in this Covenant, and taking a pledge of honor to carry out *daʿwah* work to the best of one's ability, guided by the Qur'an and the Prophetic methods, is tantamount to worship. Indeed, Allah has placed the act of *daʿwah* in very high regard, as evident in the Qur'anic verse: "And who could be better of speech than he who calls [his fellow-men] unto God, and does what is just and right, and says, 'Verily, I am of those who have surrendered themselves to God?'" (41:33).

Principles serve as the guiding foundation for any system of belief and behavior. The Qur'an serves as the ultimate source of Islamic principles, according to which Muslims are expected to think, believe, and act. Principles, as apposed to rulings, tend to be general in nature, constituting guidance through which each person, group, or Ummah, manifests their worldview. Islamic *daʿwah* is a field that is guided by Qur'anic and Prophetic principles and values. Adopting the right principles of *daʿwah* by workers safeguards the mission from misguidance and pitfalls. After all, wrong concepts lead to wrong conduct, while proper concepts lead to proper conduct. Mere correctness of fundamentals will not put an end to all our problems, but clear understanding of the principles and concepts of *daʿwah* will reduce considerably the problems that may be faced in *daʿwah* efforts.

In an effort to present the major principles that guide towards more proactive, productive, and proper *daʿwah* efforts,

we present the principles put forth in this book under three major themes: The Fundamentals of *Daʿwah*, The Ethics of *Daʿwah*, and the Methods of *Daʿwah*, with each theme discussing the relative principles from the Islamic frame of reference.

[A]

Fundamentals of *Daʿwah*

Before embarking on *daʿwah* work, Muslims in general, and *daʿwah* workers in particular, must have sound understanding, deep comprehension, and sincere belief in the fundamentals of Islam and the fundamentals of the practice of *daʿwah*. *Daʿwah* is the call for the ultimate principle and foundation of the religion, that is, *tawhīd* (belief in the Oneness of God), as the Qurʾan states: “And your God is One God: There is no god but He, Most Gracious, Most Merciful” (2:163). While embracing *tawhīd* as a priori truth, *daʿwah* workers proceed with the understanding that the universality of Islam, and its comprehensive nature, necessitate that *daʿwah* be addressed to all peoples, Muslims and non-Muslims, beginning with *daʿwah* workers themselves, and that *daʿwah* addresses all aspects of life. The ultimate source of guidance and inspiration in this task are the main sources of Islam, the Qurʾan and the authentic Sunnah. In addition, *daʿwah* workers are encouraged to have adequate knowledge in Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), considering the diverse fields in which *daʿwah* is engaged. *Daʿwah* workers are also expected to ponder, look, examine, and comprehend contemporary reality and their surroundings in order to adapt their *daʿwah* efforts in the most appropriate manner suited for various circumstances, time, and place. This task is incumbent upon them, as Allah Almighty repeatedly enumerates in various verses about believers who “give thought” (*yatafakkarūn*), and “reflect” (*yatadabbarūn*) and who “reason” and “understand” (*yaʿqilūn*). It is this very dedication to deep understanding, knowledge, and reason that ensures for perpetual renewal and revival of the religion in the hearts and minds of people.

I. TAWHĪD – FIRST AND FOREMOST!

We believe in Almighty Allah, the One and Only Creator and Governor of the universe Who alone deserves to be worshipped. He has the perfect attributes of majesty and beauty and is free from all imperfections. We love Him, exalt Him, fear His punishment and hope for His mercy. We need to be in continuous consciousness of Him and be true to our words. Allah says: “O you who have attained to faith! Remain conscious of God, and be among those who are true to their word!” (9:119).

We call upon Muslims (and those involved in *da‘wah* work in particular) to consider the fundamental of *‘aqīdah* (Islamic creed) as the premise from which all understanding, belief, feeling and practice begins. *‘Aqīdah* is the foundation of all the major and minor religious matters and constitutes the Islamic frame of reference in matters concerning every aspect of a human being’s life.

‘Aqīdah is not a ‘chapter’ in a book to be read and then left for the next chapter. Rather, it is the dominating theme that remains with us while reading all the other chapters of our life. The creed of Oneness of Allah constantly accompanies a Muslim and governs his or her life in its entirety from birth to death. Because of the essential centrality of *‘aqīdah*, Muslims are urged to have a deep and accurate understanding of the requirements of this creed. It firmly asserts that Allah is the one and only true God Who alone deserves to be worshipped and have His Will implemented. We ought to recognize, and avoid the things that are bound to invalidate this creed and take us wholly or partially out of the fold of Islam. It is strange that many Muslim children today learn what invalidates ablution, but do not learn what invalidates their creed. Knowledge of both is required, but knowledge of the fundamentals is far more reaching and more important than that of the incidentals.

Equally, we should embrace *tawhīd* in a holistic manner, rather than dealing with it in a superficial manner. It is not enough to merely memorize its tenets. We are not the only

ones upholding the truth. We do not claim superiority, show arrogance, or treat others with roughness and haughtiness. As the Qur'an and the example of Prophet Muhammad guide us, we ought to show confidence in our belief in Allah, and reflect those beliefs in our daily dealings. We demonstrate a friendly and affectionate attitude towards others. They will more likely respond to us with love and mercy. We reject hate and extremism, and rather embrace understanding and tolerance. In this way, *tawhīd* occupies all aspects of our lives, and is reflected in our minds and conscience, and demonstrated in our practice.

2. ISLAM IS UNIVERSAL

Islam is Allah's Religion for all Humans: We believe that Islam is the true, protected, eternal and final religion of Almighty Allah. It is 'everything' to us; it is our cause, our identity, and our solution. It is the past, the present, and the future for us. It is not only the source of our happiness in this life and in the hereafter, but also our way of life, which Almighty Allah has chosen for us. We believe in it, pride ourselves in it, strive hard to promote its cause and sacrifice everything for it. Allah Almighty's religion is for all peoples, He has sent Prophet Muhammad as a Messenger and a Prophet to relay the Divine message to all of humanity, as Allah states in the Qur'an: "Now [as for you, O Muhammad,] We have not sent you otherwise than to mankind at large, to be a herald of glad tidings and a warner; but most people do not understand [this]..." (34:28). Hence, since Islam is universal, and it is Allah's religion for all of humanity, it is our mission as Muslims and *da'wah* workers to spread this Divine message to all people.

Humankind is One Family: Islam espouses that all people form one single family, united by the bond of humanity, created by Allah Almighty to Whom we will all return. We are all descendants of Adam and Eve, the first parents of all humankind. Therefore, we call upon all people to mutual cooperation with

a view to securing welfare for everyone. This includes securing peace, spreading freedom and liberty, establishing justice, fighting crime, spreading knowledge, providing child care, providing welfare for the elderly and the needy, building friendly and good-neighborly relationships, protecting the environment and honoring treaties and agreements. It is from the premise that humanity is one family that we embark on *da'wah* work, for the true message to reach all our brothers and sisters in creation.

Neutrality of Divine Laws: Due to Allah's immense sense of justice, Allah created constant and neutral laws in the universe which neither favor nor oppose any individual, group or faith. Everyone stands before the natural laws of the universe on an equal footing. Therefore, any person who favorably deals with natural laws will be successful; by the same token, anyone who unfavorably deals with them will be unsuccessful. Allah will not grant victory to an individual or a group just because they are Muslim; rather, they must do their part to earn such a victory.

A Religion of Unity: Islam calls for the worship of the One True God, whose name is Allah. Islam also calls for unity. The Muslim Ummah believes in the Oneness of Allah, as well as comprehensive unity across the Ummah. Therefore, *da'wah* work has to be concerned with calling to intellectual, emotional and practical unity, and must avoid disunity in all its forms. Unity is strength, a mercy, and a blessing. As opposed to disunity, unity also provides ample reason to seek Allah's help and support.

It is rather disappointing that *da'wah* workers have, to some extent, been unable to successfully offer the Muslim Ummah much gain, one that matches their efforts and sacrifices for the Ummah's sake. Despite their numerous resources, and despite being a channel for expressing the Ummah's concerns and aspirations, many *da'wah* efforts have fallen short of their goals. This may be ascribed to a number of reasons, the foremost being

a state of disunity in *da'wah* work and the shortcomings of disconcerted efforts that failed in formulating common grounds and consensus in ideology and practice. In this context, Muslims in general, and *da'wah* workers in particular, ought to always be mindful of Allah's words:

And hold fast, all together, unto the bond with God, and do not draw apart from one another. And remember the blessings which God has bestowed upon you: how, when you were enemies, He brought your hearts together, so that through His blessing you became brethren; and [how, when] you were on the brink of a fiery abyss, He saved you from it. In this way God makes clear His messages unto you, so that you might find guidance. (3:103)

3. ISLAM IS A COMPREHENSIVE RELIGION

The Comprehensive Concept of Worship: As Muslims, we embody Islam in every aspect of our lives. The Islamic values, principles, and rulings guide and regulate our lives on both the individual and communal levels. Hence, Islam for us is not mere rituals and a personal connection with Allah, but also a comprehensive frame of reference that encompasses everything we do.

Worship is not only in rituals, but all transactions, dealings, self-development, civilization building, etc. The main reason behind our existence is to worship Allah alone, as the Qur'an states, "And [tell them that] I have not created the invisible beings and men to any end other than that they may [know and] worship Me" (51:56). This fundamental purpose for our existence actually offers a comprehensive meaning of the concept of worship as it encourages the individual to worship Almighty Allah even more, makes us experience great happiness due to our constant contact with Allah and makes us assume a more useful role in society.

Regrettably, many Muslims have confined the meaning of this notion of worship to mere religious rituals and devotions.

The well-known conventional division of Islam into “devotional creed acts” (*‘ibādāt*) and “transactional dealings” (*mu‘āmalāt*) has been dictated by the curriculum of education in Islamic schools. This ‘division’ has led some people to restrict worship to devotional acts. Such restriction is a grave mistake. This erroneous perception of division has spread far and wide, and has made the devotional acts more prominent than the transactional acts. This division has obstructed our vision of the comprehensive nature of Islam, which stands on the foundation of *tawḥīd* and the holistic purpose of our creation.

Therefore, we need to understand worship as it was understood by the Prophet and the early generations of Muslims. They recognized worship as including everything: a set of rituals, transactional dealings, self-development, civilization building (*‘umrān*), establishing a happy family, conveying the message to others, entertainment, and proficient, productive work along with other aspects of daily life and society.

Implementing Allah’s Laws: Stemming from the premise of comprehensive and holistic understanding of Islam, we stand today before the predicament of the necessity of implementing Allah’s laws in an effort to actualize Islam wholly in our lives. This predicament involves both our personal and collective lives. On the personal level, we are guided by Allah’s laws and strive to implement them in every aspect of our daily lives. However, on the collective level, is it possible to implement Allah’s laws, whether we live in Muslim or non-Muslim countries? Such a question has no easy answer. To begin with, no sensible person claims that there is only one particular solution that can be applied under all circumstances. Yet, perhaps the following solution may apply in many cases.

Islamic workers need to call for the implementation of Allah’s Laws in an open, free, transparent and peaceful manner. They have to make the public aware of their rights and also help them to realize their duties. One of the benefits of peacefully instructing the people of their rights and responsibilities under Allah’s Laws

is that the rulers' fears are removed, or at least reduced, and this benefits both rulers and Islamic workers.

Such an approach by Islamic workers may also serve to arouse remnants of goodness in rulers who feel they cannot implement Allah's Laws (whether out of weakness, fear, or personal whims and desires). It can also help implement these reforms in a gradual manner, which is a far better procedure than sudden implementation. The openness of the call allows for the added benefit of the workers' ability to recognize their errors and correct them.

