

## CHAPTER SIX



# Hindrances and Impediments

### PERIPHERAL AND SIDE ISSUES (SEE FIGURE 6.1 & 6.2)

Opponents of the cause will attempt to distract us with various side issues. At times they will accuse us of indulging in luxury, relaxation and mere theoretical speculation, and at other times, of emulating the Mu‘tazilites of old, by skirting the Sunnah and setting up human reason as our sole guide and arbiter. They will accuse us of dealing irresponsibly with the texts of the Islamic legacy and distracting the Ummah and those of its members who are engaged in serious struggle from their genuine issues and concerns. In all such situations, their aim is to draw us into discussions which they have invented in order to distract and divert us from our tasks, and to exhaust our limited energies and resources in having to defend ourselves.

This is a trench which we must not allow ourselves to be lured into. We must not give them the opportunity to persuade the Ummah that we are mistaken in our diagnosis of its crisis or that the treatment which we propose for the Ummah’s ills is of no avail. This would perpetuate the Ummah’s state of heedlessness and cause it to go on suffering. Rather, we must sidestep such battles and those who seek to initiate them. We must replace self-defense with increased affirmation and clarification of our cause, deal positively with the challenges we face and open up new channels for our ideas.

It may be possible to benefit from some of these attempts by our opponents as an opportunity to clarify our issues, offer our proposed solutions, present our points of view, explain the intellectual and cultural errors of others, and criticize their solutions and theses in such a way that people can compare what we have to offer with what they have to offer. We should not be distressed over their tendentious ways, or allow ourselves to be blinded

from perceiving the truth which might be contained in their criticisms of us or their observations about us. At the same time, we must not view the battles which our opponents seek to draw us into simply as testimonies to the rightness of our own actions, ideas, plans and projects. Rather, we ought to benefit from every question or criticism which is raised in order to lend seriousness to our own review and criticism of all aspects of our work and thought.

### OUR OWN ERRORS

Thus far, we are the only bearers of this message, and we oversee the only institution which has adopted this cause. This being the case, our own errors constitute the most serious impediments to the cause we seek to serve. The most salient of the errors into which we are prone to fall include the following:

- 1) Ceasing to be productive and abandoning our task before having created within the Ummah the necessary awareness of our cause. We must ensure that we put together a team which can carry the work forward through its necessary stages and provide the material needed for an academic course which can be taught successfully in universities, institutes and other places of learning. We also need to create parallel materials for other media channels given their importance as means of communicating the message, and to prepare universities, institutes, centers, and academic societies to be 'incubators' for the cause by adopting and embracing it and working for its success.
- 2) Ceasing to engage in ongoing evaluation, review and criticism of our progress on both the academic and practical levels in a way that ensures continuous self-correction.
- 3) Falling into one-sided thinking, that is, the belief that what we have to offer is the sole, sufficient cure for all the Ummah's ills and crises.
- 4) Partisanship, the formation of blocs and responsiveness to attempts at polarization, which is an error that could potentially abort the entire cause and isolate it from all other sectors of the Ummah.
- 5) Allowing the cause's adherents and proponents to adopt divergent theses

relating to its principles and aims. This is an error we need to beware of, since different theses in these areas could mean that the ideas relating to the cause are not sufficiently clear in the minds of those who support it. The existence of a variety of plans might result, to a certain extent, from the varied specializations of those overseeing the cause and its organs. However, a difference in principles and aims is something which should not occur regardless of the differences among the cultures of those working for the cause, and regardless of how much such people differ in their ways of dealing with its various aspects. Consequently, we must work to ensure constant dialogue amongst ourselves concerning these issues. Indeed, such dialogue can help to clarify ideas and build a unified vision relating to principles and aims. In addition, we must constantly remind ourselves that the principles of our cause require us to do the following:

