

لا عوج له

A Book Free of Aberration

*The Qur'ān as a Straightforward Book
Free of All Aberration and Crookedness*

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Translation by Dr. Abu Zayd

سلسلة إملاء الخاطر | Imlā al-Khāṭir Series



AL-SALAM
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A Centre for Arabic and Islamic Sciences

Oxford . London . Online

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جميع الحقوق محفوظة

Imlā al-Khāṭir Series

In this series, which he names *Imlā al-Khāṭir* (literally, “dictation of thoughts”), Dr. Mohammad Akram Nadwi follows in the tradition of the Ḥanbalī scholar Ibn al-Jawzī’s *Ṣayd al-Khāṭir* and shares with the world his reflections on a variety of topics ranging from theology to law, history to heart softeners, philosophy, education and more. Composed in a casual, conversational style consisting of questions followed by their brief answers (each portion predicated by *qālū/qultu*, “they said”/“I responded”), he utilizes therein the highest level of Arabic, reflecting his love of the language and his extensive expertise in Arabic grammar and rhetoric. These short but poignant reflections are part of the *balāghah* genre and tradition of Arabic literature. It should be noted that these translations, done by his senior students, serve as a guide and can never fully match the style, tone and eloquence of the original Arabic. Also note that Dr. Akram does not necessarily review each translation and is not responsible for any errors, improper word choices, or the likes, that are an inevitable part of the translation process.

Dr. Mohammad Akram Nadwi

Dr. Mohammad Akram Nadwi is a world-renowned scholar of Indian origin who has resided in England for an extensive time. After receiving in-depth training to an advanced level in the traditional Islamic disciplines at the famous Nadwat al-‘Ulāmā’ seminary in Lucknow, India, and receiving a PhD in Arabic literature from Lucknow University, he became a research fellow at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, where he conducted research for a number of years on a variety of topics, including Ḥadīth and Sufi orders in India. He has published widely in Urdu, Persian, Arabic and English, including translations (like his work on Shāh Waliullah, *Bustan al-Muhaddithin*), editions of Arabic texts (such as a renowned critical edition of *Usul al-Shāshī* in Ḥanafī jurisprudence), and original monographs on Islamic law, female ḥadīth narrators and such figures as Abū Ḥanīfah and Sayyid Abul Ḥasan ‘Alī Nadwi. His groundbreaking work, yet to be published, is an encyclopedic 40-volume documentation of the legacy of female scholarship in the Islamic tradition. He co-founded the Al-Salam Institute in 2006 where he continues to serve as Principal and Senior Lecturer.

Introduction

In this monograph, Dr. Akram continues his personal reflections on the Qur'ān, in this case, on the idea of the Qur'ān as a straightforward Book that is free of aberrations and crookedness, which many human beings have attempted to muddle with their restrictions and excesses, all of which mar the pure and straight Qur'ānic path.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

لا عوج له

بقلم: محمد أكرم الندوي

أو كسفورد

قالوا: عرضت في مقال لك سابق عنايتك بتدبر كتاب الله تعالى في شهر رمضان المبارك، فأشركنا في معنى جديد هداك تدبرك إلى تفقهه، قلت: هي عدة معان استوحيتها من كتاب الله تعالى في هذا الشهر. قالوا: أخبرنا بأشرفها لديك وأرقاها. قلت: هو وصف الله تعالى كتابه بأنه لا عوج له إذ قال: "الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَى عَبْدِهِ الْكِتَابَ وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ عِوَجًا" (سورة الكهف 1)، وقال: "وَلَقَدْ صَرَبْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِي هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ، قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا غَيْرَ ذِي عِوَجٍ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ". (سورة الزمر 28-27)

قالوا: ما الذي أراده الله إذ وصف كتابه بأنه لا عوج له؟ قلت: بيان ذلك في آية أخرى: "وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْجِبَالِ فَقُلْ يَنْسِفُهَا رَبِّي نَسْفًا، فَيَذَرُهَا قَاعًا صَفْصَفًا، لَا تَرَى فِيهَا عِوَجًا وَلَا أَمْتًا، يَوْمَئِذٍ يَتَّبِعُونَ الدَّاعِيَ لَا عِوَجَ لَهُ^ط وَخَشَعَتِ الْأَصْوَاتُ لِلرَّحْمَنِ فَلَا تَسْمَعُ إِلَّا هَمْسًا". (سورة طه 106-107)

