

Law of War and Force: the Perspective of Al-Quran and the Bible

Written by Dr. Khandaker Abdullah Jahangir
Published in the Journal of Islamic Law and
Judiciary, Vol II, 2007

Introduction

The Western people blame Islam for its law of War or Jihad. According to their view, Islam teaches its followers to be non-tolerant towards other religions. It orders Muslims to wage 'Jihad' against non-Muslims and kill them. This is why Pope Benedict XVI blamed Islam for its conception of Jihad and said that God does not like violence which is incompatible with His nature. According to him, Christianity teaches love and peace, so it is compatible to reason and to the nature of God. In fact we find that it is not only the Qur'an, but the holy Bible also commands for Jihad or war against unbelievers or enemies. In this article we will make a comparative study between the Qur'an and the Bible regarding doctrine of war and violence to examine and explore accuracy or erroneousness of Western view in the light of the Holy Scriptures of Islam and Christianity.

The Bible

The holy Bible is "the sacred scriptures of Judaism and Christianity. The Christian Bible consists of the Old Testament and the New Testament, with the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox versions of the Old Testament being slightly larger because of their acceptance of certain books and parts of books considered apocryphal by Protestants. The Jewish Bible includes only the books known to Christians as the Old Testament. The arrangements of the Jewish and Christian canons differ considerably. The Protestant and Roman Catholic arrangements more nearly match one another."¹

The Jews believe in the divinity of Torah or books of the Old Testament only. They deny divinity of the New Testament and they do not recognize the Christhood or Messiahship of Jesus and even they do not accept his prophethood, but they consider him as a false prophet². According to Christian belief every word of the old and the new testaments are the irrefragable word of God.³

According to the Islamic belief, God revealed Torah to Moses, Zabur (Palms) to David and Engeel (euangelion/Evangel/Gospel) to Jesus. These holy books were later distorted and altered by the Jews and the Christians by deletion, omission, addition and alteration. So both the Old and New Testament of the Bible include some words of God along with a lot of false statements. The Muslims consider all inhuman, cruel or brutal instructions, sayings and acts attributed to God or any

¹ Encyclopedia Britannica, Delux CD Version, 2005, Article: Bible.

² Louis Jacobs, *Principles of the Jewish Faith* (London, Vallentine Mitchell, 1964), pp 216-301; Dr. A. Cohen, *Everyman's Talmud* (London, J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd. 1949) pp 121-158; Dr. Joseph Barclay, *The Talmud* (London, 1878) pp 38-39, quoted from Zafrul Islam Khan, *Talmud: Tarikhuhi Wa Talimuhu* (Beirut, Darun Nafayes, 6th edition, 1985), pp 61-63.

³ Ahmed Deedat, *The Choice* (Jeddah, Abul Qasim Publications, 1st print, 1994), Vol-2, p73-74.

Prophet are among distorted, altered or misrepresented statements⁴. So we will discuss biblical instructions and quotations according to the Christian Faith, not according to Muslim Faith.

Instructions for war and force against the heathen in the Bible

According to the Bible God is very much fond of war. So the saints, priests, devotees and all religious people must have swords in their hand to kill the heathen and unbelievers. The Bible says: "Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand; To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; To execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints."⁵

Regarding war the Bible says: "Kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him. But all the women children, that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves."⁶

Here a reader may understand that God orders Genocide and holocaust. It is agreeable that sometimes war may be inevitable. Where there is a state, there must be some options for war to protect the sovereignty and interests of the state and its people. All peace loving people may agree to this extent, though they always try to avoid war. In case of war they try to avoid harming non-combat people and consider such atrocities as war crimes. But here God of the Bible commands to kill all non-combat male, female and children, except young unmarried woman for the entertainment of that holy people.

God also says in the Bible: "And when the LORD the God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword; but the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself; and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the LORD thy God hath given thee. Thus shalt thou do unto all the cities which are very far from thee, which are not of the cities of these nations. But of the cities of these which the LORD thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth; but thou shalt utterly destroy them."⁷

Here a reader may claim that God encourages His devotees to occupy land of other people and to free that occupied land from the poison of infidels and unbelievers He orders for wholesale destruction by killing every human being and every breathing animal.

