

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



A Prescription for Positive Progression

By Abdullah bin Hamid Ali

If the Prophet Muhammad – may Allah bless and grant him peace – was here with us today, would it matter to him if a person is called a Shiite? Would it matter to him if a person calls his self a Sunni, Sufi, or Salafi? Would it even matter if the person is a Jew, Christian, Zoroastrian, Buddhist, Agnostic, or Atheist before he decides that he should extend the invitation of Islam to any of them or make an attempt to treat a person’s spiritual or psychological ailments?

I’d think not, since all evidence would testify to the fact that the Holy Messenger of God saw all human beings as no more than *human beings*, some sicker than others, but all in need of some form of spiritual direction¹. Was it not God who said to him that “*And We have but sent you as a mercy for all the worlds?*”

¹ What further proves this point is that Imam Qadi ‘Iyad relates in his *Shifa* that once a Bedouin came to the Prophet (pbuh) seeking something from him, and he gave it to him. He then said to the Bedouin, “Have I done well to you?” The Bedouin responded, “No! And you have not been polite!” As a result, the Muslims became angry and stood to punish the Bedouin for his disrespect of the Prophet (pbuh). But the Prophet (pbuh) urged them to show restraint, entered his home, sent for the Bedouin, and then gave him something else. He then said, “Have I done well to you?” To which he replied this time, “Yes! So may Allah reward you good from a family and tribe.” Then the Prophet (pbuh) said to him, “Verily you said what you said. So there remains some rancor in the hearts of my companions because of that. So if you’d like, say in front of them what you said in front of me so that what is in their hearts leaves.” The Bedouin said, “I will do it.” So on the following day or afternoon, the Prophet (pbuh) came and said, “Verily this Bedouin said what he said. But after I gave him something else, he claimed that he was satisfied and please. Is this so?” He said, “Yes! So may Allah reward you good from a family and a tribe.” Then the Prophet (pbuh) said, “My likeness and the likeness of this one is the likeness of a man who has a she-camel that has wandered away from him. So the people pursued it. But they only increased it in flight. Then its owner called out to them, “Leave me alone with my she-camel! For verily I am more gentle with it than you are and more acquainted.” So he approached it from its front side, and then lifted up some weeds from the ground and beckoned it until it came and kneeled. Then he took hold of its saddle and mounted it. And surely if I had left you where the man said what he said and you would have killed him, he would have gone to Hell.” [‘Iyad, Al-Qadi Abu Al-Fadl. Al-Shifa bi Ta’rif Huquq al-Mustafa. 1 volume, 2 sections

[21: 107] And it was Muhammad (PBUH) who said, “I have not been sent as one who damns. Rather, I have been sent as an inviter and a mercy.” Then he said, “O Allah! Guide my people. For verily they know not”²

This man, the mercy for all the worlds, was instructed by his Lord in calling to His way to “*Hold to forgiveness, Command what is right, and turn away from the ignorant.*”[7:199].

It is related that when this verse was revealed, Muhammad – peace and blessing be upon him – asked the Angel Gabriel about its meaning. So he said to him, “O Muhammad! Verily Allah orders you to connect with those who sever ties with you, to give to those who deny you, and to forgive those who wrong you.”³

And it was this instruction given to him that led to the myriad accounts that portray his compassion for humanity, to the extent that his people’s attempts to kill him and efface any trace of his teachings from the world did not turn his mercy into rage, hatred, or vengeance. For this reason, when he was given his greatest victory - the Conquest of Mecca - he chose not to massacre those of his antagonists still inhabiting the city. Rather, he continued to keep at hindsight the loftier objective of winning the world for Islam. So he granted asylum to his archenemy, Abu Sufyan and those of his house, since his only objective from the very beginning was to purify God’s house of its idols, restore balance and justice to Arabian society, and to be let alone to preach God’s message to his people.

It is commonplace to hear Muslims proclaim, “Verily the most truthful of speech is the Book of Allah. And the finest of guidance is the guidance of Muhammad.” If this is so, then it would seem that the sour state of the Muslims as a whole – in spite of some productive factions - doesn’t truly reflect the reality uttered in this proclamation, since Muslims on all levels continue to be the main source of their own stigmata reflected in the eyes of the uninitiated throughout the lands.