While calling to Allah's Laws, Islamic workers have to overcome the love for power and openly and frankly declare that they do not wish to rule but rather to be ruled by Allah's Laws. They need also to guarantee assistance to any person in a leadership role who also wishes to do so. As Shaykh Abu al-Hasan al-Nadwi rightly remarked, "It would be better if faith reaches the hearts of those in power rather than the faithful come to power." Islamic workers ought to remember this splendid, inspirational piece of advice at all times. In any case, implementation of Allah's Laws cannot possibly be realized in any country, unless the majority of the country's citizens become freely convinced without coercion that it is the right choice for them.

4. RETURNING TO THE MAIN SOURCES

Of the fundamentals of *da'wah* is the recognition that the common grounds of all *da'wah* efforts is the Islamic frame of reference that is derived directly from the supreme sources of understanding and implementing Islam in our lives: the Qur'an and the authentic Sunnah of the Prophet.

Because we care about all people, and given the divine obligation to invite people genially to Allah's Religion, we introduce the message of Islam through these main sources, which constitute the ultimate authority beyond all other human endeavors. In doing so, we hope that others may understand Islam in its true light with an open heart and mind. We are certain that if we

exemplify understanding, peace and tranquility, as espoused by these main sources, others will be open to true guidance. Eventually, they will also find in Islam the solutions to their problems.

Indeed, the Qur'an is the Muslims' ultimate source of guidance, inspiration, and mercy. Allah Almighty says: "For, indeed, We did convey unto them a divine writ which We clearly, and wisely, spelled out – a guidance and a grace unto people who will believe" (7:52). The Qur'an also clearly demonstrates the importance of obtaining inspiration, guidance, and example from the Prophet Muhammad, as Allah says:

Verily, in the Apostle of God you have a good example for everyone who looks forward [with hope and awe] to God and the Last Day, and remembers God unceasingly. (33:21)

The Importance of the Qur'anic Language: As the Qur'an constitutes the first and supreme source of all Islamic understanding and endeavor; we highlight here the importance of its content and language, and emphasize the necessity of reading it, comprehending it, and implementing its values and principles.

Language is the 'container' of culture and knowledge, a means of communication and an important component of identity. It holds a significant position in people's lives. The Arabic language is no exception, yet is unique in that it is the language Allah has chosen for His final revelation, the Qur'an. He knows best with whom to place His message, where to place His message, when to place His message and in what language to reveal His message. Allah says in the Qur'an: "behold, We have bestowed it from on high as a discourse in the Arabic tongue, so that you might encompass it with your reason" (12:2).

Hebrew is the language of the Torah and Aramaic is the language of the Bible. Arabic is the language of the Holy Qur'an, the Prophet's Sunnah and most of the Islamic heritage. The Qur'an is Allah's Divine words revealed to the Prophet

Muhammad in the Arabic language, and hence, Muslims ought to learn the language of the Qur'an to fully comprehend the power and impact of its words and meanings.

We need therefore to try and spread, to the best of our ability, understanding of the Arabic language in non-Arab Muslim countries where *da'wah* work is well underway, and to encourage proficiency in the Arabic language among Arabic speaking Muslims as well.

Schools of Islamic Thought (Madhāhib): Throughout Islamic history, Muslims have strived to both personally understand and comprehend the religion through its main sources, and have endeavored to communicate this understanding to others. Hence, the development of various schools of Islamic thought as a methodology and a means to understanding and inspiration, rather than direct following at the expense of the main sources of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. *Madhāhib* offer us means to better understanding of original sources, insofar as they are in complete harmony with the essence and fundamentals of the religion. As *da'wah* workers, our objective vis-à-vis schools of Islamic thought is to ensure that they are a means and utility towards better understanding of the original sources.

The various schools of Islamic jurisprudence represent an important legacy initiated by great scholars and refined by successive generations of specialists. They are the object of pride and Muslims may follow any one of them. However, Muslims need to familiarize themselves, as far as they can, with the evidence presented by the scholars. Muslims are obliged to also respect other people's choices, and, if the need arises, conduct dialogue with them politely and objectively, in a sincere attempt to find the truth – no matter on whose side this falls.

These schools of legal thought are not infallible, hence there is a varying percentage of right and wrong in each one of them – a fact which has been established by knowledgeable scholars. Expert scholars are qualified to compare both the textual evidence and the various opinions of jurists, to then decide on the

view that has more evidence in its favor. Displaying uncritical zeal for a certain school is detrimental to society. However, disparaging a certain school, criticizing it, calling people to abandon it and then taking rulings directly from the Qur'an and the Sunnah without researching the rich history of jurisprudential scholarship is even more detrimental to the Ummah. All these schools of thought are deeply founded on the original sources of the Qur'an and authentic Sunnah. All the founding scholars of these schools based their methodology on the Qur'an and the authentic Sunnah of the Prophet.

Calling for the abolishment of these schools of thought is neither feasible, nor practical. In addition, those who decide on different juristic rulings than those of the existing schools are wittingly or unwittingly laying the foundation for a new school of jurisprudence, hence making the same mistake for which they have criticized others.

5. BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF FAITH AND REALITY

Starting from the fundamental premise that Islam is a universal, holistic, and comprehensive religion, founded on the bases espoused by the main sources of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, it is incumbent upon Muslims in general, and *da'wah* workers in particular, to strive for a better understanding of how we embody, embrace, and manifest Islam holistically in our contemporary lives.

As Islam is a religion for every time, place, and people, a more concerted understanding and harmony between faith and contemporary reality may be actualized through the following forms of deeper understanding (*fiqh*): the Jurisprudence of the Higher Objectives of Islam (*Fiqh Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*), the Jurisprudence of Reality (*Fiqh al-Wāqī'*), and the Jurisprudence of Consequences (*Fiqh al-Ma'ālāt*), among other relevant and authentic schools of *ijtihad*.

Understanding the Higher Objectives of the Law (Fiqh Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah): Islamic workers need to properly understand the lofty goals of jurisprudence (*Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah*). They are not supposed to hold steadfastly to the literal text and ignore the higher objectives behind legislation. This in no way means that we ignore the great importance of religious texts. It simply means that we are required to comprehend the overall general spirit and purpose of the text. We should distinguish between those texts that are agreed upon and those that are disputed. Also, we should understand the parts in light of the whole, and the general objectives of the law. We must follow the Islamic legal maxim: “*al-ʿibratu bi al-maqāṣidi wa al-maʿanī, la bi al-alfādhī wa al-mabānī*,” which means: Things are to be understood in relation to their intention and essence, not by the literal words and forms used. Another maxim is: “*al-umūru bi maqāṣidihā*” (Acts are judged by the intention behind them). This undoubtedly requires us to refer to the experts in these highly specialized disciplines. The higher objectives of Islamic law have been summarized by Fiqh scholars as the protection of: Faith, mind, progeny, body, and property. Other scholars contributed essential understandings of the higher intents and objectives of Islamic law that further include the establishment of justice, equality, and the guarantee of freedoms. Such understandings of the objectives and purposes of Islam as a religion, and Islamic law in particular, help in better delineation and prioritization of *daʿwah* efforts to ensure dissemination of Islamic knowledge that is relevant, tangible, and applicable to daily life.

Understanding Contemporary Reality on the Ground (Fiqh al-Wāqiʿ): Islamic workers ought to be able to understand contemporary issues in the field and be fully aware of the general circumstances in their society and around the world. They also have to be aware of the gap between their desired targets and the available resources. By doing so, their mottos, objectives and programs will be attainable and will be translated into

reality. They need to prepare people's minds and gather them around clear and carefully selected issues. They have to take into account the sequence of priorities and observe the logic of gradual progress in implementing them. Proper utilization of the expertise of specialists and professionals in various fields of the social sciences, such as psychology, sociology, economics, social work, political science, etc., aids *da'wah* workers in properly understanding the contemporary reality in which they operate and propagate their message. *Da'wah* workers are encouraged to be cultured and be up-to-date with important events and conditions that impact the contemporary reality on the ground and impact the lives of the people to which *da'wah* is address. Such understanding of ongoing realities and factors also helps *da'wah* workers in prioritizing and identifying important and urgent needs that have to be addressed in their respective and proper contexts.

The Jurisprudence of Consequences (Fiqh al-Ma'ālāt): Islamic workers are urged to recognize the importance of the Islamic Jurisprudence of Consequences, that is, they have to contemplate and pay attention to the consequences of their decisions and the decisions being made around them. This demands them to have a deep understanding of Allah's Laws as well as the general circumstances, at the individual, local, regional, and international levels. Before taking any decision, *da'wah* workers need to be fully aware of its effects on them and on those around them. In their thinking, they are to depend on certainty, not presumption; deliberateness, not rashness; and their real ability, not elusive impressions of their available resources. In the history of *da'wah* work there have been incidents of rash decisions made with the intention of averting certain harm or securing certain public gain, and regrettably enough, the end results were disasters or a series of blunders. Adopting an understanding of *Fiqh al-Ma'ālāt* aids *da'wah* workers in anticipating results, managing crises, and evading and thwarting detrimental and negative consequences. Such an understanding also enables *da'wah*

workers to think in a more positive mode, prepare and strategize for success, all the while being in a more calm, composed, and rational state of thought and practice.

Different Types of Escape: We have chosen to emphasize the importance of understanding the higher objectives of Islam, of contemporary reality, and of consequences, because we cannot ignore some of the pitfalls that have hindered Islamic *da‘wah* efforts throughout Islamic history. We recognize that some Muslims prefer to live in the past, frequently and extensively extolling the glories of Islam’s golden age without attempting to do anything to regain this lost glory.

Some Muslims, on the other hand, live in the present but only focus on the miserable conditions of the Muslim Ummah. They excessively moan about the sorry state of affairs the Muslims are in and blame others for the problems we face as an Ummah, while believing themselves blameless convinced they have done everything in their power to improve the situation.

There are yet some others who prefer to live in the future and choose not do anything to better the condition of the Ummah. They hopelessly wait for the coming of a ‘long-awaited guided imam’ (*al-Mahdī al-muntaẓar*), or the non-existent ‘reformist imam’, or ‘the savior hero’, or the ‘inspired leader.’ They mistakenly believe that the coming of some ‘great’ man or an angel will herald the solution to all their problems, totally ignoring the neutral, constant, divine, and universal laws.

Muslims are required to learn more about their mission. They should be familiar with the time in which they live and what they can possibly do now to improve their situation sincerely and to the best of their ability, be it small or big. As the proverb goes “a river is made drop by drop.” Almighty Allah will certainly accept work that is done sincerely and efficiently, no matter how insignificant it may seem, and will reward it. Besides, humanity will definitely benefit from it.

Enlightened Renewal (Tajdīd): We believe in the importance

of continuous renewal (*tajdīd*), without rejecting age-old principles that are still useful. We believe in combining the goodness of the old with the relevance of the new. This can provide us with the vitality that will protect us against stagnation, incompetence and isolation. We need to be deeply committed to our religious foundation while strongly connected with the modern world. A better understanding of objectives, contemporary reality, and of consequences requires us to endeavor in perpetual renewal to ensure that the message of Islam continues to be understood, respected, and embraced. The Muslim Ummah has been dealt a heavy intellectual and religious blow with the overemphasis on imitation (*taqlīd*) in Islamic thought and sciences. Reverence for the thought and legacy of historically great Islamic scholars and the founders of Islamic schools of thought ought not obstruct us today from our duty and right to practice intellectual research and reasoning (*ijtihād*), which is necessary to ensure continuous disciplined renewal of our understanding and interpretation of religion.

[B]

Ethics of *Da‘wah*

Ethics are fundamental to sound Muslim character, both individually and collectively. God created humanity in the best of form: “Verily, We create man in the best conformation” (95:4).

Hence, human beings have an obligation to preserve this excellence in Allah’s Creation both physically and ethically. Allah also emphasizes in the Qur’an that Prophet Muhammad is to be our model and inspiration in character: “for, behold, thou keepest indeed to a sublime way of life” (68:4). Prophet Muhammad himself also emphasized the value of good manners and character. ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar narrated that the Prophet said: “The best among you are those who have the best manners and character” (al-Bukhārī 56/759).

