

Three Allegations against Islam Refuted

by

Waseem A. Sayed PhD

In this short article I want to address three popular allegations made against Islam. It is said that the Holy Quran is composed of verses cancelling each other, that the teaching of the Holy Quran require the imposition of Shariah law by force everywhere in the world and that Islam teaches people to lie wherever needed so long as it is in the interest of spreading the faith!

The first allegation is based on the thesis that verses of the Holy Quran revealed late in the ministry of the Holy Prophet of Islam abrogate the verses that he received early in his ministry. Thus, it is argued, that all that is said about Islam being a religion of peace is just a charade since such statements are always based on verses that were revealed early on. What people are not told, it is said, is that these 'peace promoting verses' are no longer valid. So people need to be made aware that the true and permanent stance of Islam is the one based on the later revealed verses that call for violent Jihad and the killing of all infidels etc.

The second allegation that is made is that Shariah law is supreme and Islam demands that it be the only law of the land and that it be established everywhere in the world forcibly if necessary and that that is Islam's ultimate goal.

The third allegation that is made is that in Islam lying is deemed permissible so long as it is resorted to for the purpose of spreading the faith and that this philosophy is called taqiyya. The 107th verse of Chapter 16 of the Holy Quran is generally cited in support of this allegation.

Before I deal with these three allegations specifically, let me make some general comments.

These allegation are not new – they have been around for a long time and have been refuted not only in detail and by reference to the Holy Quran but also common sense invalidates all such claims: Could even a single person – let alone a whole world - have been won over by Muhammad (sa) on the basis of such [God forbid] lying, cheating and fabricating?

By an orientalist, I have not found a truer, sounder, more logical assessment of Muhammad, peace and blessings of God be upon him, than so eloquently summarized by Thomas Carlyle [May 8, 1840] in the beginning of his famous Lecture: THE HERO AS PROPHET. MAHOMET: ISLAM.

"Our current hypothesis about Mahomet, that he was a scheming Impostor, a Falsehood incarnate, that his religion is a mere mass of quackery and fatuity, begins really to be now untenable to any one. The lies, which well-meaning zeal has heaped round this man, are disgraceful to ourselves only. It is really time to dismiss all that. The word this man spoke has been the life-guidance now of a hundred and eighty millions of men

these twelve hundred years. These hundred and eighty millions were made by God as well as we. A greater number of God's creatures believe in Mahomet's word at this hour, than in any other word whatever. Are we to suppose that it was a miserable piece of spiritual legerdemain, this which so many creatures of the Almighty have lived by and died by? I, for my part, cannot form any such supposition. I will believe most things sooner than that. One would be entirely at a loss what to think of this world at all, if quackery so grew and were sanctioned here."

"..... A false man found a religion? Why, a false man cannot build a brick house! If he do not know and follow truly the properties of mortar, burnt clay and what else be works in, it is no house that he makes, but a rubbish-heap. It will not stand for twelve centuries, to lodge a hundred and eighty millions; it will fall straightway....."

Let me now turn to the three allegations specifically:

First allegation: Holy Quran verses have been abrogated: This is an utterly baseless claim. The Holy Quran declares itself to be perfect at the outset [2:3] and says again and again that no one would ever be able to compile even a single Chapter like any of its Chapters [2:24 -25]

And if you are in doubt as to what We have sent down to Our servant, then produce a Chapter like it, and call upon your helpers beside Allah, if you are truthful. But if you do it not — and never shall you do it — then guard against the Fire, whose fuel is men and stones, which is prepared for the disbelievers. [2:24-25]

44. The subject of the incomparable excellence of the Qur'ān has been dealt with at five different places, *i.e.*, in 2:24; 10:39; 11:14; 17:89 & 52:34, 35. In two of these five verses (2:24 & 10:39) the challenge is identical, while in the remaining three verses three separate and different demands have been made from disbelievers. At first sight this difference in the form of the challenge at different places seems to be incongruous. But it is not so. In fact, these verses contain certain demands which stand for all time. The challenge is open even today in all the different forms mentioned in the Qur'ān as it was in the time of the Holy Prophet.