In another place God commands His people and devotees: "He that sacrificeth unto any god, save unto the LORD only, he shall be utterly destroyed."⁸

It may be interpreted as an open license for indiscriminate killing of all non-Jewish or non-Christian people.

⁴ Rahmatullah Kairanvi, Izharu-UI-Haq (Truth Revealed), (Jeddah, World of Knowledge, 2nd Edition, 1992) part 2, pp 1-192.

⁵ The Holy Bible (Authorized Version/King James Version, reprinted and published by Bible Society of South Africa, 1988); Psalms 149/6-9.

⁶ The Holy Bible, Numbers 31/17-18.

⁷ The Holy Bible, Deuteronomy 20/13-16

⁸ The Holy Bible, Exodus 22/20

God also says: "For mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites: and I will cut them off. Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works: but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and quite break down their images."⁹

Again He says: "Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee: But ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves".¹⁰

A reader may understand that it is a divine instruction to deny religious freedom and liberty of non-Jewish and non-Christians. He may fill that God loves violence towards unbelievers and pagans. So He orders His people to be violate and non-tolerant towards them.

From these quotations one may conclude that God orders to kill every infidel, destroy their religious institutes and deny their religious freedom. He may also claim that for this open license Christian churches and government throughout the history killed millions of Jews, Muslims, so called witches and so called 'heretics'. He may also understand that for these Divine instructions they are killing hundreds of thousands of innocent people in Iraq and elsewhere.

Brutality and Genocide of the Biblical Prophets

As we stated earlier, war may be inevitable to protect sovereignty and interests of people and state. In the case of war peace-loving people try to make war less destructive. But from numerous quotations of the Bible one may claim that the holy prophets of God were not eager to make war less destructive. On the contrary, they were eager to fulfill such divine orders of wholesale killing and destruction. We find stories of such genocide and massacre in many books of the holy Bible. In 1 Samuel we find an example of such massacre: "And David and his men went up, and invaded the Geshurites, and the Gezrites, and the Amalekites: for those nations were of old the inhabitants of the land, as thou goest to Shur, even unto the land of Egypt. And David smote the land, and left neither man nor woman alive...."¹¹

Another example of massacre and brutal killing: "And David gathered all the people together, and went to Rabbah, and fought against it, and took it... And he brought forth the people that were therein, and put them under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brickkiln: and thus did he unto all the cities of the children of Ammon".¹²

God says: "My servant David, who kept my commandments, and who followed me with all his heart, to do that only which was right in mine eyes".¹³ Here a reader may conclude that all such massacre and holocaust of David are considered right and praiseworthy by God.

Praising such massacres and brutal killings by David and other Prophets of God St. Paul, the founder of the Trinitarian Christianity, says in his letter to Hebrews:

⁹ The Holy Bible, Exodus 23/23-24

¹⁰ The Holy Bible, Exodus 34/12-14

¹¹ The Holy Bible, 1 Samuel 27/8-9

¹² The Holy Bible, 2 Samuel 12/29-31

¹³ The Holy Bible, I King 14/8.

"And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens."¹⁴

Cold blooded murder of 'heretics' or followers of other religion

There is yet another kind of killing of 'infidels' in the holy bible. According to the Bible the faithful or religious people have the right to kill the heathens or followers of other religions even through deception, cheating or lying. We see a lot of instances of such cold-blooded murder in the holy Bible. In one case we see that depending on the command of God and divine guidance Jehu, the son of Jehoshaphat, king of Israel, cheated unarmed and unaware worshipers of 'Baal' and killed them under the edge of the sword. Describing the events the Bible says:

