

## *Causes of Islamophobia – 1*

**Friday Khutba by Dr Zahid Aziz, for Lahore Ahmadiyya UK, 11 February 2022**

يُرِيدُونَ لِيُطْفِئُوا نُورَ اللَّهِ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَاللَّهُ مُتِمُّ نُورِهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿٨١﴾ هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ  
بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾

“They desire to put out the light of Allah with their mouths, but Allah will perfect His light, though the disbelievers may be averse. He it is Who has sent His Messenger with the guidance and the Religion of Truth that He may make it prevail over all religions, though those who set up partners (with Allah) are averse.” — ch. 61, v. 8–9.

This revelation in the Quran came in about the year 1 or 2 A.H. A very similar revelation came near the end of the Holy Prophet’s life, some eight years later. That one is in ch. 9, verses 31 and 32. Verse 31 there is like the first verse which I read above, and runs: “They desire to put out the light of Allah with their mouths, *but Allah will allow nothing except the perfection of His light*, though the disbelievers are averse.” Verse 32 there is the same as the second verse above.

The first verse, in each case, tells us that the opponents of Islam wish to blow out the light lit by God by means of their mouths, i.e., they say false things about it which misrepresent that light so that it appears to be darkness and not light. However, God will make His light shine in full splendour so that everyone will be able to see it. The next verse says that the Holy Prophet has been sent with guidance and the religion of truth, to make it prevail over all other religions, because followers of those religions worshipped other things and beings as partners of God. The prevailing mentioned here is not conquering and ruling over the followers of other religions, and then saying that Islam has prevailed. This is clear from the fact that Islam is described here as light, guidance and truth. It is not stated here that God will send forces to defeat the followers of other religions and place Islam in rule over them. Light, guidance and truth are matters which can only prevail over the hearts and minds of people.

This prevailing of Islam over other religions means, firstly, that the arguments and reasons presented by Islam to show the truth of the Quran and of the Holy Prophet Muhammad will come to prevail and succeed over the opposing arguments presented against them. Secondly, in practical terms people will see that by following the guidance of Islam a person can reach the highest standards of morality and behaviour that is possible for a human being to reach. So the guidance provided by Islam will prevail over all other forms of guidance.

This is relevant to a discussion on Islamophobia because the purpose of that hostility which goes under this name, whether it is based on ignorance or on malice and enmity, is to blow out the light of Islam so that Islam appears to be darkness and not light.

It was last October that I was asked to deliver a talk on the causes of Islamophobia for the annual Lahore Ahmadiyya gathering taking place in December 2021. Today's *khutba* is based on that talk which was given in Urdu. Two days after I received this request, I was giving a Friday *khutba* on 15 October, and as it was the month of *Rabi-ul-awwal*, my topic was that the Holy Prophet Muhammad was "a mercy to the nations". While I was delivering that *khutba*, I did not know that only a few minutes earlier a Muslim in England had stabbed a member of the UK Parliament, Mr David Amess, several times with a knife. The member of Parliament died two hours later. The killer remained on the scene and it was soon proved that this was an act of terrorism committed by a Muslim. Just look at the contrast: a *khutba* is being delivered on the topic that the Holy Prophet Muhammad was "a mercy to the nations", and at that very time an innocent member of Parliament is dying after being stabbed by a Muslim who thought he was committing this dreadful attack on behalf of the religion of Islam.

This atrocity, and similar incidents, are among the *causes* of Islamophobia (fear of Islam or hatred of Islam) in the West. But Islamophobia did *not* begin because of such events. These events just continue and re-inforce Islamophobia and keep it going. The term 'Islamophobia' has come into general use only in the last twenty-five years or so, but its reality has existed for many centuries in the West. At the very beginning of

Islam, Muslims conquered countries populated largely by Christians, such as Syria, Palestine, the present-day Israel, Egypt etc. The rulers of those countries were Christian but they cruelly oppressed and maltreated their own Christian populations. The reason was that Christians were divided into many sects and these were each other's bitter enemies. When Muslims conquered those countries, they established justice there, in accordance with the teachings of Islam. They treated the Christians so well that those Christians started to prefer living under Muslim rule than the rule by their own co-religionists. There is a book with the title *The Preaching of Islam* written a hundred years ago by a British, Christian scholar of Islam Sir T.W. Arnold. He writes as follows about the Muslim conquest in the Middle East in the time of Hazrat Umar: "When the Muslim army reached the valley of the Jordan and Abu Ubaidah pitched his camp at Fihl, the Christian inhabitants wrote to the Arabs saying: 'O Muslims, we prefer you to the Byzantines, though they are of our own faith, because you keep better faith with us and are more merciful to us and refrain from doing us injustice and your rule over us is better than theirs, for they have robbed us of our goods and our homes.' " (p. 55, 1913 edition).

