

# Liberty of Thought and Belief in Islam

## Introduction

**In the name of Allah, and peace be upon His prophet Muhammad**

We have spent much time and effort in this call and writing on this subject. Specifically, we have published the following articles: "Liberty of Belief in Islam" (1972), "You do not Hold Control over them: The Issue of Liberty in Islam" (1985), "No to Religious Scholars of Imitation and Enlightenment Impostors" (1994), and "Five Criteria of Credible Islamic Rule" (1996). In the last title, we have said that the liberty of thought is one of these criteria. Lastly, we dedicated the second cultural message of this series to the subject of "Islam, Liberty, and Secularism".

Despite these articles, Egyptian society still needs more scholarship on the subject. It is not an easy task to combat a society's accumulated heritage. Even the most liberal and open-minded of the Islamist writers steadfastly hold to deepened notions of infidelity and apostasy. This subjectivity of the representatives of the Islamic call has rendered objectivity impossible; they find it unacceptable to leave dissenters, i.e. those who hold different views, unpunished by law and the state.

How could they stand what we are saying today, while they read in their sanctified, hallowed books that the right to make accusations of apostasy and infidelity has been laid down in all Islamic doctrines for the past thousand years?

In vain, we say to them that these erudite religious scholars were talking in the spirit of their era, as evidenced by their unanimity; if things were left purely to thought and intellectual consideration, then differences would have occurred. These scholars interpreted the Qur'an and the sayings (*Hadith*) of the prophet Muhammad in ways that reflected their historical context, i.e. in defense of Islam against its enemies who were attempting to oppress it, vanquish it, and shake the belief of its believers.

In this cultural message, we will prove that Islam largely calls for the liberty of thought and belief. We will cite evidence from the Qur'an, *Sunna* (sayings and deeds) of the prophet Muhammad, and the deeds and sayings of the Prophet's companions. We discard the traditions of the religious scholars of past eras, except what is proved by sound, unmistakable evidence cited from the Qur'an, the *Sunna*, and the deeds and sayings of the Prophet's companions. Looking to the sayings of

previous generations of religious scholars for sound judgment is like replacing the better by the worse; as the Holy Qur'an says "*And when it is said unto them: Follow that which God has revealed, they say: We follow that wherein we found our fathers. What! Even though their fathers were wholly unintelligent and had no guidance?*"(2:170)

Our mission is to avoid blindly following our ancestors' doctrines and the abandonment of the Holy Qur'an, as it says, "*Lo! mine own fold make this Qur'an of no account.*"(25:30)

***Gamal Al-Banna***

Cairo (1418 A.H.-1998 A.D.)

## **Evidence of Liberty of Thought and Belief, cited from the Qur'an**

The Holy Qur'an includes a number of verses that speak frankly about the liberty of thought and belief, and the issue of belief vis-a-vis disbelief. We cannot possibly cite all of these verses here, but we will present some of them, specifically those which deal with the following issues:

(A) Belief and disbelief are personal matters; they are not the business of the ruling regime. Accordingly, There should not be compulsion or coercion in religion by any authority.

(B) Prophets are just messengers who carried the divine revelation to humankind; they had no authority to coerce people to believe in God.

(C) Guidance is from God, and it is done according to His will. Therefore, prophets are not solely responsible for guiding people to the righteous path.

(D) Plurality and differences among people occur due to God's will, and He will judge people's differences on Doomsday. Islam recognizes the previous divine beliefs.

(E) There is no worldly punishment for the charge of apostasy.

**The following are some of the Qur'anic verses that support the above statements:**

### **(A) Belief and disbelief are personal matters, without compulsion or coercion:**

- *"There is no compulsion in religion. The right direction is henceforth distinct from error. And he who rejecteth false deities and believeth in Allah hath grasped a firm hand hold which will never break. Allah is Hearer, Knower. "(2:256)*
- *"Say: 'O mankind! Now hath the truth from your Lord come unto you. So whosoever is guided, is guided only for (the good of) his soul, and whosoever erreth, erreth only against it. And I am not a warder over you."(10:108)*
- *"Whosoever goeth right, it is only for (the good of) his own soul that he goeth right, and whosoever erreth, erreth only to its hurt. No laden soul*

*can bear another's load. We never punish until We have sent a messenger" (17:15)*

- *"Say: (It is) the truth from the Lord of you (all). Then whosoever will, let him believe, and whosoever will, let him disbelieve. Lo! We have prepared for disbelievers Fire. Its tent encloseth them. If they ask for showers, they will be showered with water like to molten lead which burneth the faces. Calamitous the drink and ill the resting place."(18:29)*
- *"Say O Muhammad: 'I have been bidden to worship the Sustainer of this City- Him who has made it sacred, and unto whom all things belong, and I have been bidden to be of those who surrender themselves to Him, and to convey this Qur'an to the world. Whoever, therefore, chooses to follow the right path, follows it but for his own good, and if any wills to go astray say unto him: 'I am only a warner!' And say: 'All praise is due to God! In time, He will make you see the truth of His messages and then you shall know them for what they are. And thy Sustainer is **not** unmindful of whatever you all may do" (27:91-93)*
- *"He who has denied the truth will have to bear the burden of his denial, whereas all who did what is right and just will have made goodly provision for themselves." (30:44)*
- *"He who made you inherit the earth, hence he who is bent on denying the truth, this denial of his will fall back upon him: for their persistent denial of this Truth does but add to the deniers' loathsomeness in their Sustainer's sight and thus, their denial of this truth does but add to the deniers' loss"(35:39)*
- *"Behold, from on high have we bestowed upon thee this divine writ, setting forth the truth for the benefit of all mankind. And whoever chooses to be guided thereby does so for his own good, and whoever chooses to go astray, goes but astray to his own hurt, and thou hast no power to determine their fate."(39:41)*

**(B) Prophets are just messengers who carried the divine revelation to humanity; they had no authority to coerce people to believe in God:**

- *"No more is the apostle bound to do than deliver the message entrusted to him and God knows all that you do openly and all that you would conceal." (5:99)*
- *"Say O prophet: 'It is not within my power to bring benefit to or avert harm from myself, except as God may please, and if I knew that which is beyond the reach of human perception, abundant good fortune would surely have fallen to my lot, and no evil would ever have touched me. I*

*am nothing but a warner, and a herald of glad tidings unto people who will believe' "(7:188)*