(108). فانظر كيف أنبأنا الله تعالى بأنه يجعل مواضع الجبال يوم القيامة أرضاً ملساء منكشفة، لا ترى فيها انحرافاً ولا انشقاقاً، ولا انخفاضاً ولا ارتفاعاً، يومئذ يتبعون صوت الداعي للمحشر اتباعاً غير زائعين، فأرض المحشر تكون بساطاً واحداً مستويا لا ميل فيه ولا التواء، ولا وادي فيه ولا جبل، ويتبع الناس الداعي في طريق مستقيم يؤدي بهم إليه من دون أن يكون فيه انعطاف وانحناء، أو أود وازورار، ومن دون أن يحتاجوا إلى استجلاء أو استفسار.

كذلك جعل الله كتابه واضحاً بيناً يهدي إلى صراطه المستقيم المستوي الوسط المعتدل، لا يدع مجالاً للتأويلات الضالة الظالمة، ولا التفاصيل المقحمة الممجوجة، ولا الآراء المشتهية المنتكبة، وكلما حصل لأحد تردد ناشئ من قلة التدبر وجد سنة النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم آخذة بيده إلى النجاة.

قالوا: وهل هذا العوج غير الضلال؟ قلت: نعم، فالذين يصدون الناس عن سبيل الله نوعان: الأول: الذين يضلون الناس عنها بأهوائهم وآرائهم فيسيرون بهم في غير سبيل الله تعالى، والثاني: الذين يصدون عنها ييغونها عوجاً، فيسيرون بهم في سبيل الله تعالى وقد ملأوها جبلاً وودياناً، وملتويات ومنحرفات، فيتسكعون فيها منهوكة قواهم ومثقلة أعمالهم، قال الله تعالى: "قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ تَصُدُّونَ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ مِمَّنْ آمَنَ تَبْغُوتَهَا عَوجًا وَانْتُمْ شُهَدَاءٌ ۗ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ". (سورة آل عمران)، وقال:

الَّذِينَ يُضُدُّونَ عَنِ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَيَبْغُونَهَا عِوَجًا وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ كَافِرُونَ (سورة الأعراف 45، سورة هود 19)

قالوا: فكيف يبغيها الناس عوجا؟ قلت: هو مثل قوله تعالى: "وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ الَّذِينَ أُوْتُوا الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَعِيًا بَيْنَهُمْ" وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ". (سورة آل عمران 19)، إنهم يبغيونها عوجا كما أنهم اختلفوا لما جاءهم العلم، استخدموا العلم مطية للمنصب والجاه، وحبالة لنهب الأموال وأكلها بالباطل، ومبررا لتأكيد انهم أولى بالحق والصواب من غيرهم، وأحد ذكاء وأنشط استنباطا ممن سواهم، أي إن مآتي اختلافهم هو حرصهم على الزعامة الدنيوية، فتفرق العلماء في طوائف وأحزاب وآراء، يدعون الناس إليها قبل أن يدعوهم إلى سبيل الله، فأحدثوا في سبيل الله عوجا وميلا، وصدوا الناس عنها، قال تعالى: الَّذِينَ يَسْتَحِبُّونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا عَلَى الْآخِرَةِ وَيُضُدُّونَ عَنِ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَيَبْغُونَهَا عِوَجًا أُولَئِكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ بَعِيدٍ. (سورة إبراهيم 3)

قلت: ولما أعجب العلماء المتحزبون والمتعصبون بآرائهم ومذاهبهم حصروا الصراط المستقيم في تأويلهم وجعلوا تطبيق الدين أكثر ضيقا لعامة الناس وأشد تخصصا، محتاجين إلى خبراء مرسين محنكين يلوون الشرائع والأحكام بالسنتهم وأقلامهم. الأمر الذي يؤدي إلى وجود فقهاء متنافسين متشاققين وفرق مبارئة مناوئة، ولا ريب في أن ذلك من أخبث أنواع الفساد في الأرض. فقال ينهاهم عن ذلك: "وَلَا تَقْعُدُوا بِكُلِّ صِرَاطٍ تُوعِدُونَ وَتَصُدُّونَ

عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ مَنْ آمَنَ بِهِ وَتَبِعُوهَا عَوْجًا ۖ وَادْكُرُوا إِذْ كُنتُمْ قَلِيلًا فَكَثُرْتُمْ
وَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدِينَ". (سورة الأعراف 86).

