

Towards Convincing Proselytizing

Friday Sermon Presented by

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Calling to the Exalted Allah, as well as clarifying the method of the true Message, and indicating the straight path the Holy Qur'an explained and our Master, Muhammad (PBUH) detailed, is not restricted to the 'People of the Turbans' only. It is rather the task of every Muslim who reacts with Islam. Consequently, it is unfitting to privilege only the 'People of the Turbans' with proselytizing.

Some other children of Islam, who love Islam and adore it, and realize that it represents the balance of justice that guides all humanity, have the illusion that they are exempted from calling to Allah .

Certainly, proselytizing should be the task and main constant concern of every Muslim who interacts with his religion. However, the one who interacts with Islam should call to his religion wherever he is, and in any circumstances he lives in. But the question is how much calling to Allah is well-balanced, wise, sound and convincing, for the one who interacts with Islam might, knowingly or unknowingly, make people avert from Islam due to his calling to Islam in an inappropriate way .

Hence, in this blessed hour, while we are calling to Allah, I'd like to deal with some important points that help us to have a wise, sound and convincing proselytizing.

1- We have to proceed from the Holy Qur'an :

This can be achieved by prudent reading. There is great difference between the one who calls to Allah depending on his own opinion and presents multiple interpretations, and the one who reads the Holy Quran with meditation and consideration, and

then understands it and makes the starting point of his calling derived from his interaction with the Holy Quran.

2- talking about giants and great men needs long explanation, but the only righteous man who is not attacked by falsehood, neither from before him nor from behind him, is our Master, Muhammad (PBUH)

May Allah have mercy on Imam Malek (Imam of Dar Al Hijrah), who used to sit near the tomb of the Prophet (PBUH) in Medina and say: "We are all liable to err, except for the owner of this tomb".

We can select some good examples from our righteous predecessors if we want to weigh and judge matters by the balance that never errs. It is to talk about the one who should always be present in our minds, the one whom we believe to be righteous, good and distinguished, namely our Master, Muhammad (PBUH). Studying the biography of the Prophet (PBUH) and his honored personality as mentioned in the sound Sunnah and the fixed related news, should be the basis in our calling to Allah so that it substitutes the dazzling context that most people are used to doing.

3- We should not address anyone before we know and understand him, for prefabricated moulds are not expressive of wisdom, nor of the good understanding of the Mission.

I have formerly insinuated to the Exalted Allah's words:" Thus have We made of you an Ummah justly balanced, that you might be witnesses over the nations" (Al Baqarah, 133).

How can one be a just witness over people (not a false one), unless he is well acquainted with their affairs and comprehends their circumstances?

This necessitates knowledge of each addressee we have to direct our speech to.

If we understand well this kind of speech, our words will be commensurate with his readiness.

If you follow up the Prophet's speech (PBUH) on different occasion, you will find varied speeches that suit every readiness.

His speech (PBUH) to the pagan was unlike that to the people of the Book; nor was his speech to the people of authority, the

people of high position or those who were wealthy, like his speech directed to the weak. The content of the speech is one, but the method is commensurate with the addressee.

4- We should all train ourselves to relinquish boring repetition:

This is a crisis that most people suffer from today. They do not hear something new. They have to listen to boring repeated speeches due to the perpetuation of non-reading, and due to the lack of dialogue with practical scientific varied types of readiness.

The one who does not accept the dissenter and the consenter in his dialogue, will help in keeping the crisis of boring repeated speech go on.

-5We have to quit calling to ideal images in our proselytizing. Such images are improbable to be realized on all levels, namely, in the rites of worship, in dealings, and in all circumstances.

Certainly, ideal images attract the congregation because they deal with superstitious types of heroism that hardly exist and are difficult to achieve. We may find some incidents in our history about a state that one of the distinguished had experienced in his long life, so some exploit this incident to change it into a perpetual phenomenon, though it was a temporary matter that happened on a specific occasion.

Islam has taught us objectivity and realism. The one who reads the instructions of Islam can find that they are realistic and objective. Moreover, Islam does not deal with man ideally. Haven't you read the Exalted Allahs' statement: "On no soul doth Allah place a burden greater than it can bear" (Al Baqarah, 286).

Isn't this one of the examples of objectivity ?

The Holy Qur'an might have addressed us saying: "Never make a mistake", but it rather said: "For Allah loves those who turn to him constantly" (Al Baqarah, 222). Consequently, every one of us becomes ready to absorb the mistakes of the others.