- *“And so, O prophet, if they give thee the lie, say: 'to me shall be accounted my doings, and to you, your doings: you are not accountable for what I am doing, and I am not accountable for whatever you do.’” (10:41)*
- *“Is it conceivable, O prophet, that thou couldst omit any part of what is being revealed unto thee, because the deniers of truth dislike it, and because thy heart is distressed at their saying "Why has not a treasure been bestowed upon him from on high? Or why has not an angel come visibly with him? Thou art only a warner, whereas God has everything in his care.’”(11:12)*
- *But whether We let thee see in thy lifetime, O prophet, the fulfillment of dome of what We have promised them, or whether We cause thee to die before this fulfillment- thy duty is no more than to deliver the message, and the Reckoning is Ours"(13:40)*
- *-"Hence, proclaim openly all that thou hast been bidden to say and leave alone all those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God"(15:94)*
- *“But if they turn away from thee, O prophet, remember that thy only duty is a clear delivery of the message entrusted to thee.” (16:82)*
- *“Yet, We have sent thee, O prophet, only as a herald of glad tidings and a warner, say: 'for this, no reward do I ask of you other than that he who so wills may unto his Sustainer find a way!' Hence, place thy trust in the Living One who dies not, and extol His limitless glory and praise, for none is as aware of His Creatures' sins as He.” (25:56-58)*
- *“Fully aware are We of what they who deny resurrection do say; and thou canst by no means force them to believe in it, yet none the less remind through the Qur'an all such as may fear My warnings"(50:45)*
- *“Thus it is: never yet came any apostle to those who lived before their times but they said 'a spellbinder or a mad man!' Have they perchance handed down this way of thinking as a legacy unto one another? Nay, they are people filled with overweening arrogance! Turn, then, away from them, and thou shalt incur no blame, yet go on reminding all who would listen, for verily such a reminder will profit the believers"(51:52-55)*

- *“Now as for those who take aught beside Him for their protectors-God watches them, and thou art not responsible for their conduct.” (42:6)*
- *“Now as for him who believes himself to be self sufficient, to him didst thou give thy whole attention, although thou art not accountable for his failure to attain purity.”(80:5-7)*
- *“And so, O prophet, exhort them: thy task is only to exhort, thou canst compel them to believe.” (88:21-22)*

**(C) Guidance is from God, and it is done according to His will:**

- *“It is not for thee, O prophet, to make people follow the right path, since it is God alone who guides whom He wills ”(2:272)*
- *“How then could you be of two minds about the hypocrites, seeing that God has disowned them because of their guilt? Do you perchance seek to guide those whom God lets go astray - when for him whom God lets go astray thou canst never find any way?” (4:88)*
- *“And had thy Sustainer so willed, all those who live on earth would surely have attained to faith: all of them: dost thou, then, think that thou couldst compel people to believe, notwithstanding that no human being can ever attain to faith otherwise than by God's leave, and that He who lays the loathsome evil of disbelief upon those who will not use their reason?” (10:99-100)*
- *“Verily, thou canst guide aright everyone whom thou lovest: but it is God who guides him that wills to be guided, and he is fully aware of all who would let themselves be guided.” (28:56)*
- *Is then he to whom the evil of his own doings is so alluring that in the end he regards it as good? For verily, God lets go astray him that wills to be guided, hence do not waste thyself in sorrowing over them: verily God has full knowledge of all that they do!” (35:8)*

**(D) Plurality and differences among people occur due to God’s will, and He will judge people's differences on Doomsday:**

- *Verily, those who have attained to faith in this divine writ as well as those who follow the Jewish faith, the Christians, and the Sabians- all who believe in God and the last day and do righteous deeds- shall have their reward with their Sustainer, and no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve.” (2:62)*

- *“Furthermore, the Jews assert 'the Christians have no valid ground for their beliefs ', while the Christians assert 'the Jews have no valid ground for their belief' – and both quote the divine writ! Even thus, like unto what they say, have always spoken those who were devoid of knowledge, but it is God who will judge between them on Resurrection Day with regard to all on which they were wont to differ.” (2:113)*
- *“Say: we believe in God, and in that which has been bestowed from on high upon us, and that which has been bestowed upon Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, and Jacob, and their descendants, and that which has been vouchsafed to Moses and Jesus, and that which has been vouchsafed to all the other prophets by their Sustainer: we make no distinction between any of them, and it is unto Him that we surrender ourselves. And if others come to believe in the way you believe, they will indeed find themselves on the right path, and if they turn away, it is but they who will be deeply in the wrong, and God will protect thee from them: for He alone is all-hearing, all-knowing.” (2:136-137)*
- *“For every community faces a direction of its own, of which He is the focal point. Vie, therefore, with one another in doing good works. Wherever you may be, God will gather you all unto Himself, for verily, God has the power to will anything”(2:148)*
- *Say: we believe in God, and in that which has been bestowed from on high upon us, and in that which has been bestowed upon Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, and Jacob, and their descendants, and that which has been vouchsafed to Moses and Jesus, and that which has been vouchsafed to all the other prophets by their Sustainer: we make no distinction between any of them, and it is unto Him that we surrender ourselves.” (3:84)*
- *“And had thy Sustainer so willed, He could surely have made all mankind one single community, but He willed otherwise, and so they continue to hold divergent views. All of them save those upon whom thy Sustainer has bestowed His grace. And to this end has He created them all. But as for those who refuse to avail themselves of divine guidance, that word of thy Sustainer shall be fulfilled: most certainly will I fill hell with invisible beings as well as humans, all together!” (11:118-119)*
- *“Convey into others whatever of this divine writ has been revealed unto thee, and be constant in prayer, for ,behold, prayer restrains man from loathsome deeds and from all that runs counter to reason, and remembrance of God is indeed the greatest good, and God knows all that you do. And do not argue with the followers of earlier revelations otherwise than in a most kindly manner- unless it be such of them as are bent on evildoing. And say "we believe in that which has been bestowed from on high upon us: for our God and your God is one and the same, and it is unto him that we surrender ourselves.”(29:45-46)*

- *“Say: 'O God! Originator of the heavens and the earth! Knower of all that is beyond the reach of a created beings' perception, as well as of all that can be witnessed by a creature's senses or mind! It is Thou who wilt judge between Thy servants on Resurrection Day with regard to all on which they were wont to differ!’” (39:46)*
- *“And on whatever you may differ, O believers, the verdict thereon rests with God. Say, therefore, 'such is God, my Sustainer, in Him have I placed my trust, and unto Him do I always turn!’” (42:10)*
- *“Say: 'O you who deny the truth! I do not worship that which you worship, and neither do you worship which I worship[, and I will not worship that which you have worshipped, and neither will you worship that I worship, unto you your moral law, and unto me, mine!’” (109:1-6)*

