

Deception in the Media

On November 5th, 2009, a Muslim Army Major named Nidal Malik Hasan opened fire at Fort Hood in Texas. Many innocent people died, and Hasan has been charged with thirteen counts of premeditated murder and more than thirty counts of attempted murder.

Shortly after the Fort Hood shooting, CNN posted an article titled “Murder Has No Religion” (by Arsalan Iftikhar), which claimed that such attacks are forbidden in Islam. The article began:

Most of the world’s 1.57 billion Muslims know that the Holy Quran states quite clearly that, “Anyone who kills a human being ... it shall be as though he has killed all of mankind. ... If anyone saves a life, it shall be as though he has saved the lives of all of mankind.” (<http://www.cnn.com/2009/OPINION/11/09/iftikhar.fort.hood/index.html>)

Notice that the article portrays Islam as a religion that condemns killing of any kind. But is this what the Qur’an actually says? Unfortunately for CNN’s readers, the author didn’t give a reference, so readers were left to find the quotation themselves. Yet when we turn to 5:32-33 of the Qur’an (the source of CNN’s severely edited quotation), we get a surprisingly different picture of killing in Islam:

For this reason did We prescribe to the children of Israel that whoever slays a soul, unless it be for manslaughter or for mischief in the land, it is as though he slew all men; and whoever keeps it alive, it is as though he kept alive all men; and certainly Our apostles came to them with clear arguments, but even after that many of them certainly act extravagantly in the land.

The punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His apostle and strive to make mischief in the land is only this, that they should be murdered or crucified or their hands and their feet should be cut off on opposite sides or they should be imprisoned; this shall be as a disgrace for them in this world, and in the hereafter they shall have a grievous chastisement.

Two things are worthy of note in this passage. First, the teaching appealed to by CNN (“whoever slays a soul . . . it is as though he slew all men”) was given “to the children of Israel!” (i.e. the Jews). It was not given to Muslims. Second, even if Westernized Muslims want to apply this verse to themselves, the verse obviously permits killing people who spread “mischief in the land.” Indeed, the very next verse commands Muslims to murder, crucify, and dismember those who wage war against Islam and “make mischief” in Muslim lands.

Since the United States has maintained a military presence in predominantly Islamic countries, knowledgeable Muslims understand that, according to Muhammad, U.S. soldiers meet the “mischief-making” criterion, and should therefore be killed. It’s no coincidence that Major Hasan targeted soldiers, many of whom were being deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan.

Thus, CNN quoted two carefully edited portions of a passage that justifies the killing of enemy combatants and used them to show that Islam condemns attacks such as the Fort Hood shooting. While deceptions like this are easily spotted, there is much confusion in the world concerning the role of violence in Islam. This short pamphlet will clear up some of the confusion.

Peace, Violence, and Abrogation

Muslims in the West are quick to point to passages such as Qur’an 109:6 (“You shall have your religion and I shall have my religion”) and 2:256 (“There is no compulsion in religion”) as evidence that Islam is a religion of peace. When confronted with harsher passages such as 9:5 (“Slay the idolaters wherever you find them”) and 9:29 (“Fight those who believe not in Allah”), Westernized Muslims interpret these verses in light of the more peaceful teachings of the Qur’an, typically saying something like: “Well, the Qur’an can’t be commanding us to kill unbelievers, since it says that there’s no compulsion in religion.”

Hence, Westernized Muslims pick the verses of the Qur’an they find most attractive, and they use these verses to sanitize the rest of the Qur’an. But is this the correct way to interpret the Qur’an? Unfortunately, the answer is no. The Qur’an presents its own method of interpretation—the Doctrine of Abrogation.

Qur’an 2:106—Whatever verse we shall abrogate, or cause [thee] to forget, we will bring a better than it, or one like unto it. Dost thou not know that God is almighty?

Qur’an 16:101—When We substitute one revelation for another—and God knows best what He reveals (in stages)—they say, “Thou art but a forger”: but most of them understand not.

According to the Qur’an, then, when Muslims are faced with conflicting commands, they aren’t supposed to pick the one they like best. Rather, they are to go to history and see which verse was revealed last. Whichever verse came last is said to abrogate (or cancel) earlier revelations.

What happens when we apply this methodology to Qur’anic verses on peace and violence?

The Call to Jihad: Three Stages

When we turn to Islam’s theological sources and historical writings (Qur’an, Hadith, Sira, and Tafsir), we find that there are three stages in the call to Jihad, depending on the status of Muslims in a society.

STAGE ONE—When Muslims are completely outnumbered and can’t possibly win a physical confrontation with unbelievers, they are to live in peace with non-Muslims and preach a message of tolerance. We see an example of this stage when Muhammad and his followers were a persecuted minority in Mecca. Since the Muslims were entirely outnumbered, the revelations Muhammad received during this stage (e.g. “You shall have your religion and I shall have my religion”) called for religious tolerance and

proclaimed a future punishment (rather than a worldly punishment) for unbelievers.

STAGE TWO—When there are enough Muslims and resources to defend the Islamic community, Muslims are called to engage in *defensive* Jihad. Thus, when Muhammad had formed alliances with various groups outside Mecca and the Muslim community had become large enough to begin fighting, Muhammad received Qur’an 22:39-40:

Permission (to fight) is given to those upon whom war is made because they are oppressed, and most surely Allah is well able to assist them; Those who have been expelled from their homes without a just cause except that they say: our Lord is Allah. . . .

Although Muslims in the West often pretend that Islam only allows defensive fighting, later revelations show otherwise.