In practicing *daʿwah*, activism must stem from the overall objective, that is the service of Islam. The inner ethics of a *daʿwah* worker must be sincere to the service of God, religion, and humanity. It is this sense of service and conveyance of the trust (*amānah*) and the message (*risālah*) that ought to constitute the impetus for *daʿwah* work, rather than any ambition for personal gain. To ensure proper delivering of the true nature of Islam, *daʿwah* workers ought to constantly be mindful that they reflect the model mode of a Muslim.

Hence, embodying and exhibiting exemplary ethics in words and deeds would in turn reflect the values and principles adopted by the individual or the group, and would naturally reflect the positive image of Islam. Sound religiosity of *daʿwah* workers is manifested through a sincere demonstration of ethics and character traits strongly encouraged by the Qurʾan and the Sunnah, such as bravery, patience, strength, trustworthiness, tolerance, moderation, humbleness, and avoidance of excess, fanaticism and overreaction. All in all, *daʿwah* workers should always adopt and reflect a positive attitude and maintain a strong trust in, and reliance on, Allah Almighty for support and guidance.

I. DAʿWAH WORK IN SERVICE OF ISLAM

In espousing the ethics of *daʿwah*, it is important to recognize the distinction between Islam, as a religion, and *daʿwah*, as the means to inviting to the religion and explaining its message.

A distinction must be made between Islam and *daʿwah* work. Islam is Allah's true and eternal religion for all people. We believe in Islam's infallibility, the message of Islam as revealed by Allah through His Prophet does not contain any falsehood. *Daʿwah* work, on the other hand, is a human effort that is susceptible to right or wrong. Allah's religion is sacred, while *daʿwah* work is not. In addition, the sacredness of Islam cannot bestow perfection on *daʿwah* work, nor can the mistakes of the *daʿwah* be blamed on Islam.

Not for Fame or a Worldly Position: The ethics of practicing *daʿwah* work stems from Islam's recognition that conducting *daʿwah* is undoubtedly one of the noblest tasks in life, for it is the very duty that was carried out by all Allah's prophets and messengers. It has become common practice for people to show love and respect to those who are involved in *daʿwah* work (*duʿāt*) and to hold them in high esteem. What we need to remember is that *daʿwah* activities must be engaged in with the sole intention of pleasing Allah in the first place. What must be avoided, as far as possible, is seeking such a position to win fame and people's approval.

If, however, this position of esteem comes along without our longing for it, we are to praise Allah for that and strive hard to rise to its lofty level. We need to then favorably respond to people by showing them love, reaching out to them, serving them, being humble to them and seeking no reward in return. We consider such a position a responsibility, not a privilege; and a burden, not a right. Ultimately, the important value and ethic that ought to be adopted by every *daʿwah* worker is that the objective of his/her work is the call to Allah and dissemination of His message.

A Mission, Not an Exclusive Clique: *Daʿwah* work suffers when it ceases to be a mission and becomes an exclusive domain of self-serving individuals. We have to strive to prevent appearance from prevailing over content, idleness from prevailing over effectiveness, selfishness from prevailing over sacrifice, and hypocrisy prevailing over sincerity. When *daʿwah* work becomes exclusive it arouses a dislike in the population and opens the door for adversaries to undermine it. *Daʿwah*, by the very nature of the task, is inclusive, open, and inviting.

2. BE A ROLE MODEL

To be a *daʿwah* worker, one has to strive to be the best in manifesting the correct and sound Islamic character and present

the message in the most appropriate word and deed. *Da'wah* workers should recognize that their actions, words, behavior, and even appearance are viewed in the eyes of others as a reflection of the adhered belief and ideology. Hence, *Da'wah* workers need always to strive to present themselves as the best role models for human beings.

When Life for Allah's Sake is Better: Martyrdom is a lofty position, which Allah grants to the chosen few among the believers and which is highly desired by the sincere faithful. However, in Islam, 'life for the sake of Allah' is just as good as 'death for His sake', for they both require struggle for the truth and justice. Perhaps 'life for the sake of Allah' could be sometimes more beneficial to the world than 'death for His sake'. When Islamic workers leave no stone unturned in trying to serve the cause of Islam, develop the world's resources, put human talent to good use, and make Muslim society a good example so that others admire it and try to emulate it, then 'life for the sake of Allah' brings manifold benefit to humanity. Muslims prefer life over death, and reject any cult or group that portrays life as worthless. And, here, the value of life is to be lived in the best of form, and that is the starting point of being an exemplary role model.

Two Types of Religiosity: True religiosity requires an alert mind and a sound heart that does not bend easily to temptations. Those who enjoy such traits set a good example in society and people tend to admire them and emulate them.

While we commend this type of devotion, we warn against its opposite, false religiosity, which is prompted by an impure, disturbed mind and a 'sick' heart. People without sound minds and hearts tend to act inappropriately and erroneously. They are disliked by people and they set a negative example. Unfortunately this type of religiosity, especially if manifested by *da'wah* workers, is one of the factors behind people turning away from religion. Its effects are more detrimental than those of sins

committed by regular individuals; misbehavior attributed to religion causes greater harm than misbehavior attributed to personal weakness.

Salient features of false religiosity include attaching more importance to outward appearance, neglecting inner morality, showing great interest in voluntary acts of rituals at the expense of the obligatory worship, endeavoring to achieve personal gain and ignoring public good. Furthermore, those with such characteristics tend to bestow religious legitimacy on their wrong behavior, defects, and weaknesses. They aspire to positions they do not deserve and disparage those who deservedly occupy their positions due to hard work. On the other hand, true religiosity is the complete opposite. It is the religiosity that is geared solely towards serving Allah and the mission He has entrusted us with on this earth. True religiosity is when a Muslim sincerely devotes all deeds to Allah, as explained in the Qur'anic verse: "Say: 'Behold, my prayer, and (all) my acts of worship, and my living and my dying are for God [alone], the Sustainer of all the worlds'" (6:162).

Two Types of Bravery: Bravery is an excellent character trait to have as it provides one of the most important *da'wah* tools. The more courage in *da'wah* work we have, the more opportunities for success in delivering our message.

However, there is another type of bravery, namely biding one's time and being patient, especially when a decision calls for waiting and rethinking and when it is taken in an atmosphere of trust, honesty and responsibility. This type of bravery, when complementing courage, brings about much more tangible successes, because it comes with wisdom and patience, and is able to withstand criticism and disparagement. Brave individuals who are wise have a much broader view of events and engage in more extensive calculations. Patience is a manifestation of bravery, and one of the strong traits exhibited by the prophets and messengers of God. Allah addresses Prophet Muhammad in the Qur'an and encourages him to be patient in delivering the

message: “Remain, then, [O believer,] patient in adversity, just as all of the apostles, endowed with firmness of heart, bore themselves with patience. And do not ask for a speedy doom of those [who still deny the truth]:...” (46:35).

The Strong Believer: Among the ethics and characteristics that ought to be inwardly and outwardly manifested by *da‘wah* workers is to be strong believers. We need to prepare strong believers; as the Prophet said: “A strong believer is better and dearer to Allah than a weak one, although they are both good” (reported in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* Ch 47/Book of Divine Decree). The strength of *‘aqīdah* is measured by its authenticity, just as the strength of faith is measured by its depth, that of conduct by uprightness, that of intellect by awareness, and that of the body by physical strength.

Being holistic, strong believers requires us to take care of our bodies by living a healthier lifestyle, consuming wholesome food, practicing regular exercise and observing hygiene. We should also avoid everything that is bound to harm our bodies, such as drugs, tobacco and alcoholic beverages. Our bodies will then be able to carry out *da‘wah* duties in the highest spirit and most efficient manner possible. Combining the characteristics of mental, emotional, and physical strength presents us as proper role models for people. Indeed, the Qur’an values the traits of strength and trustworthiness, as in describing the character of prophet Moses: “Said one of the two [daughters]: ‘O my father! Hire him: for, behold, the best [man] that thou couldst hire is one who is [as] strong and worthy of trust [as he]!’” (28:26).

3 . MODERATION, BALANCE, AND TOLERANCE

Exercising Moderation and Balance: Islam is a moderate religion that represents a midway point between two reprehensible extremes, one of which is characterized by excess, the other by

deficiency. Allah commands Muslims, “And thus have We willed you to be a community of the middle way, so that [with your lives] you might bear witness to the truth before all mankind, and that the Apostle might bear witness to it before you...” (2:143).

Moderation in Islam pervades all domains of life. Islam, being the final revelation, is comprehensive. Muslims must not lead an ascetic life in such a way as to neglect their duties and responsibilities and fail to engage in civilization building. Nor must they excessively indulge in the pleasures that life offers, but rather enjoy their bounties in a balanced, lawful way.

Just as moderation is required in such things as promoting civilization and earning a living, it is also required in such matters as devotional acts, spending money, dealings with others, eating healthy food and wearing clothing. Moderation calls for maintaining a just balance between the requirements of the individual and those of the community. It is important for *da‘wah* workers to adopt and manifest the ethic of maintaining a balance between rights and obligations, the body and the spirit, and the intellect and the heart, without excess or neglect.

Neglect is a reprehensible extreme because it denies the rights and interests of the individual and the community. Excess is also a reprehensible extreme because it goes against the very requirements of human nature (*fitrah*), which cannot bear it. Indeed, Allah spoke intolerably of the over-indulgent: “...verily, He does not love the wasteful!” (7:31).

In a word, exceeding the proper bounds is naturally short-lived and carries the seeds of its own destruction. Almighty Allah has chosen moderation to be the salient feature of Islam, for He is the Creator and He knows what is best for us just as He knows our nature, abilities, weaknesses and strengths.

Exhibiting Confidence: Islam is a religion that will never die. Allah reigns supreme whether His enemies like it or not, as clearly stated by the Qur’an and the Prophet’s traditions. Islamic workers should be quite confident about this because Islam is

the true and final religion. This confidence will give them all the support they need to make the required efforts and earn the approval of others. However, this view does not justify any violence or coercion. If and when Islam spreads, it must be through peace, not violence; and through *daʿwah*, not government force. The Qur'an clearly states this with confidence in the truth of Islam:

There shall be no coercion in matters of faith. Distinct has now become the right way from [the way of] error: hence, he who rejects the powers of evil and believes in God has indeed taken hold of a support most unfailing, which shall never give way: for God is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. (2:256)

Exercising Calmness, Avoiding Overreactions: We call on everyone to exercise wisdom instead of inflaming emotions and to engage in deliberation instead of provocation. Familiarize yourself with contemporary issues in order to solve them, and participate actively in civilization building (instead of ignoring relevant issues or approaching them irrationally). Calmness is strongly encouraged in the attempt to reform. We warn against some reformists' overreactions to corrupt concepts and deviant practices by some Muslims and non-Muslims. In their attempt to reform society, reformists sometimes go to extremes and sometimes place restrictions on things that are lawful in Islam.

For example, some *daʿwah* workers overstretch the notion of *bidʿah* (religious innovations) after they notice that many erroneous practices have crept into the practice of religion. Some reformers have called for the abolishment of the "Islamic Schools of Thought" when they find that some Muslims display uncritical zeal for them, and yet other individuals and groups have called for complete asceticism in reaction to the state of extravagant luxury prevalent in certain environments. Neither reaction is one that Muslims should pursue, as they do not represent a balanced and moderate perspective; everyone, especially *daʿwah* workers, should avoid taking extreme positions.

Avoiding Fanaticism: *Da‘wah* workers have to understand the difference between zeal and fanaticism. It is normal for some workers to display zeal for the method they use since they believe that they have chosen the most advantageous one, which, in their opinion, is also the best. This form of zeal is lawful and acceptable.

