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Religion of Mercy

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This text presents commentary discussions by the honorable Marja' Grand Ayatullah Makarim Shirazi which examines the religion of Islam and highlights the concepts of clemency which is analyzed in light of the Holy Qur'an, authentic narrations, and practices of religious leaders.

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Preface

Pope Benedict XVI, the leader of world's Catholics in his lecture on Tuesday, 121 September 2006 in Ratisbona University, Regensburg, Germany, discussed about relation of rationalism, faith and Jihad,

and accused Islam to violence and incompatibility with knowledge and wisdom. In his speech, he cited a quotation from talks between Christian Byzantine emperors, Manuel II with an Iranian Muslim religious scholar saying: “Let me know what new Muhammad has introduced? Has he brought anything save bad and inhuman ideas? For instance, he ordered the faith which he preaches to be spread by force of sword”.²

Narrating the said historical quotation, Pope has attributed two unfounded accusations to Islam: first, the accusation of violence and progress of Islam by force and sword; second, incompatibility of the sacred religion of Islam with knowledge and rationalism.

Although these are not new accusations against Islam, and those who are not able to encounter logically with this strong religion and culture have tried to prevent conversion of truth-seekers to Islam through such accusations, but it is very awful when a religious authority as the highest rank of world’s Catholics, who should naturally have sufficient familiarity with other religions in the world, utters such accusations. So, it was deemed necessary to give an appropriate reply to these unfair accusations. Here we reply to the first accusation, and Insha’Allah, we will prove his second accusation to be unfounded with authentic reasoning and documentation later.

Hereunder you will find a part of commentary discussions by the honorable Marja’ Hazrat Grand Ayatullah Makarim Shirazi during the blessed month of Ramadan, and published in the book, “The Loftiest Servants”.

The said discussions are reviewed and complementary notes are added, you can find it here in six chapters.

Moreover, for completion of this work, the statement by his holiness in reply to the unfounded speech by the Pope, and the notice for declaring readiness by His holiness to debate with Pope about the claim will be available in chapter six.

We hope this sacred religion which is full of clemency, compassion and rationalism to accept this little action from us and make it a reserve for us in the Day of Resurrection.

Wassalam Alaykum Va Rahmatullah Va Barakatuh

Abolghassem Olyan Nejadi

15.10.2006

1. It is noteworthy that the said lecture was delivered one day after the suspicious event of 11th September, and a few days after the wonderful victory of Hezbollah in Lebanon, and the awful defeat of the usurper Israel.

2. Newsletter of Qom Seminary Professors Association, issue 927, page 29.

Chapter 1: Explanation and Description of Question

Is Islam Religion of Violence or Clemency?

When obstinate adversaries of Islam found this divine religion a big hindrance for their interests, and more proper to say, their avarice, they decided to fight and encounter with it. They used any means and method for achieving their objectives. The struggle started from the early days of appearance of Islam, and it is and will be continuing. Rather, at our time it is one of the main programs of the West, headed by U.S.¹

One of their generally applied unmanly tools is the accusation of violence. They say: "Islam is the religion of violence and war. Islam is not compatible with the man's gentle spirit. Islam disregards human rights."

Then, they spread and implant these unfair accusations against Islam throughout the world.

Regretfully, we shall confess that the deeds of some unreal Muslims support their poisonous propagations, for instance, we can refer to Taliban group who were the symbol and indication of violence, barbarism, oppression and injustice and at the meantime, alien to Islam, and as an Islamic population ruled Afghanistan for a short period.

This small rude and ungodly population committed strange crimes during their short period of governance under the name of Islam. Our enemies provided films and reports from their deeds and crimes and broadcasted them in the world as an image from Islam. The films included heinous crimes such as beheading humans like sheep. However, fortunately the majority of Muslims in the world expressed their hatred and disgust to these unreal Muslims, and called their actions and deeds fabrications by their weak and unable mind.

Al-Qaida sect was even worse and ruder than them. They, who only know the name of Islam, but nothing of its instructions and rulings, committed such crimes in Iraq which were unprecedented in the history.

Fortunately, the absolute majority of Muslims condemned them and called them alien to Islam.

Considering these issues, it is necessary to discuss seriously and carefully if Islam is really the religion of violence or the religion of mercy, clemency and amicable relations?

In order to answer this question, we shall refer to the Holy Qur'an and the luminous verses of this virgin

and unaltered book and the utterances of our infallible religious leaders. Then, we can find some samples of the social and practical attitudes of these great men, and compare them with the behaviors of those claiming for civilisation in the Western world to let the sun of truth to reveal from the back of dark clouds.

1. Although, apparently, some pretend belief in some Islamic rules, and even in the blessed month of Ramadan, they provide Iftar (fast-breaking food) for the Islamic authorities, but today the nature of these demagogic actions is known to all, and all Muslims know that they have conspired powerfully for destruction of Islam, which is a healing to human's present and future pains and problems.

Chapter 2: Islamic Clemency and Mercy in the Holy Qur'an

With a brief study and reflection on some verses of the Holy Qur'an, we can find numerous examples of the Islamic clemency and mercy in this Divine Book, which is the basis and foundation of this religion.

Ratio of Lenience and Violence in Qur'an

The Holy Qur'an consists of one hundred fourteen Surahs, one hundred thirteen of which start with the phrase, **بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ** ("*In the Name of Allah The Most Compassionate The Most Merciful*") **as** the message of Islamic kindness, mercy and affection, however one Surah does not start with this phrase¹ for a clear reason.

The surah is a notice of war, battle and hate to the obstinate and stubborn enemies of Islam for whom there was no hope of guidance and correction. Obviously, there is no room for talking about affection and mercy when fighting with the vindictive enemy. In other words, the ratio of violence and clemency in the Holy Qur'an is one to one hundred and fourteen. That is to say, clemency and lenience is the basis and violence is an exception. Is it possible then to call a religion, the miracle of which is this Qur'an, as the religion of violence?

Return Evil with Goodness

God says:

هَلْ جَزَاءُ الْإِحْسَانِ إِلَّا الْإِحْسَانُ

"Shall the recompense of goodness be other than goodness?" (55:60)

This verse which is full of affection, clemency and amity is an Islamic motto for Muslims. Surprisingly, studying other Qur'anic verses, we find that not only instructs to recompense goodness with goodness, but also bids Muslims to reply evil with goodness!

ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ السَّيِّئَةِ ۗ نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَصِفُونَ

"Repel thou the evil with that which is fairer. We Ourselves know very well what they describe." (23:96)

O Prophet! Even though the dupes have wronged with you, but you let them return to Islam through kindness and affection.

Does the religion, the logic of which is violence and severity recommend to its prophet to reply others' evil with kindness? Or such religion is the religion of affection, kindness, clemency, tranquility and warmth?

Islamic Clemency even with non-Muslims

قُلْ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يَغْفِرُوا لِلَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ أَيَّامَ اللَّهِ لِيَجْزِيَ قَوْمًا بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ

"Say unto those who believe, that they forgive those who do not look for the days of God, that He may recompense people for that they have been earning." (45: 14)

According to the above verse, Islamic clemency and benevolence is not allocated and restricted just to the Muslims and believers. Rather, God instructs Muslims to be kind with non-Muslims too.

Is such religion the religion of violence?

We read in the story of People of Lot that the divine messengers commissioned for punishment appeared to Hazrat Abraham (as) in the shape of strangers. They were commissioned to destroy and ruin the city of People of Lot. Abraham (as) prepared food for them, but none of them touched it. This did not sound good at that time, because when a stranger guest did not touch food, the host was not secure of his evil. On the contrary, if he took food, the host felt tranquility and security. On this account, Abraham (as) conceived fear of them and felt danger, he asked them the reason. They replied: "Don't

worry. We are messengers from your Lord who have appeared to you for accomplishment of two missions:

First, we would like to give you the glad tidings of Isaac and after Isaac, of Jacob; although your wife is an old woman and you are an old man too.

