

# Answering Islam

a christian-muslim dialog

“Anyone Who Claims that Jihad Does Not Originate from Religion (Islam) Is Lying!”

من قال إنّ الجهاد ليس من الدين فقد كذب!

By Jacob Thomas



This bold headline, perhaps meant to shock conventional belief, appeared on the online daily *Alawan*, on, 12 August, 2009, “*Anyone who claims that Jihad does not originate from the Islamic religion is lying.*” (من قال إنّ الجهاد ليس من الدين فقد كذب!)

A photo was included alongside the statement which exploded the myth of *Jihad* as mere personal “spiritual struggle” which some of the men and boys who follow Mohammed claim to experience. This crowd of men was being led by a grim-faced and determined young boy wielding a sword, with “*Allahu Akbar*” emblazoned on his headband! The writer then sets out to prove his assertion that *Jihad* comes directly from Islam and is most often not a mere “spiritual struggle” at all but a grand organizing concept encompassing Islamic world conquest, and subjugation and sometimes death to Islam’s enemies – all of which come under the category of the unbelieving “Other.” One can only hope it will be read with good effect among thinking Islamists. One obvious effect of his essay, at least to this reviewer, is how his thesis explodes the often repeated claim of certain Muslims seeking accommodation from Western leaders to Islam’s tenets, that *Jihad* is primarily a spiritual struggle within a Muslim’s soul, and should not be interpreted as an aggressive ideological concept meant to wreak havoc against non-Muslims.

The author develops his thesis by referring to the authoritative Islamic texts, the Qur'an and authentic Hadiths, as well as pointing out the special radio and television programs that are prepared with the purpose of entertaining Muslims during the long summer evenings of Ramadan! The meaning of *Jihad* and its incorporation into the ceremonies of Ramadan indicates an attempt by true believers to further their aims of not allowing *Jihad* to be forgotten by others amongst them who might conceivably be questioning its validity. This evidence the writer accumulates all points to an unhappy overriding fact that in most instances **Jihad means war against the Infidels of the world.**

Quoted below are excerpts from the article, followed by my concluding analysis and comments.

Educated Muslims, and others from various traditions who agree with them, tend to describe "*Jihad in the Pathway of Allah*" as a struggle against human passions, and the soul's inclination to evil. But does this emphasis on the spiritual aspect of *Jihad*, while concealing its combative nature, help non-Muslims to feel more secure? Actually, the *Fuqaha (legal authorities)* of Islam, as well as the majority of Muslims, understand *Jihad* as a holy war against the enemies of Allah and His prophet.

Islam has practiced *Jihad* from its earliest days. The war against the *Kuffar* was not simply a just war, but it was a religious duty, depicted as a good deed that guarantees a Muslim's entry into Paradise. Furthermore, Muslims have never hesitated to advocate the duty of spreading their religion throughout the world; and thus Jihad became the ideal way to accomplish that goal. While there are certain *Ayaat* in the *Qur'an* that call for tolerance toward Christians and Jews, other *Ayaat* call for fighting them. As for those who are neither Christians, nor Jews, they face no choice but embracing Islam, or migration, or death. The Qur'an addresses the Arab nation as a unique and chosen nation entrusted by Allah with the task of spreading his knowledge and will all over the world:

***"Ye are the best community that hath been raised up for mankind. Ye enjoin right conduct and forbid indecency; and ye believe in Allah. And if the People of the Scripture had believed it had been better for them. Some of them are believers; but most of them are evil-livers."*** Surat *Al-'Imran* (The House of 'Imran) 3:110

Since Muslims have been united in the belief in the universality of Islam, they have adopted *Jihad* as the ideal method for the worldwide propagation of their faith. Anyone reading the *Qur'an* will soon discover those *Ayaat* that manifest intolerance vis-à-vis Christians and Jews.

***"A party of the People of the Scripture long to make you go astray; and they make none to go astray except themselves, but they perceive not."*** Surat *Al-'Imran* (The House of 'Imran) 3:69

***"Let those fight in the cause of God who sell the life of this world for the Hereafter, to him who fighteth in the cause of God, whether he is slain or gets victory, soon shall We give him a reward of great (value)."*** *An-Nisa* (Women) 4:74

***“O ye who believe! take not the Jews and the Christians for your friends and protectors: They are but friends and protectors to each other. And he amongst you that turns to them (for friendship) is of them. Verily God guideth not a people unjust.” Al-Ma’ida (The Table) 5:51***

***“O Prophet! strive hard [wage war] against the unbelievers and the Hypocrites, and be firm against them. Their abode is Hell, - an evil refuge indeed.” Al-Tawba (Repentance) 9:73***

