

with the dog." Surprised, my friend asked how I could say that, and so I continued to explain that according to Imam Malik, the dog is no more unclean than a cat. I encouraged him to refer back to what Imam Malik actually wrote on the subject of dogs and then we could discuss this again. So, we Googled it and we read each of the different opinions on dogs among the four main schools of Sunni Islamic doctrine, including the opinion of the Malik doctrine. So we discovered that the problem was my friend had based his opinion on hearsay rather than on solid information. When I told him so, he laughed saying, "you're absolutely right, we don't read enough." In a similar way, man tends to follow widely accepted misconceptions just like a herd of sheep, disagreeing with others and fighting over subjects on which they haven't any sound knowledge. Not only do we have to read to understand our own ideas, but we must also read the opinions that are opposed to ours. Only in this way can we find a middle ground from which we can reach out to each other instead of alienating them. Without this, such zealous arguments never end well.

It is from my father that I learned acceptance towards those with whom we may disagree, and the principle of maintaining moderation in all things. I remained true to these principles even through my studies in the United States when, in the mid-seventies, I joined Southern Illinois University in the little town of Carbondale. There were five of us from Kuwait who went there to study English. One time we were at a restaurant when we noticed some other Arab students sitting nearby. They introduced themselves and immediately started preaching to us on Arab nationalism, the Palestinian cause, and on Arab student unions. Finally, they came around to asking us for money to support their various causes, but we were all honestly broke. I told them that the money we had was only enough to pay for our