Abraham (as) and his wife became very happy and were delighted.

The other is that we are commissioned to extinguish People of Lot who are sinful and evildoer”.

This in contrary to the first news was very distressing and disturbing for Abraham. Then, he negotiated with the divine messengers for deferment or alleviation in punishment of People of Lot, and disputed with them on this.

The angels replied to his request:

يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ أَعْرِضْ عَنْ هَذَا ۖ إِنَّهُ قَدْ جَاءَ أَمْرُ رَبِّكَ ۖ وَإِنَّهُمْ آتِيهِمْ عَذَابٌ غَيْرُ
مَرْدُودٍ

"O Abraham, turn away from this; thy Lord's command has surely come, and there is coming upon them a chastisement not to be turned back." (11:76)

While People of Lot were one of the most sinful, tainted and dirty of the precedent nations and people, Abraham's (as) clemency and benevolence embraced them, and he was even trying to spend his honor with God for them and intercede for delay or alleviation in their chastisement.

Abraham's (as) charity and lenient attitude is really an exemplary one, and Qur'an and Islam encourage such kindness and benevolence.

Is it acceptable to accuse such religion which is full of clemency, kindness and benevolence to violent? Never!

Prophet's (S) Benevolence, an Attracting Factor for Muslims

One of the miracles of Holy Prophet of Islam (S) is to be soft at heart and bring hearts together:

فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ ۖ وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانْفَضُّوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ ۖ

"It was by mercy of God that thou wast gentle to them; hadst thou been harsh and hard of heart, they would have scattered from about thee." (3: 159)

According to this verse, Prophet's (S) clemency and benevolence (originating from divine mercy) attracted people and their trust to him. We read in verse 63, The Spoils surah:

لَوْ أَنْفَقْتَ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا مَا أَلْفَتَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ أَلْفَ بَيْنَهُمْ إِنَّهُ
عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

"Had thou expended all that is in the earth, thou could not have brought their hearts together; but God brought their hearts together; surely He is All-mighty, All-wise." (8:63)

Formation of a powerful Muslim nation from amongst the stubborn and ignorant people, while changing their scattered and spiteful hearts to hearts that are united and kind was a divine miracle.

Therefore, we have not exaggerated if call "bringing hearts together", uniting the rude and spiteful people and seeding affection, benevolence and intimacy among them as one of the important miracles by Islam Prophet (S).

Is the religion that is bringing hearts together with benevolence and clemency as one of its miracles, the religion of violence?

Peace and Truce, the Basic Islamic Program

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ادْخُلُوا فِي السَّلَامِ كَافَّةً وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُواتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ
عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ

"O believers, enter the peace, all of you, and follow not the steps of Satan; he is a manifest foe to you." (2:208)

According to the above verse, peace and truce is a basic Islamic program. It is interesting that Qur'an calls those who arouse dissidence, and seek war and struggle – a follower of Satan. In other words, peace and truce is a divine and merciful attitude, while war, arousing dissidence and violence is a Satanic and devilish one.

Amity and Mercy Are Among the Signs of God

Some verses of Holy Qur'an indicate the signs of God's Magnificence, which is the subject of "Argumentation of Order" in theology:

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ
يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

"And of His signs is that He created for you, of yourselves, spouses, that you might repose in them, and He has set between you love and mercy. Surely in that are signs for a people who consider." (30:21)

Here, "between you" may refer to the spouses. However, it could be applied and extended to all human beings. So, one of the signs of God is that He has brought affection, amity and mercy among all humans.

Right! "Bringing hearts together" is one of the divine signs, because otherwise, social life was not possible.

1. It is interesting that this single case has been compensated somewhere else in the Holy Qur'an, because the phrase بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ has been repeated two times in the Surah An-Naml, The Ant, n.27.

Chapter 3: Islamic Clemency and Mercy in Narration

Islamic clemency and mercy has been reflected in the various and numerous narrations, to some of which we refer hereunder:

Affection is the Basis of Religion

Imam Sadiq (as) says:

هل الدين الا الحب! ان الله عز و جل يقول: قل ان كنتم تحبون الله فاتبعوني

يحببكم الله

"Is religion anything save affection and mercy?! (Then he reasons: because) The Almighty God says: "If you love God, obey my instructions (Prophet (S) *to be loved by God.*" 1

That is to say, the motive for obeying divine instructions is love and affection towards God.

We read in another narration from Imam Baqir (as):

الدين هو الحب و الحب هو الدين

"Religion is affection, and affection is religion." 2

Sometimes intellectual reasoning is man's motive for doing something, and sometimes his love and affection make him do something. Are these two motives similar?

God sets love between the spouses for continuation of human generation. If logic and intellectual reasoning served to be man's motive for survival of its generation, and for instance if he thinks:

"One shall marry for survival of its generation to have offspring and bear all the related troubles and difficulties "or "Since I need help for when I become old and weak, and need someone to help and support me, then, I shall marry to have children".

If one's motive for marriage is any of above intellectual reasoning, only one per hundred would undertake to marry and bear the numerous hardships, problems and failures of matrimony and breeding.

However, the sexual attraction and love leads humans towards marriage despite of all its problems so that they accept and bear all hardships voluntarily, and rather, spend their entire life for their children to raise them and help them to learn to walk and talk. Right! The motive of love and affection causes such strange and amazing power.

It is applicable to the religious programs too, and for this reason the above narrations have stressed on love and affection. If you are a lover, you will be led to divine obedience and will undertake its hardships. If you are a lover of Imam of the Time (as), it will be easy for you to obey his orders and fight with vices and evils. Right!

Love and affection facilitates tasks. Is the religious doctrine which promotes the motive of its followers to be affection and love and introduces a religion equal to love and affection, be the religion of violence?

Islamic Mercy in the Battlefield

Islamic clemency and mercy is so extensive that it appears in the battlefield too. In other words, Islam renders such importance to affection, benevolence and clemency that it recommends it to its followers even in the center of violence and harshness! On this account, we find remarkable points in this respect in the narrations concerned with manners and rules of warfare, one of which is referred to hereunder:

Imam Sadiq (as) says: When Islam's Prophet (S) decided to send soldiers to the battlefield; he called and reminded them the rules³, (so that if a soldier disregarded the rules, he was reproached):

الله رسول مله على و الله سبيل يف و بالله و الله بسم سيرو

“Depart towards the battlefield (but not for sensual desires; rather), in the name of God and for His consent, and with a pure intention for Him free from any non-godly motive and act as per the Islamic programs (which will be explained later).”

“Do not betray (

لا تغلوا

)”

: What is meant by this phrase? Three possible concepts could be understood:

First: Do not betray when distributing war spoils. It has also been mentioned in some other Qur'anic verses to divide what belongs to the government and leadership, and what for the warriors shall be distributed among them fairly.

Second: The previous warriors may have betrayed each other in some affairs others than spoils.

Third: Not only must you not betray your mate warriors, but also do not betray your enemies, and fight with them chivalrously.

“Do not mutilate (“(

و لا تمثلوا

: Do not mutilate the corpse of your enemy after killing him.