**(E) There is no worldly punishment for the charge of apostasy:**

- *“Would you perchance ask of the apostle who has been sent unto you what was asked aforetime of Moses? But whoever chooses to deny the truth instead of believing in it has already strayed from the right path.” (2:108)*
- *“But if any of you should turn away from his faith and die as a denier of the truth-these it is whose works will go for naught in this world and in the life to come, and these it is who are destined for the fire, therein to abide.” (2:217)*
- *“Verily, as for those who are bent on denying the truth after having attained to faith, and then grow ever more stubborn in their refusal to acknowledge the truth, their repentance shall not be accepted for it is they who have truly gone astray.” (3:90)*
- *“Behold, as for those who come to believe and then deny the truth, and again come to believe and again deny the truth, and thereafter grow stubborn in their denial of the truth- God will not forgive them, nor will He guide them in any way.” (4:137)*
- *“O you who have attained to faith! If you ever abandon your faith, God will in time bring forth in your stead people whom He loves and who love Him – humble towards the believers, proud towards all who deny the truth: people who strive hard in God's cause, and do not fear to be censured by anyone who might censure them: such is God's favor, which He grants unto whom he wills, and God is infinite, all-knowing.” (5:54)*
- *“The hypocrites swear to God that they have said nothing wrong; yet most certainly have they uttered a saying which amounts to a denial of the truth, and have thus denied the truth after having professed their self-surrender to God. For they were aiming at something which was beyond their reach, and they could find no fault with the faith save that*

*God had enriched them and caused his apostle to enrich them out of His bounty. Hence, if they repent, it will be for their own good, but if they turn away, God will cause them to suffer grievous suffering in this world and in the life to come, and they will find no helper on earth and no one to give them succor.” (9:74)*

- *“As for anyone who denies God after having once attained to faith- and this, to be sure, does not apply to one who does it under duress, the while his heart remains true to his faith, but only to him who willingly opens up his heart to a denial of the truth: upon all such falls God’s condemnation and tremendous suffering awaits them.” (16:106)*
- *“Verily, those who turn their backs on this message after guidance has been vouchsafed to them, do it because Satan has embellished their fancies and filled them with false hopes.” (47:25)*

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I do not think that any proponent of intellectual liberty as a whole could bring as much solid evidence, confirming the fact that belief and disbelief are personal matters, not under the auspices of the ruling regime or the state. that could rival the previously cited Qur’anic verses. Human beings are free to believe or disbelieve, and God will judge them; He does not need coerced worship from any human being. The cited verses confirm the fact that prophets were the messengers of the divine revelation. As such, they tackled the issue of belief and disbelief, but had no authority except for the transmission of the message of God. Prophets had no right or authority to coerce people to believe. These cited verses affirm the fact that God alone is the source of guidance. Plurality and difference are part of the will of God; had He willed otherwise, He would have made all people one monolithic entity. The Qur’anic verses mention the notion of apostasy and disbelief explicitly many times; they do not once mention any worldly punishment for it. As well, the verses repeatedly reiterate that God will judge these differences among people, believers and non-believers.

Does the Holy Qur’an leave anything for the proponents of liberty of belief and thought? It clearly and decisively states that prophets, as the people who assumed the highest level of responsibility in the field of faith, had the authority to reveal the message of God but nothing beyond this. The Holy Qur’an told the Prophet Muhammad that he was just the messenger of God revelation; he could not guide people to the righteous path by coercion. Guidance is done by God alone: "*It is not for thee, O prophet, to make people follow the right path*"(2:272). This idea is reiterated in the following rhetorical questions: "*Dost thou then think that*

*thou couldst compel people to believe"(10:99) and "Thou art not accountable for his failure to attain to purity"(80:7)*

We know that some interpreters of the Holy Qur'an and some religious scholars have said that the verses cited above were replaced by the so-called "Verse of the Sword." This is utter nonsense, and easily refuted by any reasonable religious scholar. If this is true, why do these verses still exist as part of the Qur'anic text? The idea of some verses replacing others is utter nonsense, and is refuted in 70 pages in our book titled *The Two Great Sources: the Holy Qur'an and the Sunna*.

Some religious scholars say that the verse "*There shall be no coercion in matters of faith*"(2:256) is applicable only to the Jewish and Christian people who lived within the Islamic states: those who paid a tribute. and should not be coerced into conversion to Islam. This interpretation falls short of rendering the explicit meaning, content and spirit of this verse and is confined to the historical circumstances and context of the past Islamic era. Moreover, it is particularly suited to the agenda of those who are members of the "official religious institution".

We cannot accept the manipulation of Qur'anic verses to convey meanings that are distant, contrary, or even opposed to the literal meaning. This manipulation is a horrible abuse of the words of God to serve worldly ends. The Qur'an says, "*Deeming it a light matter, whereas in the sight of God it is an awful thing!*"(24:15)

### **Evidence of the Liberty of Thought in the *Sunna***

The *Sunna* comprises the deeds, history, manners, rules, practices and principles of Prophet Muhammad. It is the practical side of Islamic principles, and it is more than just a group of sayings. We will show here the practical side of the *Sunna*, followed by a selection of sayings, or *Hadith*, of the Prophet Muhammad that some religious scholars cite as evidence to support the punishment of people on charges of apostasy.

When the Prophet Muhammad entered the city of Medina, there was a powerful Jewish community living there. The Prophet tried to win them over to his side, in order to avoid their evil. He let them be free as part of the larger community of Medina: this is evident from the Treaty of Muwaad'a. Nevertheless, the Jewish community was jealous of the Prophet Muhammad, as he was not one of the Israelites, but was a descendent of Ishmael. They tried to conspire against him in different ways.

As well, when the prophet Muhammad entered Medina, there were tribal leaders, who, due to their wealth or lineage, enjoyed a high social or political status. Some of them did not welcome Islam, as it challenged their high status or authority, and made all people equal before God. The leader of these people was 'Abdullah ibn Ubay of Al-Khazraj tribe, The tribe was preparing to crown him as their ruler, but with the advent of Islam, the ruler instead became the Prophet Muhammad. Consequently, some people of the tribe became jealous.