***“O Prophet! make war on the infidels and hypocrites, and deal rigorously with them. Hell shall be their abode! and wretched the passage to it!” At-Tahrim (Prohibition) 66:9***

***“Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the last day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by Allah and his apostle nor acknowledge the religion of truth of the people of the Book (the Jews and the Christians) until they pay the Jizya [tax on non-Muslims] with willing submission and feel themselves subdued.” Al-Tawba (Repentance) 9:29***

One of the results of *Jihad* was the ordeals of the *Dhimmi*s (Christians and Jews living under Islam). Another consequence of *Jihad* was the punishment of Apostates (*Murtaddeen*). And beginning with the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D., *Jihad* became an institution in the *Pathway of Allah (Fi Sabeel Allah)*, as celebrated by the jurist *Ibn Taymiyya*.<sup>1</sup> According to him, *Jihad* was one of the most important duties in Islam, even better than the *Hajj*, or fasting during *Ramadan*, or the ritual prayers! *Rashid Rida*, a disciple of *Muhammad ‘Abdu*, declared as *Kuffar* (Infidels) all those “westernized” Muslims such as *Salameh Musa, Muhammad Hussein Haykal, and Taha Hussein*. Then *Hasan al-Banna* (founder of the Muslim Brotherhood) continued the tradition of *Rashid Rida*. As to *Abul ‘Ala’ al-Maududi*’s book, “*Al-Jihad Fi Sabeel Allah*”, it has become the textbook for transcontinental Islamic radicalism. All the attempts of reformists like *Imam Mahdi Shams al-Deen* and others for the use non-violence means in the spread of Islam, have failed to change the concept of *Jihad*, as commonly understood in the codified Islamic tradition.

All that one needs to learn about *Jihad* is to go on the Internet, and using a search engine, type the word “*Jihad*,” to find all kinds of information dealing ***with war, fighting, and suffering in the Path of Religion (i.e. Islam)***. The picture of a *Shaheed* (martyr) is embedded in the consciousness of Muslims. A *Shaheed* is glorified, anyone who is killed in a battle for the spread of Islam is considered as a soldier in the army of *Allah*. To engage in armed *Jihad* in order to enlarge the Islamic Empire is an integral part of the Qur’anic teachings. It was actually a great factor in that unusually rapid spread of Islam. *Jihad* is extolled in the highest levels of Islam. Just listen to the words of Iran’s President *Mahmoud Ahmadinejad*, ***‘If we want to build our country, maintain our greatness, and solve all our economic problems, all we need is martyrdom; it’s the shortest route to arrive at the summit of grace!’***

Here are also some well-known *Hadiths* that extol *Jihad*:

*Hadith 1.24* “Narrated Ibn `Umar: Allah’s Apostle said: ‘I have been ordered (by Allah) to fight against the people until they testify that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah and that Muhammad is Allah’s Apostle, and offer the prayers’”

*Hadith 1.25* “Narrated Abu Huraira: Allah’s Apostle was asked, ‘What is the best deed?’ He replied, ‘To believe in Allah and His Apostle (Muhammad). The questioner then asked, ‘What is the next (in goodness)?’ He replied, ‘To participate in Jihad (religious fighting) in Allah’s Cause.’”

*Sahih Muslim 4363*: “You (the Jews) should know that the earth belongs to Allah and His Apostle and I wish to expel you from this land (Arabia).”

*Sahih Muslim 4366*: “Narrated by Umar ibn al-Khattab. Umar heard the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) say: “I will expel the Jews and Christians from the Arabian Peninsula and will not leave any but Muslims.”

The concept of an aggressive and military *Jihad* has dominated the conscience and sub-conscious minds of Muslims. The reason for *Jihad* is not really attacks made against Muslims, but is required by the very unbelief of the *Infidels*. *Jihad’s* goal is to manifest Islam’s superiority over all other religions. No matter how hard some observers of Islam have attempted to hide the real face of *Jihad*, and to conceal its aggressive nature, still fighting in the *Pathway of Allah* remains closer to the spirit of Islam; since it is readily supported by the *Qur’an*, and the *Sunna*, as we have already noticed.

In the final analysis, the goal of *Jihad* remains, namely, to occupy the whole world and make it submit to the rule of the *Shari’a*, through the instrumentality of “*the best community that hath been raised up for mankind*,” the community chosen by Allah to guide all of humanity. This is the true meaning of *Jihad*; and every other definition amounts to a planned deception. Therefore, there is no use to attempt to play with the etymology of the word “*Jihad*,” and describe it as a spiritual exercise in piety! Its place remains in the very heart of Islam; it is even better than prayers, and it was through it that the Apostle gained victory over the *Infidels*.

