

Chapter 3

❖ The Freedom of Belief and Expression ❖

Albeit, by reflecting on the earlier discussions, the perspective of Islam on the freedom of belief as well as the freedom of expression is clear, since there are more emphasis these days in the political literatures of our country on the topic of freedom of belief and after that freedom of expression and press freedom, we will examine these two topics separately.

Some of the so-called intellectuals say: The freedom of belief and freedom of expression are among the rights and freedoms that are above the law, which no law has the right to set limit on. Every person in whatever circumstance, social system, value system, and religion he belongs to is free to choose whatever belief, thought or idea he would choose. And then he is also free to express this belief and thought, to propagate and discuss and engage in a dialogue with others regarding the same. He has equally the right to print and disseminate it to the society (freedom of the press).

This is something that has been accepted in the world today (or it is better for us to say that it is claimed that all countries of

the world have accepted it) and one of the requisites of the democratic nature of a government is this very issue. If in a country every person is free such that he could think whatever he likes, say whatever he likes, and write whatever he likes, that society is a democratic one, while the opposite is undemocratic. Nowadays, one of the problems of our Islamic system, they are saying, has something to do with this issue.

Freedom of Belief as an Affair beyond the Realm of Law

As what we have indicated, one of the freedoms which has been given much importance and chanted as slogan is the freedom of belief. Man is free to have whatever belief he is inclined with. No one has the right to insult the belief of others, or to condemn, prosecute and punish them on account of their belief. Of course, there are Muslim legal experts, both in Iran and other countries, who have come to the defense of the Islamic viewpoint in this regard, publishing numerous works on these topics.

What we are able to state as of the moment is that at the outset this question must be posed: Is “belief” [*‘aqīdah*] as a conviction and a personal affair related to the heart, in principle related to the matter of law [*ḥuqūq*], or not? Sometimes we want to express a belief or to make practical steps derived from it. If this is the case, this is no longer related to the freedom of belief; instead, it is freedom of expression or freedom of action. Belief is that which is in the heart and mind. Our question also is this: Is such a thing, in principle, related to the law, or not? In our opinion, the answer to this question is a negative one. The subject of law is the social behaviors, and legal laws are enacted for establishing order to the social relations.

Any affair that is purely individual and personal, and totally belongs to the private realm of individual life has nothing to do with law. This kind of affair is situated at the realm of ethics. It would possibly find belongingness in the ideological and moral

“must” and “must-not”, but the legal law is not enacted for it. An action can possibly be so abominable from the moral perspective, but in any case since it is a personal affair nothing has been written about it in the legal law books. As a personal and private affair, belief is not situated in the realm of law. Whether it is good or bad, correct or wrong, belief has nothing to do with law. The goodness and badness, or correctness and wrongness of a belief must be examined within the pertinent field. If a person believes in a superstitious and irrational affair—of course, it is not a rational act—yet, in any case, it is not related to law.

As such, to advance the proposition that legally speaking man is free to have whatever conviction he wants is incorrect and fallacious because the scope of law and legal rules is the social behaviors and relations while conviction is a personal and individual affair related to the heart. So, in the legal laws of Islam a law pertaining to belief does neither positively nor negatively exist:

﴿ لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ... ﴾

*“There is no compulsion in religion.”*¹

This noble *āyah* [verse] is a witness to the fact that since it is an affair related to the heart and soul, religion is not for compulsion and imposition. Conviction cannot be imposed. Belief cannot be created by force; coercion cannot change it either. Belief cannot be subjected to law such that we could express it “legally” or “legally” remove it from the mind and heart of human beings. Belief is based on reason. So long as the reason behind it exists, belief will also remain. If the reason

¹ *Sūrah al-Baqarah* 2:256.

behind it was altered, belief will also fade away. If the reason was proved false, the belief will also die out. Therefore, the question on whether belief has freedom in Islam or not is an irrelevant question because neither Islam nor any other legal system could positively or negatively formulate a law concerning belief. Yes, once the belief is expressed, propagated and disseminated, and put into action so as to draw the attention of others toward it, at the time it will enter the sphere of social action, and enacting legal law regarding it becomes possible. From then on, the discussion is on the freedom of expression, which we will examine.