If, however, they overstep this limit, these *da‘wah* workers will naturally fall victim to that form of extreme and uncritical zeal, which Islam considers forbidden as an act of ignorance. Thus, we are required to always remember that piety and the performance of good deeds are what differentiate our lawful zeal from fanaticism (which is forbidden). This, in turn, necessitates steering clear of *jāhiliyyah* (ignorance) and all forms of fanaticism, such as extreme attachment to a territory, a clan, a party or a group of people. We strive to steer clear of excess in religion as well, which may lead some to step outside of the scope of the moderation of religion. Allah states in the Qur’an a lesson for Muslims:

Say: “O people of the Book! Do not overstep the bounds [of truth] in your religious beliefs; and do not follow the errant views of people who have gone astray aforetime, and have led many [others] astray, and are still straying from the right path.” (5:77)

4. A POSITIVE ATTITUDE

We call for developing positive attitudes and spreading optimism while practicing *da‘wah*. We should be earning people’s trust and making things easy for them. Conversely, we call for the rejection of unhealthy attitudes such as pessimism, lack of trust and over complicating things. Allah wants ease for us, not hardship. Hope is a necessary prerequisite for action and success.

A Note on the Traditions of Trials and Tribulations: It is worth noting here, that the majority of the reported traditions of the

Prophet on trials and tribulations are ‘weak.’ The few ‘authentic’ Prophetic traditions, which indicate that the Ummah’s condition is going from bad to worse, are referring to a specific time, a certain place or a special circumstance. Thus, it is wrong to condemn the current weak state of the Ummah based on the implications of certain traditions. It is erroneous to generalize from traditions that categorically contradict textual evidence from the Qur’an and the Sunnah, which actually promises victory for the truth.

Such misconceptions clearly contradict the divine universal laws in addition to past and present events. They also go against Allah’s Absolute Justice, for it does not befit Almighty Allah to command the faithful to strive hard to support His religion and promise them victory while they feel that they will remain defeated. It is only when we place the parts in the context of the whole, that we can possibly put the Prophet’s statements on trials and tribulations in perspective. In this way, we remain all the more confident that God will certainly give victory to His religion. As *da‘wah* workers, it behoves us to manifest the ethic of our confidence in our God, in His message, and in our own ability to carry out and propagate His will on earth.

A Note on the Heritage of Victories and Defeats: Islamic history is replete with feats that provide a source of pride for Muslims. These past achievements can become highly beneficial if they prompt us to be rational in an effort to recreate them in the present and future. Conversely, they can become hurdles and impediments if they make us passive elements in society only concerned with lauding past historical glory.

The same thing can be said about errors made in our history. If we attempt to learn from these mistakes while actively planning for the future, we can use our knowledge for a highly beneficial purpose. If, however, we passively contemplate them while doing nothing, apart from weeping, blaming one another and expressing sadness, we will only fail at our present and future endeavors.

Overcoming Major Shortcomings: The performance of many Muslims and some *da‘wah* workers is characterized by considerable shortcomings, in both their religious and worldly matters. This unfortunate state of affairs contradicts the fact that they have chosen to be in such a state despite the many blessings Allah has bestowed upon them. Many *da‘wah* workers have been blessed with good resources, good locations, good populations and good ideas. They are qualified to lead mankind and establish a great civilization, yet they fall short of their objectives.

We are required to study seriously how to move out of the state of failure into that of effectiveness, and from the state of regress into that of progress. Some important factors that help achieve this include seriousness, creativity, self-evaluation, free competition, proficiency, institutional work, encouragement of the good doers, accountability of the trouble-makers and the love of hard work.

Avoiding Conspiracy Theories: While some *da‘wah* workers spread conspiracy theories, others deny them altogether, and still others have serious reservations about them. Conspiracies are as old as the human race and will always exist. However, it is not reasonable, nor is it religiously acceptable, to interpret everything as being a conspiracy. Even in the cases of actual ones, conspiracies are not always successful. Sometimes they even backfire against the conspirators themselves.

We have to deal with these “conspiracies” without falling victim to the two opposite alternatives: exaggeration and underestimation. We need to understand conspiracies without giving them either too much importance or too little importance. We need to avoid blaming our mistakes and idleness on conspiracies. What is worse than a conspiracy is to totally ignore it, exaggerate it, underestimate it, or not use the logic of cause and effect.

Being Positive about the Protection of Islam: Almighty Allah has taken it upon Himself to protect His religion. He has also,

in His total Wisdom, made it incumbent upon Muslims to shoulder this noble task. Although this religion, which is the manifest truth, is subject to Allah's Decree, this decree is manifested through human effort. We are all aware of the huge sacrifices made by all the noble prophets, their disciples, their companions and those who followed them in an attempt to support this religion. In these individuals, we indeed have an excellent model to follow. Muslims engaged in *da'wah* ought to always be confident of Allah's support, if their efforts are genuinely intended in the service of Allah. The Qur'an states: "O you who have attained to faith! If you help [the cause of] God, He will help you, and will make firm your steps" (47:7).

Positivity through Disciplined Enthusiasm: Enthusiasm is a blessing because it ignites the spirit of determination, sacrifice, competition and innovation. These and other laudable traits are bound to make the work prosper, and the stronger the spirit, the more prosperous it will be. Conversely, the weaker the spirit, the weaker the outcomes of *da'wah* work will be.

In igniting the flame of enthusiasm, the dose has to be carefully calculated, just as a doctor prescribes for his patient a precise balanced dose of medication. Increasing the dosage too much, especially among the youth, will overly increase their fervor, which they might express in the wrong manner. Wise Islamic workers can provide appropriate opportunities for the youth to discharge their enthusiasm and feel that they are useful. They will also make the youth feel appreciated and supported, recognizing that they have done whatever they could to the best of their ability.

Such support prevents the youth from feeling gripped by guilt if they fail to do what is required of them. Enable the youth to feel well contented as their excitement subsides, just like anyone else who feels pleased with whatever useful work they have accomplished. These efforts begin with *da'wah* workers themselves manifesting these positive and balanced traits.

5. HUMILITY AND HUMBLINESS

The true call to Islam begins with sincere and correct intention and devotion to the task that *da‘wah* workers have taken upon themselves. Of the fundamental ethics of *da‘wah* is the genuine sense of humility and humbleness that *da‘wah* workers ought to possess and manifest. As Allah describes them in the Qur’an: “For, [true] servants of the Most Gracious are [only] they who walk gently on earth, and who, whenever the foolish address them, reply with [words of] peace” (25:63).

Sincerity and Correctness: Purity of intention (*ḥusn al-niyyah*) occupies a lofty position in religion. It is the essence of actions and the very condition necessary for the actions to be accepted by Allah. Sincerity (*ikhhlās*) is also essential. Deeds that lack sincerity are futile. Sincerity alone, however, is not enough, for one’s actions may be sincere to Allah alone but may not be correct. Thus, sincerity must be accompanied by correct knowledge and correct actions just as correct actions must be sincere, as only this necessary combination can lead to success.

Sincerity coupled with naivety can easily lead to mistakes. In fact, negative results abound for such a combination. For instance, it affords some adversaries the opportunity to deceive those who are sincere in their intentions yet naive in their views, causing them to commit follies and take unwise risks. In another instance, sincere but naive workers make arduous efforts to secure some gains which are less beneficial than other gains. They may also make useless efforts. In yet another example, (and this is the worst form of foolishness and ignorance) they make a great deal of sacrifice for the wrong issues, only to effect an undesirable change to which they are the first to fall victim, thus making an already bad situation worse.

Superiority, But...: Truth is superior over falsehood. However, *da‘wah* workers are not superior over other human beings. The believer, however, may make the serious mistake of feeling

superior to the people he is calling, instead of having feelings of humility to the Creator and humbleness to people. This 'perverted' superiority represents a psychological deception where the individual feels that he or she is better than others. This misunderstanding leads this person to wrongly detach himself or herself from the intended audience. This individual justifies his or her detachment by claiming that they do not want their purity to be polluted by the corruption of others, their knowledge by the ignorance of others, and their false sense of superiority with the lowliness of others. If this individual is reduced to this state, then he or she cannot possibly be considered as being involved in *da'wah* work; rather, this individual becomes a burden on it. Indeed, Allah spoke reprehensibly of such self-deluded character:

And turn not thy cheek away from people in [false] pride, and walk not haughtily on earth: for, behold, God does not love anyone who, out of self-conceit, acts in a boastful manner. (31:18)

Islamic workers, therefore, have to demonstrate the superiority of their ideas over the falsehood of deviant ideas, not to demonstrate falsely their own personal superiority over other people. They ought to show gratefulness to Allah for honoring them with the chance to serve people. *Da'wah* workers should show love for their subjects, be tolerant and patient with them, and strive hard to help them mend their ways. If they do this, they will be showing true moral superiority and will not fall prey to false psychological deceptions. It is a superiority of truth and principles, not a superiority of individuals and parties.

Avoiding Luxury: Seeking luxury can represent a scandalous trait that involves squandering wealth, which is bound to lead to other evils in life. Islam warns against it and considers its spread in any nation a portent of destruction. Therefore, we have to avoid it by all means possible. Luxury has become a habit among some workers who claim they are involved in

daʿwah efforts. Such luxury includes paying unreasonably high prices for five star hotel rooms and accommodation, first class airline tickets, and fancy cars.

Some *daʿwah* workers falsely claim they are ‘intellectuals’ and spread information that does not serve the cause. They deceive people into believing in their false erudition and the nonsense that they say. Such ‘intellectual’ luxury has no place in *daʿwah*, which maintains the honorable purpose of humbly serving and helping people.

These examples of false intellectuals (who do not serve the people) represent a form of luxury similar to material extravagance. Therefore, sensible callers to Islam must be wary of false ‘scholars’ who waste peoples’ time, money, and effort, and constitute a form of distraction from the real agenda of *daʿwah* work. Allah encourages us to remain focused on the mission of serving Him and avoiding such ‘false’ characters:

And contain thyself in patience by the side of all who at morn and at evening invoke their Sustainer, seeking His countenance, and let not thine eyes pass beyond them in quest of the beauties of this world’s life; and pay no heed to any whose heart We have rendered heedless of all remembrance of Us because he had always followed [only] his own desires, abandoning all that is good and true.
(18:28)

Appreciation but not Sanctity of Religious Leaders: It is only natural to love the *daʿwah* movement leader, religious scholar, local imam, and the like, but this love should not exceed its limits. In fact, adherents of the previous divine faiths went astray when they glorified their prophets and saints and put them on equal footing with God, thus committing the unforgivable act of shirk (polytheism) and wrongful association so departing from *tawhīd* (monotheism).

One common mistake workers make is that they are so attached to their leaders that they regard them as the criterion by which to judge truth from falsehood and right from wrong.

Behaving as though their leaders are infallible, the workers are unaware of the maxim: “We judge people by the criterion of truth, but we do not judge the truth by people’s conduct.”

Such exaltation is one of the main reasons behind the disunity and hatred among members of *da‘wah* movements. Love shown for the leaders must be moderate. Besides, these leaders have to be regarded as mere humans who can sometimes be right and at other times wrong. Love, appreciation and loyalty shown to them have to be commensurate with the value they provide and with the greatness of their achievements. We need to seek nothing but the truth, for a leader is only a temporary thing, while a truthful concept is permanent. *Da‘wah* workers themselves, and especially their leaders, ought to manifest humbleness and humility. Ultimately, appreciation and respect is due when earned, but sanctity and infallibility is to religion alone.

As Muslims, we revere religious scholars, especially classical scholars, but we should not blindly act on their statements without considering our own special circumstances and the different time and place that we live in. We ought to make legal decisions by independent interpretation of the Qur’an and the authentic Sunnah through proper *ijtihad* in such a way as to bear in mind present-day circumstances and the factors of time and place (as scholars did during other eras).