Some people from this tribe joined the Jewish community in a pact against prophet Muhammad, intending to creating obstacles to the new call to Islam and generally conspiring against it. When the prophet Muhammad decided to fight the polytheists in the battle of Uhud, 'Abdullah ibn Ubay withdrew a third of the forces under his command, and remained in Medina. One of the methods of these dissenters was to pretend that they were Muslims at one time, and then declare they are non-Muslims, the purpose being to both shake the faith of steadfast Muslims, and to spread rumors. These people were called the hypocrites, whose truth was revealed by God in a number of Qur'anic verses, as well as in Chapter 63 of the Holy Qur'an, "The Hypocrites."

What did the Prophet Muhammad do with those people about whom the Holy Qur'an says: "*those who come to believe and then deny the*

*truth, and again come to believe and again deny the truth, and thereafter grow stubborn in their denial of the truth "(4:137)," they uttered a saying which amounts to a denial of the truth, and have thus denied the truth after having professed their self-surrender to God "(9:74), and "Do not offer empty excuses! You have indeed denied the truth after having professed your belief in it"(9:66)?* These verses tell us about those who apostatized after their earlier conversions to Islam. Prophet Muhammad treated these people kindly, When the son of ‘Abdullah ibn Ubay mentioned to the Prophet Muhammad that he would rather kill his father himself than let him be killed by any other Muslim (which would embitter the son), the Prophet Muhammad said to him "No, we will treat him kindly".

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We find other examples of apostates in Prophet’s era who were neither punished nor killed. No one offered them a chance to return once more to Islam. M. Zaki Ibrahim, leader of "Tribe of Muhammad" group and member of the Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs, discusses this issue in the two cultural messages: "Contemporary Salafism: The Destination" and "Who are the Sunnite?" Here are a few examples:

- There were many people in the Prophet’s era, both individuals and groups, who deserted Islam after embracing it. The Prophet Muhammad did not fight them or ordered Muslims to kill them, although many of them repeatedly deserted Islam, vacillating between belief and disbelief.
- A man who used to record the holy revelation of the Qur’an later deserted Islam. After returning to paganism, he shamelessly said that "Muhammad does not know except what I had written for him." This statement is found in numerous books of *Hadith*, among them that of al-Bukhari. The Prophet Muhammad did not punish him and let him live freely, and he ultimately died a natural death in bed. (See also: *al-Bari's Guide to the Hadith Compiled by al-Bukhari*).
- Twelve men deserted Islam in the era of prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and left Medina for Mecca, among them al-Harith ibn Suwaid al-Ansari. Again, the Prophet Muhammad did not their death; he just recited this Qur’anic verse "*If one goes in search of a religion other than self-surrender unto God, it will never be accepted from him, and in the life to come he shall be among the lost*"(3:85).
- ‘Ubaidullah ibn Gahsh deserted Islam after embracing it. He immigrated to *Habasha* (Ethiopia) and converted to Christianity. Prophet Muhammad did not order Muslims to kill him, nor demanded his return from the king of Habasha.

- There were two young brothers who converted to Christianity. Their father subsequently complained to the Prophet Muhammad saying, "Shall I let my two sons go to Hell?" The Prophet Muhammad did not tell him to kill them, but rather recited the following verse: "*There shall be no coercion in matters of faith. Distinct has now become the right way from the way of error*"(2:256).

These examples of apostates prove that Prophet Muhammad did not designate or inflict a punishment for desertion of Islam.

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These examples directly contradict the sayings, wrongly attributed to the Prophet Muhammad, that religious scholars use to justify a death sentence for apostates.

We discussed these false sayings in our book, "No to Religious Scholars of Imitation and Enlightenment Imposters," pages 71-78. The argument is as follows:

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The idea of apostasy as a crime, the punishment of which is death has no evidence or ground, equal to its weight, in the *Sunna* of the Prophet Muhammad. The argument revolves around three or four hadith:

1. The 'Irniyyeen came to the Prophet Muhammad to embrace Islam. They subsequently complained to the Prophet that they lived in poverty on poor lands, and suffered from ill-health. Prophet Muhammad told them to accompany one shepherd who would help them with the camels' milk and urine. They did so, but then killed the shepherd in order to steal his camels. The Prophet sent a group of armed men who chased and killed the thieves.

This story was told by al-Bukhari, Imam Muslim, and others in the books of *Hadith* and *Sunna*, but it was not related to the notion of apostasy, as these men were killed because they had killed the shepherd. This story is mentioned in Imam Muslim's book, in a chapter titled "On Renegades," and al-Shawkani relates the story in his book, in the chapter "On Fighters and Highwaymen."

Ultimately, the story cannot be used to support a death sentence for apostasy. Ibn Taymiya said "these men were killed as they were renegades who fought against Allah and his messenger;" the same thing

is also said by Ibn al-Qayyim in *Zad El-Ma'ad* and by al-Tabari in his interpretation of the Holy Qur'an.

2. In another *hadith*, the Prophet Muhammad said that Muslim blood should not be shed except in three cases: as a punishment for murder, as a punishment for adultery for married people, and in the case of renegades who shun their religion and community and work against them. Many citations for this *hadith*, like that of 'Abdullah ibn Maso'ud, associate apostasy with renegades. 'Aisha, the wife of prophet Muhammad related this *hadith*: "A Muslim's blood should not be shed unless in three cases: married adulterers, murderers who killed Muslims intentionally, and those who shunned Islam and fight against God and his messenger".

Ibn Taymiya writes that this hadith told by Aisha is an interpretation of the one told by 'Abdullah ibn Maso'ud and others about renegades who shunned their community and religion, saying, "Renegades are those who shun their community by fighting against it". This assertion agrees with this Qur'anic verse: "*It is but a just recompense for those who make war on God and His apostle and endeavor to spread corruption on earth, that they are being slain in great numbers or crucified in great numbers or have in result of their perverseness, their hands and feet cut off in great numbers, or are being banished from the face of the earth, such is their ignominy in this world, but in the life to come, more awesome suffering awaits them*"(5:33).

In the book *The Punishment of Apostasy Between Jurisprudence and Critics*, the contemporary writer, 'Abd al-'Azim Ibrahim al-Mat'any, criticized ibn Taymiya's view on this subject as "an individual, subjective view that no one has ever followed." As well, he says that Ibn Taymiya was right in two things in his interpretation: the phrasing of this hadith is clear, and it does not need interpretation or explanation. Most religious scholars agree on the fact that plain, clear texts should not be interpreted but taken literally.

We propose that the phrase "those who shun their community" has many possible meanings; if we accept this, there is no evidence that the phrase means disbelievers.