"And Jehu gathered all the people together, and said unto them, Ahab served Baal a little; but Jehu shall serve him much. Now therefore call unto me all the prophets of Baal, all his servants, and all his priests; let none be wanting: for I have a great sacrifice to do to Baal; whosoever shall be wanting, he shall not live. But Jehu did it in subtilty, to the intent that he might destroy the worshippers of Baal. And Jehu said, Proclaim a solemn assembly for Baal. And they proclaimed it. And Jehu sent through all Israel: and all the worshippers of Baal came, so that there was not a man left that came not. And they came into the house of Baal; and the house of Baal was full from one end to another. And he said unto him that was over the vestry, Bring forth vestments for all the worshippers of Baal. And he brought them forth vestments. And Jehu went, and Jehonadab the son of Rechab, into the house of Baal, and said unto the worshippers of Baal, Search, and look that there be here with you none of the servants of the LORD, but the worshippers of Baal only. And when they went in to offer sacrifices and burnt offerings, Jehu appointed fourscore men without, and said, If any of the men whom I have brought into your hands escape, he that letteth him go, his life shall be for the life of him. And it came to pass, as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, that Jehu said to the guard and to the captains, go in, and slay them; let none come forth. And they smote them with the edge of the sword; and the guard and the captains cast them out, and went to the city of the house of Baal. And they brought forth the images out of the house of Baal, and burned them. And they brake down the image of Baal, and brake down the house of Baal, and made it a draught house unto this day."¹⁵

In another example Prophet Elijah slew 450 unarmed prophets of Baal, as the Bible says: "And Elijah said unto them, take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there."¹⁶

Here one may conclude that the Bible not only instructs to conquer or occupy

¹⁴ The Holy Bible, Hebrews: 11/32-34

¹⁵ The Holy Bible, 2 Kings 10/18-28

¹⁶ The Holy Bible, 1 Kings 18:40

other countries, states and nations, but it also directs to kill unarmed and unaware followers of other religions, even through deception. We will see that such biblical narration inspired the Christian church to brutally kill and burn followers of other religions.

Hatred towards the heathen and unbelievers in the Bible

The holy bible sometimes refers to the non-Jewish or non-Christian people as 'dogs' or 'swine'. Jesus said: "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine..."¹⁷

Matthew says: "And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs."¹⁸

A prejudiced reader may conclude here that this is the philosophy for such brutality and violence. The non-Jewish or non-Christian people are sub-human beings like dogs. These dogs may be provided with help or assistance if that does not harm the 'children of God'. If the interests of the children contradict those of the dogs, then the dogs may be mercilessly killed.

War and Jihad in the Quran

Mr. Pope and other Christian scholars will conform that the above mentioned verses are correctly quoted from the holy Bible, but they may not agree with the interpretation and conclusion. They may brand such explanation and conclusion as biased, prejudiced or intentional misinterpretation. Out of their ignorance or biased mentality they are doing the same in interpreting 'Jihad' of Islam.

Jihad in Islam is nothing but 'state war'. Even 'holy war' is not the meaning of 'Jihad'. Both 'crusade' and 'holy war' are pure Christian terms invented by Christian popes to encourage Christians to invade Muslim countries. Jihad in Islam means endeavor. In political term it means 'war against enemies of the Muslim State'. Generally the enemies of the Muslim states are non-Muslims. This is why state enemies are termed as non-believers or infidels. But it does never mean that the Qur'an gives open license to kill infidels or the heathens like the holy Bible. There are many preconditions for Jihad, such as:

(1) Statehood and order of the head of the state, (2) being attacked by the enemies, (3) accepting every opportunity of peace, (3) limiting the war only in combatant enemies, etc.

People of Madina embraced Islam through absolutely peaceful propagation and they chose Muhammad (Peace and Blessings be upon him) as the head of their state. When Muslims of Madina were attacked by their enemies, Allah permitted them to fight. Allah says in the Qur'an: "To those against whom war is made, permission is given (to fight), because they are wronged; and verily, Allah is Most Powerful for

¹⁷ The Holy Bible, Matthew 7:6.