Muslims are selling drugs and committing horrendous crimes in large numbers. Muslims in a number of American cities appear to be leading the charge in the sale of wine, spirits, and swine products. Many Muslim Imams in the West see themselves as dictatorial pseudo-caliphs who demand the emotional and financial support and trust of their congregations, but do very little to earn their trust and support. And the members of many congregations find every excuse not to support any positive Islamic project in spite of the scrupulousness of those spearheading it.

[1/83]. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1420/2000.] And this shows how much it meant to the Prophet (pbuh) to save people from the fire of Hell.

² ‘ibid [1/72-73].

³ ibid. pp. 71-72.

Angry youths all over the world are becoming more and more emboldened to take their own lives in the process of taking the lives of innocent people to achieve nebulous objectives. There is still much cultural bias and ethnic bigotry. And then there is the other kind of bigotry not spoken of very much. It is the bigotry committed by the underserved against the ‘underserved of the underserved’ - the incarcerated, drug addicts, drunkards, and those who served time for crimes that society deems as being most deplorable. All complain of tyranny, yet each one of us is a tyrant in some way.

If the finest guidance is the guidance of Muhammad (pbuh), then where are those who re-establish ties with those who sever ties with them, who give to those who deny them, and who forgive those who wrong them? Where are they?

But before I am imputed as being a Muslim libeler of the entire population of Muslims, let me say that I do acknowledge that there are and will always be in every age those who truly aspire for the ideal of the Prophetic Sunnah in word and deed. For the Prophet (pbuh) said, “There will always be a faction of my Ummah who will be victorious upon truth.”⁴ And this is something I cannot and do not deny.

Rather, my plea is directed at the masses of Muslims - the majority, who appear to have given up hope of meeting the Prophetic standard and ideal, while it is every Muslim’s obligation to take Muhammad (pbuh) as his/her exemplar and paragon.

Why the majority? Because it is when the majority of us go astray that we have to worry about Allah’s comprehensive affliction befalling us. Did He not say “*And take guard against an affliction that will not befall those of you who have done wrong, exclusively. And know that Allah is severe in punishment?*” [8: 25]

Connect With Those Who Sever Ties With You

What this entails is re-establishing relationships and alliances with other Muslims who you have broken off communication and activity with in the past because of some form of dispute.

It means that you have to learn to interact with your brethren, while always leaving the door open for reconciliation regardless of what happens, as long as there is a universal community need that requires the participation and cooperation of all.

⁴ The full hadith as worded in Imam Bukhari’s Sahih #7311 is that the Prophet (pbuh) said, “A faction of my Ummah will remain victorious until the command of Allah comes to them while they are victorious.”

In plainer terms, it means that even if you find that the person you had the dispute with still may have not forgiven you, you have to be the more mature person by extending your self to them time and again by expressing your interest in coming together in positive and productive cooperation.

In the meantime, pray that Allah mends your severed relationship and brings your hearts back together, since it is only He who comes between a man and his heart. And it is only He who can alter hearts.

Give To Those Who Deny You

Giving to those who deny you means a bit more than just extending monetary aid to those who would not do the same for you were you to request it from them.

It also means that as long as people may harm, harass, or be abusive toward you, you are not to return evil with another evil. Allah says *“And the slaves of the All-Merciful are those who walk upon the Earth softly, and who when the insolent ones address them, say: “Peace!””* [25: 63]

Allah also says *“And equal not are good and evil. Repel (evil) with what is better. Then will he between you and him there was hatred become as it were your friend and intimate. And none are granted it save those who patiently endure. And none are granted it save one having a great portion.”* [41: 34-35]

Forgive Those Who Wrong You

All of us at times do wrong to others, the whole while believing that our actions resonate of justice and fairness. But when we do realize we have wronged others and ourselves, it becomes our religious duty to make a sincere repentance to Allah and seek His forgiveness, and to seek the forgiveness of those we have wronged by acknowledging in their presence that we’ve realized that we have wronged them, but that we were at the time raving and straying. Hence, we could not see with our hearts that we were befriending Satan.

The one guilty of the wrong should see his brother as having been graced by God, since He made appositeness his lot in that particular matter, a sign of God’s love and protection of His slave.

But the one who was wronged on the other hand should also see his brethren as equally having God’s grace, since it could’ve happened that God chose to not make him aware of the fault and mistake, in which case would have been a sign of divine abandonment and damnation. But the fact that the dispute did occur,

it meant that God wanted to correct the actions of the one who was in error. And that is a sign of God's love for His slave as well.

