

Membership of the brotherhood of Islam

Friday Khutba by Dr Zahid Aziz, for Lahore Ahmadiyya UK, 8 January 2021

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا ضَرَبْتُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَتَبَيَّنُوا وَلَا تَقُولُوا لِمَنْ آتَىٰ إِلَيْكُمُ السَّلَامَ لَسْتَ
مُؤْمِنًا تَبْتَغُونَ عَرَصَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ۚ فَعِنْدَ اللَّهِ مَغَايِمٌ كَثِيرَةٌ ۖ كَذَلِكَ كُنْتُمْ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَمَنَّ اللَّهُ
عَلَيْكُمْ فَتَبَيَّنُوا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا ﴿٩٤﴾

“O you who believe, when you go forth (to fight) in Allah’s way, make investigation, and do not say to anyone who offers you salutation, You are not a believer, seeking the good of this world’s life. But with Allah there are abundant gains. You too were such before, then Allah conferred a benefit on you; so make investigation. Surely Allah is ever Aware of what you do.” (The Quran, 4:94)

This verse was revealed when there was a general state of warfare in Arabia between Muslims, who had accepted the Holy Prophet Muhammad’s message, and others who not only rejected him but were trying to destroy the Muslim community by force. But people were also embracing Islam all over the country, who might not be known to the Muslim community at Madinah. They may be strangers or individuals belonging to hostile tribes who had accepted Islam. So Muslims are directed here, twice, to make investigations about any individual before treating him as an enemy. In modern terminology, Muslims are forbidden to shoot first and ask questions later. It is stated here that if someone greets Muslims with the greeting taught by Islam, they must not say that he is an unbeliever, not a Muslim but an enemy. The word translated as “salutation” here is *salām*, which stands for the greeting *assalamu alaikum*.

In connection with this verse there is a report in Sahih Bukhari that Ibn Abbas said that a man was tending his sheep when some Muslims on a military expedition came across him. He said to them: *Assalamu alaikum*. But they killed him and took his sheep. So Allah revealed this verse, and by the “good of this world’s life” is meant his sheep which they took (Bukhari, hadith 4591). In Tafsir Ibn Kathir, a different

incident is reported which is said to have led to the revelation of this verse. It is as follows:

“The Messenger of Allah sent a military expedition under the authority of Al-Miqdad bin Al-Aswad and when they reached the designated area, they found the people had dispersed. However, a man with a lot of wealth did not leave and said, ‘I bear witness that there is no god but Allah’ (*ash-hadu an la ilaha ill-Allah*). Yet, Al-Miqdad killed him, and a man said to him: You killed a man after he proclaimed: ‘There is no god but Allah.’ By Allah I will mention what you did to the Prophet.”

When the Holy Prophet was informed of this, he summoned Miqdad and asked him: “O Miqdad! Did you kill a man who proclaimed, *la ilaha ill-Allah*? What would you do when you face *la ilaha ill-Allah* tomorrow (i.e., after death)?”

The man had indicated that he was a Muslim by greeting Muslims with *assalamu alaikum* or by declaring his belief as *la ilaha ill-Allah*. But this was not accepted by the Muslims in this incident and he was treated as an enemy. The reason for doing this is said here to be *worldly gain*, in this case the gain being what that man possessed.

It is interesting to note what Maulana Syed Abul Ala Maudoodi, the well-known founder of the Pakistani religious party, the Jamaat-i Islami, and author of several books including a commentary of the Quran, has written about this verse in his commentary. He writes:

“In the early days of Islam, Assalam-u-alaikum (peace be upon you) was a symbol of recognition for Muslims. When a Muslim met another Muslim, he greeted him with this salutation, as if to say, I belong to your own community; I am your friend and well-wisher.... Still a difficulty arose when the Muslims attacked some clan and a local Muslim also became the target of attack. Then he would cry out, Asalam-u-alaikum or La ilaha illallah (there is no god but Allah). But the attacking Muslims would suspect him to be a disbeliever who was using the password as a trick merely to save his life. They would, therefore, often kill him and take

possession of his belongings as spoils. Although the Holy Prophet would severely admonish the offenders on such occasions, yet there was a recurrence of such incidents. Then Allah solved the difficulty in this verse.”

The temptation of worldly gain swayed these Muslims from recognising the man who greeted them *assalamu alaikum* or said *La ilaha ill-Allah* as a Muslim and made them brand him as an unbeliever. That has always been the case whenever a Muslim has been branded as unbeliever, that those branding him thus had something worldly to gain by it. In the case of those who declare Ahmadis as non-Muslims, even though Ahmadis claim to be Muslims, the worldly gain for them is popularity with masses. They first misguide and misinform them that Ahmadis are a danger to Islam, and then they claim credit from their followers for fighting this danger. By this means they gain or retain the religious or political leadership of the community or the nation.