¹⁸ The Holy Bible, Matthew 15:22-26

their aid."¹⁹

Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) says: "Head of the state is the shield behind whom war to be waged"²⁰

The Qur'an says: "But if the enemies incline towards peace, do you (also) incline towards peace, and trust in Allah: for He is the One that Hears and Knows (all things)."²¹

Allah says in the Qur'an: "Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for Allah loves not transgressors."²²

So war must be limited with combatant enemies of the state. Even in the battlefield it is prohibited for a Muslim fighter to kill a woman, child, sick, old man, monk or any non-combat person. Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) says: "In the name of Allah and for His cause you fight. Do not break faith; do not kill any woman, child, monk, sick or old man. Do not mutilate any human body, do not destroy any well, do not cut any tree except that prevent you from your enemy, do not kill an animal except for use and be friendly and merciful, for Allah loves those who are merciful."²³

These Islamic instructions regarding 'Jihad' may be compared with above mentioned Biblical instructions to kill every male, female, children and even every breathing animal. One may also compare the wars of Biblical prophets with those of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). I think no reasonable person can deny that Islamic concept and practice of Jihad are far superior to the modern concept of war.

The Qur'an on Religious Violence and Forceful Conversion

As we stated before, Jihad or war in Islam may be waged against another country and not against another religion. We do not find a single instruction in the Quran to kill followers of other religion or the heathen outside the battlefield or to compel other people to accept Islam. Islam prohibits violence, hatred and force in religion. There may be war for this reason or that, but not a single Muslim can ever think of insulting other people's religion or to force someone to embrace Islam. Allah says: "Reville not you those whom they call upon besides Allah, lest they out of spite revile Allah in their ignorance. Thus have We made alluring to each people its own doings. In the end will they return to their Lord, and we shall then tell them the truth of all that they did."²⁴

He further says: "And dispute you not with the People of the Book, except with means better (than mere disputation), unless it be with those of them who inflict wrong (and injury); but say, "We believe in the Revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you; our God and your God is One; and it is to Him we bow (in Islam)."²⁵

¹⁹ Al-Qur'an, Al-Hajj 22: 39

²⁰ Bukhari, As-Saheeh (Beirut, Daru Ibn Kathir, 1987) 3/1080; Muslim, As-Saheeh (Beirut, Daru Ehyaet Turath Al-Arabi) 3/1471.

²¹ Al-Qur'an, Al-Anfal 8: 61

²² Al-Qur'an, Al-Baqara 2: 190

²³ Baihaqi, As-Sunanul Kubra (Makkah, Maktabatu Daril Baz, 1994) 9/90

²⁴ Al-Qur'an, Al-An'am 6: 108

²⁵ Al-Qur'an, Al-Ankabut 29: 46

He says: "Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from error: whoever rejects evil and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold, that never breaks. And Allah hears and knows all things".²⁶

Before coming of the Prophet (ﷺ) to Madina a number of youth of Madina embraced Judaism. When their parents embraced Islam, they wanted to forcibly convert them to Islam. The Prophet did not let them to do so. He said, No compulsion in Faith. So let them follow the religion of their own choice.²⁷

Old Testament versus New Testament

One may observe that most of the above mentioned verses are quoted from the Old Testament. Jesus Christ in the Gospels did not call for revenge or war. On the other hand Islam ordained Jihad that might have opened the doors of atrocities. This observation contradicts the historic facts as well as the Christian faith. In the light of actual facts we see that absence of clear instructions and legislation regarding war in the Gospels led the Christians and Christianity to a perpetual dilemma and was the main cause of atrocities committed by the Church. But before discussing the historic facts we may review the Christian believe. Here we should consider the following things:

(1) Terming the Jewish Bible as 'Old Testament' does not mean that its laws and commands are abrogated, invalidated or nullified by the New Testament. Christianity does not believe in abrogation or invalidation of any Divine command, instruction or law. The later prophet or scripture can never nullify or change the instructions of previous prophet or scripture. So every teaching, command, instruction and law of Old Testament is irrevocable and eternal legislation for the Christians. In this regard famous Christian scholar and preacher Carl Gottaleb Pfander, D. D. says: "The Old Testament and the New have never been abrogated and can never be abrogated in their facts, their doctrines and their moral principles."²⁸

(2) Jesus did not claim that he came with a new system or law, but he insisted that he came to fulfil the Law of Moses and previous Prophets. Moreover he urged his followers the strictly abide by the Jewish Law and religious system. He said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."²⁹

(3) Jesus also declared that he left his teachings incomplete, as he said: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of

²⁶ Al-Qur'an, Al-Bakara 2: 256

²⁷ Ibn Hibban, As-Saheeh (Beirut, Muassasatur Risalah, 2nd ed. 1993) 1/352; Tabari, Jameul Bayan (Beirut, Darul Fikr, 1405 A H.) 3/13-17.