Al-Mat'any further says in his book that "Ibn Taymiya was wrong in supporting the views of past religious scholars who believed that those who desert Islam should be killed if they did not repent and return to Islam. They cite a hadith that says 'deserters of Islam should be killed;' he said that these scholars could never unanimously agree in error,... etc".

He could have said that books of *hadith* include stories of apostasy that did not result in shunning or deserting one's community. In al-Nisa'ei's book of *hadith* and *Sunna*, there are two stories of people deserting their faith without deserting the community, both related by 'Uthman ibn Affan: "ibn 'Umar said that 'Uthman said that 'the one who deserts Islam must be killed.' Yusr ibn Sa'eed said that 'Uthman said that 'apostates who shun Islam after embracing it should be killed.'" These *hadith* do not mention the desertion of the community or fighting against it. The situation did not change even after writing the *hadith* told by Aisha and Ibn Mas'oud, which include the notion of deserting one's community or fighting against it. It is possible that those who told the hadiths of Othman and Aisha in the book of hadiths of El-Imam Ahmed did not tell the complete version, i.e. that which conforms to the spirit of Islamic jurisprudence.

3. The third *hadith* is the most powerful in this argument: 'If anyone deserts one's faith to embrace another one, one must be killed.' We find this hadith in the books of al-Bukhari, Abu Dawood, Malik, and El-Nisa'ei.

The book *Nasb El-Raya* mentions that the *hadith* has three different versions, related, ibn 'Abbas, Mu'awiyah ibn Hida, and 'Aisha. The version of ibn Abbas is found in al-Bukhari, in the chapter "The struggle for asking renegades and apostates to repent and return to Islam." "Ekrema said that 'Ali brought some atheists and disbelievers to burn them, but when Ibn 'Abbas heard about this he said: 'if I were him I should not have done it, as the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) prohibited burning people as this is a divine punishment in the Doomsday. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said as well that deserters of Islam should be killed.'" Later, this *hadith* is mentioned, without the story, in the Chapter of Virtues in the book *Al-Mustadrak*, As well, this hadith is mentioned by Abu Shayba and 'Abd al-Razik in their books, again without the story. Likewise, ibn Oyayina said that Ayoub said that 'Ekrema said that ibn 'Abbas said that the prophet Muhammad said that "deserters of faith should be killed."

The hadith told by 'Aisha is related by al-Tabarani, with the following sequence of transmitters: from Abu Bakr El-Hazli from Shahr Ibn Hoshab from 'Aisha. We will now discuss this hadith told by 'Aisha in the light of its sequence of transmission, its text, and its phrasing.

Most of the chains of transmission end with 'Ekrema, one of the best of those who related *hadith* told by Abu 'Abbas,. *Hadith* related by

'Ekrema were excluded by Imam Muslim; he only relates one of his *hadith*, on pilgrimage, which is affirmed by Sa'eed Ibn Jubayr. Imam Muslim did not trust him because he was suspected of being “a liar, and follow[ing] the *Khawarij*, [i.e., the renegades who turned against Ali Ibn abu Talib], and accept[ing] bribes from rulers.” This view is reiterated by M. Abu Zahw, an exceptionally pious religious scholar. Al-Dhahabi, in his book *Mizan Al-'Etedal* includes two pages of different views on 'Ekrema. He concludes by saying ‘*Ikrima* was an inveterate liar, whose speech cannot be trusted.

In the same book, we find the version of the *hadith* told by Mu'awiyah Ibn Hida, whom all *hadith* scholars have rejected. Another version of the *hadith* is told by Shahr Ibn Hoshab, who is also rejected by the *hadith* scholars.

The *hadith* scholars and transmitters discarded *hadith* whose tellers are doubted as liars; however, in this case, many of them accepted these *hadith* and their transmission, despite the position of Imam Muslim who rejected 'Ekrema as a reliable transmitter.

As for the text of the questionable *hadith*, we see in the version of 'Ekrema that the word 'renegade' is used (in Arabic: *Zanadiqa*). The history of this word shows that it was not used in the era of the four Rightly Guided Caliphs, who ruled immediately after the death of the Prophet Muhammad. Moreover, it is not plausible that 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib, one of the aforementioned caliphs, burned people alive; he could not have been ignorant of something that Ibn 'Abbas knew. The general expression of this doubted *hadith* could be applied to anyone who changes his religion to embrace Islam, to Jews who convert to Christianity, or to Christians who convert to Judaism (this view was held by some scholars). It does, however, contradict what prophet Muhammad said in one of his messages: “No converting Christians and Jews to Islam by force.” The idea that God will not accept the repentance of the one who deserted Islam, told by Mu'awiyah Ibn Hida, contradicts many verses of the Holy Qur'an and as well as many *hadith*; these explain that the repentance of those who wished to return to Islam after deserting it was accepted. The Holy Qur'an says: “*How could God bestow His guidance upon people who have resolved to deny the truth after having attained to faith, and having borne witness that this apostle is true, and after evidence of the truth has come unto them? For God does not guide such evildoing folk. Their requital shall be rejection by God, by the angels, and by all righteous men. In this state shall they abide and neither will their suffering be lightened, nor will they be granted respite, but*

*excepted shall be they that afterwards repent and put themselves to rights: for, behold, God is much-forgiving, Dispenser of grace” (3:86-89).*

When they returned to Islam, they became good Muslims; this agrees with the spirit of Islam and the wisdom of the Islamic jurisprudence. Prophet Muhammad did not order their killing nor sent people to make them repent. Presumably he would have done so had apostasy been a punishable crime. If the *hadith* told by Mu'awiyah Ibn Hida were true, most religious scholars would not ask renegades to repent and return to Islam.

4. Scholars cite a story told by Mo'aaz. He said, “When the Prophet Muhammad sent me to Yemen, he told me to kill any man or women who embraced Islam and then deserted it”

This story is mentioned by Al-Hafiz, in the book *Fath Al-Bari*. He provides a good sequence of *hadith* transmitters, but with a different phrasing: “If any man or woman deserted Islam after embracing it, try to make them repent and return to Islam. If they did not accept repentance, they ought to be killed.” The *hadith* is also mentioned in a number of other *hadith* collections such as *Al-Jama' Al-Saghir* and *Al-Jama' El-Kabir* by Imam Al-Siyouti.

It is clear the sequence of Hafiz of transmitters cannot be trusted, and the book *Taqrib El-Tahzib* mentions that this *hadith* is told by M. Ibn Abdullah El-Arzami.