We do not Monopolize Righteousness: We do not claim to be the only ones who are right, and we warn others of being under such an illusion. While we do believe in our objectives and means, we do not claim that they are perfect. We are reflective and we confess to any mistakes or flaws in our methods and goals with the intention of correcting them.

We also respect others’ choices in terms of their objectives and means. We understand that we are all required to: 1) make sure that our intentions are to serve God sincerely, 2) try our best to do the right thing, 3) frankly admit our mistakes, and 4) be pleased with others when they act rightly. With this in mind,

we are open to others striving for the same. To this end, we ought to share our expertise with others because sharing is our duty and is bound to enrich our knowledge and organizations.

No one can claim that she or he is in no need of advice and guidance, nor should there ever be a group who claims that all their actions are right while everyone else's actions are wrong. To this end, we remain humble, but always strive to be better. As diverse Muslims, we cooperate with one another, and compete in righteousness and good deeds, as that is the criterion upon which Allah favors one over the other. Allah states in the Qur'an:

O men! Behold, We have created you all out of a male and a female, and have made you into nations and tribes, so that you might come to know one another. Verily, the noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is most deeply conscious of Him. Behold, God is All-Knowing, All-Aware. (49:13)

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Methods of *Da'wah*

The objectives of *da'wah* are constant, while the means and methods of implementing *da'wah* are ever changing based on conditions and developments of time and place. The higher objectives of *da'wah* are the sincere call to Allah's message, in its proper understanding and actualization. As for the means and methods, these have to be flexible and evolving. We have to learn from all people's experiences and not limit ourselves to rigid methods, especially if they are not achieving our ends. We need to seek innovative means from a variety of sources as long as they serve the objectives of *da'wah* without deviating from Islamic precepts. The methods of *da'wah* ought to be varied and appropriate to the context and environment in which it is practiced. However, there are important principles to the practice of *da'wah* that are essential to the success of such efforts.

This theme focuses on these major, and constant, principles of practice.

The impetus behind *daʿwah* work is the Qurʾanic call for such endeavor:

And that there might grow out of you a community [of people] who invite unto all that is good, and enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong; and it is they, they who shall attain to a happy state! (3:104)

There is no clear and systematic methodology for *daʿwah* dictated in the main sources of the Qurʾan and the Sunnah, however, these sources do indeed provide us with guidelines and principles through which proper *daʿwah* is to be conducted. *Daʿwah* workers ought to commence their efforts after recognizing, embracing, and manifesting Islam's unity and clarity of thought, and the general unity of methodological principles of delivering the Divine Message.

Islamic methods of *daʿwah* include, among others, the etiquette of dialogue and disagreement, clarity of means and language, careful consideration of the target audience of *daʿwah* (which encompasses everyone from the individual, the family, to the homeland, and humanity as a whole).

Daʿwah workers are encouraged to set objectives and prioritize them based on importance, work within the methodology of gradual progress, cooperate among one another, maintain transparency in dealings and accountability of actions.

On the more systematic level, institutional *daʿwah* efforts conducted by various formal and grassroot organizations ought to complement the work of one another, conduct affairs through mutual consultation (*shūrā*), and ensure that institutional efforts remain focused on the overall objective of spreading the Divine Message through the best means possible and the utilization of the most appropriate tools and expertise.

I. UNITY AND CLARITY OF THOUGHT

Unity of Thought: Differences of Islamic workers commonly result from a lack of shared assumptions among them. Such dissonance leads to differences in their objectives, means and priorities, as well as aversion and even hatred between the workers. Because of these critical consequences, the issue of resolving the divide by deepening intellectual unity amongst Islamic workers in general and youth in particular should be given utmost care. This can be achieved by disseminating literature based on the Qur'an and the authentic Sunnah, in the spirit of moderation, cooperation, tolerance, comradeship, and fairness. In addition, observing the logic of priorities, the art of conducting a dialogue and etiquette of disagreement are essential. Stressing the comprehensiveness of Islam and its adaptability to all places and times is very helpful.

Careful selection of literature consistent with these objectives, as well as building close working relationships is a must. These publications may then be placed before workers and the youth, and they have to be reviewed every now and then just as is the case with education curricula. These above mentioned themes ought to form a consistent and united methodology of thought about *da'wah* efforts.

Hence, *da'wah* workers commence their efforts with the recognition of the importance of clear and sound knowledge and thought. The variance of interpretation and understanding of Islamic teachings remain united under the banner of a united Islamic knowledge and principles. *Da'wah* workers are to follow the Qur'anic teaching, which states:

Say [O Prophet]: "This is my way: Resting upon conscious insight accessible to reason, I am calling [you all] unto God – I and they who follow me." And [say:] "Limitless is God in His glory; and I am not one of those who ascribe divinity to aught beside Him!"
(12:108)

Common Ground: It is impossible for all those involved in *da‘wah* work to display uniformity in objectives, means and priorities. There are some inevitable differences between them. However, careful examination will reveal that *da‘wah* workers also have many things in common (especially in matters of beliefs, rituals, morals and dealings at large). However, their disputes, which may arise out of misunderstanding, stubbornness or personal whims and desires, obscure such common ground. These differences may be so magnified that they appear to be larger than they really are while similarities are belittled and appear insignificant. Therefore, *da‘wah* workers need to recognize this fact, embrace it, and strive hard with patience and perseverance to widen the scope of understanding and agreement between all *da‘wah* workers.

Differences Versus Discord: Islam greatly values unity and encourages its adherents to observe it just as it warns them against disunity. It also, however, recognizes human diversity, which naturally leads to differences and which represents one of Allah’s Laws regarding His creation. The objective of *da‘wah* workers is to recognize the value of diversity, and embrace methods that turn differences into beneficial practice.

Differences between people can be beneficial or harmful. Beneficial differences relate to differences of opinion. Having different perspectives can enrich human experience and can help humans follow divine wisdom. Allah has created people who are different in their minds, understandings and ways of thinking, just as they are different in their gender, color, and size. Respecting diversity and beneficial differences is like lighting a number of candles. The more candles you light, the more light you get, and none of them extinguishes the other.

Harmful differences relate to discord (differences of heart). Hatred has been forbidden in numerous Qur’anic verses and Prophetic traditions. The Qur’an says: “And hold fast, all together, unto the bond with God, and do not draw apart...” (3:103). Hatred leads to conflicts and disputes. Hatred weakens

the disagreeing parties and makes them lose heart, and eventually leads to defeat.

Daʿwah is a domain that has to remain free from hatred at all times. *Daʿwah* represents the immutable fundamentals of Islam. *Daʿwah* safeguards the Ummah's identity, spirit, and mission, as well as its unity in terms of creed, conduct, and emotions. This requires us to learn Islamic jurisprudence, follow the etiquette of disagreement, and admit the others' right to disagree with us (within the bounds specified by the divine injunctions). This includes, among other things, the right to have differences in viewpoints relating to the ways and means of *daʿwah*, which may be changed according to circumstances, time and place.

Religion Versus Customs: Some customs and traditions can become so important that people tend to view them as religious practices. This is rather obvious during sad and happy celebrations as well as in social relations at large. The phenomenon becomes all the more obvious when the issue of the attitude toward certain misconceptions about Islam is raised, such as the religion's perspective on women or minorities, etc. We have to draw a demarcation line between religion and traditions and also accept or reject cultural traditions wisely by employing religion as the criterion. Within the general principle of unity of thought, *daʿwah* workers ought to recognize the distinctions between religion and customs, and embrace the latter when they are in harmony with the holistic and comprehensive nature of the religion.

2. UNITY AND CLARITY OF METHODOLOGY

The Right Methodology: When conducting *daʿwah* work, it is better to introduce the facts and principles of Islam in a clear and comprehensive manner. *Daʿwah* workers should present a clear and thorough representation of Islam when attempting to reach the hearts and minds of their audience and garner favorable

responses. Therefore, we need to avoid causing misconceptions about Islam and then trying to refute them. We should also avoid talking about rare and odd ideas, obscure groups or deviant interpretations of intricate legal sources. Should the need for this arise, the discussion has to be kept to a minimum without prejudice to the basic methodology.

Etiquette of Dialogue (Adab al-Hiwar): We need to practice the etiquette of dialogue and strive to master the art of conducting it. Dialogue is one of the most successful means of discovering the truth and calling others to it. Successful dialogue requires presenting your view in a calm and thoughtful manner, and allowing others to respond, without becoming emotional or interrupting them, especially when disagreements arise. Indeed, Allah calls on us to:

Call thou (all mankind) unto thy Sustainer's path with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and argue with them in the most kindly manner – for, behold, thy Sustainer knows best as to who strays from His path, and best knows He as to who are the right-guided.
(16:125)

Furthermore, Qur'anic and Prophetic guidelines for proper *da'wah* are clearly delineated in the following Divine address to Prophet Muhammad. Allah says:

And it was by God's grace that thou [O Prophet] didst deal gently with thy followers: for if thou hadst been harsh and hard of heart, they would indeed have broken away from thee. Pardon them, then, and pray that they be forgiven. And take counsel with them in all matters of public concern; then, when thou hast decided upon a course of action, place thy trust in God: for, verily, God loves those who place their trust in Him. (3:159)

Using Clear and Precise Language: We need to coin our own terminology that is precise, clear and original. We also have to

carefully use this terminology and avoid being carried away and influenced by the fashionable ideologies and socio-political tendencies that become popular every now and then. To describe Islam as being “socialist” when socialism prevails, “capitalist” when capitalism has the upper hand, or “democratic” when democracy becomes the prevailing tendency, to mention but a few examples, is not conducive to *da‘wah* efforts. For unlike such transient socio-political movements, Islam encompasses larger and more comprehensive doctrines. The fact that Islam might share some of its principles with other ideologies testifies to its comprehensiveness. This should not, however, lead us to describe it as being the same as such intellectual trends, for Islam is the root while everything else constitutes the branches: the Qur’an is immutable truth while other ideologies are mutable; and the Qur’an is the ultimate truth, as opposed to man-made ideologies which have varying degrees of truth in them.

Upon commencing *da‘wah* efforts, *da‘wah* workers are encouraged to recite the following supplication that prophet Moses recited to Allah in an effort to remain mindful of the need for clarity and being understood by the target audience. The Qur’an states:

Said [Moses]: “O my Sustainer! Open up my heart [to Thy light], and make my task easy for me, and loosen the knot from my tongue so that they might fully understand my speech.”
(20:25-28)

3 . *DA‘WAH* EMBRACES EVERYONE

On the level of *da‘wah* workers, we should embrace the efforts made by other workers, even if they utilize different methods.

Indeed, we should rejoice at their achievements because all our efforts serve the objectives of *da‘wah*. We have to show them love, appreciate their efforts, give them sincere advice and cooperate with them as much as possible. We also have to try to benefit from any useful effort made by other individuals or

groups, no matter how insignificant it may seem, and even if it is marred by some slips and imperfections. In regards to the target audience of *da'wah* efforts, the following discussion highlights that *da'wah* embraces everyone and is to be delivered to everyone.

The First Universal Declaration of Human Rights: We believe that Islam contains the first universal declaration of human rights. It is a religion that grants human beings all their rights. It promotes freedom of belief and supports human dignity. It also grants rights relating to education, marriage, security, livelihood, justice and ownership. Such rights are granted because they elevate a human being's worth, as humankind is the most honored of Allah's creation, as stated in the Qur'an:

Now, indeed, We have conferred dignity on the children of Adam, and borne them over land and sea, and provided for them sustenance out of the good things of life, and favoured them far above most of Our creation. (17:70)

Humans play the role of 'vicegerent' on earth, and Allah has subjected the universe for human benefit. We believe in the differences of capabilities between humans. We also believe in equality and in the dignity of all human beings. While everyone is endowed with different talents, respect and dignity is equally afforded to everyone. *Da'wah*, hence, is universal, and as Muslims, our message is to be delivered to everyone, starting with ourselves.