The Freedom of Expression in the West: From Slogan to Reality

Before describing the viewpoint of Islam regarding the freedom of expression, it is fitting to take a glance at the condition of freedom of expression in the West. The truth of the matter is that freedom of expression in the West is merely a slogan. Its claimants have never practically accepted it as an obligation and they do not. Like many other slogans, this slogan is only a means to put pressures on countries that are not ready to abject surrender themselves to the capricious desires and unreasonable demands of the World Arrogance. If there is an issue, which is incongruous with their interests, there is no mention of freedom of expression. Of course, in a bid to deceive public opinion, they usually attempt to surreptitiously and clandestinely create these restrictions, not imposing them in a conspicuous and lucid manner. There are a lot of relevant instances. We will cite here two or three cases as examples.

I have personally a piece of reliable information that sometime in the past, the representative of the Supreme Leader (Āyatullāh al-‘Uẓmā Sayyid ‘Alī Khāmene’ī) in London had submitted a news item to the newspapers for publication. Although he was ready to pay the necessary amount, none of the

newspapers was ready to publish it. The pretext was that the news item was related to a speech of the Supreme Leader, which was not concordant with the British policy. After much effort, and many mediations and recommendations, one newspaper was finally willing to publish the news item. After its publication, the newspaper was immediately prosecuted. This is while they are regularly propagating to us that Britain is one of the most liberal countries with respect to the freedom of the press.

Another example is related to Mr. Roger Garaudy, the famous contemporary French researcher and thinker. He is considered one of the luminaries of France in this era. He is a philosopher as well as a historian who has written and published numerous books many of which have been translated into different languages. He recently wrote a book in which he proved as substantiated by evidence and documents that the massacre of millions of Jews during the Second World War in Germany and some other countries is a sheer lie.¹ The nature of the case was that if there is a controversy on this claim of Mr. Garaudy, another person or persons could present counter documents and evidence proving its inaccuracy. But the way they dealt with Mr. Garaudy in France, the “bastion of freedom”, was that they prohibited his book, summoned him in court, tried him, and convicted him to pay heavy fine.

More interesting was that a German publisher who translated into German and published his book was forced to sell his publishing company. Thereafter, the said publishing company was totally effaced and omitted from the list of German publishers. As if it did not exist at all; that it has no external

¹ In his book, *Les Mythes fondateurs de la politique israélienne* (The Founding Myths of Israeli Policy), Garaudy questions the holocaust as a historical fact and as a valid basis for the usurpation of Palestine, including Jerusalem, by European Jewry with no links to the land, and at best dubious historical claims to it. [Trans.]

existence. The crime they accused Professor Garaudy of was that he has offended the Jews throughout the world.

This is while the publication of a book such as *The Satanic Verses* is not prohibited not to mention the fact that it won literary award and was translated into tens of languages. The British government is also spending thousands of pounds daily for the security of the book's writer; for Iran and some Muslim countries they set the abolition of the religious edict [*fatwā*] against Salman Rushdie as the prerequisite for the improvement of diplomatic relations with Britain.

The Islamic View on the Freedom of Expression and the Press

First Exposition

The discussion on whether the press and mass media *must* be free or *must not* be free is included in the group of “must and must-not” cases and the class of values-related cases. Therefore, the discussion on this issue opens another fundamental discussion on the criterion and origin of determining values. There are those who believe that values are based on the desire and preference of people in every society. For this reason, one cannot talk about “must” and “must-not” as well as universal values that remain in every period and place. It is natural that on such a basis we have to determine in which period and in which society we are in so that we could know what to tell based on the desire and preference of people of that period and that society. Yet, in our opinion, this basis is unacceptable and we believe that all social values cannot be determined by means of conducting opinion survey and referring to the public demand. Instead, many of the values are described on the basis of the real interests of human beings. This is apart from the fact that all social values of a society must finally have a rational foundation

and must emanate from a coherent and logical system. On this basis, regarding the second question we will also naturally arrive at the conclusion that the “must” and “must-not” we are talking about in the context of the freedom of the press will be based on the values system of Islam in the same manner that this issue in any other values system in which it is discussed will be based on the same values system.

