

# FRIDAY SERMON

23 Jan 2015

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by Imam Zafrullah Domun

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

**Main Points:** Comments on sequel to Charlie Hebdo's Publications. Mr Henri Roussel's article. What should be Muslim's reaction. What Lamartine said about the Holy Prophet (saw). The need to act peaceably and listen to dissentient voices.

As you might well be aware since the tragedy that shook France recently, Muslims around the world, especially those who live in western countries are again being victimized. The surviving journalists at the French weekly Charlie Hebdo have persisted in their scurrilous attitude to perpetuate the work of their predecessors in the name of Freedom of Expression and they have published a cartoon of the Holy Prophet on its front page again, as we said last week. As could have been expected Muslims around the world have expressed their anger at this new provocation and protests marches have been organized in many places and the French flags have been burned and at some place like in Niger and Karachi there have even been riots and people have lost their lives in clashes with the police. The worst riots have taken place in Niger where ten Muslims have been killed and forty protesters have been wounded and at least ten Christian churches have been burnt down and many Christians have had to flee. In Karachi an AFP photographer has been badly wounded and has had to be hospitalized. Meanwhile both the president of France and the Prime Minister of Great Britain have again intervened to say how the principle of freedom of expression is dear to them and their way of life even if it mocks religion.

However a journalist at the *Nouvel Observateur*, another French weekly aged about 80 years wrote a piece in its edition of 14<sup>th</sup> January last condemning Charlie Hebdo's editor for sending the whole team to death with his attitude. This guy whose name is Henri Roussel was a co-founder of the newspaper in the nineteen seventies and later on he left. His article has been reported in important newspapers in Great Britain like the *Telegraph* and *Daily Mail*. In very clear words he has said that Charlie Hebdo's Editor had dragged the whole team to their death. In addition he said that he had also talked with another founder of the paper in 2011, when they first poked fun at the Holy prophet; who told him "I think we are thoughtless imbeciles who have taken a useless risk, that's all. We think we are

invulnerable. For years, decades even we stir things up. And that one day all our stirrings blows up in our face. We should not have done it.” According to Mr Roussel this conversation took place in 2011 when Charlie Hebdo first published cartoons about the Holy Prophet Mohammad (saw). Free speech or no free speech there are still voices in France who think that it was wrong to poke fun at religious founders.

As soon as the article was published many in France have protested about what he said and they even wrote to the editor of the *Nouvel Observateur* criticizing him for allowing such an article to be published. The editor told them that in the name of free speech he could not suppress this discordant voice. This is how it goes there. Anyhow Charlie Hebdo’s shareholders should be very happy that the death of their editorial team has brought them a lot of money. They printed 7 million copies of their paper which brought them around 21million Euros whilst only 60,000 copies of their piece of dirt were weekly being printed previously. It will not at all be a surprise for us that unabashedly they publish a cartoon to show how much they are profiting from Free Speech whilst at the same time it has killed their loved ones!

Under no circumstance can we condone that people should resort to violence to settle differences. Islam does not allow us to do so. Islamic teachings aim at raising man from a stage where he acts like an animal to a stage where he distinguishes between good and evil and eventually in a stage where he becomes a spiritual being. Unfortunately we do not see any other “isms” which has been developed by men which can replace the teachings that Allah has given us. Because we Muslims have adopted Islam as our way of life others would always resent our attitude and they will do whatever they can to deter us from our religion. But since Allah wants us to be ennobled by His Teachings He expects us to bear patiently what others do to us. There are many such instances in the Holy Quran where Allah has told the Holy Prophet and his followers to bear patiently the ridicule of others. In one such verse Allah says:

“You shall surely be tried in your possessions and in your persons and you shall surely hear many hurtful things from those who were given the Book before you and from those who set up equals to Allah. But if you show patience and act righteously that indeed is a matter of high resolve.”(HQ 3:187)

So as Muslims we should expect that others would poke fun at what we hold dear. But Allah wants us to cultivate the noble quality of patience rather than reacting

violently to the offense. And Allah knows best and what He tells us to do is best. As far as publications lampooning our religion or our prophet is concerned we should ignore them with dignity. If people, like the guys at Charlie Hebdo choose to speak ill of the Holy Prophet (saw) it only means that they are ignorant people who are unaware of their own history. Had they read what one of their own intellectuals known as Lamartine said they might revise the opinion that they have of the Holy Prophet Mohammad (saw). I am referring to Alphonse de Lamartine who was a poet, a politician and a historian who lived from 1790-1869. He said:

**“Never has a man set for himself, voluntarily or involuntarily, a more sublime aim, since this aim was superhuman; to subvert superstitions which had been imposed between man and his Creator, to render God unto man and man unto God; to restore the rational and sacred idea of divinity amidst the chaos of the material and disfigured gods of idolatry, then existing. Never has a man undertaken a work so far beyond human power with so feeble means, for he (Muhammad) had in the conception as well as in the execution of such a great design, no other instrument than himself and no other aid except a handful of men living in a corner of the desert. Finally, never has a man accomplished such a huge and lasting revolution in the world, because in less than two centuries after its appearance, Islam, in faith and in arms, reigned over the whole of Arabia, and conquered, in God’s name, Persia Khorasan, Transoxania, Western India, Syria, Egypt, Abyssinia, all the known continent of Northern Africa, numerous islands of the Mediterranean Sea, Spain, and part of Gaul.**