And in this manner, people can avoid scorn and disdain for one another, which is one of the most abhorrent sins. The Prophet (pbuh) said, "And sufficient evil it is for one to hold his Muslim brother with disdain."⁵

Our Lord directs us when waging war with the enemies of the religion, "*And if they incline toward peace, you too incline toward it. And rely upon Allah*". [8: 61]

And if Allah orders me to make peace with my unbelieving foe, then to make peace with my brethren in faith is even more important and fruitful of an action.

Eschew All Bigotry

Those Muslims blessed with spiritual insight and knowledge should never allow sectarian bias and proselytizing guidelines define their approach to treating the spiritual ailments they find in different peoples.

In other words, one should not act harshly toward a person simply because he says that he is a Shiite, an Ansar⁶, a member of the Nation of Islam, a sectarian liberal, or a positive humanist.

Many of us have the tendency to discriminate due to having a specific kind of orientation, which teaches us to act harshly toward others who don't share the same orientation.

However, such posturing, prejudice, and discourtesy cannot be found as part of the behavioral norm of our Prophet (pbuh). What I mean is that, he (pbuh) made no distinction between people and the treatment of their ills, except when they took up arms against him, in which case he dealt with them accordingly. But even that was done as a treatment for their spiritual maladies.

⁵ This is an excerpt from a hadith reported by Imam Muslim in Kitab al-Birr, Abu Dawud in Kitab al-Adab, Tirmidhi in Kitab al-Birr, Ibn Majah in Kitab al-Zuhd, and Ahmad in his Musnad 2/491.

⁶ By 'Ansar,' I am referring to the notorious cult-like faction formerly known as the 'Nubian-Islamic Hebrews' who followed the leadership of the man once known as Dr. York a.k.a. Imam 'Isa Al-Hadi Al-Mahdi, and other titles and names. Let no one be confused to think that I am referring to the 'Ansar' who were the inhabitants of the city of Yathrib (Medinah) who supported the Prophet (pbuh) and gave him asylum after the people of Mecca persecuted him and his followers.

The ultimate aim of our interactions with people is the improvement of their spiritual state. And that can only be achieved by remaining patient with their lack of faith, and devising a strategy for convincing them of their errors and that they are being blinded by sin. We must then help them to remove those veils of ignorance and darkness from their hearts until they are able to see the light of truth without ambiguity⁷.

The fact is that just because a person calls his self a Sunni – for instance – or is from a Muslim land that classifies itself as “Sunni” doesn’t really translate to mean that one understands the principles that distinguish Sunnis from non-Sunnis. As a matter of fact, you’d find that a significant percentage of Muslims in a given Muslim country defined as “Sunni” or “Shiite” hardly knows the fundamental teachings of the religion. So how could they know what makes them different from their sectarian counterpart?

The truth is that one should not assume that a Shiite understands the fundamental teachings of his/her counterpart - the Sunni, and that he/she has made a conscious decision to reject any doctrine other than the one he was raised to attest to. Likewise, can be said of the common Sunni.

With this in mind – and by analogizing the followers of other religious faiths and denominations with these two Islamic factions, one should approach issues of propagation (da’wa) and teaching with an eye of pardon and compassion, so that he doesn’t drive people away from the truth.

⁷ The city of Philadelphia presently is being plagued with a daily recurrence of violence and murder committed mainly by those involved in the illegal drug trade. The hosts of practically every local radio station from time to time dedicates a show to the recurring violence, and entertains suggestions from people about possible solutions to the problem. Naturally, the solution isn’t simple. And it demands the participation of all in society from the top down in order to rid our cities of such violence and indiscriminate murder. Of course, for a Muslim the answer is always simple. *“The people need Islam in their lives.”* However, what does one say when we find out that possibly 50% or more of those involved in the drug wars are people who profess to be Muslim or who were at least raised in Muslim households? What form of rejoinder can we offer to this difficulty? As Muslims, we are to play a major role in the improvement of society. And we are to be at the vanguard of the problem-solvers. So, Muslims as a whole need to be more proactive in trying to understand what leads so many young men (and women at times) into the drug trade. Then, we need to develop more concrete solutions to the crisis beyond placing them in a jail-cell, exterminating them, or empty slogans like “Islam is the Solution.” Remember that Allah said, *“You are the best nation that has been brought forth for humanity. You enjoin good. You forbid evil. And you believe in Allah.”* [3: 110] And our senior in faith and former Commander of the Faithful, Umar ibn Al-Khattab is reported to have said of this verse, “Whoever would be pleased to be counted among this nation, let him fulfill the condition that Allah has stipulated in it.” [Tafsir Ibn Kathir: 1/526] This means that if we are not enjoining good, forbidding evil, or exhibiting true faith in Allah, we cannot truly count ourselves as being sincere members of this Ummah.