It has been narrated from Islam Prophet (S): Even if a wild dog attacked you, and you killed it. You are not authorised to mutilate it.⁴

“Do not deceive”: If you agreed for peace with your enemy, and signed cease fire with him, respect your promise and contract, and do not violate it. Muslim is one who is faithful even to the promise and contract he binds with his enemies. Hazrat ‘Ali (as) writes to his brave commander, Malik al-Ashtar:

If a contract and promise is concluded between you and your enemy, or you gave refuge to him, be faithful to your promise, and trustful to what you have undertaken, and do not spare your life for your promise, because none of divine obligations is similar to fulfillment of promise, in which all people in the world agree despite of all different thoughts and desires they may have.⁵

امراه لا و صبياً لا و فانياً شيخاً تقتلوا لا

“Do not attack the weak and unable people who do not participate in the war, and do not kill the feeble old men, children and ladies.”

اليها تضطروا ان الا شجراً تقطعوا لا و

“Do not cut trees, unless you have to!”

Studying these high rules and prudent and advanced instructions, one finds and is surprised with magnificence of Islam and scope of Islamic mercy. The Islamic clemency is even extended to the center of violence, and it includes even the trees. Prophet (S) orders his soldiers not to cut any tree at the time of war and battle, and not to hurt nature, unless the trees impede progress of Muslim soldiers and host of Qur’an. In this case, there is no problem for cutting them as much as necessary.

The further instructions of Prophet (S) clearly indicate Islamic clemency, benevolence and mercy in the battle field. Pay attention:

المشركين من احد الى نظر افضلهم او المسلمين ادنى من رجل ايما و

مأمنه فابلغوه ابي ان و الدين في فاخوكم تبعكم فان الله كلام يسمع حتى جار
فهو

“When one from the Muslim host, either the highest or the lowest in rank, gives refuge to one of the polytheists, he shall be secure, and he shall be transferred to the rear. The Islamic knowledge, instructions and rulings shall be explained for him gently and patiently. If he converted to Islam, he would be a Muslim like you, and would have the same rights Muslim have. If he did not accept Islam, or asked a respite for thinking about the Islamic instructions, he shall be returned to his country safely, and he shall never be annoyed and bothered.”

Of course, it is not easy to follow these instructions. It calls for a strong faith and charity. This is the reason why at the end of his lecture, Prophet (S) orders his soldiers to seek help from God for observance of these rules. Does the world claiming for observance of human rights and philanthropic mottos observe any of such rules? In the conflict between Israel and Palestine, these rules are never observed. Rather, these barbarian and savage felons ruin the houses of Palestinians and burn their farms, and destroy the trees. They show no pity to the small and old men and women. At the meantime, those claiming for human rights defend them and accuse us of violence.

Islamic Clemency and other Creatures

Islamic clemency and benevolence includes not only all humans (regardless of their religion), but also all creatures and beings.

On this basis, there are narrations among Islamic instructions talking about animals' rights⁶. Hereunder, we refer to one sample for familiarity with scope of Islamic clemency and affection.

Islam's Prophet Muhammad (S) has numerated six rights for the beast which shall be observed by their owners:

نزل اذا بعلفها يبدء

“When he reaches a place of rest, first he shall provide water and food for the animal. Then, he may think of his own food.”

به مر اذا الماء عليها يعرض و

“During journey and course, when he finds water, he shall lead the animal there to drink.”

ربها بحمد تسبح فانها وجهها يضرب لا و

“(If he wants the animal to move faster) He shall not lash the animal’s face and head because the animals too glorify God, and it is not right to lash the head and face of animal which glorifies God.”⁷

الله سبيل في الا ظهرها على يقف لا و

“He shall not ride on the standing animal unless in the path of God (for instance, in the battle field, where there is no problem for riding on the standing animal, because there is the possibility of raid by the enemy).”

طاقتها فوق يحملها لا و

“The animals too have a limited power and ability. One shall consider the beast’s ability, and do not make it carry more than what he can.”

تطبق ما الا المشى من يكلفها لا و

“In addition to drafting, the beasts shall be also cared for long journeys and distances, and one shall ride on them as much as their ability and bearing.”

These are subtle instructions which are not observed in the present world, and no one cares about them. Rather, many do not even understand it. However, the merciful religion of Islam takes care all of these subtle points and bids its followers to observe them. Is such religion the religion of violence?

Dua (invocation) of Muslims for all Human Beings!

Dua and blessings recited in the blessed month of Ramadan after the obligatory daily prayers in all mosques and worship centers throughout the world are another indication of Islamic mercy and benevolence. Thereby, Muslims invoke God for solving problems of all human beings (not only Muslims). We study hereunder some of these invocations:

اللهم ادخل على اهل القبور السرور

“O Allah! Let all the dead to be cheerful!”

اللهم اغن كل فقير

“O Allah! Let all the needy to be rich!”

اللهم اشبع كل جائع

“O Allah! Let all the hungry to be fed!”

اللهم اكس كل عريان

“O Allah! Let all the naked to be clothed!”

اللهم اقض دين كل مدين

“O Allah! Let all the indebted to get their debts paid!”

اللهم فرج عن كل مكروب

“O Allah! Let the affairs of all the worried untangled!”

اللهم رد كل غريب

“O Allah! Let all the expatriates be repatriated!”

اللهم فك كل اسير

“O Allah! Let all the captives to be liberated!”

اللهم اشف كل مريض

“O Allah! Let all the sick people to be healed!”

One really enjoys the extensive Islamic mercy and extols Muslims’ charity, because most invocations by Muslims are general and universal and embrace all human beings from any race and mental attitude.

Are these interesting and extensive invocations not the signs of Islamic mercy and benevolence?

Does any fair and impartial man let himself introduce such a religion as the religion of violence?

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1. Mizan ul-Hikmah, chapter 658, narration 3097 (Vol. II, p. 215)
 2. Nur’uth-Thaqalayn, Vol. 5, p. 285, narration 49
 3. Wasa’il ush-Shi’a, Vol. 11, p. 43
 4. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 42, p. 246 & 257
 5. Nahjul Balaghah, letter 53
 6. There are numerous narrations in this regard so that in Wasa’il ush-Shi’a, vol. 8, there are more than fifty rules in chapter “Rules for the Beast”.
 7. According to the Holy Qur’an, we believe that the entire world is glorifying the Lord of World.

Chapter 4: Islamic Clemency and Mercy in the Practices of Religious Leaders

The practical manner, social behavior and associations of religious authorities and Islamic leaders and Imams are full of mercy, clemency and benevolence with their followers and with adversaries. Here are two examples:

Prophet’s (S) Clemency after Conquest of Mecca

The attitude of Prophet Muhammad (S) after the conquest of Mecca is a sample of this practical manner. We narrate in brief his attitude and then compare it with that of Western civilisation with their enemies after World War II.

Prophet Muhammad (S) was annoyed in Mecca thirteen years before his Hijra (immigration) to Medina because Mecca reminded him of the numerous pains, tragedies, a baseness, troubles and afflictions as his most obstinate enemies were in Mecca. However, when the Islam conquered Mecca, and Prophet

(S) overcame those obstinate and stubborn enemies who caused all those calamities and problems, he pardoned all and extended Islamic mercy and absolution to all addressing them:

أذهبوا أنتم الطلقاء

“You are free to go wherever you will!”

Even when he was informed that one of the Islam soldiers with a flag of Islam in his hand is chanting for revenge, he was provoked, and took the flag from the soldier, and chanted for peace and amity instead of revenge:

اليوم يوم الرحمة

“Today is the day of clemency and benevolence!”

On the other hand, when the allies’ soldiers entered capital of Germany (Berlin), they massacred the inhabitants, and committed numerous crimes. For instance, they threw up an infant and fired him before falling into the ground.

Now, a generation from the same heartless felons commits a new crime every day. A pen is ashamed to write these crimes and sometimes man could not tolerate to see or hear them.

Are we the people of violence or these uncivilised wrongly claiming for civilisation?