Before explaining the various forms of these challenges it is worth noting that their mention in the Qur'ān is invariably accompanied by a reference to wealth and power, except in the present verse which, as already stated, does not contain a new challenge but only repeats the challenge made in 10:39. From this it may be safely concluded that there exists a close connection between the question of wealth and power and the challenge for the production of the like of the Qur'ān or a part thereof. This connection lies in the fact that the Qur'ān has been held out to disbelievers as a priceless treasure. When disbelievers demanded material treasures from the Holy Prophet (11:13), they were told that he possessed a matchless treasure in the form of the Qur'ān; and when they asked, *Wherefore has not an angel come with him* (11:13), they were told in reply that angels did descend upon him, for their function was to bring the Word of God and the Divine Word had already been vouchsafed to him. Thus both the demands—for a treasure and for the descent of angels—have been jointly met by the Qur'ān which is a matchless treasure brought down by angels, and the challenge to produce its like has been put forward as a proof of its peerless quality.

Now, take the different verses containing this challenge separately. The greatest demand is made in 17:89, where disbelievers are required to bring a book like the whole of the Qur'ān with all its manifold qualities. In that verse disbelievers are not required to represent their composition as the Word of God. They may bring it forward as their own composition and declare it to be the equal of, or, for that matter, better than, the Qur'ān. But as at the time when this challenge was made the whole of the Qur'ān had not yet been revealed, the disbelievers were not required to produce the like of the Qur'ān then and there; and the challenge thus

implied a prophecy that they would never be able to produce the like of it, neither in the form in which it then was, nor when it became complete. Again, the challenge was not confined to the disbelievers of the Prophet's time alone, but extended to doubters and critics of all time. The reason why the disbelievers in 11:14 have been called upon to produce ten *Sūrahs* and not the whole of the Qur'ān is that the question in that verse did not relate to the perfection of the whole of the Qur'ān in all respects, but to that of only a portion of it. The disbelievers had objected to some parts of it being defective. Hence they were not required to bring a complete book like the whole of the Qur'ān, but only ten *Sūrahs* in place of those parts of the Qur'ān which they deemed to be defective, in order that the truth of their assertion might be tested. As for the selection of the specific number 10 for this purpose, it may be noted that since in 17:89 the whole of the Qur'ān was claimed to be a perfect Book, its opponents were called upon to produce the like of the whole of it; but as in 11:14 the point was that certain portions of it were objected to, so they were asked to choose ten such portions as appeared to them to be most defective and then produce a composition even like those portions. In 10:39 disbelievers were called upon to produce the like of only one *Sūrah* of the Qur'ān. This is because, unlike the above-mentioned two verses, the challenge in that verse was in support of a claim made by the Qur'ān itself and not in refutation of any objection of the disbelievers. In 10:38 the Qur'ān claimed to possess five very prominent qualities. In support of this claim, verse 10:39 throws out a challenge to those who deny or doubt it to produce a single *Sūrah* containing these qualities in the same perfect form in which they are contained in the 10th *Sūrah*. The fifth challenge to produce the like of the Qur'ān is contained in the verse under comment (2:24) and here also, as in 10:39, disbelievers have been called upon to bring forward a single *Sūrah* like that of the Qur'ān. This challenge is preceded by the claim that the Qur'ān guides the righteous to the highest stages of spiritual progress. The disbelievers are told that if they are in doubt about the Divine origin of the Qur'ān, then they should bring forward a single *Sūrah* that may be comparable to it in the spiritual influence it exercises over its followers. See also "The Larger Edition of the Commentary," pp. 58-62.

The above explanation will show that all these challenges calling upon disbelievers to produce the like of the Qur'ān are quite distinct and separate one from the other, and all of them stand for all time, none of them superseding or cancelling the other. But as the Qur'ān comprises sublime and lofty ideas, it was inevitable that a most beautiful diction and the chastest style should have been employed as the vehicle for the expression of those ideas; otherwise the subject-matter was liable to remain obscure and doubtful and the perfect beauty of the Qur'ān would have been marred. Thus, in whatever form and in whatever respect disbelievers have been challenged to produce a composition like the Qur'ān, the demand for beauty of style and elegance of diction comparable to that of the Qur'ān also forms a part of the challenge.

