

MUHAMMAD'S SWORD (PART 2 OF 2)

Rating: 3.7

Description: A Jewish atheist speaks about the notion that Islam spread by the sword. Part Two: Spread of Islam and Muslim rule in comparison with Christianity.

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By: Uri Avnery (<http://gush-shalom.org>, 23/09/06)

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The pope himself threw in a word of caution. As a serious and renowned theologian, he could not afford to falsify written texts. Therefore, he admitted that the Quran specifically forbade the spreading of the faith by force. He quoted the second Sura, verse 256 (strangely fallible, for a pope, he meant verse 257) which says:

“There must be no coercion in matters of faith.”

How can one ignore such an unequivocal statement? The Pope simply argues that this commandment was laid down by the prophet when he was at the beginning of his career, still weak and powerless, but that later on he ordered the use of the sword in the service of the faith. Such an order does not exist in the Quran. True, Muhammad called for the use of the sword in his war against opposing tribes - Christian, Jewish and others - in Arabia, when he was building his state. But that was a political act, not a religious one; basically a fight for territory, not for the spreading of the faith.

Jesus said: “You will recognize them by their fruits.” The treatment of other religions by Islam must be judged by a simple test: How did the Muslim rulers behave for more than a thousand years, when they had the power to “spread the faith by the sword”?

Well, they just did not.

For many centuries, the Muslims ruled Greece. Did the Greeks become Muslims? Did anyone even try to Islamize them? On the contrary, Christian Greeks held the highest positions in the Ottoman administration. The Bulgarians, Serbs, Romanians, Hungarians and other European nations lived at one time or another under Ottoman rule and clung to their Christian faith. Nobody compelled them to become Muslims and all of them remained devoutly Christian.

True, the Albanians did convert to Islam, and so did the Bosniaks. But nobody argues that they did this under duress. They adopted Islam in order to become favorites of the government and enjoy the fruits.

In 1099, the Crusaders conquered Jerusalem and massacred its Muslim and Jewish inhabitants indiscriminately, in the name of the gentle Jesus. At that time, 400 years into the occupation of Palestine by the Muslims, Christians were still the majority in the country. Throughout this long period, no effort was made to impose Islam on them. Only after the expulsion of the Crusaders from the country, did the majority of the inhabitants start to adopt the Arabic language and the Muslim faith - and they were the forefathers of most of today's Palestinians.

There is no evidence whatsoever of any attempt to impose Islam on the Jews. As is well known, under Muslim rule the Jews of Spain enjoyed a bloom the like of which the Jews did not enjoy anywhere else until almost our time. Poets like Yehuda Halevy wrote in Arabic, as did the great Maimonides. In Muslim Spain, Jews were ministers, poets, scientists. In Muslim Toledo, Christian, Jewish and Muslim scholars worked together and translated the ancient Greek philosophical and scientific texts. That was, indeed, the Golden Age. How would this have been possible, had the Prophet decreed the "spreading of the faith by the sword"?

What happened afterwards is even more telling. When the Catholics re-conquered Spain from the Muslims, they instituted a reign of religious terror. The Jews and the Muslims were presented with a cruel choice: to become Christians, to be massacred or to leave. And where did the hundreds of thousand of Jews, who refused to abandon their faith, escape? Almost all of them were received with open arms in the Muslim countries. The Sephardi ("Spanish") Jews settled all over the Muslim world, from Morocco in the west to Iraq in the east, from Bulgaria (then part of the Ottoman Empire) in the north to Sudan in the south. Nowhere were they persecuted. They knew nothing like the tortures of the Inquisition, the flames of the auto-da-fe, the pogroms, the terrible mass-expulsions that took place in almost all Christian countries, up to the Holocaust.

Why? Because Islam expressly prohibited any persecution of the "peoples of the book" [\[1\]](#). In Islamic society, a special place was reserved for Jews and Christians. They did not enjoy completely equal rights, but almost. They had to pay a special poll-tax, but were exempted from military service - a trade-off that was quite welcome to many Jews. It has been said that Muslim rulers frowned upon any attempt to convert Jews to Islam even by gentle persuasion - because it entailed the loss of taxes [\[2\]](#).

Every honest Jew who knows the history of his people cannot but feel a deep sense of gratitude to Islam, which has protected the Jews for fifty generations, while the Christian world persecuted the Jews and tried many times "by the sword" to get them to abandon their faith.

The story about "spreading the faith by the sword" is an evil legend, one of the myths that grew up in Europe during the great wars against the Muslims - the reconquista of Spain by the Christians, the Crusades and the repulsion of the Turks, who almost conquered Vienna. I suspect that the German Pope, too, honestly believes in these fables. That means that the leader of the Catholic world, who is a Christian theologian in his own right, did not make the effort to study the history of other religions.

Why did he utter these words in public? And why now?

There is no escape from viewing them against the background of the new Crusade of Bush and his evangelist supporters, with his slogans of “Islamofascism” and the “Global War on Terrorism” - when “terrorism” has become a synonym for Muslims. For Bush’s handlers, this is a cynical attempt to justify the domination of the world’s oil resources. Not for the first time in history, a religious robe is spread to cover the nakedness of economic interests; not for the first time, a robbers’ expedition becomes a Crusade.

The speech of the Pope blends into this effort. Who can foretell the dire consequences?^[3]

Footnotes:

[1] Not only “Peoples of the Book”, but oppression of all others as well- *IslamReligion*.

[2] The author is mistaken in this statement, as the tax imposed upon non-Muslims was insubstantial to other means of generating public income. Rather, all Muslims encouraged and will continue to encourage others to enter its fold - *IslamReligion*.

[3] Disclaimer: All views of this author are not held by IslamReligion nor purported by Islam – *IslamReligion*.

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