The values system of Islam is a pyramid-like system with a central point on top and its surfaces below are arranged together in such a way that their placement together would lead us to the top of the pyramid. The ultimate point of values on top of the pyramid is the same thing that we described as “nearness to Allah” [*qurb illa 'llāh*]. In the parlance of philosophy, we regard the “ultimate perfection” of man as “nearness to Allah”. All values in Islam are designed and arranged in such a manner that they are gearing toward the attainment of the ultimate perfection of man, i.e. “nearness to Allah”. In this manner, the criterion and standard of values are also specified. With the acceptance of this basis, every thing that has role in attaining perfection will find a positive value, and every thing that is a hindrance in the attainment of that perfection will be considered anti-value. Every thing that draws man toward Godliness is a “good” and desirable affair, and every thing that separates man from God and draws him toward materiality and bestiality is “bad” and will have a negative value. The Islamic government and state is also duty-bound to endeavor to preserve and promote values, and to negate and hinder the growth and spread of anti-values.

So, the single criterion in determining “must” and “must-not”, “good and bad” and “value and anti-value”, and philosophically speaking, “*ḥasan*” and “*qabah*” is whether or not it is along the ultimate perfection of man and nearness to Allah. Freedom of the press and mass media can be evaluated on the basis of the same ruling. If the press and mass media are effective for the perfection and nearness of man to God, it is a

desirable affair and will have a positive value, and if they cause separation from God and lagging behind in the path toward his perfection, it will be considered anti-value and in many cases it is incumbent upon the government to prevent them.

If we give opinion on the issue from the philosophical viewpoint, speech and statement are among the human acts. Although in the common usage and public culture it is possible that sometimes action is used in contrast to speech, philosophically, speech is actually a kind of action. In philosophy action means any movement performed deliberately and willingly by man. In sum, action means deliberate movement.

With such a perspective, action is sometimes done by hands, at other times by the tongue, at another by the mind, and at yet other times by the other senses. Now, the general ruling we mentioned about values will be conformed here. That is, human actions, both individual and social, must be placed within the framework of the value system of Islam, and they must not be inconsistent with the movement of man toward the pyramid summit of “nearness to Allah”.

Of course, not all values can be related to “law” in its general sense. One set of values is technically called “moral values”, which are beyond the domain of law. The moral values are also sometimes called religious values notwithstanding the fact that in one sense religious values can also be divided into two: legal values and moral values. The significant difference between ethics and law is that ethics is related to the domain of private, individual and personal lives of human beings while legal laws are enacted in the context of social actions of human beings and are responsible in organizing social relations.

Therefore, moral values, i.e. individual values, and legal values, i.e. social values and in other words, so long as an action—as per its philosophical definition we have just made—is done totally within the personal and private domain of individual

and having no social implication whatsoever, is not covered by the legal laws, and the state and government, which guarantees their implementation, has nothing to do with it. However, as soon as an action acquires social dimension and in some way finds relationship with others, the legal laws will encompass it and the political system and the government as the guarantor of their execution will take supervision of it.

Earlier, we have also pointed out that freedom of thought and freedom of belief, for example, are essentially not subjects of legal laws because belief and thought are purely personal and private affairs related to the heart. Yes, if the belief and thought wanted to be expressed by the tongue or to be published in the newspaper, magazine and book, this is no longer freedom of belief. Instead, it entered the domain of the freedom of expression, which is the subject of our present discussion. But regarding the freedom of expression and the press, we have to state that it is natural that they are covered by the legal laws, for speaking and writing are two kinds of actions, which are not only related to the person in question as they may have relations with other members of the society. In such an assumption, they are social actions and will be covered by the legal laws unless we assumed that a person writes something only for himself and delivering a talk only to himself. Of course, it is obvious that the point of the discussion, and in other words, the point of dispute on the freedom of expression and the press can never be such assumptions.