²⁸ Carl Gottaleb Pfander, Balance of Truth (The Mizanul Haqq), part-1 (The Good Way, Rikon, Switzerland), p 17.

²⁹ The Holy Bible, Matthew 5:17-20

himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come."³⁰

(4) Jesus also praised sword or war and Jihad saying: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword."³¹

(5) Jesus also instructed to slay his enemies. He said: "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me."³²

(6) The Christians- rulers and laity- and Christianity-represented by the Church- could never avoid war. Naturally a religious person seeks instructions of his/her religion in every aspects of life. In absence of clear instructions about warfare in the Gospels they naturally depended on the instructions of the Old Testament for indiscriminate killing of all combatant and non-combat male, female and children and wholesale destruction of their property. Furthermore, they interpreted these teachings in their own way assuming that the Holy Ghost is with them that will guide them into all truth. But actually they were guided to all evil.

I am giving an example of such interpretation. Isaac Badarkan was a prominent Arab Protestant Christian. In 1849 he published a book titled "Al-Thalatha Ashrata Risalah" or "The Thirteen Letters" to discuss the corruption of the Church. In this book he mentioned that the Bible Index printed in Rome in Arabic and Latin under the Letter Ha (H) stated: "It is our Duty towards the heretics to uproot and annihilate them. The Bible teaches us to do so. Because, Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat, king of Israel deceived the false prophets and killed them under the edge of the sword."³³ And Prophet Elijah also slew the prophets of Baal."³⁴

Thus they interpret the teachings and acts of Biblical Prophets and kings to support their brutality. On the other hand, Islam closed the door of such dilemma by giving clear instructions about war or Jihad. A historical preview will disclose it to us.

A Historical perspective

Leaving the holy Bible, biblical theories of war and religious violence, when we look at the actual history of its people we see that the history of the Jewish and Christian people is full of horrifying violence and bloodshed. The holy bible itself records dreadful brutality of the Jews. To see brutality and religious violence of the Christians we have to look at the history.

History reveals to us that starting from Constantine the Great, who gave Christianity the statehood, the Christian clergy and church waged a 'Zero tolerant' war against every dissident. Not only the followers of other faiths, like Jews and Muslims, but also the Christians having different views about some articles of faith were mercilessly suppressed, killed or burnt alive and their property, books and other

³⁰ The Holy Bible, John 16:12-13

³¹ The Holy Bible, Matthew 10: 34.

³² The Holy Bible, Luke 19: 27. According to Revised Standard Version of the Holy Bible the text is as follows: But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring the here and slay them before me

³³ The Holy Bible, 2 Kings 10:18-28

³⁴ The Holy Bible, 1 Kings 18:40

belongings destroyed.

Such brutality and violence took two dimensions. In many cases the Christian kings, lords, barons or princes engaged in such inhuman cruelty in the name of Christianity. Such as brutality against the Jews in Spain, France, England and most of the European countries, against Muslims in Christian Spain, against Muslims and Jews during the Crusades and brutality of Catholics and Protestants against each others during the wars of religion in Europe. Their atrocities included economic exploitation, indiscriminate killing, burning, forcible conversion under the edge of sword, confiscation or destruction of property, mass expulsion etc. Usually the religious leadership represented by the church and the Pope supported such actions. Even sometimes they celebrated such brutality. In August 24/25, 1572, Massacre of Saint Bartholomew's Day took place. About 70,000 Protestants brutally killed by the Catholics in France and Pope Gregory XIII had a medal struck to celebrate the event.³⁵

