

## *Membership of the brotherhood of Islam (2)*

**Friday Khutba by Dr Zahid Aziz, for Lahore Ahmadiyya UK, 15 January 2021**

قَالَتِ الْأَعْرَابُ آمَنَّا قُلْ لَمْ تُؤْمِنُوا وَلكِنْ قُولُوا أَسْلَمْنَا وَلَمَّا يَدْخُلِ الْإِيمَانُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَإِنْ تُطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ لَا يَلِتْكُمْ مِنْ أَعْمَالِكُمْ شَيْئًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٤﴾ إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَرْتَابُوا وَجَاهَدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ

“The dwellers of the desert say: ‘We believe’. Say: You do not believe, but say, ‘We submit’; and faith has not yet entered into your hearts. And if you obey Allah and His Messenger, He will not diminish anything of your deeds. Surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. The believers are those only who believe in Allah and His Messenger, then they do not doubt, and struggle hard with their wealth and their lives in the way of Allah. Such are the truthful ones.” (The Quran, 49:14–15)

Certain rural Arab tribes or Bedouins are mentioned here who had just then embraced Islam. Some of them claimed to be believers or *mu'minān*. The Quran here tells the knowledgeable Muslims to say to them that they do not believe and cannot claim to be believers of a high degree because they are novices who do not yet have full faith established in their hearts. They are told that they should just say: We have become Muslims or submitted to the teachings of Islam. If they obey the commands of God and His Messenger, even superficially, in a formal way, like, let us say, a box-ticking exercise, then if they have some grain of sincerity in their hearts, although not full faith, still this obedience will lead them to higher stages and will not go to waste.

The verses go on to describe who are the true believers. They are those in whose hearts faith is established, so that “they do not doubt”, and because of their faith they sacrifice their wealth and lives in supporting the cause of Islam. But these verses allow those people to call themselves Muslims who have not yet developed an urge, attraction, longing or fondness in their hearts for carrying out the injunctions of Islam

but they are prepared to do them in obedience to God and His Messenger. On the other hand, the same word ‘submit’, as these people are allowed by the Quran to use about themselves, is mentioned about Abraham:

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُ رَبُّهُ أَسْلِمْ ۖ قَالَ أَسْلَمْتُ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٣١﴾

“When his Lord said to him, Submit, he said: I submit myself to the Lord of the worlds.” (2:131)

وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ دِينًا مِّنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ وَاتَّبَعَ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا ۗ وَاتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ خَلِيلًا ﴿١٢٥﴾

“And who is better in religion than he who submits himself entirely to Allah while doing good (to others) and follows the faith of Abraham, the upright one? And Allah took Abraham for a friend.” (4:125)

Now Abraham’s submission to God, by his saying “I submit” (*aslam-tu*), is of an incomparably high degree than the submission of these rural Arabs about whom the Quran directs that they ought to say: “We submit” (*aslam-nā*). The word in the Quran relating to someone’s submission to God or to becoming Muslim is the same, whether the submission is of the lowest degree or of the highest degree. This shows the great inclusivity of Islam, that the lowest and the highest bear the same title as being its followers.

This applies also to the word for believing (*āmanū*) or believers (*mu’minīn*). In the verses quoted in the beginning, stating “The believers are those only who believe in Allah and His Messenger, then they do not doubt, and struggle hard with their wealth and their lives in the way of Allah”, the highest grade of believer is meant. Yet elsewhere the Quran says: “O you who believe, why do you say things which you do not do? It is most hateful in the sight of Allah that you say things which you do not do” (61:2–3). Here obviously the highest grade of believer is not meant, but certain

Muslims who said things which they did not do. Despite this, even they are addressed as “O you who believe”.

The Quran also says: “The believers are brethren” (49:10). Here all Muslims are meant, whether of little faith or of strong faith. In the last *khutba*, I dealt with how a person joins the brotherhood of Islam or is identified as a member of it. With regard to this the Quran says:

“O you who believe, believe in Allah and His Messenger and the Book which He has revealed to His Messenger and the Book which He revealed before. And whoever disbelieves in Allah and His angels and His Books and His messengers and the Last Day, he indeed strays far away” (4:136).

