



Fifth question from Fatwa No. 5166

Q 5: Which is more preferable: to express Niyyah (intention) verbally or inwardly?

A: Al-Niyyah is one of the devotional acts which are based on the religious principle of Tawqif (bound by a religious text and not amenable to personal opinion). It should be expressed inwardly. It is an act of Bid`ah (rejected innovation in religion) to express it verbally. Neither the Prophet (peace be upon him) nor his Sahabah (Companions) are known to have expressed it verbally. It is authentically reported in the two Sahih (the two authentic books of Al-Bukhari and Muslim) and other books of Hadith that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said to the Bedouin who was at fault in performing his Salah (Prayer): (When you stand up for prayer, say Takbir (saying: "Allahu Akbar [Allah is the Greatest]") and then recite from the Qur'an what you know.) It is also reported in the Sunan (Hadith compilations classified by jurisprudential themes) that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: (The key of prayer is purification;

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Takbir (saying "Allah is most great") makes (all acts which break prayer) unlawful and Taslim (salutation of peace ending the Prayer) makes (all such acts) lawful.) It is also reported in the Sahih of Muslim on the authority of 'Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her): (The Prophet (peace be upon him) used to commence prayer saying: Allah Akbar (Allah is the most Great) and reciting Surah Al-Fatihah.) It has been authentically reported and unanimously agreed upon by all Muslims that the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his Sahabah used to start their Salah with Takbir. Neither the Prophet (peace be upon them) nor his Sahabah are reported to have expressed Al-Niyyah verbally. The claim on the permissibility of expressing it verbally is rejected because the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: (He who innovates things in our affairs for which there is no valid (reason) (commits sin) and these are to be rejected.) Authenticity of this Hadith is agreed upon by both Al-Bukhari and Muslim. In another narration related by Imam Muslim (may Allah have mercy on him), it is stated: (He who does any act for which there is no sanction from our behalf, that is to be rejected.)

May Allah grant us success! May peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his family and Companions!

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