The book *Nasb El-Raya* presents both the *hadith* of the killing of apostates and renegades, and the *hadith* that oppose their killing. It refutes the accuracy of the former group, as the transmitters are not adequately trusted, and refuses to accept that the Prophet Muhammad killed a woman who shunned Islam. Similar views are shown Al-Shawkani's *Nayl El-Awtar*.

As well, the killing of renegades runs contrary to the story of 'Umar Ibn Al-Khattab, as related in the book *Nasb El-Raya*, and that of Al-Shafa'i in *Nayl El-Awtar* by Al-Shawkani. In this story, 'Umar Ibn Al-Khattab met with the delegation that came from the tribe of the Bani Thawr. They said that they had killed a renegade who deserted Islam. 'Umar Ibn Al-Khattab told them “Why did not you offer him food in his confinement and try to convince him to repent for three consecutive days? I did not order or witness this, I can not accept it.”

In another story about ‘Umar Ibn Al-Khattab, told by Al-Shawkani and Al-Bayhaqi, ‘Umar Ibn Al-Khattab asked Anas “What has become of the six men who deserted us and went to the polytheists?” Anas told ‘Umar Ibn Al-Khattab that they were killed in the battle. ‘Umar Ibn El-Khattab asked Anas “Were there any other means of killing them?” Anas said, “I offered them repentance and return to Islam, otherwise I would have put them in prison”. This story proves that the punishment for those who shunned Islam was prison, death. ‘Umar Ibn Al-Khattab then said in disapproval “I did not order or witness this, I can not accept it.”

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We should here mention another story about ‘Umar Ibn Al-Khattab: that he threatened Gubla Ibn Al-Ayham with death if he deserted Islam. Gubla was the last king of the Al-Ghasasna people, who made a pact with the Byzantines and fought alongside them against Muslims in the decisive Battle of Yarmouk. When the Byzantines lost the battle, this man embraced Islam, and visited Medina and Mecca. While he was performing pilgrimage in Mecca, and he was circumambulating the holy *Kaaba*, an Arab man accidentally stepped on his gown. Gubla Ibn Al-Ayham then slapped the man so hard that his eyes were hurt. This injured man complained to ‘Umar Ibn Al-Khattab, who sent for Gubla Ibn Al-Ayham and ordered him to compensate the injured man. Gubla Ibn Al-Ayham refused and said proudly, “You want me to compensate him, while I am a king, and he is a common man?” ‘Umar Ibn Al-Khattab told him that Islam made all men equal before God. Gubla Ibn Al-Ayham demanded time to think the matter over and fled to the Byzantines, deserting Islam, and returning to Christianity.

It is clear that the case of Gubla Ibn El-Ayham was unique in two ways. He was a military leader who fought against Muslims, embracing Islam after he was defeated; Potentially, he might turn against Muslims and fight them once more. It is not a case of apostasy; it has nothing to do with freedom of belief and thought. Gubla Ibn Al-Ayham refused to follow the law of the Islamic state, under which he was equal with all Muslims even though he remained a king. Thus, the story is not about deserting one's faith. If Gubla Ibn Al-Ayham was an ordinary man, he would have been punished or imprisoned; as he was a military leader who rebelled against the laws of the state, his case was political not religious. Let us remember that ‘Umar Ibn Al-Khattab is the one who cried: “I did not order or witness this, I can not accept it.”

What is more important is that the Prophet Muhammad did not order the killing of any man or woman just because he or she rejected Islam after initially embracing it. The Prophet Muhammad refused to listen to the Arab man who said to him “O Muhammad, exclude me from the pledge of alliance,” but he did not punish him. We do not know many details about this incident. ‘Abd al-‘Azim Ibrahim Al-Mat’any, in his book *The Punishment of Apostasy Between Jurisprudence and Critics*, criticized those who said that the Prophet Muhammad did not order the killing apostates, as this view does not have evidential support. He writes, “In the year of the conquest of Mecca, the Prophet Muhammad ordered the killing of a man called Ibn Al-Akhtal, who was a Muslim who deserted Islam and returned to Mecca before the conquest. When the army of Muslims entered Mecca, he ran to the *Kaaba* to seek refuge. Despite this trick, the Prophet Muhammad ordered his killing as a renegade who rejected the faith.”

### **What is the true story of Ibn Al-Akhtal?**

According to Ibn Ishaq, the story is as follows: “‘Abdullah Ibn Al-Akhtal was a man from the tribe of the *Bani Kasim Ibn Ghalib*. When he embraced Islam, he was sent with another man to collect alms. Ibn Al-Akhtal ordered this partner to prepare food and subsequently fell asleep. When he found that his partner had not prepared the food, he killed him. He then rejected the faith of Islam and made his two girl-slaves compose poems and songs that slandered the Prophet. The Prophet Muhammad ordered his killing for these reasons.” The story, in its historical context, shows that this man had a criminal past, and he was killed, as he was a killer, not because of his apostasy.

Al-Mat’any mentions in his book that a woman called Umm Marawan rejected Islam. The Prophet Muhammad ordered his followers to try to make her repent and return to Islam; if she persisted, she was to be killed. Al-Mat’any’s reference for this story is the book *Nayl El-Awtar* by Al-Shawkani, who himself writes that this story lacks a solid confirmation of trusted *hadith* transmitters.

Ibn Taymiya says that the Prophet Muhammad accepted the repentance of those who rejected Islam and returned to it once more, but ordered the killing of those who harmed Islam, killed Muslims, stole their money and possessions, or slandered the Prophet Muhammad. such as Qais Ibn Hababam, the Al-Arniyyin tribe, Ibn Al-Akhtal, and Ibn Abu Sarh. Ibn Taymiya differentiates between rejecting Islam, without other crimes, and being a renegade who fights against God and the Prophet,

with the specific purpose of killing or harming Muslims. The former is something repentance for which is possible, while the latter were criminals that were killed after their capture.

Therefore, the *hadith* that refer to the killing of apostates are wrong. As the above stories prove, the Prophet Muhammad did not kill any apostate, but ordered the killing of those who fought against God and his Prophet, or those who harmed Muslims. Even in the stories about ‘Umar Ibn El-Khattab, there was no capital punishment for apostates.

From these stories, we conclude that the killing of renegades who rejected Islam was associated with enemies fighting Islam and harming Muslims. Those people were killed as fighters against Islam not as apostates. When they were captured they were killed to protect the nascent call of Islam. This punishment exists in all faiths now.