There are some who fish in troubled water in the name of proselytizing. This is not the nature of preachers, because the preacher accepts reality as it is, and realizes that the only infallible, unerring person is our Master, the prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Here is Abu Bakr As Siddiq standing on the podium when he was entrusted with caliphate saying: "If I am right, that will be from Allah, and if it I err, that will be from myself and from the devil."

Omar (ABPWH) who became the Caliph after Abi Bakr, was opposed by a woman while he was delivering a speech on the podium in the mosque. She considered him mistaken and mentioned a Qur'anic verse that opposed his speech, however, he said: "A woman is right, and Omar is wrong."

Talking about idealism makes man frustrated. Thus, he looks at himself as a weak person who is unable to realize the principles of Islam, in spite of the fact that Islam absorbs all people and deals with reality in wisdom.

Listen to the following tale mentioned in As Sahihain. Once, one of the Companions of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) came to Prophet crying, and said: "Oh Messenger of Allah, I am perished". The Prophet (PBUH) asked him: "What have you done?" The man said: "I slept with my wife while I was fasting in Ramadan". The Prophet (PBUH) said: "Manumit a neck". The man said: "I cannot afford it". The Prophet (PBUH) said: "Fast for two months". The man said: "Haven't I done what I have done but in fasting?" The Prophet (PBUH) said: "Give charity". The man said: "I have nothing to spend in charity". The Prophet (PBUH) said: "Then sit down and wait, for someone may give us subsistence to spend it in charity, so that we give it to you."

When charity was received, the Prophet (PBUH) gave the man a big pot to put the charity in it to spend it on the poor. The man said: "Whom shall I give the charity to, for there is no poorer man than me in Medina."?

The Prophet (PBUH) laughed and said: "Take it all for yourself."

How far are these from the arrogant who are unable to achieve one per thousand of what they say. They rather depend on the proverb that says: "The higher the price is the more profit it brings."

Literary and historical production in our history is full of exaggeration. It is said: "The best poetry is the most lying one".

This statement is commensurate with the exaggerating nature of literature. But, the scientific method we need today, especially after the spread of ignorance and superstitions, is the objective scientific method on which research depends .

Enough of superstitions ..., enough of ignorance We have to go back to the scientific method, for the world awaits us.

I'd like to refer briefly to some points in the objective scientific method, namely:

- 1In his research, the researcher should consider himself in an attempt to achieve the desired results. He should not say assuredly: "What I am talking about is an established fact ."

- 2He should distinguish between the infallibility of the text (while reading a verse from the Book of Allah), and the probable meaning he understands of the text .

- 3He should admit his limitations as man, for man cannot know everything, and the one who does not teach his disciples the knowledge of "I don't know", knows nothing about knowledge. The Exalted Allah said to His Beloved, our Master, Muhammad (PBUH):" They ask you concerning the spirit (of inspiration). Say: the spirit (comes) by command of my Lord: of knowledge it is only a little that is communicated to you" (Al Isra', 85.)

He also said: " And pursue not that of which you have no knowledge; for every act of hearing, or of seeing or of (feeling in) the heart will be enquired into (on the day of reckoning" (Al Isra', 36.)

- 4Research raises questions, and trains the others to answer them .

- 5It decreases the statement "should be", and makes the word "how" plenty .

- 6It gets away from hyperbole and exaggeration.

- 6We should keep away from generalization: We may monitor one of the anomalous phenomena that some quickly adopt to circulate, though if we make a census, we find that it constitutes only a small portion. We cannot be raised to the level of any phenomenon by generalization. How many the people fall in the mistake of generalization though they claim to belong to Islam.

Thus, they generalize the anomalous specific phenomenon and change it into a common one.

We cannot talk about generalization until we carry out full extrapolation (as the people of knowledge say). But who is able to reach this stage?

Moreover, the one who is unable to talk about everything in his lab, cannot talk about full extrapolation, i.e., he cannot monitor all phenomena.

Moreover, the highest stage that research can attain is only semi-perfect, for the perfect one is to know everything, and this belongs only to Allah Who knows every leaf that falls off its tree, and can see the black ant that creeps on the black rock in the dark night.

– 7We have to engender the spirit of hope, and refrain from spreading frustration, for our Ummah has enough of despair and frustration. Despair is the quality of the unbeliever, but the believer never loses hope of the mercy of Allah and never despairs of His Spirit.

Every person can employ something useful that exists in himself. There is no one among the human beings that is completely vicious. Goodness in man should be invested and be pointed to. Every one of us has something unique, and when this distinction is used in the context of integration, then we will see amazing results.

Accordingly, why do we spread frustration, and why don't we engender the spirit of hope?

