



100228 - Ruling on a non-Muslim touching the Mus-haf

the question

I heard one of the callers to Islam in China saying that touching the Mus-haf without having purified oneself is prohibited for a Muslim, but in the case of a non-Muslim, it is permissible for him to do that, so that he can learn about Islam. Is what he said correct?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

It is not permissible for one who is in a state of impurity to touch the Mus-haf, because of what is said in the letter found in the possession of `Amr ibn Hazm, which the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) sent to the people of Yemen, in which he said: "No one should touch the Quran except one who is in a state of purity." Narrated by Malik (468), Ibn Hibban (793) and al-Bayhaqi (1/87). Al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar said: A number of leading scholars classed the hadith about the letter mentioned as authentic, not on the basis of its isnad, but on the basis of how famous it is. Ash-Shafa`i said in *Ar-Risalah*: They did not accept this hadith until it was proven to them that it was a letter of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

Ibn `Abd al-Barr said: This letter was famous among the scholars of the Prophet's biography (sirah), and the fact that its contents were so well known meant that there was no need for an isnad, because it was akin to being mutawatir, as the people accepted it and knew it well. (*At-Talkhis al-Habir*, 4/17).

Shaykh al-Albani classed the hadith as authentic in *Irwa' al-Ghalil*, 1/158.

This includes both minor and major impurity, and the disbeliever combines both types of impurity, because he becomes junub and does not do ghusl to remove that impurity, and if he were to do ghusl, his ghusl would not be valid.



Hence the majority of jurists are of the view that a disbeliever should be prevented from touching the Mus-haf and it is haram to enable him to do that. It is more appropriate that he be prevented from touching it than a Muslim, because there is the fear that he may treat it disrespectfully. Hence the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) did not allow Muslims to travel with the Quran to the land of the enemy, as al-Bukhari (2990) and Muslim (1869) narrated from `Abdullah ibn `Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) forbade travelling with the Quran to the land of the enemy.

An-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said in *Al-Majmu`* (2/85): Our companions said: The disbeliever is not to be prevented from listening to the Quran , but he is to be prevented from touching the Mus-haf. End quote.

Ar-Ramli (may Allah have mercy on him) said: The disbeliever should be prevented from putting his hands on the Mus-haf even for the purpose of binding the book, as Ibn `Abd as-Salam said, even if there is a hope that he may become Muslim. (*Nihayat al-Muhtaj*, 3/389).

Al-Baji said in *Al-Muntaqa* (3/165): If one of the disbelievers wants a Mus-haf to be sent to him so that he may study it, it should not be sent to him, because he is najis and junub (impure), and it is not permissible for him to touch the Mus-haf and it is not permissible for anyone to give it to him. This was stated by Ibn al-Majishon. End quote.

It says in *Al-Mawsu`ah al-Fiqhiyyah*: A disbeliever touching the Mus-haf and working in making copies of the Mus-haf and producing them: the disbeliever is not allowed to touch the Mus-haf, just as the Muslim who is in a state of janabah is not allowed to touch it; in fact it is more appropriate to prevent the disbeliever from touching it. End quote.

It also says: The Malikis, Shafa`is and Hanbalis, and Abu Yusuf among the Hanafis, were of the view that it is not permissible for a disbeliever to touch the Mus-haf, because this is a kind of disrespecting the Mus-haf.

Muhammad ibn al-Hasan said: There is nothing wrong with a disbeliever touching the Mus-haf if he has done ghusl, because what makes it disallowed is being in a state of impurity, and that has



been removed by doing ghusl. All that remains is the impurity of his belief, but that is in his heart and not in his hand. End quote.

Shaykh Ibn Baz (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked: What is the ruling on a Christian touching the Mus-haf, and on his touching a translation of the meanings of the Holy Quran ?

He replied: This is a matter concerning which there is a difference of opinion among the scholars. The well-known view among the scholars is that Christians, Jews and other non-Muslims should be prevented [from touching the Mus-haf], because the Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) forbade travelling with the Quran to the land of the enemy, lest it fall into their hands. This indicates that they should not be allowed to touch it; rather we may allow them to listen to it. Allah, may He be Exalted, says: {And if any one of the polytheists seeks your protection, then grant him protection so that he may hear the words of Allah [i.e., the Quran]} [at-Tawbah 9:6]. In other words, it should be recited to them so that they can hear it, but the Quran should not be handed over to them. Some of the scholars were of the view that it is permissible to do that if there is the hope that the non-Muslim may become Muslim. They quoted as evidence for that the fact that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) wrote a letter to Heraclius, the Byzantine ruler, which contained the verse {Say, "O People of the Scripture, come to a word that is equitable between us and you ...} [Al `Imran 3:64].

They said: This verse is a verse from the book of Allah, and he wrote it to Heraclius.

But the correct view is that this does not constitute proof; rather it indicates that it is permissible to write one or two verses of the book of Allah. As for handing over the Mus-haf [to a non-Muslim], there is no proven report to that effect from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

However, with regard to a book containing a translation of the meanings of the Quran , there is nothing wrong with a non-Muslim touching it, because the translation of the meanings is like a book of commentary and it is not a Quran . In other words, the translation is an explanation of the meanings of the Quran , so if a non-Muslim touches it, or one who is not in a state of purity



touches it, that does not matter, because it does not come under the rulings on the Quran . The rulings on the Quran apply specifically to that which is written in Arabic only, and does not contain any commentary. However, if the Arabic text is accompanied by a translation, then it comes under the rulings on books of tafsir (commentary), and it is permissible for one who is in a state of impurity, a Muslim or a non-Muslim to hold it, because it is not a book of Quran ; rather it is regarded as a book of commentary (tafsir).(*Majmu` Fatawa ash-Shaykh Ibn Baz*, 24/340).

From the above, we may understand that it is permissible for a non-Muslim to touch a translation, because the translation is not Quran . So if we want to call him to Islam, he may be given a translation of the meanings of the Holy Quran .

May Allah help us all to do that which He loves and pleases Him.

And Allah knows best.