‘Ali (as) and Recommendations for his Slayer

Another sample is the attitude of Hazrat ‘Ali (as) with his killer, Abdur-Rahman Ibn Muljam Moradi.

Following the religious instructions, he was so kind and merciful that even his enemy who attempted to kill him was not deprived and excluded from his mercy. Recommendations by the kind Imam for his killer start from arresting him and continue till Imam’s death:

“My children! My slayer is just Ibn Muljam. Beware! Do not let the self-seekers and opportunists to unsheathe their swords and kill the innocent people with the excuse of cooperation with ‘Ali’s slayer for their own personal interests!

My dears! Give my slayer the same food you prepare for me!

My darlings! If I survive, I know what to do with him. If I die, you are authorised to retaliate, but as he

struck me once with sword, you shall not exceed more than one!

O Children of Prophet! Do not mutilate him after death!"

These are 'Ali's (as) recommendations about his slayer when he was dying. Do you know any authority of any country throughout the world and during history to express such recommendations in favour of his slayer?

Is Islam whose Prophet's successor is so kind and merciful, the religion of violence?

Chapter 5: Questions and Objections

Studying Islamic clemency and mercy in the Qur'anic verses and narrations by the Infallible Imams (as) and practice of religious leaders, we approve that the sacred religion of Islam which is concordant with human nature, is the religion of clemency and mercy, and not violence. It is necessary to discuss about the issues served as pretexts by Islam adversaries and so called indications of violence in Islam.

Is the Law of Retaliation an Indication of Religious Violence?

Why Islam enacted the law of retaliation?

Isn't retaliation a sort of violence?

Isn't killing a human, even of a sinful person, considered as violence?

In reply to these questions, it is necessary to consider some points for solving and removal of any suspicious question.

First point – After expressing law of retaliation, Qur'an says:

فَمَنْ عَفِيَ لَهُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ شَيْءٌ فَاتَّبَاعْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَأَدَاءٍ إِلَيْهِ بِإِحْسَانٍ ۗ

"If any remission is made to any one by his (aggrieved) brother, then prosecution (for the blood wit) should be made according to usage, and payment should be made to him in a good manner; this is alleviation from your Lord and a mercy." (2: 178)

That is to say, retaliation is neither obligatory, nor recommended. However, for preventing the crimes by felons and repetition of similar cases, the slain families are authorised to apply for it, while it is neither

obligatory, nor recommended (pay attention).

Second point – In verse 179:

وَلَكُمْ فِي الْقِصَاصِ حَيَاةٌ يَا أُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

“And there is life for you in (the law of) retaliation, O men of understanding, that you may guard yourselves.” (2: 179)

In verse 179, the same surah, life and survival has been mentioned as the philosophy of retaliation (in retaliation, there is life for you, men possessed of minds), not enmity, revenge and hatred.

If the mischievous murderer who disregards people’s soul, wealth and honor is granted a respite, and is made liable to the Islamic mercy, he may misuse the mercy and clemency rendered to him and commits more crimes. Isn’t this a treachery to the society? Encounter with gangs in the society, for whom there remains no other way than retaliation, is not an implication of violence. Rather, it is the clear indication of mercy to let the others live peacefully. 1

It is surprising that those claiming for clemency and benevolence and chanting for human rights object everywhere when such criminals are retaliated against, but when their felon friends commit the most terrible crimes in Palestine, Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chechen, south of Lebanon, Iraq and other territories, none of them object, as if all of them are deaf, blind and asleep.

When one’s finger undergoes necrosis, the passionate and skilled physician does his best to cure and heal it. However, if he does not succeed, and there remains no way save cutting it to preserve other fingers and prevent its spread to other parts of body, is such physician violent? Does clemency and benevolence necessitate this necrotic member to remain and gradually make the other parts necrotic, and even result in death for the whole body? Does any logic and intellect accept this attitude?

Consequently, retaliation is a sort of treatment and is necessary and essential for prevention from spread of corruption to other members of society and preservation of security and safety. On this account, the law of retaliation not only is not considered as an example of violence, but also considers the expedience and the benefit of society, it is a branch of divine clemency and benevolence (pay attention).

We do not think any sane, even a non-Muslim, would agree to let the murderers and mischievous individuals threatening the society’s security, who do not relent, and are not bound to any religious and human principles, live freely in the society and commit any crime. Rather, all the sane in the world would accept retaliation as the last treatment for these necrotic members of society.

Are Islamic punishments compatible with the religious clemency and benevolence?

One of the pretexts propounded by the captious is “Islamic punishments and penal laws”. They say:

- How are Islamic punishments and penal laws compatible with clemency and benevolence?
- Is giving one hundred lashes to one who has committed a sin, not considered as violence?
- Is stoning a man or woman who has lost his or her chastity as a result of domination of sensual desire compatible with Islamic benevolence?
- Is cutting the hands and feet of thieves in accordance with religious clemency?
- Are severe and harsh punishments not considered as a sort of violence?

Reply: There are subtle points in the “penal laws and punishments” which help us in replying to these questions. Studying them, it is clarified that penal laws and punishments too are another branch of Islamic clemency and benevolence, although they may seem violent at first for some.

First: Studying philosophy of penal laws and punishments

There are narrations about the philosophy of execution of penal laws and punishments clarifying our insight into these Islamic punishments. Consider the following two samples:

1) Prophet Muhammad (S) says:

صباحاً أربعين مطر من خير حد أقامه

"Execution of any penal law or punishment is better than forty days of rainfall." 2

As you see, in this prophetic narration, penal laws and punishments are resembled to rain, and execution of any law (even the least form) is called better than forty days of rainfall. The narration implies that as rain is a mercy of God, and God sends it down for the people of earth, divine penal laws too are a sort of divine blessing. In fact, execution of Islamic punishments washes away the filth from society like rain, and purifies it from the pollutions.

For instance, if one disturbs public security in the society, and violates people's soul, wealth and honour such that a part of society is threatened, he will be an outlaw and punishment of an outlaw will guarantee security in the society. It washes away terror, fear and insecurity from the society. Those who produce

and distribute narcotics in an Islamic society, and destroy the youths through this great crime, and corrupt the country for achieving their own personal interests and profits, shall be punished for corrupting on the earth.

Can we call the Islamic penal laws as resembled to rain here?

We believe that such individuals and groups are liable to Islamic punishments. If they are not punished, God will not leave them, and they will be involved in the consequences and adversities caused by their corruptive activities.

2) Seventh Imam, Hazrat Musa Ibn Ja'far (as) commenting on the verse 57:17 ﴿يُحْيِي الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا﴾³ says:

العدل فيحيون رجالاً الله يبعث لکن و بالقطر يحييها ليس

صباحاً أربعين لقطر من الارض في أنفع فيه الحد لإقامه و العدل لإحياء الارض
فتحي

"It does not simply imply that He revives the dry lands with bountiful rain. Rather, it implies that He appoints (great, sincere and ambitious) men for reviving justice in the world, and revives land as a result of revival of justice. Undoubtedly, execution of penal laws and punishments on the earth is more beneficial than forty days of rainfall." 3

As you can see, there is no trace of revenge, violence and such in the traditions explaining the philosophy of penal laws. Rather, they are concerned with affection, clemency and spread of justice in the society.

Second: Ways for proving applicability of penal laws

Studying the ways of proving applicability of penal laws displays other appearances of Islamic clemency and benevolence.

Applicability of many penal laws is proven with four witnesses or a confession at four different times. That is to say, for application of penal law for adultery, four just men shall testify that they have seen a man or woman committing adultery.

Is it possible! We have not found even one case in the narrations and historical books where adultery is proven with testimony of witnesses for applicability of penal law. Therefore, this way is practically

impossible, and this is a sort of Islamic clemency including such sinners.