New Converts: Muslims are pleased when an individual genuinely reverts to Islam. It is, after all the objective of *da'wah*. This joy, however, sometimes exceeds its limits if the reaction of Muslims or *da'wah* workers is manifested in a wrong way. Therefore, in order for us to secure a benefit for the religion and for the newcomer, we ought to ascertain the intention of the new convert as well as his or her level of understanding, seriousness

and wisdom. Upon gaining such insight, we can then offer him/her the necessary help and guidance in a gradual, moderate manner until Islam becomes well established and instilled in their hearts, in their understanding, and in their practice.

However, if we give them an exaggerated welcome we are bound to turn them into a ‘puppet’ or a conceited person who may fall into arrogant and false conceptions about their intellectual and spiritual status. This may lead them to ignore the guidance and help of individuals with much more knowledge and experience. A balanced, moderated, and objective reaction and offer of support is more conducive to a new convert’s newly-found sense of identity and belonging.

Safeguarding the Family: In Islam, marriage is the only means to establish a legitimate relationship between a man and a woman with a view to starting a family, which represents the first and most important ‘educational institution’ (incubator) and the best environment for children. The family’s management responsibility falls on the shoulders of the father and the mother. Therefore, *da‘wah* efforts should aim to safeguard family values and provide the necessary tools to make family units cohesive, strong, loving, and successful.

Affirming the Status of the Muslim Woman: Women have suffered a great deal of injustice and oppression throughout history at the hands of societies that followed either of the two extreme trends. The first one is secular extremism, which aims at corrupting and alienating individuals from their faith, dignity, and pure human nature. The second one is religious extremism, which claims women inferior and incompetent, and endeavors to prevent them from playing their rightful roles in the various domains of life, and confines women within the walls of domestic life.

Religious extremists are still considered blameworthy even if their intentions are good. In fact, some of them treat women with suspicion, regard them with contempt, and do not seem to

understand the notion of *qawāmah* (support and responsibility) in its proper meaning as espoused in the Qur'an. This is due to their ignorance of the rights that Islam has granted to women as well as the patriarchal customs and traditions that have accumulated over the centuries. Muslim extremists who oppress women claim they have 'religious sanction' even though there is no textual evidence in Islam to support such oppression.

Muslims in general and Islamic workers in particular must trust women, do justice to them and pave the way for them to assume their rightful roles in life, foremost among which is their role in conducting *da'wah*. Such equal treatment of women has numerous advantages, including: 1) the realization of justice, which is a significant Islamic principle; 2) benefiting from women in *da'wah* work, particularly in those domains in which women surpass men; and 3) liberating Islam from the misconceptions of subjugating women, and preventing individuals or groups from using the name of Islam to subjugate women. There are deviant trends that endeavor to deceive Muslims into believing that the injustices inflicted upon women in many parts of the Muslim world are part of Islam, and that liberation of women can come only through destroying significant aspects of Islam, if not Islam completely.

Indeed, Islam is a religion that has granted women freedom in a just and balanced manner. It has also secured their rights, dignity, and independence, and has awarded women the titles of 'half of society', 'men's equal siblings', and 'honorable teachers of generations'. It is incumbent upon *da'wah* workers to recognize, embrace, and manifest the proper perspective of Islam towards women in particular, and towards gender roles in general.

Champion the Gifted and the Talented: We need to focus our attention on the gifted and talented among the youth because they are the future leaders of revival and development. They are the ones who are qualified to offer beneficial alternatives and future initiatives for the good of humanity. *Da'wah* efforts

ought to reinforce the self-confidence of the youth, and to encourage their talents to flourish.

The Required Form of Entertainment: In the spirit of *da‘wah*’s embracing of everyone, and the objective of delivering the message to everyone, it is worth noting here Islam’s perspective on appropriate forms of entertainment. Lawful forms of entertainment are among the chief factors that help strengthen the relationships of individuals with the group or movement to which they belong. This makes them more devoted to it and more enthusiastic about understanding and supporting its ideals. Therefore, *da‘wah* efforts should encourage lawful forms of entertainment and call everyone to engage in such entertainment on various joyous occasions, such as Islamic festivals and at the beginning and the end of the school year. To this end, we also encourage organizing festivals, competitions, sports activities and morally oriented songs (*nashīd*). The recognition of lawful forms of entertainment stems from the understanding that Islam encourages all lawful means that lead to joy and happiness, unless they lead to misguidance and sin.

Protecting Your Homeland: Callers to Islam, wherever they may be, need to strive hard to defend their homeland, secure its peace, safeguard its achievements, protect its environment and seek to aid its future generations. Indeed, the relationship between the innate sense of belonging to one’s homeland and the voluntary sense of belonging to a religion is that of complementarity and harmony, not that of contradiction and discord. *Da‘wah* embraces everyone, and safeguarding one’s homeland is essential to safeguarding the individual and the society.

4. SETTING THE OBJECTIVES AND LOGIC OF PRIORITIES

Da‘wah work ought to commence after proper setting of direct objectives and identification of the target audience. To ensure

sound implementation of *daʿwah* efforts and to maximize positive results, *daʿwah* workers ought to consider the logic of priorities, focus on what is relevant, and move forward through stages gradually.

Setting the Objectives: Every form of *daʿwah* work has its objectives that it strives hard to realize. Given that setting such objectives is of paramount importance, workers must precisely and clearly identify their aims and commit them in writing to ensure that each word and sentence serves to define such aims in terms of accuracy, consistency, necessity and attainability. Setting the objectives is essential to bring about conducive and tangible positive results of *daʿwah* efforts.

As for those individuals or groups who mix up imaginary hopes with reality, their chances of failure will be far greater than those of success. If a mistake made by one individual is considered a disaster, then a mistake made by a group of people is a greater disaster.

One of the criticisms leveled at Islamic workers is that most of their members know “what they do not want,” but they do not know “what they do want exactly.” They mistakenly define themselves in terms of what they reject, rather than defining themselves in terms of what they promote. When workers adopt erroneous objectives or correct yet unattainable objectives, they do a great harm to their cause because they are “running after a mirage.” Those workers will not be excused by their “good intentions.” Good intention constitutes only part of a whole, and the other part to complete the picture is doing the right thing, rightly. Promote the right objective at the right time with the right people using the right methods.

Workers need to know exactly “who they are” and “what they actually want.” Then, in light of this realization, they set their plans and programs. In this way, they will be honest with themselves as well as with those who respond to their call; otherwise failure will be the outcome.

Focus on What is Relevant: When dealing with the general public, Islamic workers need to present only the indisputable Islamic facts and disregard juristic differences. They should also put aside inconsistent narrations, odd interpretations, elaborate details, and probable and dubious assumptions. These often controversial issues can be discussed by specialists within certain academic environments, according to consistent and strict criteria and only when the need arises. As for the general public, the primary focus should be on practical, beneficial, and relevant matters.

The Logic of Priorities: All Islamic issues are not on an equal footing in terms of importance, and because of this, setting priorities is essential. The issues of faith (*īmān*) and monotheism (*tawhīd*), for instance, are far more important than that of ‘removing a harmful object from the road’. By the same token, all *daʿwah* issues do not have the same degree of relevance. Therefore, we have to understand them all and give each one the attention it deserves. We have to revisit our list of priorities every now and then to update them according to the dynamics of changing circumstances.

Daʿwah workers ought to envision and practice their *daʿwah* efforts from within the premise of priorities. It is important to note, however, that prioritization of matters does not contradict the comprehensive nature of the religion, which encompasses every aspect of individual and collective life. It is rather a method that aims to bring about the most tangible and beneficial results effectively.

Prioritization requires us to have the ability to carefully evaluate our options. We have to be able to distinguish between the unpleasant choices that we are confronted with and choose the lesser evil. Conversely, we are required to carefully distinguish between the advantageous choices available and opt for the best one.

Circle of Influence Versus Circle of Concern: The circle of

influence includes those matters that we can change (and thus benefit ourselves and others). This includes improving our health, ensuring means of living, helping our relatives and friends, being a good example to our colleagues, guiding those around us to the truth, developing our skills, supporting our family, and learning the rules that govern work and citizenship.

The circle of concern relates to those things over which one has little or no direct control. One may, for instance, be concerned with local or international issues, such as the value of the US dollar, presidential elections in other countries, pollution and environmental destruction, and world poverty.

Our focus should be on the circle of influence. We need to widen our circle of influence. We are only capable of exercising a positive impact on things and people we can influence, and this falls within the arena of our religious obligations. We may spend time on the circle of concern, but within certain limits. It is good to be aware of current events and stay in touch with a few other people, without letting them take up all our time.

If we choose to focus all our attention on the area outside our influence, we will be wasting our time and energy, and we may become depressed about matters for which we can do nothing. This will in turn cause us to live in a state of anxiety and grief. We may withdraw from social life, make excuses for doing nothing and even blame our inaction on divine decree. Successful people are those who are good at creating solutions and alternatives, whilst unsuccessful people are good at making excuses.

Gradual Progress: We call upon *da‘wah* workers to emphasize the concept of gradual progress, not sudden change; careful, strategic planning, not arbitrariness; wisdom, not agitation; deliberateness, not haste; and continuous, persistent work, not interrupted, hurried work. As the Prophet said, “The best loved deeds to Allah are the continuous ones even if they are few or little” (al-Bukhārī 3/31). The Prophet is also reported to have emphasized the value of every deed, even the small ones, in the

service of the overall objective of spreading the message of Islam. He said: “Convey what you have received from me, even if it is one verse” (al-Bukhārī 3461). We need to remember the saying, “Time is part of treatment.”

Going by Stages: We need to break down our plans into different stages, which build upon one another and serve the overall objective. The stages in sequence will allow the final goal to be achieved since the first goal paves the way for the second one, and the second one is founded upon the first one. Each stage lays the foundation for the next one. We also have to set realistic objectives that we can achieve in a reasonable time and in a way that suits the prevailing environment.

Planning for the Future: The present is the son of the past and it is the mother of the future. Workers have to learn from the past, deal effectively with the present, and make sufficient preparations for the future. We have to do everything in our power to improve the situation, always putting our trust in Allah and relying completely on Him.

Therefore, *da‘wah* workers plan for the future, for this testifies to their prudence and paves the way for success. If we choose not to plan, we will be doomed to failure and will be marginalized. Indeed, Islam attaches great importance to investing in the future. Islam teaches us to fear the displeasure of Allah and prepare for the Day of Judgment, which is our eternal future.

We recognize the efforts of planning which prophets undertook to ensure the best results. For example, there is the story of prophet Joseph who saved Egypt from the dreadful seven-year-long famine through his planning to consume wisely and store enough wheat. Prophet Muhammad also attached much significance to future planning, as evidenced by the planning for the migration of his companions to Abyssinia, the planning for his and his companions’ migration from Makkah to Madinah, and the planning for improved relations through the Covenants

and agreements he concluded with the Jews in Madinah. He also planned for the spread of Islam through peaceful means. His *da‘wah* included the letters he addressed to various rulers that opened the door to negotiations and set in motion the glorious development of Islamic civilization. These measures taken by the Prophet helped pave the way for the future of Islam.

Strategizing Responses to Attacks on Islam: Every now and then, people face different kinds of trials, tribulations, problems and misconceptions. Examples of attacks on Islam include defaming the Prophet Muhammad and his household, the attack on a Muslim community center, the assault on a holy place, and the mocking of Islamic scriptures. There are various motives behind these assaults, including hatred, ignorance and seeking fame. Attacks on Islam sidetrack the efforts of sincere Muslims and divert their attention away from the message and essential areas of activity.

