

Reconsidering Hadith: evaluating the sayings attributed to the Prophet Muhammad (s)

Sunday 22 October, 2017

Checking the sources: did the Prophet Muhammad (s) really advocate violence?

It was reported in *The Guardian* on 18th October 2017 that King Salman of Saudi Arabia had issued a royal order establishing a global body of elite scholars based in the holy city of Medina to identify and eliminate “fake and extremist texts”.

A senior research fellow at Chatham House, Jane Kinnimont, is quoted as saying that the Saudi authorities have been worried about extremism both as a domestic threat and as a strain on Saudi relations with the west since 9/11.

For the last 125 years the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement and other Muslims have been debating the order of priority in which the Islamic source texts should be taken in order to determine what Islam actually says. Ahmadis have maintained that the authoritative source is the Holy Quran, because it contains the divine commands, then next in order of priority the *Sunnah* or actions of the Holy Prophet (s), followed by his sayings. All other sources such as the opinions of jurists and interpretations and extrapolations follow on after.

Lahori Ahmadis have also held that where a saying of the Holy Prophet (s) appears to contradict the Holy Quran then that saying needs to be checked for the reliability of those reporting it and preferably reinterpreted, but that as a final step, if the Holy Quran and the hadith **cannot** be reconciled, **then the hadith should be rejected**. *Non-Ahmadis* hold the *opposite* view, and regard the verses of the Holy Quran as having been ‘abrogated’.

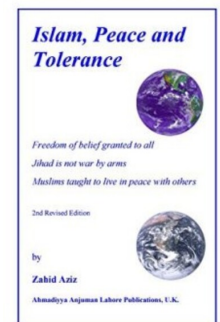
All extremist interpretations of the Holy Quran and justifications for murder and violence are based on sayings attributed to the Holy Prophet which are not, in fact, reliable. They not only *contradict* the Holy Quran but also the actions of the Holy Prophet (s). *Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad* of Qadian, who founded the original Ahmadiyya Movement (of which the AAIIIL or Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement claims to be the true representative), drew the attention of the scholars of Islam to this, inviting them look anew at the doctrine of *jihad*, for example, in the light of the Holy Quran.

In his book *The British Government and Jihad* he invited the Amir of Afghanistan to take urgent action in this regard, pointing out that the failure to do so would damage his country. **We can see today only too well the result of ignoring Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s advice.**

The [Ahmadiyya Association for the Propagation of Islam](#) (*Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at Islam*) was established in Lahore in 1914 to promote the informed understanding of Islam in the West. In the UK it operated the [Shah Jehan Mosque in Woking](#) until the early 1960s. Its new UK headquarters is at *Dar-us-Salaam*, 15 Stanley Avenue, Wembley, HA0 4JQ, UK. In 1924, in Berlin, it built the first mosque in Continental Europe of the modern era. The [Berlin Mosque](#) is now recognised by the German government as part of the German national heritage. From its European and other centres around the world this organisation has taught that Islam promotes peace, harmony and mutual respect between all communities and nationalities.

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4. Liberal View of Other Religions

Faith in all prophets
There is a great misconception that the Quran preaches intolerance, and that Muhammad preached his faith with the sword in one hand and the Quran in the other. The basic principle of Islam, a faith in all the prophets of the world, is enough to give the lie to this allegation. The great and liberal mind that preached not only love and respect for the founders of the great religions of the world but much more than that, faith in them, could not shrink to the narrowness of intolerance for those who preceded. Tolerance is, in fact, the word that can sufficiently indicate the breadth of the attitude of Islam towards other religions. It preaches equal love for all, equal respect for all, and equal faith in all.

No compulsion in religion
Again, intolerance could not be ascribed to a book which altogether excludes compulsion from the sphere of religion.— 2:256
“There is no compulsion in religion.”— 2:256
In fact, the Holy Quran is full of statements showing that belief in this or that religion is a person’s own concern, and that he is given the choice of adopting one way or another; that, if he accepts truth, it is for his own good, and that, if he sticks to error, it is to his own detriment. Given below are just two of these quotations:
“The Truth is from your Lord; so whoever wishes, let him believe, and whoever wishes, let him disbelieve.”— 18:29
“Clear proofs have indeed come to you from your Lord; so whoever sees, it is for the good of his own soul; and whoever is blind, it is to his harm. And I am not a keeper over you.”— 6:108

Why fighting was allowed
The Muslims were allowed to fight indeed, but the object was not to compel the unbelievers to accept Islam, for it was against all the broad principles in which they had hitherto been brought up. It was

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to establish religious freedom, to stop all religious persecution, to protect the houses of worship of all religions, mosques among them.

Relations of friendship with others
It is sometimes asserted that the Quran forbids relations of friendship with the followers of other religions. How could a Book which allows a man to have as his comrade in life a woman following another religion (2:5), say in the same breath that no friendly relations can be had with the followers of other religions? The loving relation of husband and wife is the friendliness of all relations and, when this is expressly permitted, there is not the least reason to suppose that other friendly relations are forbidden. The fact is that, wherever there is prohibition against making friends with other people, it relates only to the people who were at war with the Muslims, and this is plainly stated in the Quran.
“Allah does not forbid you, with regard to those who do not fight you for religion, nor drive you forth from your homes, that you show them kindness and deal with them justly. Surely Allah loves the doers of justice. Allah forbids you only with regard to those who fight you for religion, and drive you forth from your homes and help (others) in your expulsion, that you make friends of them; and whoever makes friends of them, these are the wrongdoers.”— 60:8

No punishment for apostasy
It is generally thought that the Quran provides a death sentence for those who desert the religion of Islam. Anyone who reads the Quran will see that there is not the least ground for such a supposition. The Quran speaks repeatedly of people going back to unbelief after believing, but never once does it say that they should be killed or punished. For example:
“And whoever of you turns back from his religion, then he dies while an unbeliever— those it is whose deeds are fruitless in this world and the Hereafter.”— 2:217
“Those who disbelieve after their believing, then increase in disbelief, their repentance is not accepted, and those are they that go astray.”— 3:90



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