Tawfique Chowdhury’s Alliance with the West

(NB: This article is being posted after much deliberation and is in no way meant to smear or tarnish the person of Shaykh Tawfique. This is a phenomenon which seems to be growing among some of the da’aat ulama in the West. As the issue is more important than the person involved, we emphasise again that this is not an attempt to ridicule or mock Shaykh Tawfique. This is a refutation of his article by a prominent scholar and da’ee, Shaykh Anwar al Awlaki. Shaykh Tawfique has also been advised of errors in his original article by two fellow instructors at al Kauthar Institute, Shaykh Abu Abdissalaam and Shaykh Nabil ul Haq. Shaykh Younes Kathrada, Shaykh Abu Ayman and Imam Shakeel Begg have also advised Shaykh Tawfique. See below for links to their respective advices. May Allah guide us to the truth and upon the truth)

From Shaykh Anwar’s Blog on February-12-2009

A few months ago I was approached by students of Shaykh Tawfique Chowdhury to teach some courses at al Kauthar institute. Since this was the first time I have heard of the institute or Shaykh Chowdhury I did some research on both. Yesterday someone posted on my blog an accusation that Shaykh Tawfique was a hypocrite which I promptly deleted. I then read the article that was linked to the post and was amazed by what I have read. Not knowing Shaykh Chowdhury personally, I find it shocking to hear such a statement coming from a person who is considered to be a man of knowledge. Because Shaykh Chowdhury is considered as such and is running an institute that is imparting knowledge to hundreds of students I deem it necessary to respond to his article as an advise to him and a warning to all those who consider themselves to be his students. There is also another reason. Since 9-11 and the active involvement of the US in defining what Islam means today there has been a gradual decline in the standard of walaa’rsquo; and baraa’rsquo;; with many scholars and daeess in the West lowering the bar further and further.

But this letter represents one of the most blatant manifestations of this phenomenon. I will comment on parts of the article but you can read it in its entirety here: Muslim Scholars-West’rsquo;s Natural Allies in Fighting Scourge of Terrorism

The article is problematic from its title all the way to the end. The title is: &ldquo;Muslim Scholars are the West’rsquo;s natural allies in fighting terrorism&rdquo;.

He then opens as follows (with added emphasis):
- “As the Director-General of Mercy Mission and AlKauthar Institute, which now has over 14 instructors and over 50 courses running in 10 countries in 5 continents, the safety and travel convenience of the Institute’rsquo;s instructors are serious considerations for me. We can prepare proficiently for the classes, market them, fill the class with hundreds of registered students, but a simple visa or entry issue into a country for an instructor can destroy all this good, and can destroy dawah organizations in the eyes of the unforgiving Muslim communities. Recently a couple of extremely well known speakers, very popular in the dawah scene around the world, were not allowed to come to Australia because they were accused of being &lsquo;wahhabi’rsquo;!

- I am sure everyone realizes the systematic attempt by a variety of lobby groups these days to discredit Muslim speakers, daeess and mashaikh in an attempt to close avenues of dawah by these people of knowledge. Scholars and speakers alike are being harmed and negatively portrayed in the media, wherein the underlying argument seems to be that Islam is the problem and so those who preach Islam are the main un-indicted co-conspirators in extremism and terrorism. Based on this, some categories of Muslims speakers and preachers are supported by anti-extremism programs and shown to be the more tolerant and acceptable versions of Islam and everyone else is portrayed as an aberrant wahhabi! This dangerous escalation needs to be challenged.

- An alternative argument that is the more logical and the more in conformity with reality must be presented, which is that Muslim scholars are natural allies of the West, specifically in fighting extremism and terrorism. Islam and its knowledge and education must be allowed to flourish if extremism is to be curtailed and removed.