### **The issue of renegades in the reign of Abu Bakr**

Most religious scholars use the story of the renegades' war, during the reign of the first caliph, Abu Bakr, as evidence to legitimize killing rejecters of Islam. This war was misunderstood historically; Abu Bakr did not start the war. Rather, it was waged by tribes who, once they heard about the death of the Prophet Muhammad, wanted to free themselves from two obligations. They refused to pay alms under the pretext that it was to be paid only to Muhammad, as per the Qur'anic verse: "*Hence, O prophet, accept that part of their possessions which is offered for the sake of God, so that thou mayest cleanse them thereby and cause them to grow in purity, and pray for them, thy prayer will be a source of comfort to them*" (9:103). They said that the prayers of the Prophet Muhammad was the reason for their paying *Zakat* alms. Secondly, they wanted to free themselves from the rule of Abu Bakr. One of their poets said:

*We have obeyed the prophet when he was among us,  
We, as people, refuse the caliphate of Abu Bakr  
Is he going to name his son as his successor?  
If it happens, we would all be ruined.*

This was not a case of rejecting faith, as they were still Muslims; it was a matter of paying the *Zakat* alms and refusing to accept Abu Bakr as caliph. It was political mutiny or rebellion, which took shape when the rebels thought that Medina was without an army; Abu Bakr had sent the army, headed by 'Usama Ibn Zayd, to conquer the Levant as ordained by Muhammad before his death. Abu Bakr knew their intentions and sent a group of the Prophet's companions to protect the borders of Medina and ward off the renegades. Later, when the army returned, Abu Bakr sent battalions to chase the renegades, punish the rebellions tribes, and made them submit to the law of the state.

Therefore, we can say that Abu Bakr did not fight apostates, but he was fought by groups of political renegades who opposed his rule. It was not a matter of faith, but a political matter of money and rule. These tribes fought so as not to pay *Zakat* alms, and Abu Bakr fought them to restore political order and for the *Zakat*. Abu Bakr said plainly: "I swear by God, if they did not pay me what they paying to the Prophet, I will fight them for it".

‘Umar Ibn Al-Khattab, among many of the prophet's companions, condemned the idea of Muslims fighting one another; this was to be considered a crisis of faith. However, Abu Bakr, as a ruler and a statesman, knew that the rebellion against him, the central authority, and an adamant refusal to pay the *Zakat*, was enough reason to wage war. This is the truth about the renegades' war, but this story has been misused as evidence to support killing those who reject the faith, even those who do not openly oppose the state and refuse to obey its laws.

Islam's tolerance included even those renegades, as is apparent in the story of the *Khawarij* (renegades), who openly opposed Imam ‘Ali Ibn Abu Talib. Brandishing their weapons against him, they accused him of apostasy, and appointed another ruler for themselves. Imam ‘Ali did not fight them until they killed an unarmed man; when he asked them to produce the perpetrator, they claimed that they all were his killers.

### **Evidence of liberty of thought from deeds and situations of the companions of prophet Muhammad**

Successive political developments in the Islamic society after the death of the Prophet Muhammad led to the emergence of unfamiliar trends of thought. Chief among them was the “great strife” between Imam ‘Ali and Mu'awyaia Ibn Abu Sufyan; the blood shed among Muslims in these wars was more than than the blood shed in the wars of conquest. Things aggravated and some people accused both Imam Ali, Mu'awyaia Ibn Abou Soufian, as well as some their followers in war, of infidelity and said they must be fought, and killed, their money stolen, and their women captured. Wasil Ibn 'Ata' said that Imam Ali, Mu'awyaia Ibn Abou Sufyan, and their followers cannot be accepted as witness in legal matters, especially after the battle of Suffain, as they were all wrong, followed a lost cause, and committed mistakes. He did not enumerate these mistakes. This position, however, was not typical of most of the Prophet’s companions.

In the message of contemporary Salafism, we mention examples of the tolerance of the Prophet’s companions towards those who held minority beliefs concerning God.

- The Companions did not accuse of heresy those who opposed the doctrine of predestination. They said that God does not predestine or decree someone be believer or not. He does not guide someone to faith, and they said that man creates his own destiny, and chooses to be a believer or non-believer.
- The Companions did not accuse people of heresy who supported the doctrine of predestination, i.e. that God predestined every human being to a certain fate, and subsequently He made men different in belief and disbelief. Obedience and disobedience are like differences in other facial and bodily features. Man cannot control or choose his fate.
- When leaders of these various philosophical doctrines died, they received an Islamic burial and funeral.
- Even the group called the *Mu'tazila* were not considered to be infidels, although they claimed many things contrary to Islam: that the Holy Qur'an is a creation of God, that those who committed major sins are in the in-between status of being a Muslim and a non-believer and that they would be in Hell for eternity, that God does not predestine human beings to sin as they are responsible for their sins, and finally that the Holy Qur'an is not the Word of God but one of his creations.

- Likewise, the group called the *Murji'a* were not considered to be infidels, although they also claimed many things contrary to Islam: faith is in the heart, not accompanied by good deeds, the mere belief in God and his prophet Muhammad is enough in faith without prayers, and a believer is like angels and prophets, i.e. the same in stature.
- The group called *Jahmia* were not considered to be infidels, although they too claimed many things contrary to Islam: there is no deity on a throne to be worshipped, and God did not reveal Holy Scriptures as His Word. They denied the Night-Journey of the Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Jerusalem, and his ascension to Heaven. This group even denied the epithets of God mentioned in the Holy Qur'an. Ibn Mubarak said, "We would better talk about the Jewish faith, and not about the doctrine of *Jahmia*." Yet, when the leader of *Jahmia*, Jahm Ibn Safwan, and his secretary, Ja'd Ibn Dirham, died, they had Islamic funerals and burials. No one accused them of being infidels, polytheists or apostates. It is noteworthy that these groups, and the ones that came after and before them, are said to be from the 72 groups that left mainstream Islam and, according to the well known *hadith*, are condemned to Hell. Many scholars, however, consider this *hadith* to be very weak.

Ibn Taymiya said that Imam Ahmed Ibn Hanbal did not accuse these groups of heresy, and he prayed at the funerals of some of the men from these groups that Ibn Taymiya described as "aberrant and deviant."