Speech and writing have social effects, and as such, they are social actions. Apart from that, it must be said that sometimes speech and writing have such social effects that other social actions do not have. The greatest social developments, whether in the positive dimension or negative dimension, have been the result of effects of these two actions. The most important instrument of the prophets who have been the greatest catalysts of change throughout history in the realm of social life of

humanity has been speech and talking. Many political and social tumults and disorders are also formed as a result of the influence of speech and writing. Nowadays, the role of the newspapers and periodicals in the different arenas of human societies cannot be denied. Thus, there is no doubt that speech and writing must be regarded as important social actions and that the state and government has the right in the set of legal laws to take into account particular rulings for them. It is for this reason that speech is a very important and influential action and it is never been a simple action. Islam has also opened a special account for speech, explaining many decrees and teachings about language and speaking.

Second Exposition

From the viewpoint of Islam, everybody is free to express his or her own belief unless doing so is inconsistent with the human interests. What is referred to as “interests” includes material and spiritual as well as worldly and otherworldly interests. This issue is similar to the case of a food manufacturer and pharmaceutical company that are free to produce any food or drug unless it is detrimental to the health of human beings. The mere probability of the existence of poisonous and dangerous food or drug in the productions of a producer will render its productions as banned. Now, you have observed that due to the effect of the spread of the mad cow’s disease in Britain,¹ other countries have banned all imported beef products from Britain. Here, there is no more discussion about free trade. Why? It is because with a probability, let’s say, of one in a million, there is a chance that on account of consuming contaminated meat one person will be harmed. Owing to this minute probability,

¹ See, for example, M.S. Ahmed, “Mad Cow Disease: ‘Proud UK’ can’t admit it is poisoning the world,” *Crescent International*, November 1-15, 1997, <http://www.muslimedia.com/archives/special98/madcow.htm>. [Trans.]

(import-export) transactions are stopped and no one in the world has also complained as to why you, for example, are acting against the spirit of free trade. If other things which are detrimental to the human health are also banned, no one will protest why buying and selling them are declared prohibited and their producers prosecuted, and no one either will say that it is against human rights and that human beings are free to produce whatever they like. They are free to produce so long as it is not harmful to others.

Those that exist in the world and are the focus of attention are usually these harms that will be inflicted on the human body and physique. But apart from physical harm, Islam also pays attention to the spiritual and religious damages. It acknowledges freedom so long as it is not physically and spiritually harmful to man. The people of the world usually regard justifiable the imposition of limit on freedom only on matters harmful to man from the material and physical dimensions, while paying little attention to cases that are damaging to the humanity from the spiritual and religious aspects; in the present period, it can be said that the latter has not been given attention at all. Alcoholic drinks that obliterate the human intellect, damage the heart and liver, and have numerous other harms, are not prohibited, for the people like them. They say that since the primary right of every human being is freedom in the choice of occupation, if someone wants to open a beverage shop you cannot and should not prevent him. If we would prevent such an occupation and job, we have behaved against human rights. Prior to the Revolution, by resorting to similar arguments there were hundreds of liquor stores in Tehran and other cities in our country. They were saying that the concerned person has freedom to sell liquor and of course, you are also free to buy as the demand of human rights is that he is free in his job and those who regard it as unlawful [*ḥarām*] and against the religion are also free not to buy.