- Along these lines, I gave a talk at a dinner organized by the Muslim Council of Wales, which was attended by some of the nation’rsquo;s top anti-terrorism chiefs and prevention of extremism experts. It was delivered in early December 2008 in the city of Cardiff, UK. My goal was to present the intellectual side of the argument that Muslim scholars should not be harmed in their work.&rdquo;

What Shaykh Tawfique has done is protect dawa in exchange of tawhid. The institute and its instructors, and the spread of dawah have become more important than walaa’rsquo; and baraa’rsquo;;. This has become a serious and
widespread problem. Scholars and daees giving direction to the ummah based on what they deem as maslaha (benefit) and not based on what Quran and Sunnah state on the matter. So when you present a person with evidence from Quran and Sunnah they simply brush it off and say that the maslaha determines otherwise. If maslaha has become such an important source of sharia that it has the power to abrogate textual evidence from Quran and Sunnah, why not appoint a council of shuyukh and have them tell us what to do and what not to do based on their infinite wisdom and understanding of &ldquo;maslaha&rdquo; and just forget about Quran and Sunnah altogether?

Ibn Masud (ra) says: The ones before you have perished because they followed what their scholars told them and left the Torah and the Gospel.

Hundreds of verses and hadith on Jihad are swept away because the maslaha determines that I protect my institute or my organization, and hundreds of verses and hadith on wala&amp;rsquo; and baraa&amp;rsquo; are swept away because the maslaha of dawa determines that we engage and integrate with the kuffar. This is the same maslaha of dawa that Sayid Qutb referred to as being an idol that is worshiped besides Allah.

In every age since the dawn of history there has been a battle between truth and falsehood. The leaders of truth were the prophets and their followers and the leaders of falsehood were some of the kings and rulers along with their armies. Today the leaders of this war against the truth are the very same people Shaykh Tawfique has chosen to sit with. Not only that but he has the audacity to claim that Muslim scholars should be their allies!

Let&amp;rsquo;s assume for a moment that he is correct in his assessment that there are Muslim extremists and terrorists. Since when in our fourteen-hundred year history did Rasulullah, any Sahabi, or any scholar justify siding with the disbelievers against Muslims? That is if we assume that he is correct in saying that there is extremism and terrorism amongst Muslims. Well, as a matter of fact there are extremists among us but they are not the same people his audience, and probably he himself, have in mind. The Khawarij who are extremists are classified as such because Rasulullah said about them &amp;ldquo;they kill the Muslims and spare the disbelievers.&amp;rdquo; The audience you are speaking to care less about Muslims who kill Muslims. All what interests them is protecting Westerners and Western imperial interests. To them the mujahideen who are fighting against the invading soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan are terrorists, as well as the mujahideen fighting in Palestine against the Israelis, in Kashmir against India and in Chechnya against Russia. I am speaking the obvious here but unfortunately even the obvious needs to be clarified to the writer of such an article. I do not think anyone can argue that these anti-terrorism chiefs do consider the mujahideen as terrorists and I do not think any Muslim can argue that killing the occupying US and British soldiers along with their coalition is not an extremist act.

But they also have some others in mind too: The ones who are behind bombings in the West that kill civilians. This is an issue that cannot go beyond the boundaries of fiqh. Whether the author agrees with such operations or doesn&amp;rsquo;t this issue can never be an issue of aqeedah. So even if he believes that the perpetrators of such acts are wrong and have no basis in sharia, the most he can say about them is that they have followed an invalid ijtihad. But under no circumstances is he allowed to side with the disbelievers against these Muslims. If a Muslim kills each and every civilian disbeliever on the face of the earth he is still a Muslim and we cannot side with the disbelievers against him. On the other hand the issue that the author of the article is guilty of is not a matter of fiqh or ijtihad but a matter of kufr and emaan. Choosing to ally one&amp;rsquo;s self with the enemies of Allah and His Messenger is nothing less than hypocrisy. Umar(ra) accused Hatib of being a hypocrite for something much smaller than what Tawfique has expressed and unless Tawfique himself has attended the battle of Badr then what he said is inexcusable.

Allah (swt) says: &amp;ldquo;O you who have believed, do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies. They are [in fact] allies of one another. And whoever is an ally to them among you - then indeed, he is [one] of them. Indeed, Allah guides not the wrongdoing people.&amp;rdquo; [al Maidah 51]

But because there are some who were weak and had fear that the Christians and the Jews might bring harm on them they went to them and became their allies. Allah says about them: &amp;ldquo;So you see those in whose hearts is disease [i.e. hypocrisy] hastening into [association with] them, saying, &amp;ldquo;We are afraid a misfortune may strike us.&amp;rdquo; But perhaps Allah will bring a conquest or a decision from Him, and they will become, over what they have been concealing within themselves, regretful.&amp;rdquo; [al Maidah 52]

They run towards America today because they fear them but when Allah brings His conquest and punishment on America these hypocrites will regret the position they took.