-8We should not talk about the unseen only and what will happen in the Hereafter. This is what many people tend to do in the context of proselytizing. Some talk about the Hereafter and forget about the present contemporary affairs man lives in. Thus the preacher becomes out of his time.

Belief in the unseen is a present fact we interact with, but this does not mean that we forget about major affairs we live in in the present.

We have to talk about contemporary issues with which we interact every minute, such as ignorance, poverty, diseases and epidemics that spread in the world .

The World Health Organization recommends increased precaution to the sixth supreme level saying: "There is a global epidemic."

We have to face this issue and study it seriously. We have to talk about the disintegration which has begun to spread among us, about teaching and its crises, about women and their problems, about education, about childhood, etc....

Talking about the unseen should be present, because every activity of ours has its own mirror in the unseen world. But, is it reasonable to talk about the mirror and disregard the present activity?

– 9 Criticism is useful, but it should be objective and oriented towards reformation results. However, poignant criticism, which aims only at stinging and defamation, and is distanced from any practical educational goal of reformation, will be devastating.

If you put your hand on the disease for medical treatment, and provide the sick with treatment, you are considered wise. In the past, the physician was described as a sage because he does not put his hand on the disease to curse it. He rather does so to cure it..

- 10 Our emotional interaction with the ideas should be commensurate with the human nature. No doubt, each idea has an emotional reaction. But the catastrophe is: what do we seek if ideas vanish and nothing remains but emotions?

Do we seek crying, laughing, or practical behavior ?

We are satiated with crying and laughing. We want cultural building; we want to get out of our accumulated crises.

– 11 We have to take the initiative of stretching bridges with everyone, because the mentality of hermitages does not build an Ummah. When we know that our Master, Muhammad (PBUH) is sent a Mercy to the world: "We sent you not, but as a Mercy for all creatures" (Al Anbiya', 107), and that he stretched bridges with every one, we realize that every secluded person has a closed mentality similar to that of the hermit. Calling to Allah necessitates stretching bridges with everyone so that one calls the others to Allah, and so that he has dialogue with them. It does not matter whether they accept the call or not.

- 12 To reduce all the gaps between speech and action: we say a lot and do a little, and the Exalted Allah said :

O you who believe! Why do you say that which you do not do. Grievously odious is it in the sight of Allah that you say that which you do not. Do" (As Saf, 2-3.)

-13 If you desire to acquire mechanism of habilitation for you all, as well as for all the children of the Islamic Ummah; and if you desire to have the minimum degree of qualification (I do not talk about scientific legitimate specialization that is a collective obligation, the function of which is to issue legal opinions in critical issues, and needs a lot of research on the part of the owners of specialized for every single issue, I rather talk about the general habilitation with which every Muslim should be concerned) apply the following steps :

-1 Knowledge of strange vocabularies of the Holy Qur'an: As you are Arabic, you should be acquainted with the meaning of the Qur'anic words. I do not exclude the non-Arabs in this concern. Consequently, this requires reading the Holy Qur'an from the beginning till the end. If you do not know the meaning of a word, look it up in the lexicon, in a concise booklet of explanation, or in an exegesis book.

-2 Fundamental truths of jurisprudence and doctrine: I do not talk about details. I rather refer to what you need concerning the fundamentals of faith through which you know Allah, and the indispensable practical branches concerning prayer, transactions of buying and selling, and others, according to your needs .

-3 You have to be aware of your reality and understand it: Nowadays, novelties are plenty, so do not be like the one who lives in the past and talks about the present.

-4 You have to acquire the minimum degree of moral civility and spiritual promotion: We are not an Ummah of philosophy as much as of ethics, of faith, of refinement, of truth, of sincerity, and of turning to Allah.

-5 We should train ourselves to communicate with the others by taking one step towards them, and ask them to take a step towards us.

As I have mentioned above concerning the mentality of the hermit, we have to train ourselves to communicate with the others so that we live up to the responsibility of the Mission.

-6We have to interact with the contemporary challenges on condition that we do not get out of our Islamic fundamentals. Nowadays, there are great contemporary challenges on all levels: economic; social; political, behavioral; scientific; and practical. Consequently, we have to understand these challenges and react with them within the framework of our fundamentals.

As I have mentioned, ours is the religion of flexibility, but there are fundamentals that we have to preserve. So let us react with the contemporary challenges without departing from our fundamentals.

These are main points that, perhaps, we may change into practical mechanism. When we do that, we shall not talk about the problem of the 'People of the Turbans', for in our religion, there are no clergymen. We are all clerics.

Allahum..., guide us to You favorably, and make us from those who listen to wisdom and follow the best of it .

I say my words and ask Allah's forgiveness.