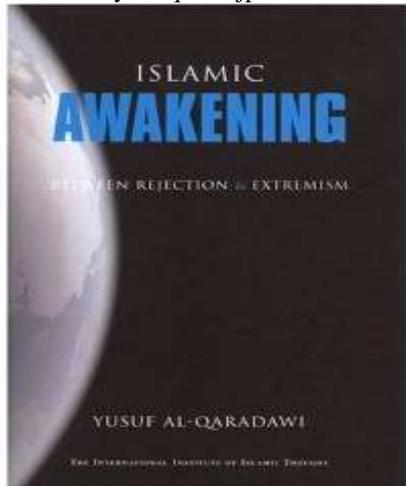


**Islamic Awakening Between Rejection and Extremism**, Dr. Yusuf al Qaradawi.

Reviewed by: Saqib Rajput.



With the fall of the Islamic caliphate and the general decadence of the Islamic culture Muslims, and especially Muslim youth, have found themselves striving to bring back the prestige their great nation once had. The severe economic, social and political degradation of the Ummah has led many youth to believe that the only way to “awaken” the enthusiasm of the ummah, was is through rash means . This zeal has eventually found itself transformed into discontent, friction and pessimism. Young activists believed that an awakening would only occur with the rejection of all things foreign to Islam and by replacing them with strict adherence to what they believe to be pristine Islam.

In this book, Yusuf Qaradawi, a seasoned scholar and world-renowned author, examines the causes and nature of extremism and lends his advice towards some of its possible solutions. From the outset, , Qaradawi points out that it is not his intention to condemn or praise this modern phenomenon, but to lay the foundations to a better understanding of it and to possibly guide the phenomenon aright.

Dr Qaradawi identifies extremism as remoteness in religion, thought and behavior, just as literally the extreme of something is the furthest one can be from its center. Qaradawi does not mean, however, that extremism is following a hard-line but respected juristic opinion. Rather it is that remoteness which is manifested in bigotry, pride, harshness and overburdening. With this definition, extremism goes against moderation, the very essence of Islamic teachings and way of life.

Dr Qaradawi states that a primary cause of extremism is lack of knowledge. Jubilant youth are quick to pass judgment on an issue with only the smallest consideration as to the legal consequences of their opinions. These activists have little appreciation for the depth of Islamic jurisprudence. The particulars of Hadith, Usul and Fiqh are foreign to them. Qaradawi also points out that there is a cause to the general lack of knowledge of these youth. According to him, youth have lost respect for many scholars throughout the Ummah. Youth have come to see scholars as becoming too compromising in their juristic opinions; ever ready to appease corrupt governments. At the same time, many scholars have distanced themselves from those active in the Islamic reform; quick to blame youth and turn up their noses at their weak understanding. Another salient cause of extremism, as pointed out by Qaradawi, is that Islam has become a “stranger in its homeland”. The practice of Islam has become something foreign in Muslim countries . The call to prayer has become silent, laws have moved from being founded on Shariah to being based on secular thought and Western culture has replaced much of Islamic culture .

Like an understanding father, Qaradawi advises his young Islamist counterparts on how to remedy extremist tendencies. He points out that a major area of improvement for youth concerned with the Ummah’s awakening is their methodology of learning Islam. He reminds youth of the many years of training scholars take before they are able to lead the Muslim people, academically or otherwise. Companions spent years studying under the tutelage of the noble Prophet, on whom be peace, before they taught others. Even after attaining respect amongst other scholars, these Muslim leaders were most observant of the manners of debating and disagreement. Qaradawi advises youth to invite others to Islam in the same manner that the great scholars and leaders did. The Prophet’s

teaching itself was characterized by relating to each individual's understanding, level of commitment to Islam and personal circumstance. And thus, Qaradawi mentions that we should not burden people new to Islam or weak in their commitment to the religion with intricacies. Rather we should remind them of those things that are most crucial to Islam. Further, Qaradawi directs those serious about Islamic work to familiarize themselves with Usul. He states that a great problem of extremism is its tendency to over emphasize the insignificant and to ignore the important. A student of Usul will find within the study the prioritization of issues.

To further the remedy, Qaradawi gives some counsel to his fellow scholars and leaders. He advocates that scholars must learn how to relate to youth, to find out what their problems and concerns are. He advises scholars to "abandon their ivory towers, forsake their intellectual heritage, and come down to earth with the young."

In true Qaradawi style, this book leaves the reader with a lucid understanding of the subject at hand. Letting the facts present themselves and not clouding them with emotion, his juristic background comes to the forefront. Equally, Qaradawi's love for literature is apparent by the ease and enjoyment by which the book is read.

This book would be an excellent weekend read for any one interested on the subject. However, those wanting to read up on terrorist groups, CNN and "Daniel Pipe's militant Islam" should look somewhere else. Qaradawi's extremism is the hard-liner conservative interpretation of Islam, rather than the hostile. This type of extremism is the one that we Canadians are more used to, as this trend of conservatism is becoming ever so present in our MSA campuses and Mosques. In fact Qaradawi dedicates a few paragraphs dealing with the North American experience and extremism. One would hope that in future versions of the book, even greater space would be set aside for this study. Qaradawi explains that Islam in North America is new and is facing different conflicts than Islam in its native lands. The context of a pluralistic, secular and materialistic society means that Islam must take on its challenges in a manner that is characterized by ease and facilitation, rather than constraint and extremism  
(2003 records)