There are numerous conditions for the other way that is confession of the sinner. For instance, he or she shall confess four times, and each confession shall be in a different place, and even if one confesses four times in one place, it is deemed as one time. ⁴ Moreover, if the sinner repents with the Islamic judge before his or her conviction, and regrets for what he or she has done, it is difficult to execute penal law for him or her. ⁵

These points are mentioned in numerous narrations one of which is referred to here to see the Islamic benevolence and clemency of the real successor of Prophet Muhammad (S), extended to the sinner who had referred to him willingly for judgment: An adulteress came to Hazrat 'Ali (as) and asked him to purify her with execution of penal law for adultery, because the worldly chastisement is easier than the permanent and continuous punishment in the other world. Imam said: Go and return after delivery of your child to be purified.

The lady went and came back after childbirth and repeated her request. Imam asked several questions from her (hoping to dissuade her and make her hesitate in what she says). He said: Go and breast feed your child and after infancy, come to purify you. The lady returned after two years and again repeated her request. Again Imam asked several questions and the lady replied. Finally, Imam said: Go and nurture your child so that he could protect himself against the daily dangers. Then, come to be purified. The lady came back weeping. ⁶

As you see, it is not easy to prove guilt liable to penal law, and it is not possible to prove it as far as the sinner does not want execution of the penal law. This is an indication of Islamic benevolence.

If Islam was the religion of violence, would it be so fastidious for conviction of a sin?

Third: Rules for execution of penal laws

Even if applicability of a penal law is proven, and the Islamic judge decides to execute it, there are rules and instructions for how to do it which are indications of Islamic clemency and benevolence. Hereunder, we refer to some of these rules:

1) Lash penalty shall not be executed at the beginning and end of day in winter because the lash would hurt too much. Rather, it shall be executed in the middle of day when it is warmer.

2) Contrarily, it shall not be done in the middle of day in summer, when it is too warm. Rather, it shall be done at the end of day.⁷

3) The sinner shall not lie when lashing takes place. Rather, he or she shall be sitting or standing, because the lash strokes are slower in this condition, and the sinner feels less pain.⁸

4) If the sinner is sick, execution of penal law shall be postponed till his or her recovery.⁹

5) If she is pregnant, it shall be deferred till delivery. 10

There are some other rules¹¹ all indicating Islamic clemency even for a sinner, the details of which could be found in the Fiqh books.

Considering above three points, (philosophy of penal laws, ways for proving applicability of penal laws and punishments and rules for execution of penal laws and punishments) as well as reflection on the subtle points, makes any fair and impartial man to confess that Islamic clemency and benevolence exists even in the seemingly violent penal laws and punishments. On this account, execution of Islamic punishments is accompanied with so many blessings for the society that its blessings exceed the blessings of forty successive days of rainfall.

Holy War (Jihad) and Islamic clemency

Why has Islam which we introduce as the religion of mercy enacted Holy War and authorises Muslims to attack others and kill them?

Isn't war an application of violence? If yes, why has it been recommended?

For replying to this question, it is necessary to find Qur'an's attitude towards war to clarify if Islamic Jihad is a sort of violence or is it compatible with the Islamic clemency? For this purpose, we study some Qur'anic verses hereunder:

First and second: Military readiness for prevention from war

وَأَعِدُّوا لَهُمْ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ وَمِنْ رِبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ

"(O Muslims!), make ready for them whatever force and strings of horses you can." (8:60)

تُرْهِبُونَ بِهِ عَدُوَّ اللَّهِ وَعَدُوَّكُمْ

"To terrify by them the enemy of God and your enemy" (8:60)

In fact, Islam intends to eradicate war through high readiness of Muslims, and prevents any conflict and blood-shedding. Islam says:

Be so strong and powerful that the enemy may even not think of warfare and attack.

Is such religion the religion of violence?

We read in the next verse:

وَإِنْ جَنَحُوا لِلسَّلْمِ فَاجْنَحْ لَهَا وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ ۗ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

"And if they incline to peace, do thou incline to it; and put thy trust in God; He is the All-hearing, the All-knowing." (8:61)

Thereby, Islam does not support conflict, violence, war and blood-shedding. When the enemy repents and is ready for peace and reconciliation, it instructs to leave war and accept cease-fire.

In brief, Islam's attitude towards war is a preventive one, but if it is not effective and war occurred, it benefits any appropriate opportunity for ceasing war.

Therefore, Islam has not authorised its soldiers to start any war, and all Islamic wars have been initiated by the enemy.

Is this attitude towards Jihad mixed with violence, or clemency and benevolence?

Third: Scope of Holy War (Jihad) and its Rules

فَمَنْ اَعْتَدَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ فَاعْتَدُوا عَلَيْهِ بِمِثْلِ مَا اَعْتَدَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ ۗ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ

"Whosoever commits aggression against you, you commit aggression against him like as he has committed against you; and fear God, and know that God is with the god-fearing." (2: 194)

According to the above verse; firstly: You are authorised to commit aggression only against those who have committed aggression against you. Secondly: Your aggression shall be like them and you shall not transgress. Thirdly: Do not forget god-fearing even in the battle and blood-shedding field, and know that God is with the god-fearing.

In fact, law of Jihad in Islam is accepted and observed by all the sane in the world. Does any wise man authorise man to submit to an enemy attack and let them dominate his soul, wealth and honour? Never! Rather, all sane recommend the same preventive logic of Qur'an.

Fourth: Is ignoring Jihad equal to destruction of houses of worship

God recites one of the philosophies of Jihad in Qur'an:

وَلَوْلَا دَفَعُ اللَّهُ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَّهُدِمَتِ صَوَامِعُ وَبِيَعٌ وَصَلَوَاتٌ وَمَسَاجِدُ

يُذَكَّرُ فِيهَا اسْمُ اللَّهِ كَثِيرًا ۚ وَلَيَنْصُرَنَّ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَنْصُرُهُ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَقَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ

"Had God not driven back the people, some by the means of others, there had been destroyed cloisters and churches, oratories and mosques, wherein God's Name is much mentioned.

Assuredly God will help him who helps Him – surely God is All-strong, All-mighty." (22:40)

If the faithful and brave individuals do not take any action and just be an onlooker of the destructive activities of tyrants, unbelievers and the cruel, there will remain no trace of temples and centers for divine worship. The temples are the station of wakefulness and arch of prayer is the field of battle and war. Mosque is a barrier to the tyrants. Basically, any invitation to theology is against the tyrants who would like people to worship them as God. Therefore, if they can, they would destroy all of these centers.

It is interesting that according to this verse, not only Islamic Jihad guarantees Islamic temples, but also the temples of all divine religions are protected thanks to it.

Initial Jihad

Question: What you stated about defensive Jihad in Islam is proper and acceptable for us. We too confess that defensive Jihad is not considered as violence. Rather, it is in agreement with Islamic benevolence and clemency. Is the initial Jihad which is performed initially and without any attack by the other party, in accordance with Islamic clemency? And not considered as a sort of violence?

Answer: It could be replied in two ways. Pay attention.

First answer: Is there any initial Jihad in Islam?

Some Islamic researchers, scholars and historians believe that there is not any initial Jihad in Islam, and all the wars that occurred at Prophet's (S) time at the beginning of Islam have been defensive, that is, first the enemy has attacked, then Prophet (S) and Muslims defended themselves.

For instance, in the "Confederates Battle", which was one of the most extensive battles by Islam enemies against Prophet (S) and Muslims, the idolaters started the war. They departed towards Medina from different parts of Hejaz headed by Mecca idolaters, and surrounded the city. Muslims had to defend their soul, wealth, honour and beliefs. Does any sane agree to keep silent before the armed enemies (intending to kill Islam Prophet (S) and Muslims, and capture their women and children and destroy Medina)? Is confronting with them considered as violence?