So if a member of the Ansar Cult comes to you seeking counsel on Islam, be patient and help him. If a *Faradian*⁸ member of the Nation of Islam seeks your religious counsel, help him. And if atheists come to you seeking your religious counsel, help them. And do the same with every person who comes to you for religious counsel regardless of his/her view of God and the cosmos or even his/her sexual orientation.⁹ This is because all of us come from Adam. And Adam came from dust. So all of us are brethren in humanity. And we all share the same foe, *Satan*.

Bridging the Gap Between the 'Free' and the 'Freed'

Before I began work in a state-run correctional institution, I shared the scorn for Muslims behind bars and those who served time there that many African-American Muslims and others do.

All peoples are bigoted in some way or another. Many Arabs and Indo-Pakistanis have a tendency to be bigoted against all non-Arabs unless they are of European origin. Whites can many times be bigoted against all non-whites. And African-Americans have a tendency to be bigoted against whites – at least in their conversations, as well as against Arabs, in spite of the fact that the root of their bigotry in such cases is more reactive. But what can be the justification for the bigotry of fair-skinned African-Americans against dark-skinned African-Americans, or even the bigotry experienced by African-Americans from Haitians and Africans who still have a direct connection with the continent?

African-Americans in general believe that they are the subjects of everyone else's bigoted gestures, while they themselves have no bigoted attitudes or behaviors. In fact, it is commonplace to find African-American Muslims who haven't been incarcerated speaking of formerly incarcerated Muslims and looking at them with disdain. They question the sincerity of their faith, in spite of the fact that only Allah would know such a thing.

⁸ What I mean by 'Faradian' is the member of the Nation of Islam who still believes that Allah came in the person of Farad Muhammad.

⁹ The fact that Islam prohibits homosexual behavior in the strictest terms should not be reason for Muslims to act harshly toward people who show signs of being or who openly profess to be homosexuals. The fact is that Islam views such people as being sick. And instead of standing in judgment over the person, the strong believer sees this person as a form of pauper. Hence, he attempts to treat this illness in whatever way possible. And if he cannot, he leaves it for someone else. But the conduct of the Holy Prophet (pbuh) is the standard to which we are to aspire, which means that unwarranted harshness and revilement of gays would not serve a divine purpose. The Prophet (pbuh) has said, "...Deal with people with beautiful conduct." And he made no exception between healthy and the sick.

I, too, had a similar view of Muslims who went to prisons or who came out of prisons as Muslims. But my experiences with Muslim inmates for almost 4 years now have corrected my clouded view of Islam's mission of change and spiritual advancement.

Islam doesn't teach us to condemn the sick. It teaches us to treat them. It teaches us to utilize all possible means to preserve peace in society and to protect all the inalienable rights of every human being: one's person, religion, sanity, wealth, and honor.

In order to achieve this, we must eliminate or at least mitigate all internal and external factors that attribute to a person's spiritual, emotional, and psychological degradation, which might lead him/her to threaten the inalienable rights of other people.

I recall that a few years ago I was involved in a three-part discussion with a couple of Muslims. The main speaker was relating to us an incident he had with a Muslim crack addict. He boasted of severely scolding this troubled Muslim for his addiction, and how he rebuked him by saying to him that "Muslims don't smoke crack. So how could he really expect for people to consider him to be a Muslim," or something to that effect? Upon hearing this, I decided to ask the question, "Well, don't you think that by you acting so harshly against this brother, it might lead him to fall deeper into his addiction? It would seem to me that it would hurt him more to push him away from Muslims. He'd only be encouraged to seek consolation in the company of other drug addicts and in a crack-pipe."