In other cases the church or the Pope initiated and engaged in such brutality in the name of Christianity. Under the papal order of 'Inquisition' to 'punish heretics and wipe out the spiritual leprosy' thousands of Muslims, Jews and so-called heretic Christians were persecuted and burnt alive. The third Lateran council (1179) decreed "the punishment of heretics by the secular arm after prosecution by a bishop". A papal edict in this regard says: "we give you a strict command that by whatever means you can, you destroy all these heresies and repel from your dioceses all who are polluted by them ... If necessary you may cause the princes and the people to suppress them with the sword."³⁶

Pope Innocent III proclaimed a sacred war against Albigenses, a Christian sect considered heretic by the church. During the Albigensian Crusade thousands of people were massacred, which is considered- as mentioned in Encyclopaedia Britannica- the first modern case of genocide³⁷. Arnold Amaury, the papal legate, reported this event to the pope saying: "Our men sparing neither rank, sex, nor age, slew about 20,000 men with the edge of sword; and when a huge slaughter of men had been made, the whole city was pillaged and burnt, the Divine Vengeance wondrously raging against it". At the massacre of Lavaur 400 people were burnt in one pile and 'they made a wonderful blaze and went to burn everlastingly in hell'.³⁸

Even the Protestants could not free themselves from such evil. Martin Luther demanded wholesale slaying of the Jews in the name of Christianity. He wrote: "We are at fault for not slaying them, rather we allow them to live freely in our midst despite their murder, cursing, blaspheming, lying and defaming."³⁹

A number of scientists, philosophers, thinkers and reformers were also persecuted, killed, burnt or imprisoned by the church. The church even killed and burnt her own

³⁵ Encyclopaedia Britannica, Article: Massacre of Saint Bartholomew's Day.

³⁶ The Story of Civilization, The Age of Faith, part-IV pp 773-774, quoted from Dr. Abdul Hamid Qadri, Dimensions of Christianity (Islamabad, Pakistan, Da'wah Academy, International Islamic University, 1st edition, 1989), p 29.

³⁷ Encyclopaedia Britannica, articles: Cathari, Albigenses, Innocent III, Genocide.

³⁸ Rev. W. P. Hares, the Teaching and Practice of the Church of Rome in India Examined, p 122, John William Draper, History of Intellectual Development of Europe, Vol II, quoted from Dr. Abdul Hamid Qadri, Dimensions of Christianity, p 30.

³⁹ Encyclopaedia Britannica, article: Anti-Semitism.

people for reading the Bible in vernacular translation. In 1525 William Tyndale brought out an English translation of the Bible. The poor translator was strangled and burned at the stake in 1536 by the Church.⁴⁰

In 1380 when John Wycliffe had done English translation of the Bible, the same treatment was meted out to him. Thirty years after his death, in May 1415, under the decree of the Council of Constance, his eaten up and decomposed bones were dug out from his grave and condemned to ashes and cast into a nearby stream. The readers of his translation were burnt with the copies round their necks, men and women were executed for teaching their children the Lord's Prayer and Ten Commandments in English...⁴¹

Such brutality in the name of Christianity led a number of people to blame Christianity itself. The renowned philosopher of 20th century and Nobel laureate Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) says: "You find as you look around the world that every single bit of progress in human feeling, every improvement in the criminal law, every step towards the diminution of war, every step towards better treatment of coloured races, or every mitigation of slavery, every moral progress that there has been in the world, has been consistently opposed by the organized Churches of the world. I say quite deliberately that the Christian religion, as organized in the churches, has been and still is the principal enemy of moral progress in the world."⁴²

We do not find such brutality and violence in the history of Islam. In fact Islam closed the door of such atrocities and violence through clear instructions about war or Jihad. Nobody can imagine a state without option of war. We may all agree that the doctrine of wholesale forgiveness, such as "whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also"⁴³ is to be followed in personal affairs, not in state affairs. When a state is attacked by its enemies, we can not ask it to open another frontier to welcome the enemy. All we can do to keep war- when it is inevitable- as less destructive as possible and prevent targeting non-combatant people.