In the Battle of Hunain, Prophet (S) was informed that "Havazan tribe" and some other idolaters are going to assault Medina, the main base of Muslims. Prophet (S) prepared Muslims for defending themselves and their religion, and thereby the battle of Hunain occurred.

Among the wars at the beginning of Islam, it may seem that “The Battle of Khaybar” has been an initial Jihad, but while studying history it is clarified that it has been a defensive one. Prophet (S) was going to give a telling response to the plots, sabotages and mischief of those who were implicated directly or indirectly in most events. Moreover, Khaybar was the center of corruption and sedition, and Muslims aimed to destroy this center. Therefore, the Battle of Khaybar too was not an initial Jihad.

The same applies to the Badr battle. In the second year of Hjirah, two events took place in the Battle of Badr, one of which was known as minor Badr and the other as major Badr, both initiated by Islam’s enemies.

The Prophet (S) was informed that a group Heads of Meccan idolaters have come around Medina, and have plundered Muslims’ camels, sheep and other properties, and are escaping to Mecca. Prophet (S) ordered the Muslim soldiers to chase them. The soldiers chased them to Badr, but despaired of finding the enemy.

The event finished without any conflict and it was known as minor Badr. The major Badr battle which occurred later in the same year, was a response to the sharp aggression by the Mecca heads, and was a defensive war.

“Conquest of Mecca” was one of the important campaigns by the Prophet (S). However, first, it aimed at destruction of center of Islam enemies and idolaters, because all Muslim problems, adversities and wars were planned there. Secondly, no war happened during “Conquest of Mecca”. When the idolaters observed the Muslims' mighty and crowded army, they surrendered themselves without any war and blood-shed.

In brief, according to this group of Islamic researchers, scholars and historians, all wars that occurred at the beginning of Islam were defensive, and none was considered as an initial Jihad. Qur’anic verses too confirm this:

أَلَا تُقَاتِلُونَ قَوْمًا نَكَثُوا أَيْمَانَهُمْ وَهَمُّوا بِإِخْرَاجِ الرَّسُولِ وَهُمْ بَدَءُوكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ ۚ

"Will you not fight a people who broke their oaths and purposed to expel the Messenger, beginning the first time against you?" (9: 13)

The phrase “beginning the first time against you” indicates that the wars at the beginning of Islam were defensive, and not initial.

In another verse God excludes a group of idolaters after declaring war with them and says:

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ عَاهَدْتُمْ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَنْقُصُوا شَيْئًا وَلَمْ يُظَاهِرُوا عَلَيْكُمْ أَحَدًا
فَاتِمُوا إِلَيْهِمْ عَهْدَهُمْ إِلَىٰ مُدَّتِهِمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ

"Excepting those of the idolaters with whom you made covenant, then they failed you ought not lent support to any man against you. With them fulfill your covenant till their term; surely God loves the god-fearing." (9:4)

The words applied in this verse indicate that Muslims will not involve in war with idolaters as far as Islam enemies do not break their promises, and are not supporting those who are directly fighting with Muslims, and no danger is felt from their side. In one word, Muslims will not initiate war.

In addition to the above two verses, verse 61, of 'The Spoils' surah proves the same. The verse recommends Muslims that if they are called for peace; they shall receive their call and reply positively. The verse implies that Islam does not attack and assault the tribes, nations and countries not initiating war against it.

In brief, as per some Islamic researchers, scholars and historians, wars by Islam Prophet (S) at the beginning of Islam have been all defensive, and none has been on its initiative. Some Qur'anic verses too approve of the same.

Second answer: In some special cases, initial Jihad is in concordance with logic and intellect

Three types of initial Jihad are induced from the Holy Qur'an which are in concordance with intellect and practice of all sane in the world, and are not in contradiction with Islamic benevolence and clemency:

1) Jihad for extinguishing sedition

Qur'an refers to this type of Jihad:

وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّىٰ لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ وَيَكُونَ الدِّينُ لِلَّهِ ۗ

"Fight them, till there is no persecution and the religion is God's." (2: 193)

According to the verse, wherever there is mischief, and there is no other way except war for its elimination, we are authorised to initiate Jihad for elimination of mischief and sedition. As it was stated, such initial Jihad is acceptable by all the sane and other religions and doctrines in the world. Practice of the sane confirms it too, two samples of which are referred to hereunder:

a) Several years ago, when the Muslim countries of Bosnia and Herzegovina were assaulted wildly by

the oppressor Serbs, they destroyed the houses, mosques, farms, hospitals and other institutes of this Islamic country, and even worse, they initiated a widespread genocide. A union was formed by the European countries to find a solution for this sedition. Finally, they concluded that there remains no way save military aggression and fighting with Serbs. Thus, they attacked them and extinguished the sedition.

Here, we do not care the motives of the said union (if they aimed at spiritual affairs and supporting Muslims or prevention from the problems which will involve them in the future.). However, they authorised and accomplished the initial Jihad and military attack for extinguishing the sedition by Serbs, and the sane in world approved them.

b) Another live example is the war which occurred recently in Afghanistan. We saw that after ruling this country, Taliban started widespread cultivation of poppy to taint the neighboring countries, Middle east and rather, all the world. Moreover, they committed unprecedented crimes in Afghanistan, and changed into a dangerous cause of disturbance for people in Afghanistan and other countries.

For termination of this tumult and elimination of disturbance, UN formed a force to attack to Afghanistan and save the oppressed people of this country and the entire world from Taliban. Undoubtedly, this was approved and accepted by all the sane in the world. Afghan people objected the U.S. in this event because they knew that U.S. did not enter Afghanistan for elimination of disturbance, and rather, it was seeking for its own interests.

So, Jihad and war for extinguishing disturbance which is induced from Holy Qur'an is accepted by all the sane in world, and is not to be considered as violence.

2) Jihad with tyrants and rebels

When two Islamic tribes, groups or countries are involved in conflict, according to the Holy Qur'an, the other Muslims are obliged to solve and settle their dispute. If one of them does not accept to reconcile and does not stop oppression and aggression, and continues its assault despite the readiness of other party for reconciliation, it is called a rebel from Islamic point of view. Here, Islam authorizes Muslims to fight with the rebel group and initiate Jihad (Holy War) against it.

Islam does not let us to keep silent and be an observer while a group is oppressing another one. On this basis, we believe that all Islamic territories shall contribute to the oppressed Palestinians (in any possible way), and eliminate the evil of the usurper and oppressor Israel which commits a new oppression and crime every day. Otherwise, they shall bear a heavy responsibility with God.

Although, this is an initial Jihad, but it is compatible with any sane logic and intellect, and not considered as violence. Rather, it is the requisite of Islamic benevolence and clemency for the oppressed group.

3) Jihad for elimination of hindrances to freedom for propagation of Islam

God has issued instructions and programs for prosperity, freedom, perfection, felicity and tranquility of man, and has obliged His prophets to declare these instructions to the people. If an individual or a group finds these orders a hindrance to their cheap interests, and impede prophets' invitation, prophets and their followers are authorised to eliminate them first peacefully, and if not possible, resorting force in order to restore freedom for propagation.

In other words, people in all societies are entitled to hear the call of heralds of truth, and be free to accept their invitation. If some want to deprive them from their legitimate right and do not let them listen to call of heralds of truth, the advocators of these programs are authorised to use any means for provision of this freedom.

Therefore, if Muslims want to propagate their religion and doctrine through logical ways and introduce it to non-Muslims, but a group hinders them and their logical and proper propagations so that they may break pens, cut tongues and choke breaths, Islam authorises its followers to initiate Jihad for elimination of these hindrances and paving the way for the proper and logical propagation of religion of truth (not imposing it with force and power of sword).