Concerning *hijāb* [Islamic modest dress] they are also saying that it must be free. Anyone who wants to have *hijāb* can have it while anyone who does not like it can have without it. Freedom in the choice of attire and dressing is a primary right of human beings. You cannot compel anyone to have *hijāb*. This is against human rights! What is interesting is that such words are sometimes uttered even by those holding offices or partially holding offices in the Islamic system particularly in some ministries and government organs. Recently, they allegedly sought for the solution in such a manner that a non-government organization in a government building held a meeting for the removal of discrimination against women, and numerous foreign women without *hijāb* participated in this program. Perhaps, you have also seen in the newspapers its picture. They wanted to issue a decree and put to test the people so as to see to what extent the people are sensitive toward the religious laws and decrees. Thanks to God, because of the intense reaction that was shown by the people, they kept silent. So long as such people are present in this country, the other Islamic values will remain respected, and if some things have ever diminished, by the grace of God and His will, they will be redressed.

In any case, in the Western culture these freedoms do exist and are deemed respectable. They are saying that no law can set limit on them. We who are Muslims and observing the Islamic law have fundamental disagreement with them in this context. For them to merely say that they have been stipulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, for us the said declaration is not a divine revelation. They have stated and written them based upon their culture while we do act based also upon our own Islamic and religious culture, and we do not have any compulsion on the observance of matters contrary to the decree of God and His Messenger (ﷺ).

Non-spoken and Media Expression

An issue that must be given attention is that books, periodicals, media, films, the Internet, and in sum, anything that in one way or another performs the function of message transfer, in reality, are the diverse kinds of expression and communication. In order to communicate to others his thoughts, beliefs, inclinations, and anything transpires in his mind and heart, man makes use of language, speech and writing. Similarly, in a bid to communicate his message to others, he sometimes makes use of other body parts such as the eyes, eyebrows, hands, and feet. At other times, he does the same through drawings and paintings. All of them are means to do a single work, i.e. transfer of one's message to others. With such a perspective, it is very clear that the newspaper, magazine, book, theatre, film, caricature, radio, television, the Internet, etc. in reality are all "various kinds of expression", and every legal decree that expression and speech have can also be applied to them.

Therefore, if, for example, Islam states that insulting or embarrassing others, or divulging the secret of the private and personal life of others by means of talking and speaking are not allowed and in some cases they are to be prevented, prosecuted and penalized, doing the same acts through film, newspaper, book, and caricature has the same ruling and it makes no difference whether a person insults and embarrasses others by speaking, or does it by writing in a book or newspaper. Some think that the paper of the newspaper has sanctity such that by speaking you cannot baselessly attribute something unjustifiable to somebody, but without any supporting document and evidence and only based on the fact that "it is said" or "it is heard" a whole page of the newspaper can be filled with accusations against an individual.

Sometimes you talk to a person face to face from a close distance, expressing to him love and affection. At other times, you write the same expression of love, interest and affection in a

letter, which you send to the person concerned. Do these two forms of expression differ from each other? Does the face-to-face way an expression of love while the one inscribed on the paper an expression of hatred? Once the subject is the same, whether it is uttered by the tongue or inscribed by the pen on a sheet of paper, there is no difference. Yes, there is a difference between them, for once you write and publish it in the book and newspaper its effect is ten times, hundred times, or probably thousand times greater. If abusing, calumniating and accusing a person by means of speech face to face is bad, writing it in a letter or expressing it through a film and play is equally bad and unacceptable; it makes no difference (as far as the badness of the act is concerned). If embarrassing a person in front of others by means of speech is bad, embarrassing him in front of thousands and millions of people by means of publishing an essay in a book and newspaper is far worse. It is not that all at once the ruling would be changed and since it was in the newspaper, it is not only not bad but also it would be regarded as sacred.

Therefore, mass media in Islam has no ruling distinct from that of oral expression. If the “spoken” form of something has been morally deemed forbidden, expressing the same through other media is also morally forbidden. If its “spoken” form has been unlawful [*ḥarām*], its expression in any other means is also unlawful. If the “spoken” expression of something has been recognized by the legal law as not allowed and prohibited and penalty for doing so is determined, the ruling for expressing the same through other media is also the same. On the contrary, if “spoken” expression of something and spoken reaction to it is deemed obligatory [*wājib*], in the case of having facilities expressing the same through other communication media is equally obligatory.

