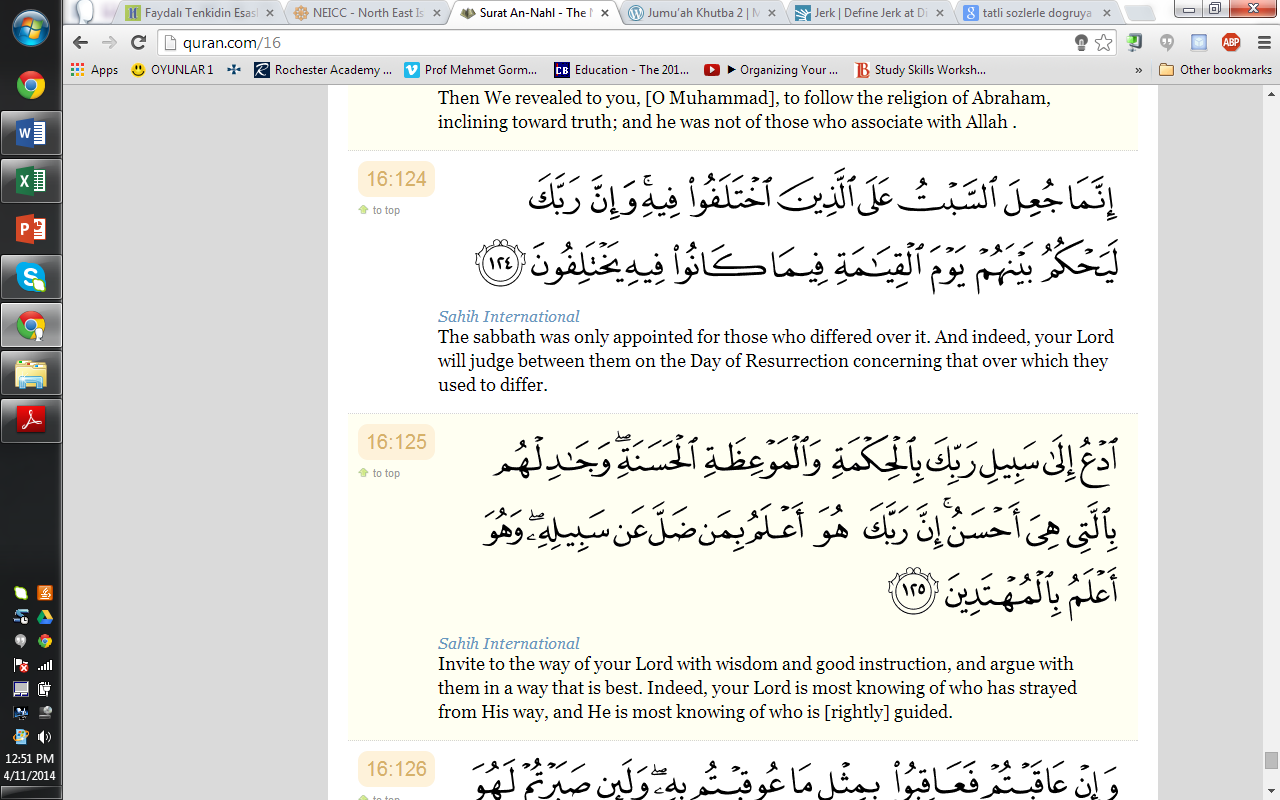
**بِسْــمِ الله الرَّحْمنِ الرَّحِيم**

**اَلْحَمْدُ للهِ. اَلْحَمْدُ للهِ. اَلْحَمْدُ للهِ الَّذِى هَدَانَا لِهذَاوَمَا كُنَّا لِنَهْتَدِيَ لَوْ لاَ أَنْ هَدَانَا اللهُ. وَ مَا تَوْفِيقِي وَ لاَ اعْتِصَامِي إِلاَّ بِاللهِ. عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَ إِلَيْهِ أُنِيبُ.**