He then states:

- "And before some self-righteous individual paints my actions as being done in fear, know this: I did not deliver this lecture with nifaq and hypocrisy in my heart, rather with absolute izzah and honour and passion and conviction and arguing for our right to preach our pristine and pure religion"
He claims that he did not deliver this lecture with hypocrisy in his heart. If that is true then he should recant this article because it states otherwise. We do not judge by what is in the hearts. We judge by what is apparent. When al Abbass(ra), the uncle of Rasulullah(saaws), was taken as a POW at Badr he claimed that he was a Muslim. Rasulullah(saaws) said: &ldquo;What is apparent to us is that you were against us.&rdquo;

So we go by what is apparent and not by what is hidden in the hearts. Hypocrisy may not be in Shaykh Tawfique&rsquo;s heart but this article is awash with it.

He then says that he did this with absolute izzah and honour. Seeking an alliance with an enemy that openly expresses interest in changing our religion, is guilty of massacres of Muslims, and violations of basic human rights in treating our prisoners, in order to protect dawa and to run an institute without hindering the visas of his instructors is an act of izzah?! In fact there can be no honor in meeting with such people unless it is in one of either two settings: either to declare to them that they are a misguided lot of disbelievers whose actions would lead them to Hellfire or to meet them in the battlefield and send them to Hellfire.

But to meet them in order to advise them on how to win the &ldquo;war on terror&rdquo; and to request to be their ally and not to be mistaken as an &ldquo;enemy&rdquo; is the ultimate level of humiliation and disgrace especially when coming from a person who is honored with Islamic knowledge. Sacred Islamic knowledge needs to be honored and respected by the ones who carry it and should never be put to &ldquo;use&rdquo; in the service of these enemies of Islam. When the scholar of Bani Israel went to advise the &ldquo;anti-terrorist chiefs&rdquo; of his day against the terrorists of the day, Allah said about him: &ldquo;And recite to them, the news of him to whom We gave [knowledge of] Our signs, but he detached himself from them; So Satan pursued him, and he became of the deviators. And if We had willed, We could have elevated him thereby, but he adhered [instead] to the earth and followed his own desire. So his example is like that of the dog; if you chase him, he pants, or if you leave him, he [still] pants. That is the example of the people who denied Our signs. So relate the stories that perhaps they will give thought.&rdquo; [al-Araaf 175-176]

Allah has honored the scholars and raised them to a high status when they live by the word of Allah, but when they use the knowledge of Allah against what pleases Allah He humiliates them. The ultimate level of disgrace is to be likened to a dog. That is the analogy of the scholar who has used his knowledge in the service of the disbelievers.

&ldquo;And he whom Allah humiliates - for him there is no bestower of honor.&rdquo; [al-Hajj 18]

There is no honor in speaking to these &ldquo;top&rdquo; leaders and there is no honor in asking to be their ally. Allah (swt) says: &ldquo;Give tidings to the hypocrites that there is for them a painful punishment. Those who take the disbelievers as allies instead of the believers. Do they seek with them honor? But indeed, honor belongs to Allah entirely&rdquo; [al-Nisa 138-139]

Shaykh Tawfique says:

- "Why not use these Muslim scholars that are credible in the eyes of the Muslim masses to achieve the common goal of prevention?"

&ldquo;Why not use?&rdquo; Who is he talking to? Doesn&rsquo;t he say this event &ldquo;was attended by some of the nation&rsquo;s top anti-terrorism chiefs and prevention of extremism experts&rdquo;? So is he asking that these top anti-terrorism chiefs use scholars and use their credibility to fight against Muslims? Is this how cheap Islamic scholarship has become? Does he know who he is talking to? In case he doesn&rsquo;t then let me explain it. He is talking to the ideological, and even genealogical, descendants of the Romans who were at war with the ummah since the time of Rasulullah(saaws) up until this very moment. He is talking to the ones who will be the ancestors of the ones who will march against us under eighty banners and fight al Mahdi and the Messenger of Allah Isa (as) at the end of the time. Who is the great battle of al Malhama going to be fought against? Doesn&rsquo;t the hadith state that it is the Romans? How can he propose an alliance with the very people who are a continuation of a relentless battle against Islam that has been waged for fourteen-hundred years and will carry on until the last of them join the Dajjal? What adds insult to injury is that this message is not directed at the common Joe among the masses of the Romans but to the nations top anti-terrorism chiefs, the Imams of Kufr of our modern times!