What reaction did I get? "Now, here you go again with that 'young-boy' stuff! Why can't you just listen sometimes and not say anything?" And this is what an adult Muslim believes characterizes a true and sound Islamic ethos and interaction between a young and older adult Muslim. In other words, instead of rebuking the Muslim crack-addict, we should embrace him, and provide him with the institutional and educational programming and guidance he needs to overcome his addiction. This means that Muslims will need to be actively involved in establishing facilities for Muslim drug-addicts, alcoholics, etc. We also need to be thinking about establishing institutions for helping incarcerated Muslims re-enter society, and to provide them with adequate job training skills that would help them to survive in a fast-paced constantly and rapidly changing capital-based world economy. If we don't see any importance in such things, what are we really doing for humanity, especially if we are focusing most of our attention on people who really require very little emotional and psychological improvement?

My experience in the prison system has revealed to me that for a surety "Allah is truly at the aid of His slave as long as he is at the aid of his brother," especially in light of how much I have increased in my understanding of the human soul and compassion for people. The Prophet (pbuh) tells us, "The believer is

the mirror reflection of the (other) believer.”¹⁰ He also said, “Verily the believers with respect to their mutual love, kindness, and compassion, are as the likeness of the body. When one member falls ill, the rest of the body responds with insomnia and fever.”¹¹ Consider also his statements, “One believer to another believer is like the building. Some parts of it strengthen others,”¹² and “None of you believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for his self.”¹³

All of these statements demand from us to aid one another and to be catalysts to one another’s spiritual improvement. Consider that the Prophet (pbuh) has told us, “The strong believer is better and more beloved by Allah than the weak believer, yet there is good in both.”¹⁴

So if the strong believer is better and more loved, if believers strengthen one another, if they love for their brethren what they love for themselves, then it is the duty of all to work and strive the utmost striving to improve and rebuild demolished souls. And this is the essence of the Islamic message to the world. And it is what it has to offer to world beyond salvation from eternal damnation. So ponder deeply on that!

Who’s Going to Pay For All This?

None of these lofty tasks can be effectuated without M-O-N-E-Y. So where will the money come from? Some might say, the extremely affluent Muslims will pay for it, since Allah has clearly granted them the means. Well, that might be the case. And Allah may actually move them to do so. But what if He doesn’t? What next then? Are the poor among us just left without any form of aid?

And let’s talk about that word, ‘poor.’ It is common to hear minorities from the inner-city complain of their alleged “poverty.” And in many cases, the claim is true, since there are really people who classify as genuinely ‘poor’ in America and other Western countries. However, the definition of poverty in Islam or according to our Sacred Law (Shariah) is much less arbitrary in its parameters. In other words, a person who has a home, a car, a television, cable, regularly rents movies and goes to the cinema, who has a refrigerator and a cupboard full of a month’s goodies, and has some of the finest clothes on his back, is technically not ‘poor’ according to Islamic standards. We compare ourselves to extremely affluent whites, and then make the claim of being poor. Many of us may even believe that we are eligible for *zakat* if our

¹⁰ Reported by Abu Dawud in Adab 49 and Tirmidhi in Birr 18.

¹¹ Reported by Bukhari in Kitab al-Adab 27 and Muslim in Kitab al-Birr 66.

¹² Reported by Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi, Nasai, and Ahmad.

¹³ Reported by Muslim, Bukhari, Tirmidhi, Nasai, Ibn Majah, Darimi, and Ahmad.

¹⁴ Reported by Muslim and Ibn Majah.

electricity or heat is turned off due to lack of payment.¹⁵ And to get back to the main issue after that short digression, let us return to the question, “Who is going to pay for all of this?” The short answer is, US. But, HOW will we do it? Consider the following:

The Muslim communities in the West are in need of so many things that would make life more comfortable, more wholesome, and purer for Muslims. We need to own homes without having to pay an interest-based mortgage. We need competent schools for our children. We need recreation, exercise, and health centers. We need civic centers for major Islamic events and holiday prayers. We need to pay the water and electric bills at our mosques. We need. We need. We need.

If we imagine that there are at least 200,000 Muslims between Philadelphia and New York City alone, let’s say we want to help every Muslim to become a homeowner in the area. Let’s make a list of all Muslims who don’t own homes. Today, let’s have every Muslim give one dollar to purchase homes each valued at \$50,000, for example, for the first 4 people on the list. Tomorrow we’ll do the same for the next four. And the next day, we’ll do the same again, and for each day until we complete the list. How long would it take for us to guarantee that all Muslims are homeowners? It would take considerable amount of time. But, it would be possible. As a matter of fact, we’d likely be able to get a special deal with the real estate agency so that we might be able to purchase each house for about half the cost, due to the guarantee they have of so many sales and immediate full payment.