In M. Zaki Ibrahim's book *Contemporary Salafism: the Destination*, the author differentiates between practical heresy and doctrinal heresy:

In the *hadith* of the Prophet Muhammad, the terms *kufir*, "apostasy," and *shirk*, "polytheism," are never used to mean rejection of the Islamic faith. Rather they are jurisprudential terms, mentally, logically, and collectively, referring to the believer who commits certain sins, thereby imitating the non-believer in word or deed. Thus, these terms refer to sinning, taking rules lightly, or transgressing one's limits. This does not mean flagrant, practical rejection of faith. These distinctions should be known everywhere; otherwise, if the *hadith* was taken literally, then there would be no real 'Muslim' on Earth. Muslims now have imitated other non-Muslim people in many things, excepting the tenets of faith, some morals and rituals. The deluge of civilization is mixed with everything in our life, materially and abstractly, and this is a fact that cannot be ignored by scholars, Salafists, or ignorant people. I pray to God to spare us the scourge of ignorance.

God says in the Holy Qur'an "*And for those who malign believing men and believing women without their having done any wrong- they surely burden themselves with the guilt of calumny, and thus with a flagrant sin!*" (33:58).

### **The Issue of Apostasy: Scholarly Works**

There is no verse in the Holy Qur'an that states a worldly punishment for apostasy, nor do we find evidence of such a punishment in the sayings and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions. They never punished anyone for heresy or apostasy. The question now is how are there several prolonged lengthy *hadith* that tackle this notion of a worldly punishment for apostasy?

This notion is the work of old religious scholars who wanted to record Islamic jurisprudence, or *fiqh*, and to codify laws during the last years of the 'Umayyad Caliphate and the early years of the 'Abbasid Caliphate. This was a time when political and doctrinal disputes aggravated and threatened the Islamic nation, or *Umma*. These religious scholars tried to defend the faith, order, and authority of the ruling regime; the atmosphere of political unrest dictated that they should ostracize trouble-makers through the legitimization of 'weak' or 'distorted' *hadith*, creating incorrect but strong sequences of transmission for them, as well as excluding other *hadith*. These scholars created a phrase to accuse people of heresy: "*Those who deny what is known in faith by necessity,*" and subsequently devised the notion of demanding repentance from wrong doers.

These scholars considered the punishment for heresy and apostasy to be unique, one that precludes an Islamic funeral and burial. Their money can be damaging to Muslims.

According to the author of the book titled *Al-Jawhara*:

*Those who deny what is known  
In our faith by necessity should be killed  
As they are like those who committed adultery  
And said it was allowed!*

It is clear that this phrasing is nominal only; any scholar might consider anything in Islam as "known by necessity" and that whoever denies it is heretic who deserves death. It happened once that a Sudanese court found Mahmoud M. Taha to be a heretic and condemned him to death because he denied that *hijab* (headscarf) was obligatory, while their scholars saw it as something "known by necessity"!

In another book by Khawarizmi, he says that: “These are some phrases that denote heresy like 'I do not like prayers,' 'I know the divine wisdom', 'I wish killing/ fornication is allowed' ...etc.” Scholars even invented another phrase with the same meaning as "*Those who deny what is known in faith by necessity,*” which is "*the saying, the deed, or the belief of heresy.*” Jad Al-Haq issued a *fatwa* (religious edict ) in Egypt, in the journal *Al-Wafd* (issue dating 23-2-1993) that tackled the relationship between belief and its application:

Scholars unanimously agreed on the fact that those who denied something obligatory like prayers or fasting, or approved of something forbidden like fornication and killing, which are things well-known from the Holy Qur’an, are heretics who rejected faith and shunned Islam. Ibn Taymia says in his book “Those who deny obligations like prayers or approve of something forbidden like injustice, wine, usury, or fornication, or forbid things lawful like food and marriage, and then they are infidels.” Thus, the one who does not fast in Ramadan and denies that this is an obligation, is an infidel, whereas the one who does not fast but does not deny that it is an obligation is a sinning Muslim who deserve punishment, but does not reject Islam!

No doubt, that this is a dangerous slope in jurisprudence, giving scholars greater authority. Indeed, it is contrary to the Qur’anic teaching of not describing what is lawful and what is forbidden by mere fancy. This authority does not governs things but rather governs people. In identifying so many people as heretics, the scholars are succumbing to mere fancy. Moreover, it contradicts Islamic jurisprudence that tends to limit sinners, not increase their numbers. Hence, this authority constitutes a danger to the freedom of thought. No freedom of thought is possible with such authority.

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The second addition by scholars is the attempt to convince 'sinners' to repent. There is no proof of such practice in the Holy Qur’an and *Sunna*. Both sources urge Muslims to repent, of course, but do not tell us that any authority should coerce people to do so, as some scholars had decreed. Muhammad once told a thief whose hand was cut to repent and said that God would thus forgive him. With this coerced repentance, undertaken by scholars, the repentance becomes meaningless; it occurs because not as a result of persuasion, but thru fear of capital punishment. It is a kind of mental terrorism and psychological manipulation.

These additions of forced repentance and the issues discussed above are contrary to the spirit of Islam: they are not mentioned in the Holy Qur'an or *Sunna*. When reading the Holy Qur'an and the Sunna, one should refuse these concepts entirely. These additions were inserted by religious scholars, with the aim of comprehensive teachings and the protection and stabilization of the ruling regime and law. Their circumstances compelled them to try to protect faith, they were not calling for freedom of belief and thought.

### **Conclusion**

We showed the notion of the freedom of thought and belief in the Holy Qur'an and the *Sunna*, and as practiced by the companions of the Prophet Muhammad. We also showed how religious scholars constricted this freedom by codifying laws and doctrines under the pretext of protecting faith, as per their circumstances. This was accomplished by the spread of false, weak, or distorted *hadith*, and incorrect sequences of transmission, as well as the spread of faulty interpretations. The scholars tended to support the authority of the ruling regime; the scholars were men of the law as well. That is why they have devised the phrase "*Those who deny what is known in faith by necessity*" and that the so-called heretics should be urged to repent or face the punishment of death.

The political circumstances of the past eras, as well as the application of weak, distorted *hadith*, without relying on evidence from the Holy Qur'an and *Sunna*, are all the factors that compelled the scholars to do this. We should discard the deeds and sayings of those scholars of the past and should stick with the major sources of the Holy Qur'an and *Sunna*. They are the ones we should follow wholeheartedly as they represent absolute, objective, and eternal Islam, not a version crippled by historical circumstances.

Historical circumstances dictated these conditions to scholars, and new, modern circumstances dictate that we should return to what God and his Prophet Muhammad have decreed. This is what corresponds with the atmosphere of liberty in modern age. We will draw parallels between two good qualities: a return to original Islam and living up to the standards of modern age.