**أَشْهَدُ أنْ لاَ إِلهَ إِلاَّ اللهُ وَحْدَهُ لاَ شَرِيكَ لَهُ وَ لاَ نَظِيرَ لَهُ وَ لاَ مِثَالَ لَهُ. اَلَّذِى لاَ أُحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْهِ. كَمَا أَثْنَي عَلَى نَفْسِهِ. عَزَّ جَارُهُ وَ جَلَّ ثَنَاؤُهُ وَ لاَ يُهْزَمُ جُنْدُهُ وَ لاَ يُخْلَفُ وَعْدُهُ وَ لاَ إِلهَ غَيْرُهُ. وَ نَشْهَدُ أَنَّ سَيِّدَنَا وَ سَنَدَنَا وَ مَوْلاَنَا مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ و حِبيبُهُ وَ رَسُولُهُ. اَلسَّابِقُ إِلَى الأَنَامِ نُورُهُ. وَ رَحْمَةٌ لِلْعَالَمِينَ ظُهُورُهُ. صَلَّى اللهُ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ وَ عَلَى آلِهِ وَ أَوْلاَدِهِ وَ أَزْوَاجِهِ وَ أَصْحَابِهِ وَ أَتْبَاعِهِ وَ أَحْفَادِهِ أَجْمَعِينَ. أَمَّا بَعْدُ فَيَا عِبَادَ اللهِ؛ إِتَّقُوا اللهَ تَعَالَى وَ أَطِيعُوهُ. إِنَّ اللهَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا وَ الَّذِينَ هُمْ مُحْسِنُونَ.فَقَدْ قَالَ اللهُ تَعَالَى فِي كِتَابِهِ الْكَرِيمِ. أَعُوذُ بِاللهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ. بِسْــمِ الله الرَّحْمنِ الرَّحِيم**

We will focus on the question regarding how we should make constructive criticism, which is an important means of seeking the better at everything, so that it will be effective and fruitful. What are the essential points to be taken into account by those who make and receive criticism? To begin with, let me read the ayah form SuratAnNahl v.125:



This ayah teaches us very important strategies when inviting people to do good, and correct their mistakes. This khutbah will be explaining the content of wisdom, good instruction, and the best way. Criticizing a statement or behavior, revealing its negative and positive sides, and making a comparison between what is and what should be; it is one of the important scholarly essentials that facilitates progress toward the ideal. In this respect, it has been employed since the early generations of Muslims. For example, in the methodology of Hadith, a given report would be evaluated with a critical approach in terms of its text and the reliability of its chain of narrators. Indeed, criticism took its place in the methodology of Islamic disciplines from the beginning, in order to unearth the truth at issues such as finding the right meaning to be derived from Divine commandments and interpreting them correctly. This scholarly discipline of criticism served as a sound filter against elements incompatible with Islam. As the discipline of munazara (comparing and discussing ideas) also developed, the new interpretations that emerged as a consequence of fruitful discussions were also put to criticism, tested with established criteria, and sparkles of truth were attained in the end.

Particularly at questioning the reliability of the chain of narrators in the field of Hadith, there was a serious accumulation of literature. Numerous volumes of work sought to help authenticate whether statements reported as Hadith genuinely belonged to the Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him. But even while making judgment and evaluation at such an important issue, scholars showed the utmost sensitivity at refraining from excessive remarks.

The method of criticism was successfully employed particularly during the first five centuries of the Islamic calendar in the fields of both religious and positive sciences, for the sake of reaching the most appropriate. Therefore, this scholarly method can be employed in our time as well, given that fairness, respect, and mindfulness are maintained. At this point, let’s refer to the manners and method of criticism briefly.

**Adopting a Fair Attitude and Soft Style**

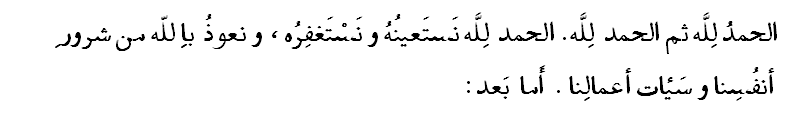
The issue criticized must be presented in a very sound style and utmost care must be shown at using a polite manner of speaking. That is, the criticism is not meant to evoke a negative response, but to be easily welcomed. When you present your alternative thoughts and plausible approaches for solving certain matters, you will be shown respect if you do it in agreeable politeness. For example, suppose that you are stating your opinion on a certain subject and the person you are addressing thinks the opposite. If you say, “This is what I knew about the matter, but I see that it has a different side as well,” that person will likely come to you after a while and confess that your opinion had been more appropriate. And this time, you will respond by thanking that person for being so fair. In this respect, one should know how to—to some degree—dismiss one’s ego, experience, and knowledge for the sake of upholding righteousness. In other words, if you expect the reasonable to be met reasonably, you should even evaluate others’ not-that-reasonable thoughts within their own reasonability, adopt a welcoming attitude toward them, and form an atmosphere of sincerity where people can be welcoming toward truths.