**“If greatness of purpose, smallness of means, and astonishing results are the three criteria of a human genius, who could dare compare any great man in history with Muhammad? The most famous men created arms, laws, and empires only. They founded, if anything at all, no more than material powers which often crumbled away before their eyes. This man moved not only armies, legislations, empires, peoples, dynasties, but millions of men in one-third of the then inhabited world; and more than that, he moved the altars, the gods, the religions, the ideas, the beliefs and the souls.**

**“On the basis of a Book, every letter of which has become law, he created a spiritual nationality which blend together peoples of every tongue and race. He has left the indelible characteristic of this Muslim nationality the hatred of false gods and the passion for the One and Immaterial God. This avenging patriotism against the profanation of Heaven formed the virtue of the followers of Muhammad; the conquest of one-third the earth to the dogma was his miracle; or rather it was not the miracle of man but that of reason.**

**“The idea of the unity of God, proclaimed amidst the exhaustion of the fabulous theogonies, was in itself such a miracle that upon its utterance from his lips it destroyed all the ancient temples of idols and set on fire one-third of the world. His life, his meditations, his heroic reveling against the superstitions of his country, and his boldness in defying the furies of idolatry, his firmness in enduring them for fifteen years in Mecca, his acceptance of the role of public scorn and almost of being a victim of his fellow countrymen... This dogma was twofold, the unity of God and the immateriality of God: the former telling what God is, the latter telling what God is not; the one overthrowing false gods with the sword, the other starting an idea with words.**

**“Philosopher, Orator, Apostle, Legislator, Conqueror of Ideas, Restorer of Rational beliefs.... The founder of twenty terrestrial empires and of one spiritual empire, that is Muhammad. As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask, is there any man greater than he?”**

Among Muslims also there is a need to learn more about the Holy Prophet (saw) and to imbibe his teachings and to stop killing and torturing other Muslims in his name. Any Muslim who tries by any means to impose his views of Islam on others is not at all following the footsteps of the Holy Prophet (saw). There is no doubt that unfortunately many Muslims including many Ahmadis have failed to inculcate in themselves the true teachings of Islam as taught by the Holy Prophet (saw). Such Muslims understanding of Islam has turned them into bigots because they fail to learn from the teachings at source and rely on interpretations made by their leaders. Muslims should make it their duty to try to understand the message of the Holy Quran and to judge everything else using it as the yardstick and nothing else. Diversity of opinion helps a Jamaat and it does not impoverish it at all. Those who espouse dissentient views help the majority to reexamine their certainties and help them to avoid groupthink which can be fatal within a group. We all say that Islam is a tolerant religion. Yet when the time comes to put such teachings into practice we manifest intolerance, bigotry and refusal even to hear a different point of view. All the problems and the strife that exist between groups of Muslims today may be traced to this intolerance and this incapacity to tolerate another point of view. Muslims have unfortunately up till now not understood how to live and let live. Most Islamic groups have parochial views of Islam and each one think that the other one is wrong. Instead I think we should learn to say that the other one may have a point and let us sit down and discuss it. We should be so open minded that we can follow the truth where it leads us instead of just saying that we have a monopoly on truth. Our duty is to do our duty to Allah and work for the betterment of mankind and remit our affairs in the hands of Allah. If we are well guided Allah knows it and that should be quite sufficient for us. If someone comes along and say

that what we believe is wrong we should be ever ready to discuss it with such a one and defend our point of view with an open mind as we have always been saying.

The great example of the Holy Prophet (saw) is here to inspire us to do good and not to harm anyone even if that one tries to harm us. Many might say that these are utopian teachings and they are nowhere to be found in the world. Some years back I might have said that Jamaat Ahmadiyya mainstream might have been an example for all to follow. Unfortunately because of the experience that I have had with the Jamaat I have come to know that at times they can be as bigoted and as intolerant as all their persecutors around the world. The Jamaat has not shown that example of tolerance as it should have done in obedience to the practice of the Holy prophet and Hazrat Masih Maood (as). That Jamaat contents itself in just discoursing about the teachings of Islam but they do not care to put into practice. They have shown their intolerance *vis a vis* those who do not agree with them in a most flagrant way and they are not at all eager to have any dialogue to deepen understanding. It is really unfortunate that the Jamaat that was created to bring about a revolution in beliefs and practice has itself failed to live according to its own expectations. This shows how a movement of reform in Islamic thought and practice is difficult in the Muslim world. Unless and until the Muslim world including the Ahmadi accept that reformation in Islam is done through those who are appointed by Allah for the purpose, not much progress will be accomplished and the world of Islam will continue to lag the unbelievers. May Allah grant to each one amongst us the wisdom to understand His Teachings and to put them into practice *incha* Allah.