Furthermore, and so as to leave no doubt on what the Holy Quran itself claims, it says itself that if it was not the Word of God surely there would be many contradictions in it.

[4:83] Will they not, then, meditate upon the Qur'an? Had it been from anyone other than Allah, they would surely have found therein much disagreement.

The claim made that the Holy Quran has itself declared that some of its verses have been abrogated by others...later verses abrogating earlier ones etc. is totally unsustainable. The verse cited in support of this allegation usually is [2:107]

Whatever Sign We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring one better than that or the like thereof. Dost thou not know that Allah has the power to do all that He wills?

132. It is mistakenly inferred from this verse that some verses of the Qur'ān have been abrogated. The conclusion is patently erroneous and unwarranted. There is nothing in this verse to indicate that the word *Āyah* refers to Quranic verses. Both in the preceding and the following verses, a reference is made to the People of the Book and their jealousies against the new Revelation which shows that the *Āyah* spoken of in this verse as being abrogated, refers to the previous Revelations. It is pointed out that the previous Scriptures contained two kinds of commandments: (a) Those which, owing to changed conditions and to the universality of the new Revelation, required abrogation. (b) Those containing eternal truths which needed resuscitation so that people might be reminded of the forgotten truth. It was, therefore, necessary to abrogate certain portions of those Scriptures and bring in their place new ones, and also to restore the lost ones. So, God abrogated some portions of the previous Revelations, substituting them with new and better ones, and at the same time re-introduced the missing portions by similar ones. This is the meaning which is consistent with the context and the general spirit of the Quranic teaching. The Qur'ān has abrogated all previous Scriptures; for, in view of the changed conditions of mankind, it has brought a new Law which is not only better than all the old Laws, but is also meant for all men for all times. An inferior teaching with a limited mission must give place to a superior teaching with a universal mission. In the verse the word *Nansakh* (We abrogate) relates to the word *Bi-Khairin* (one better) and the word *Nunsihā* (We cause to be forgotten) relates to the word *Bi-Mithlihā* (the like thereof), meaning that when God abrogates a certain thing He brings a better one in its place and when He causes a thing to be forgotten, He resuscitates it. It is admitted by Jewish scholars themselves that after the Israelites were carried away in captivity to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, the whole of the Pentateuch was lost (Enc. Bib.).

There is another verse that is sometimes quoted in this context: 16:102. Here also the meaning that somehow a verse abrogation is meant is quite untenable:

R.14**102.** And ‘when We bring one Sign in place of another¹⁵⁷⁷—and Allāh knows best *the object of* what He reveals—they say, ‘Thou art but a fabricator.’ Nay, but most of them know not.

وَإِذَا بَدَّلْنَا آيَةً مَّكَانَ آيَةٍ ۖ وَاللَّهُ
أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يُنزِّلُ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ
مُفْتَرٍ ۚ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٠٢﴾

1577. The meaning is: “When We avert or delay punishment on account of a change for the better on the part of those who are threatened with it.” There is no reference here to the abrogation of any of the verses of the Qur'ān. There is no verse in the Qur'ān which clashes with any other verse of the Book and which may therefore have to be regarded as abrogated. All parts of the Qur'ān support and corroborate one another. There is nothing in the context either to suggest any reference to the idea of abrogation.

Second allegation: Shariah law must be implemented everywhere and is the only law acceptable etc.

As far as the question of whether Islamic law, or any other religious law, can be imposed perforce, the answer, on the basis of the Holy Quran is a definite no. The Holy Qur'an says [2:257]:

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ

La Ikraha fiddine

This is a statement of the Holy Qur'an of course; but it is a universal statement which can never be changed. It is an example of how laws can become permanent and universal. It says there is NO coercion in faith or in matters of faith. No coercion is possible and NO coercion is permitted. So, here is the question: If one religion imposes its law on a society where people of other religions and denominations also live, how will this verse stand against your attempt to coerce? Not only vis-à-vis the people from other religions, but vis-à-vis people from the same religion who are not willing.

So, this is the fundamental question. Therefore the conclusion is that coercion is not an instrument in religion, not a valid instrument in religion.