قالوا: اكتشف لنا عن ذلك المعنى بمثال من كتاب الله تعالى. قلت:
خذوا مثلاً قوله تعالى: "وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تَذْبُجُوا بَقْرَةَ
قَالُوا أَتَتَّخِذُنَا هُزُوعًا قَالِ اعْوِذْ بِاللَّهِ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ..." (سورة البقرة
67-71). فأمر الله تعالى بذبح البقرة أمر واضح جلي لا غموض فيه ولا
خفاء، ولا ميل فيه ولا التواء، ولو أنهم أخذوا أي بقرة مهما كان نوعها أو
لونها لأتوا ما أمر الله به، ولكنهم ضيقوا الأمر مستثيرين أسئلة لا يحتملها
المقام، وهكذا المتخصصون المنطوقون على أنفسهم يجعلون الأمر العام
المطلق البين محاطاً بقيود وشروط وتأويلات وشروح يابأها عباد الله
الصالحون نائية عنها أسماعهم، كارهة لها قلوبهم ونافرة منها عقولهم.

قلت: إن العلم الذي يأتي من الله تعالى بواسطة رسله هو مراد
المسلمين جميعاً، بل مراد البشر كافة، لم يرد الله أن يجعله ملتبساً مشتبهاً
مشكلاً مبهماً يحتاج إلى خبراء يميطنون النقاب عنه ويزيجون الستار، إن
الله أمر بحكم ثم أمر بالسبب المؤدي إليه، والحكم والسبب إليه كلاهما بين
بيانا فيه للناس شفاء، لاختفاء فيه ولا التواء، فمثلاً أمرنا بأن نذكره وأمرنا
بالصلاة سبباً إلى ذكره، فإذا صلى الناس كانوا مؤدبين للصلاة وذاكرين له،
ثم يأتي أناس فيجعلون هذا الذكر المطلق مقيداً بقيود وشروط، ويجعلون
الصلاة مقيدة بقيود وشروط لم يذكرها الله ولا رسوله، ثم يأتي أناس آخرون
فيخالفونهم ويحدثون قيوداً وشروطاً أخرى، ثم يأتي أناس غيرهم فيخالفون

الحزبين جميعا، وهكذا تتكاثر الأحزاب والطوائف ملحة على أن الذكر لا يصح إلا على طريقها الخاص وأن الصلاة لا تقبل إلا على طريقها الخاص، ويتحزبون ويتعصبون ويتشاقون ويتقاتلون، باغين سبيل الله عوجا.

قالوا: من هم أمثلة الذين ييغون سبيل الله عوجا؟ قلت: أحبار اليهود والرهبان من النصارى، ومن هذه الأمة طوائف كثيرة جعلت طرقها هي المؤدية إلى سبيل الله حاصرة الحق فيها رامية غيرها بالزيف والضلال، ولم ترض بما بينه الله في كتابه وفي سنة رسوله، فجمعوا الذلول صعبا، والسهل حزنا، والقيم معوجا، يصدون الناس عن سبيل الله تعالى صدا.

قلت: إن الله تعالى قد خلق الناس على فطرة وأنعم عليهم بوسائل العلم من السمع والبصر والعقل، فإذا تُركوا وكتابَ الله تعالى اهتدوا إلى معانيه ومراميه، لأنه يتوافق مع فطرتهم وعقلهم، ويمكنهم أن يحكموا عليه بالصدق والصواب ويقبلوه، إن المقياس الذي يستعمل في هذا الحكم يتشارك فيه بنو آدم كلهم، فيعرفون به ما جاءهم من ربهم.

قالوا: ألا نحتاج إلى معلمين؟ قلت: بلى، ولكن المعلمين ليس واجبه إلا بيان سبيل الله، لا أن يجعلوه عوجا.