STAGE THREE—When Muslims establish a majority and achieve political power in an area, they are commanded to engage in *offensive* Jihad. Hence, once Mecca and Arabia were under Muhammad’s control, he received the call the fight all unbelievers. In Surah 9:29, we read:

Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, nor acknowledge the Religion of Truth, from among the People of the Book, until they pay the *Jizyah* with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued.

Notice that this verse doesn’t order Muslims to fight oppressors, but to fight those who don’t believe in Islam (including the “People of the Book”—Jews and Christians).

Not surprisingly, we find similar commands in Islam’s most trusted collections of ahadith (traditions containing Muhammad’s teachings).

Sahih al-Bukhari 6924—Muhammad said: “I have been ordered to fight the people till they say: *La ilaha illallah* (none has the right to be worshipped but Allah), and whoever said *La ilaha illallah*, Allah will save his property and his life from me.”

Sahih Muslim 30—Muhammad said: “I have been commanded to fight against people so long as they do not declare that there is no god but Allah.”

Here again, the criterion for fighting people is that the people believe something other than Islam.

It’s clear, then, that when Muslims rose to power, peaceful verses of the Qur’an were abrogated by verses commanding Muslims to fight people based on their beliefs. Islam’s greatest scholars acknowledge this. For instance, Ibn Kathir (Islam’s greatest commentator on the Qur’an) sums up Stage Three as follows: “Therefore all people of the world should be called to Islam. If anyone of them refuses to do so, or refuses to pay the *Jizyah*, they should be fought till they are killed.”

When Muslims Reach Stage Three

Abrogation also accounts for shifting attitudes regarding Jews and Christians in the Qur'an. While Muslims are to be friendly to Jews and Christians when the former are outnumbered, the Islamic position changes when Muslims reach Stage Three, at which point Christians and Jews are to recognize their inferior status and pay the *Jizyah* (a payment made to Muslims in exchange for not being killed by them). Consider some of Muhammad's later teachings about Christians and Jews:

Qur'an 5:51—O you who believe! do not take the Jews and the Christians for friends; they are friends of each other; and whoever amongst you takes them for a friend, then surely he is one of them; surely Allah does not guide the unjust people.

Qur'an 9:30—And the Jews say: Uzair is the son of Allah; and the Christians say: The Messiah is the son of Allah; these are the words of their mouths; they imitate the saying of those who disbelieved before; may Allah destroy them; how they are turned away!

Qur'an 98:6—Those who reject (Truth), among the People of the Book and among the Polytheists, will be in Hell-Fire, to dwell therein. They are the worst of creatures.

Sahih Muslim 4366—Muhammad said: "I will expel the Jews and Christians from the Arabian Peninsula and will not leave any but Muslim."

Al-Bukhari, Al-Adab al-Mufrad 1103—Muhammad said: "Do not give the People of the Book the greeting first. Force them to the narrowest part of the road."

Needless to say, these teachings can hardly be considered peaceful or tolerant.

Muslims in the West

Since Muhammad obviously commanded his followers to fight unbelievers (simply for being unbelievers), why do Muslims in the West deny this? Here we must turn to Surah 3:28, which reads:

Let not the believers take disbelievers for their friends in preference to believers. Whoso doeth that hath no connection with Allah unless (it be) that ye but guard yourselves against them, taking (as it were) security.

According to this verse (which uses a variation of the word *Taqiyya*, meaning "concealment"), Muslims are not allowed to be friends with non-Muslims. However, if Muslims feel threatened by a stronger adversary, they are allowed to *pretend* to be friendly. Ibn Kathir comments: "In this case, such believers are allowed to show friendship outwardly but never inwardly." Abu Darda, one of Muhammad's companions, put it this way: "We smile in the face of some people although our hearts curse them."

Assessment

Is Islam a religion of peace? No. Islam is a religion that pretends to be peaceful when Muslims are too weak to win a war. When Islam is dominant, Muslims are commanded to subjugate or kill everyone around them. (Just look at how non-Muslims are treated in Muslim countries; compare this constant abuse and persecution with what is being proclaimed about "peaceful" Islam by Westernized Muslims.) Of course, there are many Muslims who aren't violent. Many Muslims in the West love peace and tolerance. But they didn't get these values from Islam. They got them from the West, and now they're reinterpreting Islam based on their Western values. For dedicated Muslims, however, there are only two possible situations to be in: (1) fighting unbelievers, and (2) pretending to be peaceful while preparing to fight unbelievers. Either way, conquering the world in the name of Allah is always the goal.

For Further Study

For a video detailed video discussion of this information:
<http://www.answermuslims.com/p/jihad.html>

To learn more about these issues, be sure to visit these sites:
www.Answering-Islam.org
www.AnsweringMuslims.com
<http://www.youtube.com/user/Acts17Apologetics>

For some specific articles, please visit the following links:
<http://answer-islam.org/Silas/swordverse.htm>
<http://answer-islam.org/Silas/femalecaptives.htm>
<http://answer-islam.org/Silas/jihad.htm>
http://answer-islam.org/Shamoun/badawi_mushrik.htm
http://answer-islam.org/Shamoun/badawi_tolerance.htm
http://answer-islam.org/Shamoun/badawi_holy_war.htm
http://answer-islam.org/Shamoun/na_debate.htm
http://answer-islam.org/Authors/Wood/two_faces.htm
<http://answer-islam.org/Authors/Wood/women.htm>



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THREE STAGES OF JIHAD

"Surely Allah has bought of the believers their persons and their property for this, that they shall have the garden; they fight in Allah's way, so they slay and are slain."

-Qur'an 9:111

"Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, and those who are with him are severe against disbelievers, and merciful among themselves."

-Qur'an 48:29