The only authority in Islam, which was genuinely capable of being given the right to coerce, was the Founder of Islam, Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Why? Because he was a living model of Islam and because when enquired about his character, his holy wife, Hazrat Ayesha, said, he was the living Qur'an.

So, the only person who could be genuinely entrusted with the faith of others, and be permitted to use coercion also where he felt that rectification was to be made by force, was the Holy Prophet.

Yet, addressing him, Allah says in the Qur'an, (88:22-23):

إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُذَكِّرٌ ۚ لَسْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِمُصَيِّرٍ

Innama ania mozakkir lasta alaihim *be* mosaitir.

You are just an admonisher. No more. You are given NO authority to coerce. You are not a superintendent of police. Mozakkir is exactly the superintendent of police.

So, that is why neither coercion is possible, nor permitted by God. Moreover, what prevents a Muslim from following the Muslim law? Why should he wait for the whole legislation to be changed?

Most of Islam and most of Christianity and most of Hinduism can be practiced without their being the law of the country. The more so since the general principle accepted by the modern political thinkers is that religion should not be permitted to interfere with politics and politics should not be permitted to interfere with religion.

This is where it is important to answer the question as to what form of government Islam proposes.

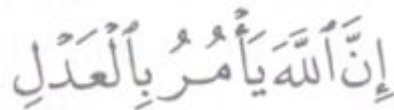
If Islam proposes a government which is representative of God, then the issue is to be looked at from a different angle altogether.

If, on the other hand, Islam proposes a system of government which is common to various denominations of religions and different people, then an entirely different outlook would appear.

The fact is that Islam pleads for the secular type of government more than any religion and more than any political system.

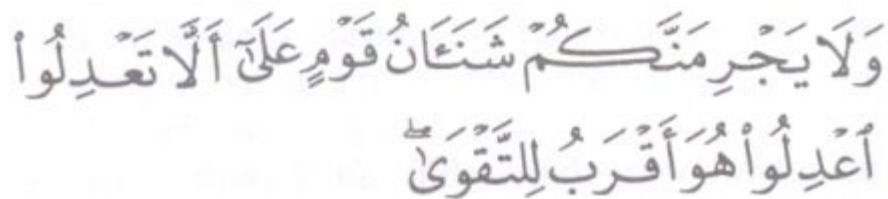
The very essence of secularism is that absolute justice must be practiced regardless of the differences of faith and religion and color and creed and group.

This, in essence, is the true definition of secularism. And this is exactly what the Holy Qur'an admonishes us to do in matters of state, how things should be done and how the state should be run. The Holy Qur'an says:



Innal laaha ya moro bil adley (16:91)

Allah orders you to always practice justice. And then it develops the theme by saying:



Wa laa yajremannakoum shanaanou kaumin ala allah taadelou. Ei delou howa akraboulit taqwa (5:9).

No amount of enmity between you and any other people, should permit you to deviate from absolute justice. Be always just that is nearer to righteousness,

When you dispense your responsibility as a government, you must dispense those responsibilities with absolute justice in mind. Now, when absolute justice is established as the central theme of a government, how could Islamic law be

imposed upon non Muslim? Because it would be against justice. And so many contradictions would arise.

This is the interpretation proved from the practice of the Holy Founder of Islam, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.

In Medina, when he moved there after Hijra, he came into contact with the Jewish and other communities who accepted him not as their religious leader, but a political leader. They agreed - and this is called the Charter of Medina -to refer to him all disputes and trust his superior judgment to resolve all the contentions between various parties.

Islamic law had already been revealed at that time. Jews came to him for guidance or for decisions. Without fail, every time he enquired from them: 'Would you like your dispute to be settled according to the Jewish law or according to the Islamic law or according to the arbitration?'

Without fail he never imposed Islamic law on a non-agreeing party, which did not belong to the faith.

This is absolute justice. So, absolute justice has to be employed by a truly Islamic government, if it ever dreams of calling itself 'Islamic government'. And this is in other terms, a secular government.

