9431 - Ruling on describing those who are committed to the religion as fundamentalists and extremists

the question

It has become common in some of the media to accuse the youth of the Islamic revival of being extremists and fundamentalists. What is your opinion of this?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Whatever the case, this is a mistake that has come from the east and the west, from the Christians, communists and Jews, and others who try to put people off the call to Allah and its supporters, and who want to be unfair to the da'wah by calling it extremism or fundamentalism or whatever other names they give it.

Undoubtedly calling people to Allah is the religion of the Messengers, it is their path and their way. The people of knowledge are obliged to call others to Allah and to be active in doing so. The youth are obliged to fear Allah and to adhere to the truth, not to go to extremes or be harsh. It may so happen that some of the youth are ignorant, so they go to extremes in some matters, or they are lacking in knowledge, so they are negligent in some other matters. But all the youth and others, such as the scholars, must fear Allah and seek the truth with evidence (daleel), i.e., what Allah and His Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said; they must beware of bid'ah (reprehensible innovations) and exaggeration. They must also beware of ignorance and shortcomings. No one among them is infallible, and some of the people may err by doing too much or by falling short. But that does not mean that everyone is at fault; the fault rests with those who make the mistake.

But the enemies of Allah among the Christians and others who are following in their wake have

made this a means of attacking the da'wah and putting an end to it, by accusing its people of being extremists and fundamentalists.

What does "fundamentalism" mean?

If they are fundamentalists in the sense that they adhere to the fundamentals or basic principles (usool), to what Allah and His Messenger said, then this is praise, not condemnation. Adhering to the fundamentals, the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), is commendable and cannot be condemned. What is to be condemned is when people overdo things or fall short, when they go to extremes or are harsh or do not do what they have to do – this is what is to be condemned. But the person who adheres to the right principles, derived from the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), is not at fault; this is perfect and is to be praised. This is what is obligatory upon seekers of knowledge and those who call others to Allah: they should adhere to the fundamentals from the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), and whatever they know of the basic principles of fiqh, 'aqeedah and hadeeth, whatever can be used as evidence (daleel). They have to have basic principles which they follow. Describing the daayi'ahs as fundamentalists is a general word which does not mean anything apart from condemning them and putting people off. Fundamentalism is not a bad thing, in fact it is something good.

If the seeker of knowledge adheres to the fundamentals, paying attention to them and staying up at night to study them from the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), and what the scholars have stated, there is nothing wrong with that. But going to extremes in following bid'ah is what is wrong, and going to extremes of ignorance and falling short is also wrong.

The daa'iyahs are obliged to adhere to the fundamentals of sharee'ah and adhere to the middle course to which Allah has guided them, for Allah has made them an ummah justly balanced (cf. Al-Baqarah 2:143). So the daa'iyahs have to be justly balanced, treading a middle course between exaggeration and negligence. They have to be steadfast in adhering to the truth, and to adhere to

it on the basis of shar’i evidence (daleel). There should be neither exaggeration nor negligence, but the moderation that Allah has enjoined.