

# FRIDAY SERMON

14 November 2014

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by Imam Zafrullah Domun

After reciting the *Tashahhud*, the *Ta'uz* and the first chapter *Al Fatiha* of the Holy Quran, Imam Zafrullah Domun said:

This year many countries in Europe are commemorating the First World War which went on from 1914 to 1918. This was a war that was most devastating in the loss of life and property that the world had known till then. Eventually the victors especially England and France dictated very severe terms to Germany at the conference of Versailles which was held in 1919. Hitler was a mere soldier in the First World War but he rose to power in Germany and tried to exact revenge on the victors and this led to the second world war which took place from 1939 to 1945. This war surpassed the FWW in its atrocity. During the course of the war Hitler who was the dictator ruling Germany at that time would create what are known as concentration camps where he would send the Jews and eventually he would kill about 6 million of them. After the war many researchers wanted to understand what could have made the German people commit such atrocities against other human beings with whom they had been living quite peaceably till then.

Plenty of experiments have been made and of course we have too little time to talk about the most significant ones. But there is one which particularly stand out. It was carried in 1961 by a man who was known as Stanley Milgram. He was a psychologist and he devised an experiment in which volunteers participated as a teacher and a learner. Eventually he wrote a book about this experience entitled "Obedience to authority". Many articles have been written about these experiments and I am using materials from these articles found on the net.

Usually if a person in a position of authority ordered you to deliver a 400-volt electrical shock to another person, will you obey him? Most people would answer this question with an adamant no, but Yale University psychologist Stanley Milgram conducted a series of obedience experiments during the 1960s that demonstrated surprising results. These experiments offer a powerful and disturbing look into the power of authority and obedience.

Milgram started his experiments in 1961, shortly after the trial of the World War II criminal Adolph Eichmann had begun. Eichmann was the one responsible for the death of the Jews. The Israelis captured him in South America and they brought him to Israel for trial in the haul of a plane. There is a film about this trial which can be viewed on the net. At his trial Eichmann repeated in his defense that he was simply following instructions when he ordered the deaths of millions of Jews. It was this reply of his that roused Milgram's interest. So he wondered "Could it be that Eichmann and his million accomplices in the Holocaust were just following orders? Could we call them all accomplices?" So he devised an experiment to find out how far people who are in a

system will obey orders to harm despite their personal conviction that such harm are reprehensible.

So Milgram placed newspaper ads to recruit 40 men volunteers to participate in his experiment. In exchange for their participation, each person was paid \$4.50.

Milgram developed an intimidating shock generator, with shock levels starting at 30 volts and increasing in 15-volt increments all the way up to 450 volts. The many switches were labeled with terms including "slight shock," "moderate shock" and "danger: severe shock." The final two switches were labeled simply with an ominous "XXX."

Each participant took the role of a "teacher" who would then deliver a shock to the "student" every time an incorrect answer was produced. While the participant believed that he was delivering real shocks to the student, the student was actually a confederate in the experiment who was simply pretending to be shocked.

As the experiment progressed, the participant would hear the learner plead to be released or even complain about a heart condition. Once the 300-volt level had been reached, the learner banged on the wall and demanded to be released. Beyond this point, the learner became completely silent and refused to answer any more questions. The experimenter then instructed the participant to treat this silence as an incorrect response and deliver a further shock. Just imagine how these people continued to apply electric shocks just because they were being told to do so.

Most participants asked the experimenter whether they should continue. The experimenter issued a series of commands to prod the participant along with such sentences as: "Please continue." "The experiment requires that you continue." "It is absolutely essential that you continue." "You have no other choice, you must go on." And those who were administering the shock continued and even qualified the learners as stupid because they did not know the answers to the questions that were being asked.

The level of shock that the participant was willing to deliver was used as the measure of obedience. How far do you think that most participants were willing to go? When Milgram posed this question to a group of Yale University students, it was predicted that no more than 3 out of 100 participants would deliver the maximum shock. In reality, 65% of the participants in Milgram's study delivered the maximum shocks.

Of the 40 participants in the study, 26 delivered the maximum shocks while 14 stopped before reaching the highest levels. It is important to note that many of the subjects became extremely agitated, distraught and angry at the experimenter. Yet they continued to follow orders all the way to the end. These statistics are quite revealing. All the participants never stopped and asked themselves what was the use of these shocks and were they justified or not. These people just obeyed orders.

Since these original studies these experiments have been replicated and it has been found to be as Milgram concluded. You may read further on these matters on the net. Now the question was Why did so many of the participants in this experiment perform a seemingly

sadistic act on the instruction of an authority figure? According to Milgram, there are a number of situational factors that can explain such high levels of obedience:

The physical presence of an authority figure dramatically increased compliance.

The fact that the study was sponsored by Yale (a trusted and authoritative academic institution) led many participants to believe that the experiment must be safe.