**Making General Statements without Targeting the Person**

History has witnessed that, in whatever field, those who do not show respect to others’ thoughts and who continuously dismiss others as worthless, ruin so many worthy things without even noticing it. For this reason, whatever is the nature of the element before us, we should adopt the principle of treating them all with a certain degree of respect. This is a very appropriate means of making people before us accept the truths that we present. Otherwise, no matter how great the projects that we offer, statements slammed on others’ heads will not be welcomed. When criticism is not expressed politely, it will inevitably be received negatively, even if the matter that we criticize is an obvious mistake of someone that conflicts with the decisive and established teachings of religion. For example, you might witness that your friend has gazed at a forbidden sight. If you tell his embarrassing mistake to his face in a direct way and reproach him, he may respond by trying to justify some devilish considerations—Allaah forbid! In particular, if the individual in front of you is not ready for a criticism of his attitudes and behaviors, then every criticism of yours will evoke reactionary behavior and disrespect against truths, or even make that person hostile against his own values. Even if such people understand what they hear is true, they will do their best to devise new arguments to get the better of the person before them, owing to the trauma of receiving that criticism like a mighty blow on their head; they will be continuously imagining the best way to answer the criticisms directed toward them, even when they retire to their bed at night.

Thus, matters need to be told indirectly, without taking individual persons as targets.Indeed, when the Messenger of Allaah, peace and blessings be upon him, witnessed a person’s wrongdoing, he did not directly criticize that person. Instead, he gathered people in a place like a masjid, and spoke about that act in general, which allowed the wrongdoer to hear the lesson. On the authority of EbuHumeyd Abdurrahman ibni Said esSaidi RA, said: The Messenger of Allah had commissioned Lutbiyyah to collect taxes.When he returned, he said “This amount is the tax I have collected and these were given to me as presents.” Upon hearing this, the Prophet addressed his followers from the pulpit and made a general statement about when he commissions a person to carry out a certain commandment of Allaah and that person states that a part of what he collected belongs to the state and the rest is a present to him. To show how mistaken this idea was, the Prophet asked whether those gifts would have been presented had he sat in his parents’ home. (narrated in Bukhari and Muslim).

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The issue of who makes the criticism is also very important. If something needs to be told to someone, one should not be too eager to do that personally, but rather leave the issue to another person whom the one to receive criticism loves very much. In such a situation, even criticism from a beloved friend will be taken as a compliment. If it seems likely that a criticism you need to make will receive a reactionary response, you should leave it to someone else because what really matters is not who voices the truth but whether the truth meets with a heartfelt acceptance.

At this point it is useful to relate a relevant parable of the two grandsons of the Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him. Although this parable about Hasan and Husayn does not take place in the reliable sources of Hadith, it conveys important lessons.

Accordingly, the two boys came to make ablutions somewhere and they saw a man who splashed water all around but did not wash his limbs properly as required for a valid ablution. These two young talents of keen insight sought a way to show him the way without humiliating him. With this intention, they asked the man to tell them which one of them made ablutions correctly. They made ablutions exactly as they had learned from their blessed father Ali ibnAbiTalib, may Allaah be pleased with him. When they were done, they asked which one of them did it better. With the ease of being free from humiliation, the man calmly replied that they both did it so well and that his own way was wrong. Therefore, it is important to reiterate that the style we use at correcting wrongs bears great importance in terms of acceptance.

