Synopsis of the Friday Sermon delivered by Ameer Mustapha Elturk on August 22, 2014

“Dawah with Wisdom and Good Preaching” – Part 1

It’s no secret that Muslims were not created to enjoy this world. Rather, we were created to serve the cause of Allah (SWT). We were produced to serve humanity. We have a gigantic prophetic task ahead of us. It is our responsibility to help humanity save themselves from doom on the Day of Judgment. Our salvation is not complete unless we reach out to people and convey the very same message Allah (SWT) enjoined upon His prophets. This is the work of dawah.

Dawah was the primary focus of all prophets and messengers of Allah (SWT). They called their people to the sole message, “Worship God, you have no other deities besides Him.” Muhammad (SAW) was specifically summoned to, “Call (O Prophet) unto the path of your Lord” (al-Nahl, 6:125). Although the address is directed toward Muhammad (SAW), by extension the address is to all Muslims for all time to come. Simply because Allah (SWT) is not going to raise another prophet after Muhammad (SAW) who, like his predecessors, called and invited people to worship the One God, One Lord.

It must be kept in mind that, unlike previous prophets who were sent to their own respective peoples and nations, Muhammad (SAW), the seal of all prophets and messengers, was sent to the whole of humanity, “We have not sent you (O Prophet) except to the entire humanity as a giver of glad tiding and a warner but most people do not know” (Saba’, 34:28). Similarly, unlike previous nations, the ummah of Muhammad (SAW) was raised to serve mankind, “You are the best nation produced for (the service) of humanity, you enjoin what is good and forbid the wrong” (Aal ‘Imran, 3:110).

Therefore, by and large, whatever Muhammad (SAW) was called on to perform or accomplish, is in essence and by extension a call intended for all Muslims and believers. “Call unto the path of your Lord with the Wisdom, the good preaching and argue with them in ways that are best. Surely, your Lord knows those who have strayed from His path and He knows those who are guided” (al-Nahl, 16:125).

Our task is to ensure that the final message, the Qur’an, reaches every person in the world. The good news is, the Prophet (SAW) said, “This affair will reach what is reached by the night and the day; and Allah will not leave a dwelling of a mud-brick or a camel’s-hair tent, except that Allah will cause this Deen to enter it – bringing honor or humiliation. Honor which Allah gives to Islam and humiliation which Allah will give to disbelief.”

A similar hadith from al-Miqdad al-Aswad states, “There will not remain upon the surface of the earth a mud-brick house or a camel’s-hair tent except that Allah will make the word of Islam enter, bringing both mighty honor and utter humiliation. Allah will either honor them by making them worthy of it and those whom He humiliates shall have to render submission to it.” Al-Miqdad (RAA) then commented, “The religion will then be entirely for Allah.”

The prophecy has indeed come true. Today, with the advent of the internet and social media, the name Islam has entered nearly every home in every continent. Unfortunately, its entry in most cases is not what one
would expect or like it to be. It is entering the homes of people through Fox news, CNN and other biased anti-Islam satellite channels among other outlets.

Islam is reaching every person, the business and lay person, the poor and the rich, the capitalists and the socialists, the intellectuals, educated, as well as the illiterate. Half of our job is done for us. What we are required to do is explain and demonstrate to them the true and authentic teachings of Islam. People must learn it from Muslims who understand and live the faith.

The ayah from surat al-Nahl quoted above, “Call unto the path of your Lord with the Wisdom and the good preaching,” commands us to reach out to every member of the society. The ayah does not only suggest to us the method by which we need to make dawah, it indirectly informs us who we must reach out to.

Every society, state and country is made up of the majority and the minority. The minority consists of the intellectuals and elite of the society. They are the brain trust, the movers and shakers. They are the pace setters, the ones who influence legislators and those in power. While the majority are ordinary people who simply follow the decision of the minority.

Both sectors of the society require dawah; the elite and intellectuals as well as lay people. The command, “Call unto the path of your Lord with the Wisdom and the good preaching,” becomes even more relevant in our strategic planning. Dawah with the Wisdom is reserved to the elite and intellectuals and dawah with the good preaching is meant for the lay people.

A distinction must be made between dawah “with wisdom” versus “dawah with the Wisdom.” Most translators prefer the translation “with wisdom.” Although, grammatically correct, a better translation is “with the wisdom.” The difference between the two is, in the first case, “with wisdom” is an indefinite noun (nakirah) which means any wisdom. Whereas, “with the Wisdom” the noun becomes definite (ma’rifah) and suggests only one wisdom, i.e. the Wisdom of Allah (SWT) the Almighty, the all-Wise, the wisdom of the Qur’an. “Ya Seen, and the Wise Qur’an” (Ya seen, 36:1,2).

The Wisdom of the Qur’an must reach the intellectuals and the elite in a subtle and clever way that they may understand the message of the Qur’an. This requires special skills and is not meant for everyone.

Whereas, dawah through “good preaching” may be catered to the masses. The lay people are essentially a clean slate that can be influenced by “good preaching.” Any Muslim with a basic understanding of the Qur’an and Islam may share with their fellow non-Muslims what we know of the truth that attracted millions of people over the centuries. The Prophet (SAW) instructed, “Convey on my behalf even one ayah.”

It will be difficult, however, to convince the elite, scholars and intellectuals who invested their lives studying and earning PhD’s in psychology, sociology, humanities and social sciences among other disciplines, the superiority of the Qur’an simply by quoting a few verses. This makes our dawah effort even more challenging.