This is what Islam taught and did. It legalized Jihad or war with a lot of clear restrictions. Scopes of transgression are very limited. If someone attempts to do so others have the right to protest, as no person or institution has sanctity or infallibility in explaining or implementing Islamic teaching.

This is why we see that the atrocities committed by Muslim rulers or generals were fewer and much less brutal than those of Christian rulers and the Church. A simple comparison between the Christian and Muslim societies of medieval age discloses the truth. In a time when the Christian church persecuted, killed and burnt scientists, philosophers, thinkers and dissident Christians as heretics and also killed, burnt or forcibly converted the Jews, Muslims and Pagans, we do not find such things in Muslim societies.

Above all, if Islam is to be blamed for legislation of war when inevitable with so many restrictions, then Judaism, the Old Testament and all biblical prophets must be blamed for legalizing and waging brutal warfare, indiscriminate killing and

⁴⁰ Encyclopedia Britannica, article: Tyndale, Biblical Literature, Biblical Translation.

⁴¹ Encyclopedia Britannica, article: John Wycliffe; Dr. Paterson Smyth, How we got our Bible

⁴² Bertrand Russell, Why I am not a Christian, pp 20-21, quoted from Dr. Abdul Hamid Qadri, Dimensions of Christianity, pp 40-41.

⁴³ The Holy Bible, Matthew 5/39

wholesale destruction and Christianity must be blamed for the same, because, though Jesus Christ did not set any new law for war, he confirmed that he had come to fulfil the laws of the Old Testament.

Nowadays most of the Western scholars are not willing to blame Christianity for wrongdoing of its followers. But when the case of Islam comes, most Christian scholars hold Islam responsible for the crimes of its followers. It is notable that Muslim 'secular leadership', such as rulers, kings, sultans and generals, business tycoons- not religious leadership- committed such brutality. We do not find well-known Muslim religious leaders or Imams initiating or commanding any campaign against heretics or infidels. But the Muslim rulers waged wars or invaded other countries, sometimes to protect their own countries and sometimes to occupy other countries in the pretext of 'preemptive just war'. Naturally, in either case they used the name of Islam and Jihad to justify their warfare and provoke the people to participate and support it. Sometimes we find unknown small fanatic groups engaged in such atrocities.

Generally, Christians believe in sanctity and infallibility of the church and the Pope and consider them the absolute authority to interpret and represent Christianity. Even though they are not willing to consider Christianity responsible for the inhumanity of the church or the Papacy, but they put the blame on the church or the popes personally. Kings of Europe engaged in brutal warfare in the name of Christianity, Catholicism or Protestantism. But people are not blaming the religion, but the rulers only and trying to forgive and forget the past and live in peace and harmony.

The rulers of Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Morocco, Muslim Spain or Turkey in using the name of Islam are like the rulers of Spain, France, England, Austria, Germany or Italy in using the name of Christianity, Catholicism or Protestantism. But Pope Benedict XVI and his supporters are still following the mentality of their medieval predecessors in creating animosity toward Islam and Muslims for past misconduct of Muslim rulers or atrocities of contemporary Muslim fanatics.

Modern Mentality

Nowadays we hear some western secular pundit are calling to 'convert Muslims to Christianity.' We find some American or European well-learned secular politicians and scholars are eager to destroy Muslim Holy Places in Makkah and Madina for crime of unknown Muslim terrorists of Afghanistan or Iraq. Celebrated conservative columnist and commentator Ann Coulter wrote "we should invade their countries, kill their leaders and convert them to Christianity."⁴⁴ It is very likely that these famous and distinguished politicians and columnists will become policy makers of USA or other countries.

A few misguided and deviated Muslim youth may be involved in violence. They may wrongly call their violence and terror activities as 'Jihad'. They are not waging their so-called 'Jihad' to occupy other people's land or to convert others to Islam. They are doing so to protest occupation of their land, express their anger or to revenge killing of their people. Certainly they are wrong in the way of protest and we condemn their terror activities. All Muslim states and organizations are condemning them. Not a single Muslim state or any known Muslim organization is supporting

⁴⁴ The Wisdom of Ann Coulter, a Newsnetwork feature, The Independent (Dhaka), 8/9/2006, p 12.

violence.