Islamic workers have to contemplate ways of prioritizing these problems and then deal with them according to the motives behind them. They may respond to these problems by adopting different strategies, such as observing complete silence or providing a media response that will expose these problems and misconceptions with or without naming them.

It should be noted, however, that when they choose to counter false allegations, they have to observe utmost care. Otherwise their efforts will be wasted and they will fall prey to the tricks of wicked individuals who only intend to divert their attention away from the real mission, exhaust them, and then restart the cycle by raising more accusations.

Being Active ... Being Proactive: Islam encourages its adherents to be active, and proactive, for activism is the prerequisite to civilization building (‘*Umrān*). Islam encourages productive discussion and dialogue, but warns against idle and vain talk. Some *da‘wah* workers gather, not to engage in constructive,

positive conversations, but rather to waste time (discussing trivial issues, defaming people and organizations, superficially raising some unnecessary issues and giving themselves false hopes). Having wasted a few hours, they then disperse without having done anything beneficial. They falsely believe that they have discharged their duty towards God by supporting His religion, while in fact they are only deceiving themselves (through futile speeches to satisfy their passion for idle talk and to fill the vacuum in their lives). They are only venting their emotions rather than spreading knowledge, in the mistaken belief that they truly serve Islam, while in fact they are neglecting their agenda and responsibilities. To make matters worse, they bestow religious legitimacy on their distracting chatter and meaningless sophistry. They argue just for the sake of argument, rather than for any helpful goal.

5. COOPERATION

Cooperation is key to the success of any group effort. As *da‘wah* is a collective responsibility on all Muslims, *da‘wah* workers need to have a positive attitude towards cooperating with team members and with other groups to ensure the success of the mission and maximize the results. Grassroots and institutional *da‘wah* organizations should take earnest measures to facilitate teamwork and team spirit. The principle of cooperation, from an Islamic perspective, is only to be practiced in service of what is good and beneficial to humanity, but not in unlawful deeds, as Allah states in the Qur’an: “... but rather help one another in furthering virtue and God-consciousness, and do not help one another in furthering evil and enmity;...” (5:2).

Da‘wah is a Collective Responsibility: The task of inviting others to Islam is a collective responsibility, and is by no means restricted to students of Islamic studies (although the duty of these individuals is far greater). Islam strives to improve all types of people: the cowardly and the brave, the stingy and the

generous, and the challenged and the intelligent. However, given the seriousness of *da'wah* work, we need to look for people possessing high moral values (such as honor, bravery, valor, patience, determination, fairness, and selflessness). We need to search for high caliber people who are capable of paving the way for successful *da'wah* work. This does not mean that such people are infallible, for it is only human to err. Such high caliber *da'wah* workers prefer the public interest to their personal interest, the essence to the form, and the inner qualities to the outward appearance. Furthermore, they live up to their principles whatever the difficulties may be. Despite any dangers, they adhere to their ideals until they depart this life and return to their Lord. The more such high moral people we engage, the more successful the work will be.

We are Only a Group of Muslims: We believe that any Islamic group, party or *da'wah* movement is merely a group of Muslims and not *The Muslim Group*. The value of each one of them depends upon the types of ideas and concepts that they adopt and the real results they achieve. It is quite dangerous for any single group to consider itself as the “chosen” group for the Muslims. Cooperation between groups is essential for more successful *da'wah* efforts.

Cooperation and Goodwill – The Motto of Al-Manār Journal: We cooperate with all people in a spirit of fraternity and goodwill, and we find acceptable excuses for those who have different opinions. This is in compliance with the famous rule coined by Shaykh Muhammad Rashid Rida which he adopted as the motto of *Al-Manār Journal*: “We cooperate in what we agree upon and tolerate one another in what we disagree upon.”

The Good and the Best: Muslims make different juristic and *da'wah* choices that vary following their different circumstances, understanding, and academic levels. It is by no means

correct to impose one's opinion or choice on others even if one believes that one's opinion or choice is the best and the most correct. It would be more beneficial to agree on a good choice than to disagree on a better choice, and to cooperate with one another regarding a good choice rather than to argue endlessly as to which form of cooperation is the best.

The Bonds of Comradeship: Sisterhood and brotherhood is one of Islam's fundamentals and a basic principle of unity in *da'wah* work. Making comradeship prevail is both pleasing to Allah and it can also lead to victory. Conversely, neglecting such bonds is displeasing to Allah and leads to disunity, division, and breakdown of Ummatic oneness.

Da'wah workers are required to attach due importance to bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood in theory and practice, and avoid whatever opposes it. Nurturing such strong bonds creates love and affection amongst Muslims, gives them assistance and support and helps them achieve success. Lack of strong bonds only leads to discord, disunity and defeat. Allah stresses the bonds of brotherhood in the Qur'an and stresses reconciliation, saying:

All believers are but brethren. Hence, [whenever they are at odds,] make peace between your two brethren, and remain conscious of God, so that you might be graced with His mercy. (49:10)

Team Spirit: We aspire to inculcate a team spirit among all *da'wah* workers and deepen the practice of engaging in collective endeavors. This requires an appreciation of the efforts of the pioneers and their previous achievements, and the promotion of effective communication across generations. By doing so, we are bound to benefit from both the wisdom of the elderly and the enthusiasm and vitality of the youth. Team spirit gives precedence to public interest over personal interest, supports civilized means to prevent problems and differences before they occur, provides the capacity to find the best solutions for problems and

establishes administrative and financial justice amongst all callers to Islam. Team spirit also reinforces a unity of methodology, and ensures that *daʿwah* workers are all united in both their goals and means. Such a spirit inculcates the value of diversity from within the framework of unity.

Individual and Collective Cooperation: The overall concept and value of cooperation is applicable to both the individual and collective levels. Individual *daʿwah* workers are encouraged to cooperate with each other, and complement each other's efforts. Similarly, and on a more collective level, Islamic *daʿwah* organizations ought to cooperate with one another to ensure successful efforts on all fronts.

6. TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The Value of Transparency ... The Dangers of Secrecy: Islam begins with the "proclamation" (*shahādah*) that there is only One God, Allah, and that Prophet Muhammad is His Messenger. Islam places great value on transparency and openness, as is evident in its premise of the *shahādah*'s public declaration. *Daʿwah* work must be public, open, and inclusive. We strongly warn against secrecy in Islamic work. We stress the fact that Islam is comprehensive and as clear as daylight; its principles and concepts are open and not a secret. Since individuals are naturally inclined to publicly declare the beliefs that they are proud of, public declaration of beliefs adds strength to these beliefs; furthermore, people favorably respond to concepts that are clear, sound and publicized. They tend to have an aversion to concepts that are distorted, deviant and secret.

Furthermore, secrecy stirs suspicion and distrust. Mistakes made in secret can do more harm to those people who make them than they do to others. The attempt to hide one's mistakes makes the mistakes even worse. Those mistakes made in the 'darkness' where they cannot be seen grow larger as opposed

to mistakes made in public, for these can be spotted and rectified when seen by other people. However, we recognize that there may exist special circumstances where workers choose to go underground in countries under oppressive and autocratic regimes.

The Importance of Accountability: Accountability is a fundamental Islamic principle and a civilized practice that must be observed and carried out particularly in *daʿwah* work, which is a collective duty. We need to promote frankness, constructive self-criticism, transparency, constant examination, reformation and rectification. In this way, we will recognize the advantages of our actions and be able to retain and even increase them. We will also recognize and avoid repeating the mistakes of our dealings. Human efforts are generally subject to both right and wrong but accountability will help tremendously in improving the outcome of our efforts.

Some Islamic workers mistakenly believe that they are not responsible for their failures in *daʿwah*. They seem to ignore the importance of evaluation and accountability. Injustice pervades in the absence of accountability, as workers who make a positive difference can be equated with workers who cause problems.

Daʿwah workers should fulfill the criteria of sincerity, goal orientation, and proper performance. The efforts of *daʿwah* workers who fulfill these criteria will certainly be appreciated and their mistakes will understandably be forgiven. However, if one or more of these criteria is missing, then their efforts will be in vain, and they should be held accountable for the unpleasant outcome.

Transparency and accountability reinforce the credibility and legitimacy of the message and its upholders. In both Muslim and non-Muslim countries, transparent efforts, coupled with evaluation and accountability, build trust, answer attacks on Islam, and strengthen bonds among *daʿwah* workers, and between them and the general public to whom they direct their efforts. In addition, transparency and accountability have

proven merits and benefits for organizational and collective work, and help avoid pitfalls and prevent shortcomings.

7. INSTITUTIONAL WORK

Daʿwah is a monumental task, and it is an obligation on Muslims to ensure the spread of the Islamic message to non-Muslims, and to correct the understanding and proper implementation of the religion among Muslims. Such a task cannot remain in the realm of individual effort. The collective nature of the duty of *daʿwah* necessitates organization and institutionalization of the efforts to maximize the results. *Daʿwah* organizations need to ensure, however, that such collective work remains guided by the Islamic frame of reference and the fundamental principles espoused by the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

Between the Official and Grassroots Daʿwah Work: Official *daʿwah* work is work undertaken by government bodies, while popular or grassroots *daʿwah* work is work conducted by non-governmental groups. Regrettably, there has been some distrust, suspicion, and hatred between the governmental and non-governmental groups. We need to remember two important facts: (a) None of them is absolutely right or completely wrong; each one has a certain percentage of right and wrong, and (b) the two may exchange places sometimes, the popular becomes official and vice versa. Thus, what is required is that both parties make concerted, sincere efforts to build bridges of trust, understanding, and cooperation, for *Daʿwah* work is everyone's responsibility.

Once this is done, both parties will reap numerous benefits, otherwise they may suffer a series of troubles and even disasters. This is not a simple task at all, but it is by no means impossible. Due to its great significance, we are required to make concerted efforts in this regard.

Starting from Where Others Left Off: Institutional work is most

productive when it is strategized and systemized. We need to start from where others left off by building on their experiences. Never can an organization, center, school or worker engage in any activity without relying on others' experiences. It is through such collaborative efforts that a project can be efficiently and productively implemented, thus saving time and resources. Contemporary workers are not the first to serve the religion of Allah, nor will they be the last ones to carry out this noble task of serving humanity for the sake of God.

Islamic Research and Daʿwah Institutions: Islam is valid in all places and at all times. It helps us solve all new problems. Therefore, we call upon Muslim scholars and jurists to study and suggest appropriate solutions to our problems through various research institutions. A number of prominent Islamic research institutions throughout the world have done a tremendous job in *daʿwah* efforts and in answering contemporary questions that commonly arise. Such institutions include Fiqh (Jurisprudence) academies, Iftā' (Religious Edicts) Councils, think tanks, and unions of Muslim scholars, among others.

Establishing these and other research institutions is of paramount importance, and we hope that these institutions will cooperate with one another for maximum benefit. They need to perfect their work by involving specialists in the various disciplines of knowledge (including the medical and physical sciences) and strive for more efficiency and credibility. *Daʿwah* workers need to consult these research institutions on matters of jurisprudence (fiqh), rulings, (fatwa), Islamic doctrine (*ʿaqīdah*), independent reasoning (ijtihad) and the rule of law (Shariʿah).

Respecting Specialization: We ought to seek the opinion of qualified scholars in religious matters and consult other experts in their respective fields of specialty. There may be some who excel in the field of *daʿwah* but are not qualified enough to issue legal verdicts or edicts, nor are they specialized in a particular technical profession, like medicine, or economics, or information

technology. Institutional work benefits measurably from division of labor and specialization, leading to more productive and constructive *da'wah* efforts.

Relationships Among Islamic Organizations: Islamic organizations should deal with one another with the aim of complementing one another; if this is not possible, then to coordinate their activities, if this is not possible, then the aim has to be to cooperate with one another; if this is yet not possible, then respect and coexistence should be achieved, otherwise everyone will lose. The bottom line has to be avoiding confrontation at any cost if all of the above fails to materialize.