The Responsibility of Expression

Of course, it should not be imagined that regarding expression (both spoken and via media) Islam is only concerned with prohibiting and restricting it. Such a notion is totally wrong. So many expositions and statements (both spoken and via media) is deemed permissible from the viewpoint of Islam, without restricting them howsoever. Many expositions and statements are not only permissible but they are also obligatory. Not only that they are obligatory; instead, some are among the most obligatory things. In a situation wherein the enlightenment of a society and its deliverance from the misguidance of unbelief [*kuf̄r*] and polytheism [*shirk*] and impiety depends upon the use of the tongue, pen, film, and any other media, it is incumbent upon man, should he be capable of, to use them all to express the truth and refute falsehood. Sometimes, this issue is so important in that to exercise dissimulation [*taqiyyah*]¹ is unlawful, and in the words of the late Imām Khomeinī (may his soul be sanctified), “To take action is obligatory unless there is nothing to convey”. The movement of Imām Khomeinī (*r*)²—this greatest socio-political movement of the twentieth century—commenced with the pen and speech. The Imām began his work by issuing

¹ *Taqiyyah*: prudential dissimulation of one’s true beliefs under conditions of acute danger to one’s life, property, or honor, a practice based on Qur’an, 3:28. As its observance depends on certain terms and conditions, it may be obligatory [*wājib*], recommended [*mustahab*], abominable [*makrūh*], or forbidden [*ḥarām*]. For a fuller discussion of *taqiyyah*, see Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi, *Taqiyyah* (Dar es Salaam: Bilal Muslim Mission of Tanzania, 1992), <http://www.al-islam.org/taqiyyah>; *Al-Taqiyya/Dissimulation*, <http://www.al-islam.org/encyclopedia/chapter6b.html>; and ‘Allamah Tabataba’i, *Shi’ite Islam* (Albany, N.Y., 1975), pp. 223-225, <http://www.al-islam.org/anthology>. [Trans.]

² The abbreviation, “*r*” stands for the Arabic invocative phrase, *rahmatullāh ‘alayhi, rahmatullāh ‘alayhā, or rahmatullāh ‘alayhim* [may peace be upon him/her/them], which is used after the names of pious people. [Trans.]

manifestos and delivering speeches.¹ He regarded speaking and “expression” for him as the most obligatory of all obligations and deemed himself “obliged” to do it. In some cases, his view concerning this “duty” is as what he said: If a person does not shout and voice out (the truth of the matter), he has committed major sin. In this connection, the Holy Qur’an also states:

﴿ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالْهُدَىٰ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا بَيَّنَّاهُ

لِلنَّاسِ فِي الْكِتَابِ أُولَٰئِكَ يَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّاعِنُونَ ﴾

“Those who hide the proofs and the guidance which We revealed, after We had made it clear in the Scripture: such are accursed of Allah and accursed of those who have the power to curse.”²

Those learned men who do not convey the truths of religion that God revealed for the people, do not resist against heresies and exercise voluntary silence for the sake of his personal interests are the subject of God’s curse and that of the angels and all those who are entitled to curse. In such cases as per the text of the Holy Qur’an, to express is among the most obligatory things and anyone abandoning it deserves the curse of those who are entitled to curse. What is meant by “expression” [*bayān*] is not solely “speaking”. Instead, it includes writing, radio, television, and any media that can possibly be used to spread the truth and

¹ For information on the role of Imām Khomeinī’s speeches in the victory of the Islamic Revolution, see *Kauthar: An Anthology of the Speeches of Imām Khomeinī Including an Account of the Events of the Islamic Revolution (1962-1978)*, Volumes 1-3 (Tehran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imām Khomeinī’s Works, Winter 1995). [Trans.]