When Islam was imported to Iran, it did not enter this territory for imposition of idea on Iranians. Rather, it fought with Iranian host for elimination of unreasonable hindrances for logical propagation of Islam. After overcoming Sassanian host, it never obliged and compelled people to accept and convert to Islam. On this account, some fire temples were flaming years after conquest of Iran by Islam, and some people still had their previous religion and doctrine. However, most of the Iranians who were clever embraced Islam and obeyed its instructions.

The Sassanians were the main hindrance for propagation of Islam in Iran. Eliminating this great hindrance, Islam prepared the situation for acceptance of Islam by Iranians. Certainly, this type of initial Jihad too is not refuted by the sane of world.

In general, initial Jihad for extinguishing sedition, prevention from rebellion of tyrants and rebels and elimination of hindrances to Islamic propagation is not considered as violence. Rather, it is the same Islamic benevolence.

It is inferred from above that Islam is the religion of compassion and clemency, and even some of its rulings which may seem violent apparently, are not practically in contradiction with Islamic clemency. Those who accused this clement religion with violence, are either unfamiliar with Islamic instructions or vindictive enemies who find Islam a hindrance for their illegitimate personal interests and benefits.

Objectives of Jihad in Islam

War is never regarded as a merit in Islam. Rather, it is believed to be a demerit because of causing

destruction, and waste of souls, powers and facilities. In some Qur'anic verses, like 65, 'The Cattle' surah is called as one of the divine chastisement among earthquake, thunder, and heavenly or earthly calamities. On this account, Islam has instructed to avoid war as far as possible. However, when existence of a nation is endangered or its sacred objectives are subject to fall, war is deemed as a merit, and is entitled with "Jihad in the path of God".

Therefore, in contrary to what the enemies propagate, Islamic Jihad never implies imposition of belief. Basically, an imposed belief is worthless in Islam. Rather, Jihad is recommended when the enemy imposes war on the Islamic nation or deprives it from its natural freedoms, disregards its rights or a tyrant oppresses unfairly. Then, it is obligatory for Muslims to support the oppressed even if it may result in conflict with the oppressor's nation. This is also remarkable that Islam has emphasised on peaceful coexistence of followers of other divine religions, and there are detailed discussions in the verses and Islamic narrations and Fiqh on this under the title of "Rulings for the Tributary".

If Islam advocated imposition of belief and resort to force and sword for achievement to its objectives, rulings for the tributary and peaceful coexistence would have been nonsense.

Sometimes calamities too are merciful!

Do those objecting the rulings of retaliation, and Islamic punishments and Jihad, introducing them as the signs of violence, call heavenly and earthly calamities and divine punishments as violence and introduce God as violent. However, we believe that divine calamities and chastisements embracing the sinners, are a mercy although they may seem apparently violent. Qur'an says:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِي قَرْيَةٍ مِّنْ نَّبِيٍّ إِلَّا أَخَذْنَا أَهْلَهَا بِالْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَضُرَّعُونَ

"We have sent no Prophet to any city but that We seized its people with misery and hardship, that haply they might be humble." (7:94)

The man in ease and affluence does not listen to the prophets, but when he is involved in difficulties, he pays heed to them and is ready to accept the truth.

Therefore, divine chastisements for awakening the sinners and resulting in their return and repentance to God, is not violence. Rather they are the same divine clemency and benevolence.

1. In addition to above two points, God addresses "the men possessed of minds" with this rule. That is to say, retaliation is not a case of emotion and revenge. Rather, it is a law legislated based on intellect and sapience. Those possessing safe minds will approve that this law is the source of social life and security for the society.

The phrase, لعلمك تتقون, at the end of this verse is another proof for our claim, because it mentions that retaliation is aimed at protection and securing society against taints, hatreds and evils. Therefore, every clause of verse for retaliation contains remarkable points and conveys the messages of peace, life and affection. It clearly testifies that retaliation is not an implication of violence. It is noteworthy that retaliation has been repeated four times throughout the Holy Qur'an, while it is seventy nine for رحمت (mercy), one hundred sixty for رحمان (beneficent) and one hundred ninety eight for رحيم (merciful). This indicates that retaliation is an exceptional case, and the basis is Islamic mercy, affection and benevolence.

2. Wasa'il ush-Shi'a, Vol. 18, p. 308

3. Wasa'il ush-Shi'a, vol. 18, page 308, narration 3

4. You can study these narrations in Wasa'il ush-Shi'a, vol. 18, page 377 onwards.

5. Late Sheikh Hurr al-Ameli has narrated these traditions in Wasa'il ush-Shi'a, vol. 18, page 327.

6. Wasa'il ush-Shi'a, vol. 18, p. 378, first narration

7. Wasa'il ush-Shi'a, vol. 18, p. 315 onwards.

8. Wasa'il ush-Shi'a, vol. 18, p. 369, first narration

9. Wasa'il ush-Shi'a, vol. 18, p. 320 onwards

10. Wasa'il ush-Shi'a, vol. 18, p. 378 onwards

11. For instance, lashing the vulnerable organs is forbidden. This has been mentioned in Wasa'il ush-Shi'a, vol. 18, p. 369 onwards.

Appendixes

1) Statements of His holiness Grand Ayatollah Makarim Shirazi criticising Pope's utterances regarding Islam

Recently, cartoonists in Denmark insulted Islam and Islam Prophet (S) and faced with worldwide protest by Muslims. Now, Pope, leader of Catholics, deluded world, and questioned Islamic Jihad and accused Muslims with violence and faced with severe and widespread protest by Muslims.

Of course, such movements were expected after the heroic victory of Hezbollah in Lebanon over Israel (thanks to the ruling of Islamic Jihad), but why was a great Christian leader deceived by tyrant and cruel politicians and this was proof that he is unaware of Islamic rulings. Is it acceptable for the great leader of Catholics to be so uninformed of a great religion like Islam with more one billion and four hundred million followers?

Condemning this big insult to Islam and Muslims resulting in more insecurity in world, we remind that Qur'an explicitly says:

وَإِنْ جَنَحُوا لِلسَّلْمِ فَاجْنَحْ لَهَا

"And if they incline to peace, do thou incline to it." (8:61)

وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ

"And fight in the way of God with those who fight with you, but aggress not: God loves not the aggressors." (2: 190)

Does Pope expect Palestinians to keep silent while Zionists dispossess them of their country, Palestine, and expatriate them? Or Hezbollah to keep silent while Zionists transgress Lebanon and ruin everything and massacre all including infant, old and young?

O Pope! Instead of assaulting Muslims in the world, you have better to admonish your cruel and bloodthirsty politicians that the time of colonisation has expired and you shall respect the independency of Islamic countries and Muslims to be respected.

Following the ideas of imperialist politicians, you committed a big sin. Try to compensate it as soon as possible, and be sure that your illogical assault to Islam and Muslims has no effect save more solidarity among them.

16.09.2006

Peace be upon the one who follows guidance.

2) Invitation from Pope to a scientific and logical debate

On 20.09.2006, His holiness Grand Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi invited Pope to a scientific and logical debate and added: The debate could be in a live broadcast at any time and place with no restriction. I am sure that at the end of debate, people in the world will judge that Islam is a herald of peace, amity and truce, and Jihad is a defensive shield against the enemies, but not for imposition of belief and idea.

In his Kharej Fiqh lesson in the seminary on the occasion of end of course before the blessed month of Ramadan, His holiness expressed: Many Christians are living with Muslims from centuries ago, and it is never heard that one is obliged to convert to Islam.