Consultation (Shūrā): We call all Muslims to adopt the principle of consultation (*shūrā*), to encourage critical thinking and innovation and to respect the opinions that both agree and disagree with theirs. We recognize everyone's right to freedom of thought and expression, while maintaining that everyone should honor and adhere to decisions agreed upon by the reputable parties (unless they violate the principles of Islam). For a decision to be right, it has to be taken by the appropriate authority, which requires that all information and facts are available and that all deliberations are honest, objective and trustworthy. Consultation is a collective effort, and must be exercised with tolerance and respect for variance in opinion. Consultation is highly encouraged in Islam, and it is incumbent upon Muslims to consult with one another, as stated in the Qur'an: "and who respond to [the call of] their Sustainer and are constant in prayer; and whose rule [in all matters of common concern] is consultation among themselves;..." (42:38). Allah ordered the Prophet Muhammad to consult with his companions, while emphasizing the value and importance of leniency, respectful speech, and consultation to collective efforts:

And it was by God's grace that thou [O Prophet] didst deal gently

with thy followers: for if thou hadst been harsh and hard of heart, they would indeed have broken away from thee. Pardon them, then, and pray that they be forgiven. And take counsel with them in all matters... (3:159)

Consultation (*shūrā*) is to be practiced on both the individual and collective levels. On the institutional level, *shūrā* provides for better understanding, strengthens team spirit, and reinforces unity of thought and methodology. Decisions and planning made in consultation are more prone to be sound and correct.

Avoiding the Facade of Figureheads: We need to take all reasonable precautions to ensure that *daʿwah* work does not have dual authorities, an apparent front one (which serves as a mere facade) and a hidden one (which plays a real role, controls everything and manipulates the apparent authority). In such a case where dual authorities exist, the hidden authority makes decisions from behind and dictates them to the publically apparent authority, or the hidden authority creates a situation whereby it forces the apparent authority into acting according to its wishes. This form of manipulation contradicts the principles of *daʿwah* work, particularly the principle of consultation (*shūrā*), and bestows legitimacy on illegitimate decisions. In essence, it constitutes a kind of dictatorship.

A dictatorship in religious matters is far worse than a dictatorship in worldly matters, for the former bestows religious legitimacy on anything it tends to control. To make matters worse, this situation gives the secretive authority the chance to treat others arrogantly and with contempt. All this causes the apparent authority to look at the hidden one with spite and to be placed in a weak position before their own followers. This may lead to enmity and hatred and eventually to defeat and frustration. *Daʿwah* work has paid dearly for such practices.

Peaceful Changing of the Guards: *Daʿwah* workers have to devise a proper mechanism to appoint and remove leaders,

particularly on the institutional level. Leadership change must occur in a systematic, satisfactory, loving, and orderly manner. This will prevent hatred; get rid of divisions; put an end to idleness and inactivity; create an opportunity for reformation and creativity; provide chances of further communication across generations; train the largest possible number of potential leaders; deepen team spirit; and engender respect for institutional work.

Financial Self-Sufficiency: We call for the establishment of financial self-sufficiency and reliance on private resources as far as possible, because donations do not constitute a guaranteed and stable source of income. Normally the best way is to set up endowment funds (*waqf*) depending on the available resources and prevailing circumstances. Self-sufficiency serves for more objective and sound efforts that are protected from influence of donors and financiers. Such self-sufficiency helps promote and focus on the ultimate and sincere objectives of *da'wah*.

Conclusion

THERE is no force on the face of the earth with as much potential as the force that you, Islamic workers, have that can possibly save humanity. Therefore, rise to the lofty level of your ideals so as to qualify for the leadership of humanity through service.

Your responsibility is universal and comprehensive. Your religion contains a message of mercy, justice and peace; and the style of life to which you are calling removes all shackles, and alleviates all forms of hardship from human life. Islam commands you to treat all types of people with dignity, kindness and respect.

Thus, you need to understand your mission properly. You must realize that you are callers to the truth, not judges over people's actions; reformists, not rebels; builders, not destroyers; and messengers of mercy, not hatemongers. You need to treat people with love and mercy, and be patient, just as a father treats his children and a physician treats his patients.

When you follow this guidance afforded to us by the Qur'an and the Sunnah, you will benefit your surroundings; community, the Muslim Ummah, and humanity as a whole, for the dearest to Allah are those who are the most helpful to His creation. People will then voluntarily turn to you to lead them to goodness, light and peace. The servant of people is their leader.

Discussing ideas openly through dialogue is the best method to ensure careful examination of what is right or wrong. It is for this reason that we present this memorandum before committed and enlightened people who are involved in *da'wah* work so that we may benefit from their opinions.

It is now left to every *da'wah* worker, Islamic organization and society to adopt any principles they deem appropriate to

their special circumstances and to make any modification necessary. The principles espoused in this book stem from the individual and collective experience of *da‘wah* work, and are general guidelines and values that we believe ought to be espoused by every Muslim. Incorporating them in the right context and environment will be, by Allah’s Will, highly beneficial.

Finally, we urge *da‘wah* workers to remain mindful of the essential objective of *da‘wah*, that is the service of Allah and His religion and Creation, and to utilize to the best of one’s ability this guidance available to us through Islamic principles, values, and fundamentals. Ultimately, we derive our unity and strength from our frame of reference: *tawhīd*, and dedicate our deeds and efforts to espouse and manifest our true belief in our *‘aqīdah*.

*We pray to Almighty Allah to guide our steps, to grant us assistance,
help us do whatever deed is well-pleasing to Him and to create
opportunities for us to serve Him better.
Indeed, He is able to do all things.*



Glossary of Terms

Ḥukm (sing.: *Ḥukm*): Religious rulings.

ʿAqīdah: Belief, the substance of a belief; creed.

Dāʿiyah (pl. *Duʿāt*): Lit. Caller, a person who calls or invites. Refers to Muslims who practice *daʿwah* in inviting others to the path of Islam. More specifically, *duʿāt* refers to individuals or groups who formally dedicate their time and profession to *daʿwah* work.

Daʿwah: Invitation; call. Refers to the duty of Muslims to invite or call others to return to the straight and natural path of Islam or submission to God willingly. *Daʿwah* is addressed to both Muslims and non-Muslims.

Faqīh (pl. *Fuqahāʾ*): Literally, one who has a deep understanding of Islam, its laws, and jurisprudence; a jurist.

Fiqh al-Wāqīʿ: Literally, jurisprudence of contemporary reality.

Fitrah: Nature, natural disposition, or natural instinct. The natural constitution with which humans are created. Muslims consider Islam the religion of *fitrah*, in the sense that human beings are created with a natural inclination to believe and submit to God willingly.

Ḥadīth (pl. *Ḥadīth*): The verbalized form of a tradition of the Prophet, constitutive of his Sunnah. A hadith narrative is divided into two parts: the *Isnād* (chain of transmission) and the *Matn* (content of the hadith). A saying of the Prophet Muhammad.

Iḥsān: Doing one's action to perfection or excellence. In the religious context, *iḥsān* is the striving to excellence in worship as the Prophetic Hadith explained: "*Iḥsān* is for Muslims to worship God as if they see Him, and although they cannot see Him, they undoubtedly believe that He is constantly watching over them."

Ijtihād: Literally, striving and self-exertion; independent reasoning; personal intellectual and disciplined analytical thought. Ijtihad involves the interpretation of the accepted juridical sources of Islam, inference of legal rulings from them, or giving a legal verdict or decision on any issue on which there is no clear specific guidance in the Qur'an and the Sunnah, while taking into consideration the variables imposed by the fluctuating circumstances of society.

Ikhlāṣ: Sincerity and dedication. The act of being loyal and devoted.

Glossary of Terms

Istikhlāf (Also *Khilāfah*): Stewardship, vicegerency; successorship. Human beings are referred to as the *khulafā'* or stewards of God on earth.

Jāhiliyyah: Literally, ignorance. Refers to the Pre-Islamic era of the Arabian Peninsula.

Khalīfah (pl.: *Khulafā'*) *Khilāfah*: Steward, vicegerent; successor. Office of the head of the Muslim state. Also the designation of the political system of the Muslim state after the Prophet. The word *khalīfah* was used after the death of Prophet Muhammad to refer to his successor, Abū Bakr, as head of the Muslim community. Later it came to be accepted as the designation for the head of the Muslim state. Anglicized as caliph. (Also see *Istikhlāf* above).

Madhhab (pl. *Madhāhib*): Literally, way of going. Islamic School of thought, jurisprudence.

Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah: The intents or higher objectives of Islamic law, objectives and purposes.

Marjī'īyyah: Frame of reference, reference of authority.

Maṣlahah: (pl. *Maṣāliḥ*). Consideration of public interest. It is generally held that the principal objective of the Shari'ah and all its commandments is to realize the genuine interest or benefit of the people.

Mithāq: Lit., Covenant, or pact. Stemming from the Arabic word *Wathīqa*, delineating placing confidence in someone or something like a written document.

Saḥwāb: Lit., awakening. In the modern Islamic context, it refers to the Islamic Awakening, or revivalist efforts that found their beginnings in the 20th century and have been stimulated by a range of events and conditions that engulfed the Muslim world throughout the century, leading to a renewed sense of religious identity and religiosity.

Sharī'ah: Literally, path; way. The body of Islamic law.

Shūrā: Mutual consultation.

Sīrah (pl. *Siyar*): Biography, also used to refer to books written about the life of the Prophet.

Sunnah: Literally, a clear path or beaten track. Refers to the example of Prophet Muhammad, which consists of all that he said, did, approved of, or condemned. It is a source of Shari'ah and a legal proof next to the Qur'an. The Sunnah may corroborate a ruling that originates in the Qur'an, or may consist of an explanation or clarification of the Qur'an, and may also consist of rulings on which the Qur'an is silent.

Tajdid: Renewal, revival of religion on the basis of the fundamentals of Islam.

Taklīf: Lit., commissioning; Delegating of trust or obligation.

Taqlīd: Lit., imitation. The uncritical adoption or imitation of a particular scholar or school of thought.

Glossary of Terms

Ta'ṣīl: Lit.: grounding or rooting. An Islamic approach and methodology to corroborate the 'Islamic basis' on a contemporary matter. The *Arabic-English Lexicon* by E. W. Lane does not offer an equivalent translation but an explanation for *Ta'ṣīl*. It states: "He made it to have a firm, or fixed, root, or foundation, whereon another thing might be built." "The Islamic basis."

Tawḥīd: Lit., to unify. The Islamic concept of *tawḥīd* is the principal doctrine and foundational creed of the Oneness of God, the worship of the One and Only God, monotheism.

Ummah (pl: *Umam*): Community, nation. Specifically, the community of believers or the universal Muslim community.

ʿUmṛān (v. *yuʿamir*): Civilization building; prosperous human development.

Uṣūl al-Fiqh: Principles, fundamentals of Islamic jurisprudence, philosophy of law; the methodology of deriving laws from the sources of Islam and of establishing their juristic and constitutional validity. *Aṣl* (pl. *Uṣūl*): Root, origin, source; principle.

THE culmination of over half a century's work and experience, this invaluable booklet outlines a set of essential principles taken from the Qur'an and the Sunnah which every Muslim, and in particular those inviting to Islam, ought to exemplify on both personal and institutional levels.

Inviting to the Divine message is a duty incumbent upon all Muslims, a trust (*amanah*) and a fundamental aspect of our vicegerency on earth. Therefore to take a pledge of honor to carry out *da'wah* work to the best of one's ability, guided by the Qur'an and the Prophetic methods, is tantamount to worship. To do so we need to embody the values, morals and ethics espoused in this booklet. We also need to take a pledge of honor to promote, facilitate and encourage cooperation, tolerance, respect and understanding among all people.

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ISBN 978-1-56564-659-9