Too heavy? Let’s try another idea. Every mosque has bills and other expenses. Some communities are more capable of defraying those costs than others. For those *masjid* organizations that normally have difficulty in paying their bills and expenses, it might be a good idea to establish a relationship with at least one other mosque or Islamic center in the city, so that when extreme hardship occurs, a plea can be made to the believers at Jumu’a at both centers for everyone in attendance to donate one dollar toward the defrayment of the cost of the utilities of the one mosque currently in straits. The same sort of strategy can be employed with any repairs needed for the building in order to pay plumbers, carpenters, engineers, etc.¹⁶ After

¹⁵ The point here is not that the money for *zakat* cannot be used to help people pay *halal* debts that they owe. Rather, the point is that when people have a house full of gadgets and other personal items that are fit for resale and that can be used to defray any debts owed, one is not considered poor. So Muslims should not really feel much sympathy for a person who has two cell phones, 3 televisions, and 3 computers, who has his electric or hot-water disconnected, when he/she can sell one of these surplus items to defray the costs.

¹⁶ It is key in all of this that the board of every mosque offers transparency in the decisions it makes with its donations. In other words, the amount of money it collects every Friday needs to be posted every week or at least there should be a monthly report. The board has to understand that it is the mosque’s trustee, not its owner, and that Allah is its true owner for He said, “...And that the mosques belong to Allah. So do not call with Allah anyone” [72: 18]. We are to remember that people usually give donations toward the upkeep of the institution, not necessarily to line the pockets of members of the board. If a portion of the funds are used to pay the Imam’s or a teacher’s salary, that should be stated

establishing such a relationship with one center, extend yourselves to a third center, and form an alliance based upon such needs. If a school needs to be opened and we need, let's say, \$80,000, and each center has in regular attendance 500 people, for 80 jumu'as request that each person from the 3 centers donate \$1.00 toward the opening of the school. This would mean that in less than 1 year and ½ we'll be able to open the school.

If we need to pay the salary for 5 teachers, who have a combined gross annual salary of \$250,000, and we've expanded our alliance to include 5 different Islamic centers now, if everyone donates a dollar per week, we'd be able to pay the teachers' monthly salary easily. And our children will be able to attend Islamic schools free of charge. When one of us dies, people wouldn't even think about buying burial insurance, because he/she knows that the community will fulfill its obligation of washing, shrouding, burying, and praying over their brethren. So one wouldn't even entertain the possibility of indulging in the *haram* by purchasing burial or life insurance.¹⁷

Hopefully, the point is understood by now. And in this way we'll be able to fulfill all of our community needs, especially if we form a very broad network of alliances throughout our respective communities and countries. No more need for fundraiser dinners, or demanding the support of just a few people. But none of this can come to past if we don't see the urgency of our situation, and if we don't follow the Sunnah of our beloved messenger (pbuh) of establishing ties with those who sever them with us, giving to those who deny us, and forgiving those who have wronged us. Life is too short for the type of play that Muslims have been involved in. And it must stop before life is stopped abruptly and unexpectedly. And reflect deeply on the words of our Creator,

“Competition in [worldly] increase diverts you, Until you visit the graves. Nay, you will come to know. Again, Nay! You will come to know. Nay! If you were to know with a certainty of knowledge, you would surely see Hellfire. Then, you'd see it with the eye of certainty. Then, you'll surely be asked that Day about the pleasure.”

in the exposure. The same goes for the portion of the funds used to defray the costs of electricity, water, and other utilities. By doing this, organizations earn the trust of donors. And they earn for themselves a reputation of scrupulousness and honesty. This ultimately leads to the possibility of receiving larger donations, which are much needed for the maintenance of all of our institutions. Otherwise, our institutions will be threatened with ruin.

¹⁷ It is important that Muslims understand that carrying out the funeral rites of other Muslims are a communal obligation (*fard al-kifaya*). If some Muslims fulfill it, sin is removed from those who didn't. But if no one does it, the sin falls on all Muslims in the world community. And we will answer for it before Allah. So there is no excuse or justification that one can have for taking out burial or life insurance for this purpose.

And my hope is that these words of mine will reverberate deep into our souls, and move us to lift our feet up out of the mud.

Your Truly,
Abdullah bin Hamid Ali