قالوا: كيف نميز بين المعلمين الناصحين، وبين المعلمين المتبعين للأهواء؟ قلت: بفطرتكم وبعقولكم، كما تفرقون بين طيب عالم ناصح، وبين متطبب جاهل متتهب لأموالكم. وعليكم ببذل الجهد في ذلك وإياكم والتكاسل والتخاذل، قال الله تعالى: "والذين جاهدوا فينا لنهدينهم سبلنا".

A Book Free of Aberration

An Examination of the Qur'ān as a Straightforward Book Free of All Aberration and Crookedness

By Dr. Mohammad Akram Nadwi
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They asked: You have mentioned in a previous article your particular care to ponder over the Book of God in the blessed month of Ramadan. Can you enlighten us on any new meaning that your reflections have lead you to understand?

I replied:

There are a number of meanings from God's Book that I was inspired to in this month.

They asked: Tell us about the most noble of them in your eyes.

I replied:

It is God's description of His Book that it is free of aberration, when He says: "Praise be to God Who has revealed to His servant the Book devoid of all crookedness;"¹ and "We have indeed propounded for mankind all kinds of parables in this Qur'ān that they may take heed. It is an Arabic Qur'ān free of all crookedness that they may guard against their evil end."²

They asked: What did God intend by describing His Book as free of aberration?

I replied:

The clarification of that lies in another verse:

¹ Qur'ān 18:1.

² Qur'ān 39:27-8.

"They ask you concerning the mountains: "Where will they go?" Say: "My Lord will scatter them like dust and leave the earth a levelled plain in which you shall find no crookedness nor curvature. On that Day people shall follow straight on to the call of the summoner, no one daring to show any haughtiness. Their voices shall be hushed before the Most Compassionate Lord, so that you will hear nothing but a whispering murmur."³

Look at how God describes how he will make the sites of the mountains on the Day of Judgement a smooth and naked land, where you would not be able to see any deviation or rift, nor any depression or elevation. It would be a day when all would follow the voice of the caller without deviating. The land of Resurrection will be one flat and equal plain, with no bends or curvatures, no valleys or hills. People will follow the caller in a direct and straight path that will lead them to the plain, without any turns or bends, and without need for directions or inquiry.

Similarly, God has made His Book clear and plain in order to guide to His straight path, which is direct, in the center and balanced. It doesn't leave any scope for deviant, unjust interpretations, nor any hastily spewed details or deviant views based on desires. And whenever any doubts should arise for any person from their lack of deliberation, they find the sunnah of the Prophet to take them by their hand back to salvation.

They asked: Is this aberrancy different from deviation?

I replied:

Yes, for those who obstruct others from God's path are two types: firstly, those who deviate people away from it through their own desires and views and bring them to travel on other than the path of God; and secondly, those who hinder men from the path of God by trying to make the path itself crooked. The latter remain traveling within God's path but fill the road with mountains and valleys, and sudden twists and turns. They fumble about, with sapped strength and heavy deeds. God says: "Say: 'People of the Book! Why do you hinder one who believes from the way of God, seeking that he follow a crooked way, even though you yourselves are witness to it being

³ Qur'ān 20:105-8.

the right way?' God is not heedless of what you do."⁴ And He says: "... those who hinder men from the path of God and seek to make it crooked; and disbelieve in the Hereafter."⁵

They asked: How do they seek to make it crooked?

I replied:

It is like the statement of God: "The People of the Book adopted many different ways rather than follow the true way of Islam even after the knowledge of truth had reached them, and this merely to commit excesses against one another. Let him who refuses to follow the ordinances and directives of Allah know that Allah is swift in His reckoning."⁶ Surely they seek to make it crooked as they had differed after true knowledge had come to them. They utilized the knowledge as an instrument for gaining position and status, a snare to net more wealth—consuming it in falsehood and a justification for affirming that they were closer to the truth than others, with sharper intelligence and greater deductive ability. In other words, the origin of their differences was their greed for worldly leadership, and so their scholars split up into groups, sects and various views, each of them calling people to that instead of calling them to the way of God. They invented in God's way much deviation and hindered people from that way. God says: "Those who have chosen the life of the world in preference to the Hereafter, who hinder people from the Way of God, and seek to make it crooked, they have gone far astray."⁷

I also said:

When these partisan and sectarian scholars became enthralled by their own opinions and by their groupings, they began to confine the straight path to their own interpretations. They made the application of their religion for the masses extremely restrictive and constrained, requiring the most experienced minute experts, who twisted the laws and rulings with their tongues and pens. This is the matter that leads to the rise of competing, schismatic jurists and artificial opposing sects, and there is no doubt that

⁴ Qur'ān 3:99.