The points of belief listed here are the very fundamentals of the creed of Islam. So why does this verse address “O you who believe”? They became Muslims in the first place by acknowledging belief in all these points. They already believe these things. The reason for addressing “those who believe” is that, whatever may be their present level or depth of belief or their commitment to it, they can always improve on it and advance in it. The Quran here calls *all of them* believers, whether they are the novices like the desert Arabs we mentioned before, about whom the Quran said “You do not believe”, or they are the believers of the highest commitment and rank.

So as with the word ‘Muslim’, the word ‘believer’ in the Quran is applied to everyone in the brotherhood of Islam, from those of little or superficial faith to those who feel motivated to make great sacrifices for Islam.

Moreover, as I explained in the last *khutba*, these fundamental points of belief are summarised in the *Kalima*:

أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ.

“I bear witness that there is no god but Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah”. Sometimes, the second part is: “and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger — وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ

These are the words which were proclaimed by anyone who accepted Islam in the Holy Prophet's time to announce that he or she was now a Muslim after having belonged to another faith.

One example is of a well-known Companion Abu Dharr. After hearing that a man in Makkah was claiming to be a prophet, Abu Dharr came to see the Holy Prophet and became a Muslim at his hand. Due to the persecution of Muslims at Makkah by the Quraish the Holy Prophet advised him to keep his acceptance secret. But he went out to the Ka'bah and in front of the Quraish he declared: "O people of Quraish! I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, and I testify that Muhammad is His servant and messenger". The Quraish rose up and Abu Dharr was beaten nearly to death (Bukhari, hadith 3523).

Then there is the story of the acceptance of Islam in Madinah by Abdullah ibn Salam who was a Jewish scholar. He too came to meet the Holy Prophet and accepted Islam. When people from his community came to see the Holy Prophet, Abdullah ibn Salam appeared before them and said: "I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah" (Bukhari, hadith 3329).

Another example is the conversion of the mother of the famous Companion Abu Hurairah. He asked the Holy Prophet to pray for the guidance of his mother. The Prophet did so and this satisfied Abu Hurairah. When he returned home, he could hear from outside the sound of splashing water. His mother was having a bath and she called out to him to wait there. After dressing she opened the door and said: "O Abu Huraira! I testify that there is no god but Allah, and that Muhammad is His servant and messenger." Abu Hurairah rushed back to the Holy Prophet to give him this news (Sahih Muslim).

You will all have heard of the story that once the Holy Prophet, during a break in a journey, was asleep resting under a tree. A desert Arab came upon him, took the Holy Prophet's sword, woke him up and said: "Who can save you from me now?" The Holy Prophet simply said: "Allah". The sword fell from the man's hand. The Holy Prophet

picked it up and said: “Who can save you from me now?” The man said: “Be a better wielder of the sword” (the meaning is: Forgive me). The Holy Prophet said: “Do you bear witness that there is no god but Allah and that I am the messenger of Allah?” He said: “No, but I promise that I shall not fight you nor side with those who fight you.” So the Holy Prophet let him go. Here the Holy Prophet asked him to accept Islam by reciting the *Kalima*. The incident also shows that neither was the Holy Prophet vindictive nor did he convert people to Islam by the sword. He did not punish the man in any way, even though that man was so close to being able to kill him. The man didn’t accept the *Kalima*, so the Holy Prophet let him go and he went back to his people.

We all know how much the Holy Prophet’s uncle Abu Talib protected him against his persecutors at Makkah for ten years, despite himself remaining an unbeliever and idol-worshipper. When Abu Talib was about to pass away from this world, the Holy Prophet went to see him. Two staunch opponents of Islam were already there. The Holy Prophet asked Abu Talib to say: *La ilaha ill-Allah* (‘There is no god but Allah’), but the two opponents of Islam said to Abu Talib: “Will you turn away from the religion of your father?” The Holy Prophet kept on asking Abu Talib to say this *Kalima*, but the two opponents kept on repeating their question to Abu Talib. In the end, Abu Talib decided to follow his ancestral faith and he refused to say *La ilaha ill-Allah* (Bukhari, hadith 1360). In another hadith it is reported that Hazrat Abu Bakr asked the Holy Prophet: “O messenger of Allah, what is salvation?” The Holy Prophet replied: “He who accepts the *Kalima* which I put before my uncle (Abu Talib), but which he rejected, that is the means of salvation.”

This shows that reciting this *Kalima* was a badge of Islam and of being a Muslim. No Muslim has the right to add extra conditions to this for the acceptance of Islam.

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