**Educating Individuals to Accept Criticism**

Additionally, making people able to accept criticism and evoking a righteous feeling of respect in them constitute a separate dimension of the issue. The Companions, who had attained an ideal level of righteousness, could comfortably warn one another about any wrong that they had committed without causing any negative reaction at all. For example, during a sermon, Umar ibn al-Khattab, may Allaah be pleased with him, reminded people that it was necessary to keep bridal dues (mahr) within affordable limits and told them not to ask for too high amounts. What he suggested was a reasonable solution to prevent possible abuses. Even today, an understanding attitude of this issue will definitely fulfill an important function at solving a social problem. While Umar was drawing attention to this fact, an old woman spoke up and asked the caliph, “O Umar, is there a Qur’anic verse or hadith on this issue that you know and we do not? The Qur’an commands, ‘But if you still decide to dispense with a wife and marry another, and you have given the former (even so much as amounts to) a treasure, do not take back anything thereof’ (an-Nisa 4:20), thus not setting a limit to the amount of bridal dues.” In spite of being the caliph governing a great state that challenged the two superpowers of the time, Umar said aloud to himself, “O Umar, you do not know your religion even as much as an old woman.” (Bayhaki).  This degree of righteousness caused Umar to be referred as “al-waqqafinda’lhaqq” (one who halts when he meets the truth). That is, when he faces a righteous argument, he stops like a car that suddenly comes to a halt while moving downslope. It is necessary to effect this feeling in people. For this reason, we should make a deal with a certain friend and authorize him or her to comfortably criticize any wrong that arises in our personal attitudes and behaviors.

In conclusion, a person who intends to criticize, or rather to correct certain matters, must first understand the issue well and make a serious effort in terms of making the correct remark. Secondly, the other person’s feelings must be taken into consideration and fathom whether that other person is ready to welcome what we are about to say. If a negative reaction seems likely, one should not think, “I definitely want to be the one who expresses this truth,” but instead leave the criticism to another person whose remarks will be more influential. Considering the circumstances of our time, when arrogance has become so prevailing and people cannot tolerate even a little criticism, these principles have gained a greater importance. As for those who receive criticism, they should uphold righteousness above everything else and respond to criticisms with gratitude instead of reacting negatively. Bediüzzaman advises us: if someone warns us about a scorpion on our back (in other words, one who warns us about our wrongs), we should only express gratitude, which is an indication of maturity.

**أَلاَ إِنَّ أَحْسَنَ الْكَلاَمِ وَ أَبْلَغَ النِّظَامِ. كَلاَمُ اللهِ الْمَلِكِ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلاَّمِ. كَمَا قَالَ اللهُ تَبَارَكَ وَ تَعَالَى فِي الْكَلاَمِ. وَ إِذَا قُرِئَ الْقُرْآنُ فَاسْتَمِعُوا لَهُ. وَ أَنْصِتُوا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ. أَعُوذُ بِاللهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ. بِسْـمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمنِ الرَّحِيمِ:**

**إن الدين عند الله الإسلام**

**اَلْحَمْدُ للهِ. اَلْحَمْدُ للهِ. اَلْحَمْدُ للهِ حَمْدَ الْكَامِلِينَ كَمَا أَمَرَ. نَشْهَدُ أَنْ لاَ إِلهَ إِلاَّ اللهُ وَ نَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَ رَسُولُهُ النَّبِيُّ الْمُعْتَبَرُ. تَعْظِيمًا لِنَبِيِّهِ وَ تَكْرِيمًا لِفَخَامَةِ شَانِ شَرَفِ صَفِيِّهِ. فَقَالَ اللهُ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ مِنْ قَائِلٍ مُخْبِرًا وَ آمِرًا: {إِنَّ اللهَ وَ مَلاَئِكَتَهُ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ. يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا صَلُّوا عَلَيْهِ وَ سَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا}. لَبَّيْكَ...**

**{ إِنَّ اللهَ يَاْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَ الإِحْسَانِ وَ إِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَي وَ يَنْهَي عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَ الْمُنْكَرِ وَ الْبَغْيِ. يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ }**

**(An-Nahl, 16/90**) Allah enjoins justice (and right judgment in all matters), and devotion to doing good, and generosity towards relatives; and He forbids you indecency, wickedness, and vile conduct (all offenses against religion, life, personal property, chastity, and health of mind and body). He exhorts you (repeatedly) so that you may reflect and be mindful!