However, the Christians in Europe, in countries such as England, France, Italy etc., which were ruled and largely populated by Christians, were most unhappy to see that in the Middle East, where their sacred places were located, Christians had been defeated and were living under Muslim rule. This was the beginning of Islamophobia in the West. The Christians in Europe knew little about Islam, and they constructed an image of Islam based on their hatred, ignorance and prejudice towards Islam and Muslims. Before I go further into this, I want to digress and point out that this false image-making has had a lasting effect till the present time. Around the year 1960, an English historian Norman Daniel published a book entitled *Islam and the West, The Making of an Image*. In it, he has shown after much research and analysis that the false picture of Islam which was presented in Western writings of 700 or 800 years ago, still has some reflection in modern Western literature on Islam. At the beginning of his book he writes that there are "prejudices which still, after so many centuries, affect European attitudes [towards Islam]; and which do so, despite the great

contemporary improvement in understanding...” (p. v). He also writes: “the European West has long had its own characteristic view [of Islam], which was formed in the two centuries or so after 1100, and which has been modified only slowly since” (p. 1).

At the end of his book, Norman Daniel, speaking from a Christian point of view, appeals for a new approach. He writes: “We may ask ourselves ... what there is that is theologically acceptable to us in verse after verse of the Quran, including those verses which are concerned with Christ and His mother.” Then he adds that it is not enough to say what is acceptable to us (Christians) in the Quran: it would be better to ask ourselves: “what is *illuminating* to us in these verses” (p. 307). He further adds, regarding the Quran and the books of Islamic theology written by Islamic scholars many centuries ago: “These Quranic verses, these works of theology, if we continue seriously to examine them as friends of Islam, may sometimes give us actual light upon our own problems ... and may help us to find common ground where we can usefully agree with Muslims”.

So the very learned and scholarly Norman Daniel in his book first looks in great detail at the misrepresentation of Islam throughout the centuries by Christians in the West. This is the root of the present-day Islamophobia. He ends by advising fellow Christians that they must not try to blow out the light of Islam, but rather try to find light from it. Finally, he concludes that they must study Islam “without thought of propaganda, and without hatred”. He pinpointed Islamophobia at a time when this term was not in use, and did not come into use till forty years later, and he proposed how to stem it and reverse it.

Another Western scholar of Islam of our times, Francis Robinson, compiled a book entitled *Atlas of the Islamic World since 1500*, published around the year 1980. He expresses surprise that although Christianity has lost its hold in the West, and Western countries have become non-religious or secular, but still the same objections against Islam, which used to be spread by bigoted Christian writers of the past, have been adopted by the non-religious, secular Western writers and are today put forward in new ways. He writes that “traditional sources of hostility to Islam derived from the

medieval Christian polemic still flourish in secular form”, and: “Indeed, a disapproval of Islam, which sometimes amounts to outright hostility, seems ingrained in the secular culture of the West” (Introduction, p. 20, col. 2). In other words, the Christianity which denounced and ridiculed Islam for a thousand years lost its dominance in the West, especially in Europe, and Christianity itself became an object of mockery. But its hostile attitude to Islam was passed on to, and inherited by, the modern secular culture and left its mark significantly till the present time.

I will continue this topic in the next *Khutba* and deal with the reasons why the prejudice against Islam which arose a thousand years ago, in an age of ignorance and bigotry in the West, continued in our modern educated times.

May Allah enable us to continue the work of removing misconceptions about Islam until its light shines all over the world, ameen.

بَارِكْ اللَّهُ لَنَا وَكُمُ فِي الْقُرْآنِ الْعَظِيمِ، وَنَفَعْنَا وَإِيَّاكُمْ بِالآيَاتِ وَالذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيمِ، إِنَّهُ تَعَالَى جَوَادٌ كَرِيمٌ  
مَلِكٌ بَرٌّ رَوْفٌ رَحِيمٌ-