⁵ Qur'ān 7:45 and 11:19.

⁶ Qur'ān 3:19.

⁷ Qur'ān 14:3.

this is from the most evil types of corruption in the earth. God said, prohibiting them from that: "And do not lie in ambush by every path [of life] seeking to overawe or to hinder from the path of God those who believe, nor seek to make the path crooked. Remember, how you were once few, and then He multiplied you, and keep in mind what was the end of mischief-makers."⁸

They said: Tell us more about that meaning with examples from the Book of God.

I replied:

Take an example from His statement: "Then call to mind the other event: when Moses said to his people, "God commands you to sacrifice a cow," they replied, "Do you mean to have a jest with us?" He answered, "I crave God's protection from behaving like ignorant people . . ."⁹ God commanded the slaughtering of a cow with a clear and open command, with no room for confusion or ambiguity. At this point, had they slaughtered any cow, of any color or stripe, they would have fulfilled God's command, but they restricted the matter by seeking inappropriate questions. And this is how the minute specialists draw [this cloud] over themselves, making a general, absolute, and clear matter encompassed by restrictions, conditions, and interpretations which the pious slaves of God reject, being repugnant to their ears and repulsive to their hearts and minds.

I also said:

Surely the knowledge which comes from God through the medium of the messengers is the aim of all the Muslims—rather all of humanity itself. God does not want to make it vague or unclear, nor difficult or unknown, such that it would require experts to remove its veils or lift its curtains. God issues a command for a ruling, and also commands the cause which leads to it. Both the ruling and the cause are clear and a healing for people, without ambiguity or concealment. So He commanded us to remember Him (dhikr), and also commanded us to pray (ṣalāh) as a means to remember Him. When people pray, they fulfill the directive to pray as well as the one to remember

⁸ Qur'ān 7:86.

⁹ Qur'ān 2:67-71.

Him. Then later on, people come in order to make this general command to remember God restricted by all sorts of restrictions and conditions, and also began to restrict prayer in the same way with those things which neither God nor His Messenger mentioned. Then other people come to oppose them with their own restrictions and conditions, and then more people come and so on. This is how groups proliferate, all insisting that remembering God or prayer is not correct unless it is in a certain way. So they begin to differ, split, become schisms and fight with one another, seeking to make the path of God crooked.

They asked: What are examples of those who seek to make the path of God crooked?

I replied:

The priests and rabbis of the Christians and Jews, and from this ummah, many groups which made their own way the exclusive path to God, confining the truth to themselves and labeling others with deviation. They were not satisfied with what God clarified in His Book or the Prophet in his sunnah. They made what was lenient difficult, and what was easy sorrowful, and what was straightforward crooked, obstructing people from the path of God.

I also said:

God created people on a pure nature and blessed them with many means to knowledge such as the faculties of hearing, seeing and the intellect. And when they are left with God's Book they are guided to its meanings and inspirations, because it is in uniformity with their nature and their intellects. They can judge it to be true and correct, and then accept it. The standard that is used in this judgement is shared by all human beings, and they can utilize it to recognize that which has come from their Lord.

They asked: Do we not need teachers then?

I replied:

Of course, but the teachers' only obligation is to clarify God's path, not to seek to make it crooked.

They asked: How can we distinguish between sincere teachers and those that follow their own desires?

I replied:

Through your innate nature and your intellects, in the same way that you can recognize a competent and trustworthy physician from a pretender who is ignorant and only after your money. But you will have to strive hard in this regard, and do not be lazy or weak, for God says: "As for those who strive in Our cause, We shall surely guide them to Our Ways."¹⁰

¹⁰ Qur'ān 29:69.