- a. Make Revelation and the cosmos our two primary sources of thought, culture, knowledge and civilization.
- b. Scrutinize the Islamic legacy, the contemporary human heritage, and all social and human realms with a critical eye in order to distinguish the positive from the negative, the useful from the harmful, and that which is consistent with Islamic conceptions and the Qur'anic epistemological methodology from that which is not. In addition, we should combine the positive with the helpful in accordance with a sound methodology. It is hoped that the practice of clarifying what is obscure and correcting what is faulty will serve to shape the Ummah's mentality and temperament in a manner which, in accordance with Islamic principles and perspectives, achieves revival and prosperity.
- c. Be mindful of the scale of priorities suited to the life of the Ummah. We must beware of isolating ourselves from the Ummah's concerns and immersing ourselves in abstract thought and its problems, debating over theoretical issues from which no action results and which bear no connection to concrete reality. Rather, we must continuously call for thought which is both scientific and social in nature, and accustom the Ummah to this.
- d. Beware of holding up personal opinion, aspirations and preferences as the equivalent of thought and intellectual production. Personal inclinations, aspirations and preferences are subjective, perceptive mat-

ters, whereas thought is the logical, scientific or rational arrangement of premises by which we arrive at results or conclusions; as such, it has to do with research and investigation. A thinker may reach conclusions which conflict with his personal desires and inclinations; however, he has no right to modify his conclusions on this basis.

In concluding this enumeration of the most significant methodological and intellectual obstacles and impediments which face our cause, it should be emphasized that awareness of these obstacles may help to turn them into possibilities which, if they are understood and dealt with properly, can be invested by means of a dialogue whose fundamental principles and aims are defined by the Islamic vision.

These obstacles cannot, ultimately, thwart action or intellectual initiative. In fact, the identification of these obstacles marks the beginning of the correct methodological path to dealing with them, proposing solutions to them and transforming them into possibilities which may be put to positive use. The multiplicity of these issues – if they are viewed as obstacles which can be turned into possibilities – confirms another advantage inherent within them, namely, the multiplicity of the possibilities which exist for confronting this very multiplicity of obstacles. As such, they produce more than one alternative in the intellectual arena by means of which action can be taken. All of them may be viewed as experimental fields for testing our cause's orientation and determining its capacity for achievement in such a way that the cause becomes, rightfully, the foundation for the Ummah's awareness of its various component groups and their levels.

Given the foregoing, we need to think carefully about how to construct a scale of priorities for these alternatives and the various fields of action. The process of setting priorities should take place in accordance with action plans which are suitable from a temporal perspective, and which likewise take into account considerations of place and distinctions among Muslims' various aptitudes and strengths (as scientists, researchers, audiences, movements, intellectual trends, etc.).

The adherents to the cause need to demonstrate the highest degree of flexibility and creative initiative, whether by participating to the fullest possible extent in establishing the roots of the cause and clarifying its various aspects, or by urging others to join the ranks of those working in this field. It

is a field that requires integrated, concerted efforts which in turn serve to provide a sound definition of freedom and its limits. As for the initiative spoken of here, it is exercised either by posing issues or undertaking research projects, establishing a long-term plan to turn the cause of 'the reform of Islamic thought and the Islamization of knowledge' into an intellectual, cultural and civilizational current, and thinking about measurable standards for achievement lest we mistakenly imagine ourselves to have obtained results which have no real existence.

Efforts need to be made to write out a detailed conceptualization of the process of thinking about the issue of 'the reform of Islamic thought and the Islamization of knowledge' as a civilizational, cultural and intellectual realm, as well as the standards by which to gauge progress therein. Such a conceptualization should constitute, in essence, a major, long-term plan of action covering all aspects of this issue given its status as both a movement of thought, and the thought of a movement, whose branch institutions are integrated with the root institution in a manner which reflects both flexibility and capable initiative. It is an issue which we cannot afford to put off since waiting to act merely causes difficulties to worsen. A movement of thought can best be managed not by someone who is a mere observer, but, rather, by someone who is aware, an initiative-taker, and capable of confronting every new development which merits thought, review, action or change.