I may digress here to note that in the above report, where the Holy Prophet said to Miqdad, “Did you kill a man who proclaimed, *la ilaha ill-Allah?*”, only the first part of the *Kalima* is mentioned and not the complete *Kalima: La ilaha ill-Allah, Muhammad-ur Rasul-ullah* (‘There is no god but Allah; Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah’). The *Kalima* is sometimes abbreviated just to its first part. For example, the Holy Prophet said: “Three things are the basis of faith: (the first is) to withhold from one who says ‘There is no god but Allah’— do not call him *kafir* for any sin, nor expel him from Islam for any misconduct” (Abu Dawud, Book of Jihad, ch. 35). Another example is that when some Muslims said about a certain fellow-Muslim: “He is a hypocrite who does not love Allah and His Messenger”, the Holy Prophet said: “Do not say that. Have you not seen that he says ‘There is no god but Allah’ (*La ilaha ill-Allah*), desiring thereby the pleasure of Allah?”

It is written in an Islamic work of the classical times: “if an atheist, or an idol worshipper, or one who believes in gods besides the One God, were to merely say, *There is no god but Allah*, he enters Islam. Or if he were to say, *I believe Muhammad to be the messenger of God*, he enters Islam. This is because the deniers of Islam refrain from saying these two formulae. Hence if he were to declare even one of these

two commandments, he would be taken out of the category called non-Muslim, and would be considered as a Muslim.” (*Lisan-ul-Hukam*).

We can see from this how accommodating are the teachings of the Quran, the Holy Prophet and Islamic law, that they are minimising what they require from a person to show that he belongs to the Muslim community. Even only saying *La ilaha ill-Allah* should be accepted as showing that a person is a Muslim. But Muslim *Ulama* of later times want to require more and more from a person before accepting him or her as a Muslim. According to the 1974 amendment to the Constitution of Pakistan, a Muslim is also required to declare belief in the finality of prophethood of the Holy Prophet Muhammad and to announce that they reject anyone after him who applied the word prophet to himself “in any sense of the word or of any description” and not accept such a person even as a reformer or as a Muslim.

The verse I quoted at the beginning goes on to say: “You too were such before, then Allah conferred a benefit on you; so make investigation.” It is reminding those Muslims, who did not believe a person to be Muslim even after he greeted them with *salam* or he declared ‘There is no god but Allah’, that all of you were at the beginning of Islam in the same position as that person. You too were scattered individuals, to be found mixed in anti-Muslim tribes and clans. You used to identify yourselves to each other by the Islamic greeting or by saying ‘There is no god but Allah’. If you had openly said this, your life was in danger. Now this person, and others like him, are in that position and you are refusing to accept their claim to be Muslim. If his tribe heard him say this, they would have killed him for being a Muslim, and you have killed him for being an enemy of the Muslims.

Doesn’t this remind us of the present position of Ahmadis? They are like the man mentioned in this verse. They claim to be Muslims. Non-Muslims believe their claim and opponents of Islam believe their claim. Anyone who is hostile to Muslims includes Ahmadis as being Muslims and treats them with the same hostility. At the same time, Muslims themselves, or certainly a large majority of them, attack Ahmadis as being enemies of Islam.

Opponents of the Ahmadis in Pakistan should ponder over the words of this verse: “You too were such before”, meaning you too used to be in the position of that man whom you have killed. Before the creation of Pakistan, Muslims of the Indian subcontinent were a minority in the country. They say they were disadvantaged and unfairly treated by the majority. But how did the non-Muslim majority of that country identify who is a Muslim? And when Muslims demanded that Muslim-majority provinces should join together to become Pakistan, how did they themselves identify who is a Muslim in order to be able to count the number of Muslims? There was a famous scholar of Islam and prolific author in India, Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi (d. 1999), who also wrote a book against the Ahmadiyya Movement. It has a chapter devoted to strongly condemning Maulana Muhammad Ali’s interpretations of the Quran. Yet in another book, in English, called *Muslims in the West*, Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi writes:

“A friend of mine once said to an educated Hindu gentleman, ‘My brother, if a Muslim is asked who is a Muslim, he unhesitatingly replies that whoever recites and believes in the holy *Kalima* — *La ilaha illallah, Muhammadur rasulullah*, is a Muslim. This affirmation sums up the whole of Islam. Now, what would your answer be if the same question was put to you concerning a Hindu?’ ” (p. 137).

This is the answer, as to how Muslims as well as non-Muslims identified who was a Muslim. But this is what these Ulama tell the outside world, with great pride, that Islam has provided such a simple and clear definition of a Muslim, which is accepted by every Muslim, and that no other religion provides the same kind of unanimously-accepted definition about its own followers. On the other hand, the same Ulama add conditions to this definition of a Muslim by their own will and whim in order to exclude people from Islam who recite and believe in this holy Kalima.

بَارَكَ اللهُ لَنَا وَنَاوَكُمْ فِي الْقُرْآنِ الْعَظِيمِ، وَنَفَعَنَا وَإِيَّاكُمْ بِالْآيَاتِ وَالذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيمِ، إِنَّهُ تَعَالَى جَوَادٌ كَرِيمٌ
مَلِكٌ بَرٌّ رَوْوْفٌ رَحِيمٌ-