Then, he added: Pope's hard-bitten utterances are the clear instance of spreading violence throughout the world. Unfortunately, it endangered the peaceful coexistence between Muslims and Christians, while at present, we need invitation to peace, security and truce more than ever.

His holiness called all esteemed seminary students and preachers to explain for people the pacific attitudes of Islam according to the Qur'anic verses and Islamic narrations.

Text of His holiness's letter to Pope

Your Excellency Pope Benedict XVI

With greeting,

Considering your utterances in Germany rebuking and reproaching Islam and the ruling of Islamic Jihad (Holy War), hurting the feelings of all Muslims, I, as one of the Muslims' religious authorities, having many followers all around the world, and the writer of more than 130 books in various Islamic sciences, including more than 40 books about commentary of Holy Qur'an, invite you to participate in a scientific and logical debate in a live broadcast with me to discuss about two issues:

- 1) Does Islam advocate violence or it invites to peace, amity and kindness?
- 2) Did Islam spread throughout the world through the force of sword or the extreme logic, reasoning and attraction of Islamic culture?

I will be glad to declare that I leave the time and location to you, and do not have any condition for it. I hope you would declare your agreement with this.

Wishing your ever success,

Nasser Makarim Shirazi

25.09.2006

Islamic Seminary of Qom

Islamic Republic of Iran

The invitation letter was sent to Vatican embassy in Tehran in Persian and English, but we have not received any reply yet.

3) The remonstrant letter by representative of Iranian Assyrians to Pope

The utterances of Pope Benedict XVI was so illogical and weak that even his impartial and fair coreligionists could not keep silent, and many of them stood against it. For instance, we refer hereunder to the reasonable and logical letter of MP of Iranian Assyrians in the Islamic Consultative Parliament:

In the name of God

His Eminence Pope Benedict XVI

It was very astounding for the Assyrian Christian society that you criticised harshly all beliefs of Islam

and Muslims with a different and of course hostile conception. We know that you are in the same position that Pope John Paul II as the symbol of peace and dialogue among religions, not only did he not mention anything unreasonable against Islam and Muslims, but he also forgave the Turkish Muslim who shot him.

Jesting Jihad and calling Islam violent is a questionable judgment which you utter carelessly in this critical time. Didn't your predecessor remind the Christians in an impressive statement that they shall learn religious zeal and support as well as sincerity and servitude from Muslims?

It is very surprising for the Christians in the world that why you revive the divisive utterances of the Christian Byzantine emperor, Manuel II Palaeologus in the recent centuries and renew the old wounds of Crusade Wars dressed by present civilised world?

If you renew the old wounds, Muslims too will naturally talk about the crimes committed by Crusade fighters of Catholic Church during the Middle Ages against other Christians, Jews and Muslims.

We, Assyrians, as a Christian society converting to Christianity at the time of its appearance in the east, have been living many centuries in the Islamic territories and especially in our home country, Iran. We have never been transgressed or offended by Muslims for our religious beliefs. Rather, we have been laudably honoured and respected by our countrymen.

We, Assyrians, had most cultural and scientific transactions and deals with Muslims at the beginning of Islam, and have rendered valuable services to Islamic caliphs and Muslims. Now, it is the time of dialogue and our deals at the beginning of appearance of Islam could be a live notation for our dialogue. Regretfully, your attitude is far from the dynamic civilisation

We are living with our Christian beliefs and ideas, and our eastern religion is still alive with remembrance of Eastern Church in our country, Iran. Our language and script is also alive in the territory where Islam is ruling for centuries. We have never heard nor seen the violence you are talking about, and we believe that it is not true. We too like other believers and particularly Muslims expect your excellence to apologise the dynamic one billion society. This is the same instruction of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who says: Share with your neighbor in happiness and grief.

We too like these one billion believers are grieved by this hostile judgment.

With regards,

Jonathan Betkellia

Representative of Iran's Assyrian and Chaldean Christians in the Majlis and Director of the Asian branch of the World Union of Assyrians

19.09.2006

4) Is it a mistake or something else?

A conference for studying and reviewing the causes and consequences of Pope's utterances was held in the presence of tens of eminent professors and scholars from seminary and university from 18 to 22 on Monday, 9.10.2006 in the office of Political and International Studies of Foreign Ministry, a part of which will be quoted hereunder:

Mostafa Boroujerdi, the latest ambassador of Iran in Vatican referred to parts of biography of Pope Benedict XVI and his scientific and political background, and expressed: Benedict XVI was the head of Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which can select the next Pope. However, as he was the head of Congregation, he selected himself as new Pope after demise of Pope John Paul II.

Referring to his concern about appearance and spread of Islam in Europe, especially Italy, he remarked: During the recent 40 years, number of Muslims in Europe has doubled, and this causes concern for the political, security and religious departments of European rulers.

According to Boroujerdi, Christianity has failed to fulfill the expectations of church despite of all facilities it has applied for mission. This has increased Pope's concern.

Indicating spread of Islam in Italy, he expressed: The area of Italy is half of Iran, and its population is 57 million. 437 Catholic radio channels are evangelizing in this country. However, as confessed by church authorities, the people are referring less to church. On the other hand, according to the studies, the Muslim population of this country may reach 50 million within the next 10 years. This has concerned the new Pope.

Expressing that west introduces Al-Qaida as the symbol of Islam to create hatred in Europeans against Islam, the latest ambassador of Iranian Vatican said: Another point concerning the Pope and church is that despite of growth in Islamism; Catholic Church is suffering from increase in Christians' irreligiousness.

In this congress, stating that Pope's insult against Islam is not start of Crusade War and rather it is its continuation, the scholar, Mr. Khosroshahi, the previous ambassador of Iran in Vatican stipulated: In the project of encounter with Islam, Pope is assigned with the cultural and religious part of the project, as we see that Mr. Bush too has exactly confirmed his utterances.

Referring to the biography of new Pope, he said: He was a member of the Nazi Youth organization when he was young, and then, he joined church and became a priest.

He added: It is a vulgar idea if we say that Pope's utterances have resulted from his lack of knowledge about Islam. Be sure that a Pope knows more than others about the positive points of Islam.

Khosroshahi stressed: Pope has the record of relation with Fascism in Italy and Nazism in Germany. His

correspondence with Hitler and Mussolini is a published document.

Stating that precedent Pope had a close cooperation with imperialism of U.S., he expressed: It was published in the Left dailies in Italy at the lifetime of John Paul Pope II that when he is going to comment about the critical global issues, first he studies CIA reports.

Then, Mohaghegh Damad, the great professor, head of Islam Encyclopedia stated: I beseechingly propose to select a practical strategy for replying Pope.

Stating that Pope has introduced Islam as an irrational religion, he said: For replying this question, Pope shall be reminded to study the contents of 1400 years of Islamic literature.

Many of western thinkers have confessed that Islam is the religion of rationalism. The great Islamic thinkers have been a model for the western civilisation, and the western civilisation is indebted to Islamic rationalism. This is a good reply to Pope's claim.

According to Mohaghegh Damad, regardless of physical spread of Islam during the last two centuries, concerning Christianity, conversion of great and famous western thinkers and philosophers have dealt a deathblow to western civilisation. For better understanding, can you imagine what happened to Muslims and Islamic society if, for instance, a great philosopher like Allamah Tabataba'i (as) converted to Christianity?

According to the heads of Islam Encyclopedia, like Walter and Corbin who were rationalists were astonished by Islam, and Corbin says: I love the rational Iranian Islam, and dies as a Muslim.

Referring to the narrations and verses concerned with Jihad, he said: The Islamic scholars shall study these verses and narrations to clarify the issue of Jihad for the Islamic society. 1

1. Keyhan daily.

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