He goes on further to argue that we are not the enemy but we are the greatest ally:
Shaykh Tawfique says that the West should use "independent" scholars for its war on terror. When asked what does he mean by "independent"; he responded by mentioning a few criteria, one of which is that they should not be "paid or financially compensated in any way." But why is that? If these scholars are being "used" for the war on terror why not charge for their services? Why do it for free? The corrupt kings and presidents of the Muslim world realize that what they are doing for the West is a betrayal of their trust as leaders of the ummah so they are at least charging a price for it. Take the Yemeni government as an example. They have raked millions of dollars from the West and millions of petro-dollars from the gulf and used a fraction of it to built projects for the people with the rest of it going into building palaces for themselves, establishing a "bright" future for their children and stashing the rest into international bank accounts. Can't the Green Zone Scholars savvy up and do the same? There is a Yemeni saying that goes: "paid; Don't be like the poor Jew who has no dunya and no Akhira;" If one is bent on selling his religion then he should charge as much as he can for it.

Shaykh Tawfique says:

- "For America, 7 years of fighting terror around the world and conflating orthodox Islam with fundamentalism and terrorism &ndash; with little progress &ndash; truly demonstrates that alienation of key allies in the ideological battle ground is a costly mistake. It is imperative that we avoid this mistake as we look for a fresh strategy to tackling terrorism and its challenges into the future. There should be an active attempt to identify scholars from the broad spectrum of Muslim groups that support the cause."

Shaykh Tawfique seems to be unhappy that America after 7 years of fighting the war on terror is seeing little progress. I can only say that alhamdulillah that is the case! In fact I pray that America sees no progress at all. I pray that Allah destroys America and all its allies and the day that happens, and I assure you it will and sooner than you think, I will be very pleased. Pleased as every true believer should be pleased and as Sarah (as) was pleased when she heard that the angels will destroy the towns of the people of Lut. Allah says: "And his wife was standing and she smiled." [Hud 71]

We will smile insha Allah when we see the destruction of the modern people of Lut.

But Shaykh Tawfique fails to recognize the reason why America is losing in its war on terror. It is not because it has failed to identify scholars who will be their allies as he suggests, but it is because America is fighting against the Awliyaa of Allah and whoever fights against the Awliyaa of Allah is doomed. Rasulullah(saaws) says in the hadith qudusi: "Whoever fights my Awliyaa I will declare war against him." Rasulullah(saaws) also says: "There will be a group of my ummah fighting for the truth and they will not be harmed by those who oppose them." That is why America is loosing. And even if America would hire all the Green Zone Scholars it can and follow your fresh strategies it will still lose. It is the promise of Allah and His Messenger. Whoever is betting today on America is betting on the wrong horse.

Scholars need to proclaim the truth. Rasulullah(saaws) says that the scholar who withholds knowledge will have his mouth masked with fire on the Day of Judgment. It is enough of a sin to withhold knowledge, but it is even worse to speak what is false. Knowledge honors its carrier but it comes with a price. If a person cannot pay that price of sacrifice and hardship then it is better for him to take off the cloak of scholarship and live as a laymen. That is better for him on the Day of Judgment.

Allah says: "Indeed, they who conceal what Allah has sent down of the Book and exchange it for a small price - those consume not into their bellies except the Fire. And Allah will not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He purify them. And they will have a painful punishment. [al-Baqarah 174]"

In the end I pray that Shaykh Tawfique would retract this statement and come back to the truth and be the man he once was.

Anwar al Awlaki
Yemen

Advice to Shaykh Tawfique by Shaykh Nabil ul Haq

Advice to Shaykh Tawfique by Shaykh Abu Abdissalaam

Thoughts on Shaykh Tawfeeq Chowdhury's Address

An Offer to Retract and Unite
Shaykh Abu Ayman (Rabitah Ansar as Sunnah - Australia) responds to Shaykh Tawfique - mp3

Advice to Shaykh Tawfique from Imam Shakeel Begg