The challenge has always been there. Centuries ago Islam was attacked by Greek philosophy based on logic. Had it not been for Imam al-Ghazali and Ibn Taymiah refuting those arguments with the Wisdom, Islam may not have reigned supreme.

We have to face the challenges of convincing the intellectuals head-on because, “God wants to establish the truth by His words and cut off the root of those who deny it, so that He might prove the Truth to be true and the false to be false, however much the criminals might dislike it” (al-Anfal, 8:7-8).

In a quick assessment of the present, it is clear that after the “Occupy Wall Street” movement, many conscientious intellectuals are in search of an alternative to the Western approach of democracy and capitalism. They are deliberating over the type of state they want to see - a socialist state or some other system. The ninety-nine percent are fed up with the lies and deception of the government, capitalists and corporations.

Capitalism as practiced today has proven to be a failure. It prefers the one percent over the ninety-nine
percent. Islam provides a solution that, if implemented, will solve the entire global economic crisis. The divine system works, if only intellectuals and economists paid heed to the Islamic economic system.

The concept of zakat is the best way to sustain a healthy and vibrant economy. This was proved during the reign of the second Caliph Omar Bin al-Khattab (RAA). An annual two and a half percent of one’s net worth is imposed on Muslims who meet the Nisab or zakat eligibility. The zakat money is spent mainly on the poor and destitute, welfare and administration.

The West may learn from the zakat system. Taxes don’t have to be thirty or forty percent of one’s annual gross income. Two and a half percent of one’s net worth is sufficient to sustain a healthy economy. Imagine taxing the rich and super rich 2.5% of their net worth. Imagine taxing Bill Gates 2.5% of his net worth of $76 billion.

Additionally, Islam forbids dealing with interest and usury. Such unfair dealing grants the lender a profitable risk free transaction while hardship is imposed on the borrower. Placards and posters were raised during the occupy Wall Street marches demanding justice. One placard read, “Let’s bank the Muslim way?” Wise choice. An interest based economy in essence widens the gap between the haves and the have-nots. The Islamic economic system on the other hand is intended to close the gap. The Prophet (SAW) instructed Mu’adh Bin Jabal (RAA) before he was sent to Yemen, “Take from the rich and return it to the poor.” “So that possessions do not circulate among those of you who are rich” (al-Hashr, 59:7).

Similarly, Western governments who pass laws and legislations that are clear violations of Divine principles are not benefitting society as a whole. Legislation that promotes evil and forbids what God has made lawful is repugnant to the natural disposition of man. The rate of depressed and anxiety-ridden individuals is spiraling out of control due to transgressing the boundaries of the Divine. Staying within the divine boundaries ensures happiness to everyone. “Whoever follows My guidance shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve” (al-Baqarah, 2:38).

Furthermore, the Western social system is a racist system that prefers whites over blacks. Despite the great advances won by those during the Civil Rights Movement, racial tensions continue to run high all across America, as most recently evidenced in Ferguson, Missouri. Islam teaches that all humans regardless of their origin or skin color, are brothers and sisters whose beginning can be traced back to Adam and Eve, created equal in the eyes of God.

The ninety-nine percent is ready for a change. It is the one percent who are not ready. Our dawah efforts must be directed toward the one percent who are resistant to change. The political, social and economic challenges must be met with the Wisdom of the Qur’an. Our duty now becomes: how do we extract the gems of wisdom of the Qur’an and convey the great principles and ideas with Western intellectuals in a way that is not preaching?

Intellectually gifted students need to be trained in all fields of social sciences, economics, political science, sociology, philosophy, psychology, etc. in order to disseminate the knowledge and wisdom of the Qur’an at the highest intellectual level in academia. It is important to note however, that one must filter secular knowledge through the Islamic lens in order to determine what is in agreement with Islam and what conflicts with its teachings to truly advance and contribute to society as a whole.

Today, western intellectuals have succeeded in neglecting the spirit in favor of the body; emphasizing the world herein over the hereafter and replacing God with materialism. In reality, Islam requires we place the utmost emphasis on the Creator, the spirit and the hereafter. The only way to succeed in this struggle of ideology is to have strong conviction, yaqeen, in the Creator.

This challenging task requires individuals who possess real faith (iman). One may possess conviction through the company of the righteous, practicing Islam and adhering to the sunnah of the Prophet (SAW),
which is sufficient only on an individual level. True change in the society however, must come about through conviction on an intellectual level through deep devotion to the Qur’an. This is the real jihad, “Strive hard against them with this Qur’an” (al-Furqan, 25:52).

Western Muslims are fortunate that religious freedoms as well as other freedoms such as freedom of speech and assembly are granted to them; in addition to that, Western Muslims have access to Western universities and institutions. We are part and parcel of the American experience, so rather than blending in and taking a backseat, raise your voices to the forefront and stand up for what is right. Let us make a profound change that yields economic prosperity, fair governance and social justice. Allah (SWT) says, “We shall show them Our signs on the horizons and in themselves until it becomes evident to them that it is the truth” (Fussilat, 41:53).

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1 The authentic hadith was narrated by Tamim al-Dariy [Sahih: Related by Ahmad (4/103), Ibn Hibban in his Sahih (no. 1631) and others. Shaykh Al–Albani authenticated it in Tahdhir–Sajid (p. 118)]

2 Musnad Ahmad