The point is made clear in another verse [4:59] where we are told to elect officials based on competence and nothing else, and once they are given their office they are admonished to administer, to govern, with justice:

Verily, Allah commands you to make over the trusts to those entitled to them, and that, when you judge between men, you judge with justice. And surely excellent is that with which Allah admonishes you! Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing.

621. Authority or power to rule has been here described as a “trust” of the people in order to point out that it belongs to the people and is not the birthright of any individual or dynasty. The Qur’ān disapproves of dynastic or hereditary rule and institutes instead a representative form of government. The Chief is to be elected; and in electing him the people are bidden to vote for one best fitted for the office.

A fuller discussion of this topic by Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV (ra) can be found at: <http://www.alislam.org/books/shariah/index.html>

Third allegation: That there is a philosophy in Islam called taqiyya that permits Muslims to lie if necessary for the good of the faith! Nothing could be farther from the truth.

The verse generally cited for this is 16:107.

Whoso disbelieves in Allah after he has believed — save him who is forced thereto while his heart finds peace in the faith — but such as open their breasts to disbelief, on them is Allah's wrath; and they shall have a severe punishment.

In this verse the case of a person recanting his or her faith is mentioned but permission to lie is certainly not given. A verdict is reserved for such people as cannot find the strength to bear extreme torture - their case is further discussed in verse 111 where the conditions are laid out under which such people may find forgiveness for their weakness to which reference is made in verse 107:

Then, surely, thy Lord — to those who fled their homes after they had been persecuted and then struggled hard in the cause of Allah and remained steadfast — aye, surely, after that thy Lord is Most Forgiving, Merciful.

Here it is stated that such a person must take certain actions to merit being forgiven by God. Such a person should migrate from such a place and then occupy himself hard in the preaching of the faith to those around him in his new place of residence and establish his allegiance to the faith by his actions steadfastly – such a person would indeed find God to be Most Forgiving and Merciful.

1580. Whereas vv. 109, 110 referred to those persons who revert to disbelief and open up their hearts to it and join the ranks of the enemies of Islām, the verse under comment deals with such persons regarding whom judgment had been reserved (verse 107). The judgment given in their case is that if they migrate from their homes and strive in the cause of God and endure with patience all the hardships that may befall them in the way of Islām, then, and not till then, will God pardon their previous sins, for only then will it become established that they have made full amends for their past lapse. The *Sūrah* being of Meccan origin, *Jihād* mentioned in the verse is not fighting with the sword but is only “striving” to promote the cause of Islām.

The Holy Quran stresses the need for truth so repeatedly and so forcefully and we see this in the life of the Holy Prophet so brilliantly illustrated that there can be no doubt in any one's mind that the so-called philosophy of taqiyya or anything like it could be taught by Islam, the Holy Quran or the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa).

Hypocrisy is so vehemently condemned in the Holy Quran that it is one of the earliest things talked about and then repeatedly stressed again and again...

The subject is dealt with in verses 2:9 to 2:21 in the very beginning of the Holy Quran.

Verse after verse of the Holy Quran talks about the need for truthfulness but let me just quote these few and I invite everyone to go read the Holy Quran and see the stress laid upon truth by the Holy Quran:

O ye who believe! be strict in observing justice, and be witnesses for Allah, even though it be against yourselves or against parents and kindred. Whether he be rich or poor, Allah is more regardful of them both than you are. Therefore follow not low desires so that you may be able to act equitably. And if you conceal the truth or evade it, then remember that Allah is well aware of what you do. [4:136]

In deed so much stress is laid in the Holy Quran that it specifically mentions the situation envisaged by this allegation...contrary to what they assert the Holy Quran says that Muslims must be true and just even when dealing with their enemies:

[5:9] O ye who believe! be steadfast in the cause of Allah, bearing witness in equity; and let not a people's enmity incite you to act otherwise than with justice. Be always just, that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah. Surely, Allah is aware of what you do.

Now let me end by quoting two more verses where Muslims are told to have their words and deeds to be in accord with each other:

O ye who believe! why do you say what you do not do? [61:3]

Most hateful is it in the sight of Allah that you say what you do not do. [61:4]

In the end let me invite everyone interested in learning more about Islam to visit www.alislam.org

All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of all the worlds!