On the other hand Mr. Bush and his supporters are involved in crusade and violence in the name of God. Mr. Bush told us that it is God who instructed him to invade Iraq. Mr. Blair also put the burden on God, as he said, 'we are in Iraq with the wishes of God.' We can not, or at least, should not condemn them, because they have very noble cause for killing of thousands of human beings, including indiscriminate killing in Faluja and other places. But we are really horrified, frightened and shocked with the philosophy of forcible conversion!

We see that the most ignorant and violent Muslim terrorists do not insult other people's religion. The people of Mr. Pope desecrated the holy book of Muslims and they made insulting cartoons of the holy Prophet of Muslims. Muslims all over the world protested such actions. In some places they burnt US or Danish flags or effigies of their political leaders. But we did not hear any illiterate mullah of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, India or any other country burnt or insulted a copy of the Bible or an effigy of Jesus Christ, or made insulting cartoon of Jesus.

We do not find any ignorant and violent mullah is asking to convert any Christian to Islam. Such an ignorant mullah may ask to kill Mr. Bush, not for being a Christian or an American, or a defender of freedom and democracy, but for being occupier of their land and killer of their people. He may ask destruction for America or Israel, also for the same reason, not for being a democratic state, or for religion of the people of America or Israel. But he will never ask to kill Christians or Jews for their religion or to convert them to Islam.

Conclusion

From above discourse we see that both the bible and the Quran have instructions regarding war, with the following differences:

(1) According to the Qur'an, Muslim state may wage Jihad or war against another state and it must be limited to the combatant people. It strictly prohibits attacking any non-combatant target. On the other hand the Bible commands for indiscriminate and brutal killing of all combatant and non-combatant male, female and children, sparing neither rank, sex, nor age. The Bible even teaches to kill unarmed and unaware followers of other religion

(2) According to the Qur'an War may be waged against an army, country or state for their aggression and not against a faith or religion. But according to the Bible war may be waged to annihilate and uproot heresy and to kill heretics, that is, the followers of other faiths.

(3) Qur'an commands to respect other people's religion. On the contrary the Bible teaches religious hatred and uses bad and humiliating language for the followers of other religions.

(4) Throughout the history Christianity remained non-tolerant and extremely violent to other religions and religious opinions. It named other religions and religious differences as 'heresy' and violently tried to destroy them completely. Also in the pretext of 'preaching' they attacked other people's religious sentiment and developed religious hatred and animosity.

(5) It appears that many 'secular' Christians could not get out of this mentality of intolerance toward other religions. Many of them feel very much excited and

proud to humiliate religious sentiment of other people in the pretext of 'freedom of thought and expression', but in the same time they enforce blasphemy law, anti-Semitism law, homeland security law and many other laws to forbid people to express their 'free' opinion against holocaust, the Jews or Jesus Christ. Some of these secular Christian pundits advocate for forcible conversion.

(6) We saw the Popes in the past initiated and supported religious fanaticism and violence. It is extremely unfortunate that we see Pope Benedict XVI, a pope of 21st century following the footsteps of his medieval predecessors in promoting and patronizing religious hatred or initiating and supporting the crusades of secular rulers. We hope that he would change that course and preach to his own people the message of love and respect to other people's religious sentiment. Instead of giving false, irrational and provocative statements against Islam, he should have told his own people that making cartoons and insulting other people's religion can not please God. He should have told to Mr. Bush that God could not order you to kill thousands of human being in Iraq. He should have told his own people that killing and forcible conversation is not the way of God. But his statement did not fulfil our expectation. He condemned Islam for violence, but did not ask Christians to shun violence.

We do not know the reason. Some may suggest that it is because the non-Jewish or non-Christian people are dogs as described by Jesus Christ, according to the Christian Bible. Violence against dogs is not good, but it is not so horrible. On the contrary violence against human beings or children of God is horrible. This is why Mr. Pope advised Muslims only. We can not agree with such a suggestion. We hope that Mr. Pope will clarify the reason.