

A GLIMPSE OF TOLERANCE IN THE CONCEPT OF ISLAM

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Abstract

The article analyzes the principles of tolerance in Islam based on history, divine sources, and the views of Western thinkers. Virtues such as patience, forgiveness, and justice occupy a special place in the Quran and Sunnah. Western historians are moving away from the view that Islam was spread by the sword and are recognizing its humane and peace-loving characteristics.

Keywords: Islam, tolerance, Quran, western historians, stereotypes of terrorism, interfaith relations

Introduction

The myth that Islam was spread by the sword is disappearing from the pages of serious historical works written in the West. Western historians are abandoning such claims because they are faced with a number of situations. These situations include the following:

- The fact that there is no reliable information about whether anyone was forced into Islam during its history;
- that the territories of the nations with the majority of the population have not been occupied by Muslims (for example, Malaysian and Indonesian nations);
- the fact that peoples who conquered Muslim countries and exercised their political and military rule there (for example, Turks and Tatars) themselves accepted Islam before much time had passed;
- the decline of Muslims under various external influences, their distortion of the true essence of their religion based on their personal perceptions, and the consequent increase in the number of those who consciously and voluntarily follow Islam, despite the various superstitions that have spread;
- Despite the fact that the majority of the Muslim world was under the occupation of Western countries until the middle of the 20th century, the nature of the spread of Islam and the possibilities of repelling the forces against it did not disappear.

The Italian orientalist Laura Vaglieri, astonished by the above circumstances, wrote in her book "The Description of Islam" (An Interpretation of Islam), he writes: "Is there any miraculous power in this religion? Where does its power of persuasion come from? What strings of the human heart does it pull to make it respond to its calls without saying a word?" [1:31].

However, despite the work of Western historians to revise the above considerations about the spread of Islam by the sword, the ideas about Islam as cruel, fanatical and aggressive, formed in medieval Europe, still persist. One of the reasons for this is the terrorist attacks in the United States in 2001. Due to these attacks, the entire religion began to be used in conjunction with the term terrorism. The views of representatives of a number of Western sectors can be cited in this regard.

Bill O'Reilly, a commentator on the American television and radio company "Fox", while describing the Quran, compares it to Adolf Hitler's book "Mein Kampf". Jerry Fine, the former head of America's largest Protestant denomination, describes the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as "a man with the devil inside him". Another famous American religious figure, Gary Falwell, has called the Prophet a terrorist. Another famous American evangelist, Franklin Graham, said at the inauguration of the US president: "This religion is an evil religion that aims to harm itself" [3:36].

American Enterprise magazine, in its December 2001 issue. "Its very essence is hatred and enmity... Islam is a religion of enslavement, and it is the new enemy that stands at the threshold of our civilization today". Farida Zakaria, international editor of Newsweek magazine, wrote in her October 15, 2001 issue: "Muslims are being raised in a culture of hostility and distrust toward the West. This culture does not deny terrorism, but rather fosters a brutality and bigotry that is rooted in its own heart". Don Feder, editor-in-chief of the Boston Herald, wrote in his November 5, 2001, issue: "Islamic terrorism is not an accident. It has become the norm. Islam, which emerged in the seventh century, spread by the sword throughout the world from the Pyrenees to the Philippines by the seventeenth century. Today it is resurgent, but it is not spread by wild horsemen. Its banner is now carried by murderous gangs, terrorists, and dictators" [6:22].

Naturally, the resounding of such opinions by a number of famous experts in the field through the mass media did not fail to have an effect on the public consciousness. And these visions continue to this day.

In order to demonstrate that the above-mentioned biased opinions about Islam are based on emotions and to prove that tolerance is a major part of this religion, it is necessary to turn, at least in part, to its main divine source.

No one can deny that the true basis of tolerance and its product are kindness, patience, and other moral virtues. It is worth noting that the Quran mentions kindness, gentleness, goodness, forgiveness, and patience more than 900 times. The Quran teaches people to be kind to Allah and His Prophet [Muhammad [SAW] indirectly calls upon the believers to be characterized by the above-mentioned virtuous qualities, or praises their possession and commands them to do so. Several examples from the Quran can be cited as evidence. Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 143: **"Indeed, Allah is Kind and Merciful to mankind"** [5:20]. Surah Al-Anbiya, verse 107: **"And We have not sent you, [O Muammad], except as a mercy to the worlds"** [5:316]. Surah Al-Imran, verse 134: **"Who spend [in the cause of Allah] during ease and hardship and who restrain anger and who pardon the people – and Allah loves the doers of good"** [5:60]. These are just three examples from many others.

After the quotations from the Quran, the question arises: is there any other civilization that is so full of moral virtues? Is there any other culture other than Islam that extols the virtues of tolerance in its most fundamental source? Here, only examples from the Quran have been cited, but the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad, which if collected would amount to many volumes, calling his ummah to the above virtues have not been cited. Or, the words of Islamic scholars based on the Quran and Sunnah, which would fill a large library, have not been mentioned.

At the same time, it should be emphasized that tolerance in Islam is not characterized by weakness, humiliation, or inability to withstand the oppression and oppression that is directed at it. The Quran clearly describes what measures should be taken against those who are subjected to such humiliation and oppression. In Surah Ash -Shura, verses 40-43: **“And the retribution for an evil act is an evil one like it, but whoever pardons and makes reconciliation – his reward is [due] from Allah. Indeed, He does not like wrongdoers. And whoever avenges himself after having been wronged – those have not upon them any cause [for blame]. The cause is only against the ones who wrong the people and tyrannize upon the earth without right. Those will have a painful punishment. And whoever is patient and forgives – indeed, that is of the matters [worthy] of resolve”** [5:484]. In these verses, the virtues of patience are also emphasized.

The opposite nature of tolerance, evil, and goodness in Islam does not put people on the same level. The Quran, Surah Ghafir, verse 58: **“And not equal are the blind and the seeing, nor are those who believe and do righteous deeds and the evildoer. Little do you remember”** [5:470].

It would be appropriate to present, from an objective point of view, the views of Western thinkers on tolerance in Islam. The great British orientalist De Lazzi O'Leary, in his “Arab Thought and its place in History”, he says: “History itself has amply proven that the tales of Western historians that Muslims spread Islam across the world with the “point of a knife” are a blind superstition” [2:1].

Italian orientalist Laura Vaglieri in her book “An Interpretation of Islam” he says: “It is not an exaggeration to say that Islam not only limited itself to a call for religious tolerance, but also made it part of its permanent law” [1:27].

English writer Herbert George Wells in his “Outline of History” says: “Islam spread and ruled because it gave humanity the best political and social system, the most perfect of which has never been achieved before. This system, which provides a broad, pure and flawless political idea, can be used as a practical program in the world today” [4:613-614].

Many such Western thinkers can be cited. The conclusion of the above information is that in Islam, man (any) is created with dignity. Since the object of tolerance is man, then Islam is by its very nature a religion of tolerance.

References

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