² *Sūrah al-Baqarah* 2:159.

save human beings from deviation, ignorance and impiety. In such cases, to express is not only a “right” [*haqq*] but also a “duty” [*taklif*]. Enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong is one of the most important among them. Of course, there are different stages of its duty. One stage of the duty of expression is related to the people in general while another stage of which is for the individuals who have peculiar facilities, powers and capabilities. In this context, the highest stage of duty is shouldered by the Islamic state and government, which possesses the greatest power and facilities in this respect.

In principle, the general criterion of proving duty for the government is the same general ruling, which we discussed in relation to values. That is to say, what is related to the “interests of society” and along the path of the society in general toward “nearness to Allah”, it is necessary for the government to the extent of its capability to provide them as far as possible. And it is also incumbent upon the government to remove whatever is detrimental for the interests of society, both material and spiritual, and serves as an impediment for the realization of human perfection. For instance, if expression of an issue (whether orally or through any other means) is harmful for the welfare of society, its spread must be hindered in the same manner that distribution of poisonous, contaminated and perilous foodstuffs and medicines in the society shall be prohibited.

The Freedom to Ask

An issue that has remained untouched is that sometimes the motive of a person in expressing a subject is not in propagating and promoting it, but in posing the question. That is, as an academic or scientific discussion and subject he wants to make clear for himself this issue. What is the ruling for this issue from the viewpoint of Islam?

In this regard, we have to say that Islam places special importance and value to posing a question and academic

discussion, although it would be about the most crucial Islamic principles and teachings. Islam never suppresses raising a question and does not prohibit it. Not only does Islam not hinder posing a question but also it gives importance to giving the reply and clarifying the doubt to such an extent that if a person from the enemies of Islam at the middle of the battlefield wants to ask a question about the truths of religion Islam has ordered to provide the opportunities for him to come and get a due answer:

﴿ وَ إِنْ أَحَدٌ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ اسْتَجَارَكَ فَأَجِرْهُ حَتَّى يَسْمَعَ

كَلِمَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ أَلْبِغْهُ مَأْمَنَهُ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴾

*“And if anyone of the idolaters seeketh thy protection (O Muhammad) , then protect him so that he may hear the word of Allah; and afterward convey him to his place of safety. That is because they are a folk who know not.”*¹

But the point that must be given attention in this regard is that “there is a place for every talk and position for every point”. Question and inquiry are respectable, but they must be placed within the framework of the same general values system of Islam. In other words, the manner and circumstances of raising question should not be in such a way that it is harmful to others, make them lag behind in the ultimate perfection and make them deviate from the path of perfection. Religious and scientific inquiry and question must be posed in their proper place, and not that, for example, doubt would be raised before the assembly of schoolchildren or any other assembly that has no familiarity with the fundamentals of Islam and philosophical and scholastic

¹ *Sūrah at-Tawbah* 9:6.

matters. Anyone who has a question has to raise it at the academic centers and at the circle of pertinent experts at the religious seminary and other similar academic assemblies. And there is no problem for that. There is no problem either with scientific discussions on religious controversies provided that their particular requisites and etiquettes are properly observed. If it is so, apart from being not harmful, it also paves the ground for the growth and consolidation of the religious principles and precepts. But if a person does not observe the proper requirements and regulations, and asks the question in such a manner that it leads to the corruption of belief and deviation of others, he must be stopped in the same manner that distribution of any harmful item shall be checked.

Under the pretext of freedom in medical issues, can one spread any microbe in the alley and street?! This is while there is no problem and impediment in bringing the same microbe in the laboratory and before the experts for study and research on it. Not only that there is no problem but rather it is very important because out of studying it, the experts can discover the means to prevent its infection, to resist against it and to cure those who are afflicted with it, and thus, saving the lives of thousands and millions of people.

Intellectual and religious doubts are exactly similar to it. Raising them in the public opinion of society bears no result except heavy, and sometimes, irreparable and catastrophic losses. But raising them in the academic circle of pertinent experts will result in the further growth, blossoming and exaltation of thought, learning and religion.