The selection of teacher and learner status seemed random.

Participants assumed that the experimenter was a competent expert.

The shocks were said to be painful, not dangerous.

Milgram conducted further experiments and he noted that the presence of rebellious peers dramatically reduced obedience levels. When other people refused to go along with the experimenters orders, 36 out of 40 participants refused to deliver the maximum shocks. This conclusion also is quite important. It shows that if there is even one person who refuses to obey the tide may be turned in the vicious cycle of obedience which leads to harmful results.

Of course you all know that I am not telling you about all this because I want to speak about psychologists and their experiments. This is not the aim. The aim is to relate what this experience shows and what most members of mainstream Ahmadiyya Jamaat have been doing in trying to inflict pain on their coreligionists who are members of Jamaat Ahmadiyya Al Mouslemeen. An authority figure says something and all think that his instructions have to be followed. In our case the main authority figure is a caliph and minor ones are the amir, the presidents and the missionary in charge. They say that x or y has to be socially boycotted and you see all the sheep conform and they take it to be virtuous to obey and inflict harm and consequently paradise doors will be flung open for them. In this particular case people believe that they are being properly guided because they looked up to these authority figures as those who could guide them to paradise. But the fact of the matter is that by obeying these people are taking their path to hell. People obey blindly because of the force of the system within which they evolve. But such should not be the case.

We are all aware of the famous hadith where a group of Muslims were asked by their amir to jump into the fire and they refused and when the matter was reported to the Holy Prophet he said “Had they entered into it, they would have remained into it. There is no obedience in matters involving disobedience to Allah; obedience is in matters which are good and are universally recognized” Our prophet has made it clear to us what should be obeyed and what should not. I have heard that there are some people within the Jamaat who say “that social boycott is allowed in Islam”. I invite such new learned ones to make themselves known and to publish their reasons for their stupid assertions. They think that they know Islam and they are knowledgeable but such people have taken their own

stupidity as real knowledge. The hadith is clear “there is no obedience in disobedience to Allah.” No man’s directive can have more importance than Allah’s directives as spelled out by the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet (saw).

Now a question may be asked what can be done to remove such sheep like compliance from the Ahmadis. The answer according to me is that there should be some bold men or women who can talk sense and defy those who are in authority about their perverse instructions of boycotting one’s kith and kins. If a few such people will tell the caliph and his subordinates what they think about his unislamic instructions he will understand that people are not ready to follow him when he gives them instructions which appear to be contrary to the Holy Quran and the practice of the Holy Prophet (saw). In fact the caliph could be told that there is a flagrant contradiction between what he says in his sermons as we quoted last week and what he expects Ahmadis to do. Fortunately there are some such persons within the Jamaat these days who dare albeit tentatively to defy the authority. Let us hope that their number might increase and that they might tell those who wield authority how they have strayed from the path of righteousness.

In order to become fearless and talk sense to those in authority one needs to equip oneself with knowledge. Allah says in the Holy Quran “*Innama yakhshallaho min ibaadehil olamaa*” meaning “Only those who possess knowledge fear Allah”. Commenting on this verse Hazrat Masih Maood (as) tells us that knowledge in this verse means knowledge of Allah of His Being and His Attributes. Here he has not spoken about philosophy or law or politics or accountancy or business. The knowledge that one should aim for is that which has been imparted to us through the Holy Quran. It is sufficient to free us from the shackles of tradition and all sorts of authority. It is a knowledge that is delivered to the heart by Allah and which frees man from any other besides Allah. It is a knowledge that is received by praying to Allah and by manifesting true moral qualities as taught by the Holy Prophet (saw). It is a knowledge that binds to Allah and to no one else. It is incumbent upon each Ahmadi Muslim that he should strive with all his might to try to drink at this fountain of knowledge because it will quench his thirst and will help him to see everything in their true perspective, Allah willing. May Allah help each one amongst us to drink from His Fountain of Knowledge and may we all be enlightened and become true Muslims who are thoroughly submissive to Him and to no one else.

In the end I would like to speak a few words about an incident which took place in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan of ill repute at the beginning of the week. A pregnant Pakistani Christian woman 24 years old and mother of three children was killed alongside her husband for alleged blasphemy. She and her husband of 27 years had their legs broken so they could not flee the mob that locked them inside a brick-making factory before their murder. The couple was thrown on top of a brick kiln where they were burned alive, witnesses said. Apparently there was a dispute between the husband and the owner of the kiln about wages and the couple were accused of desecrating the Holy Quran by burning its pages. Consequently a mob gathered and burned them alive. Police have arrested about 40 persons. What happens next Allah knows. Just imagine how so

called Muslims can perpetrate such heinous crimes. May Allah grant patience to the children and their relatives. Praise be to Allah that He did not chose for us to live in such a country where Muslims kills others for almost nothing.