We should also remember that both ancient and modern Islam recognize only two realms. **One is already Islamized and the other is on the way to Islamization.** This explains the classical division of the world into “*Dar’ul-Islam*” (The House of Islam), and “*Dar’ul Harb*,” (The House of War.)

It was quite revealing [as we have been discussing the true nature of *Jihad*] that in April, 2008, the *Society of the Algerian Muslim ‘Ulema* (Religious Authorities) organized a special written contest for Algerian young people. They were to compose an essay (**but not to debate it!**) on the following theme: “**The Law of Muhammad will conquer the whole world, since it is compatible with reason and wisdom.**” Equally worth noticing is that the statues of the national hero, *Emir Abdel-Kader*, as seen in many Algerian

public squares, portray him as yielding a threatening sword; whereas in his real life he was, fundamentally, a *Sufi* poet!

### **Analysis**

It is quite evident that the above words did not come from an Islamophobe, but from a frank and reforming North African Muslim. Such a reforming spirit as this writer exhibits is shared by other Muslim moderates. He is seeking to show how *Jihad* has become imbedded in the very psyches of Muslim men and boys. They feel superior to the “Other” and an aggressive worldview is instilled in them from an early age out of their very own sacred texts. The militaristic aspects of such *Jihad* should not be underestimated or ignored. World domination is the goal. The writer is anxious for others to ponder how the violent texts in their holy book still move men and boys to become “true believers” who harbor violent and aggressive tendencies and thoughts of Islam’s future world domination.

### **Comment**

The article is a reminder to all that the power of *Jihad* lies predominantly in its sacred texts. And the working out of those texts in real life makes for aggressive, domineering and sometimes violent actions by boys and men who are captivated by being part of what they deem to be total truth and the importance of seeking in every way possible to bring about the world domination their religious texts set forth as inevitable. Those in the West who redefine *Jihad* only to mean “spiritual struggle” are deluding themselves. Such people found predominantly in politics, the liberal academy and among liberal churchmen, exhibit how indebted they are to the late and highly controversial Palestinian-American scholar Edward Said. The American Academy in particular has capitulated to his famous anti-Western *Orientalism* thesis that Western scholars can never truly understand the Muslim world. It has resulted in intellectuals often being highly critical of their own culture and its past practices, especially during colonialism. But they are more than willing to cultivate and accept Islam as a “religion of peace” while turning a blind eye toward its more sinister aspects and deadly rampages over the centuries since its founding. In their eyes *Jihad* has only good connotations and reflects nothing as serious as civilizational conflict.

I end by quoting the words of the late Professor Samuel P. Huntington, who was for many years director of the John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies and chairman of the Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies and had a significantly different view from his liberal fellows in the academy. He understood the reality of civilizational conflict inherent in Islam as it confronted all other cultures and religions.

***In all these places, [reference is to Middle East and Africa] the relations between Muslims and peoples of other civilizations --- Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, Hindu, Chinese, Buddhist, Jewish --- have been generally antagonistic; most of these relations have been violent at some point in the past; many have been violent in the 1990s. Wherever one looks at the perimeter of Islam, Muslims have problems living peaceably***

*with their neighbors. The questions naturally rises as to whether this pattern of late-twentieth-century conflict between Muslim and non-Muslim groups is equally true of relations between groups from other civilizations. In fact, it is not. Muslims make up about one-fifth of the world's population but in the 1990s they have been far more involved in intergroup violence than the people of any other civilization. The evidence is overwhelming.*<sup>2</sup>

## **Post Script**

Internal Jihad Never Stops in Iraq; 19 August, 2009

Just a few days before Ramadan, Islamic terrorists attacked the Iraqi Government building complex housing several ministries, killing 95 people, and wounding around 563!



Source: Al-Sharq al-Awsat Online Daily, **20 August 2009**, with the top headline: "**Terrorists get through to the very heart of Baghdad leaving hundreds of dead and wounded.**"

## **Footnotes**

<sup>1</sup> *Ibn Taymiyya* lived during the times of the Crusader and Mongol invasions, a circumstance that conditioned his theories on the jihad. When the Mongols invaded Dar al-Islam they eventually converted to Islam. The dilemma arose as to whether the war against them should be considered a jihad or a war between two Muslim entities. In his fatwa on the Mongols, Ibn Taymiyya acknowledged that they practiced the five pillars of Islam, but this did not automatically make them true Muslims. The mainstream view was that under the Shari'a they were Muslims, but Ibn Taymiyya introduced a new evaluation criterion: Whether or not they respected the five pillars, if someone did not follow one of the precepts of the Shari'a, they ceased being Muslim and could therefore be declared kafir. ([Source](#))

<sup>2</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, [Simon & Schuster, New York, NY 10020] 1996, Chapter 10 “*From Transition Wars to Fault Line Wars*”, p. 256.