43087 - Was Islam spread by the sword?

the question

Was Islam spread by the sword?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

We have already stated in question no. 34830 that jihad is of two types: taking the initiative in fighting and jihad in self-defence.

Undoubtedly taking the initiative in fighting has a great effect in spreading Islam and bringing people into the religion of Allaah in crowds. Hence the hearts of the enemies of Islam are filled with fear of jihad.

In the English-language Muslim World Magazine it says: There should be some kind of fear in the western world, one of the causes of which is that since the time it first appeared in Makkah, Islam has never decreased in numbers, rather it has always continued to increase and spread. Moreover Islam is not only a religion, rather one of its pillars is jihad.

Robert Bean says: The Muslims conquered the entire world before and they could do it again.

The Orientalists wanted to slander Islam by claiming that it was spread by the sword.

The orientalist Thomas Arnold wrote his book The Preaching of Islam with the aim of killing off the spirit of jihad among the Muslims and proving that Islam was not spread by the sword, rather that it spread by means of peaceful preaching, free from any use of force.

The Muslims fell into the trap that was set up for them. When they heard the orientalists' accusations that Islam was spread by the sword, they said: You are mistaken, listen to a refutation

from one of your own people, this Thomas says such and such.

The defeatists among the Muslims come out to defend Islam, and they want to disavow Islam of this so-called lie, so they deny that Islam was spread by the sword, and they say that jihad is not prescribed in Islam, except in the case of self-defence. There is no such thing in Islam as taking the initiative in fighting in their view. This goes against what the Muslim scholars have stated, let alone the fact that it goes against the Qur'aan and Sunnah.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah said in Majmoo' al-Fataawa, 28/263.

The purpose is that all religion should be for Allaah alone, and that the word of Allaah should be supreme. The word of Allaah is a comprehensive phrase that refers to His words that are contained in His Book. Hence Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"Indeed We have sent Our Messengers with clear proofs, and revealed with them the Scripture and the Balance (justice) that mankind may keep up justice"

[al-Hadeed 57:25]

The purpose behind sending the Messengers and revealing the Books was so that mankind might keep up justice with regard to the rights of Allaah and the rights of His creation. Then Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"And We brought forth iron wherein is mighty power (in matters of war), as well as many benefits for mankind, that Allaah may test who it is that will help Him (His religion) and His Messengers in the unseen"

[al-Hadeed 57:25]

So whoever deviates from the Book is to be brought back with iron, i.e. by force. Hence the soundness of the religion is based on the Qur'aan and the Sword. It was narrated that Jaabir ibn 'Abd-Allaah (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) commanded us to strike with this, meaning the sword, whoever turns away

from this, meaning the Qur’aan.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allaah have mercy on him) said in al-Faroosiyyah (p.18):

Allaah sent him – meaning the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) – with the guiding Book and the conquering sword, ahead of the Hour, so that Allaah alone would be worshipped with no partner or associate, and his provision was placed beneath the shade of his sword and spear. Allaah has established the religion of Islam with proof and evidence, and with the sword and spear, both together and inseparable.

This is some of the evidence from the Qur’aan and Sunnah. The evidence clearly indicates that the sword is one of the most important means that led to the spread of Islam.

1 – Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“For had it not been that Allaah checks one set of people by means of another, monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, wherein the Name of Allaah is mentioned much would surely, have been pulled down. Verily, Allaah will help those who help His (Cause). Truly, Allaah is All-Strong, All-Mighty”

[al-Hajj 22:40]

“And if Allaah did not check one set of people by means of another, the earth would indeed be full of mischief. But Allaah is full of bounty to the ‘Aalameen (mankind, jinn and all that exists)”

[al-Baqarah 2:251]

2 – Allaah has commanded us to prepare the means of fighting against the kuffaar and frightening them. He says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And make ready against them all you can of power, including steeds of war (tanks, planes, missiles, artillery) to threaten the enemy of Allaah and your enemy, and others besides whom, you may not know but whom Allaah does know”

[al-Anfaal 8:60]

If Islam was only spread by peaceful means, what would the kuffaar have to be afraid of? Of mere words spoken on the tongue? In al-Saheehayn it is narrated that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “I have been supported with fear as far as a month’s journey.” Would the kuffaar be afraid of being told, “become Muslim, but if you do not then you are free to believe and do whatever you want”? or were they afraid of jihad and the imposition of the jizyah and being humiliated? That may make them enter Islam so that they may be spared this humiliation.

3 – When the Messenger called people to Islam, his call was accompanied by the sword, and he commanded his leaders to do likewise, so that when the people saw the serious of the Muslims in calling people to their religion, that dispelled any confusion.

Al-Bukhaari (3009) and Muslim (2406) narrated that Sahl ibn Sa’d (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said on the day of Khaybar: “Tomorrow I will give the banner to a man at whose hands victory will come, one who loves Allaah and His Messenger, and Allaah and His Messenger love him.” The people spent that night wondering which of them would be given the banner and all of them were hoping for it. Then he (the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him)) said, “Where is ‘Ali?” It was said, “His eye is hurting.” So he spat in his eyes and made du’aa’ for him, and he was healed, as if there had not been anything wrong with him. Then he gave him the flag and he [‘Ali] said: “Shall I fight them so that they will be like us?” He said: “Go ahead, until you reach their encampment, then call them to Islam and tell them what they are obliged to do, for by Allaah if Allaah were to guide a man at your hands that would be better for you than having red camels [the best kind].”

So this call to Islam was accompanied by the force of arms.

Muslim (3261) narrated that Buraydah said: When the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) appointed a commander to lead an army or a raiding party, he would advise him to fear Allaah with regard to himself and the Muslims with him, then he said: “Fight in the name of Allaah and for the sake of Allaah. Fight those who disbelieve in Allaah, fight but do not

steal from the war booty (before it is shared out), betray, or mutilate. Do not kill children. If you meet your enemy of the mushrikeen, call them to three things, and whichever one of them they respond to, accept that from them and leave them alone. Then call them to Islam and if they respond, accept that from them and leave them alone. If they refuse but they pay the jizyah, then they have responded to you, so accept that from them and leave them alone. If they refuse then seek the help of Allaah and fight them…"

So the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) told his commanders to call the kuffaar to Islam whilst wielding their swords over their heads. If they refused to become Muslim then they should pay the jizyah with humility. If they refused then there was nothing left for them but the sword – "If they refuse then seek the help of Allaah and fight them"

4 – The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "I have been sent ahead of the Hour with the sword so that Allaah will be worshipped alone, and my provision has been placed in the shade of my spear, and humiliation has been decreed for those who go against my command, and whoever imitates a people is one of them." Narrated by Ahmad, 4869; Saheeh al-Jaami', 2831.

The fact that the sword and power were means of spreading Islam is not a sources of shame for Islam, rather it is one of its strengths and virtues, because that makes people adhere to that which will benefit them in this world and in the Hereafter. Many people are foolish and lacking in wisdom and knowledge, and if they are left to their own devices they will remain blinded to the truth, indulging in their whims and desires. So Allaah has prescribed jihad in order to bring them back to the truth and to that which will benefit them. Undoubtedly wisdom dictates that the fool should be prevented from doing that which will harm him, and should be forced to do that which will benefit him.

Al-Bukhaari (4557) narrated that Abu Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: " 'You (true believers in Islamic Monotheism, and real followers of Prophet Muhammad and his Sunnah) are the best of peoples ever raised up for mankind' [Aal- Imraan 3:110 – interpretation of the meaning]." He said: "You are the best (i.e., the most beneficial) of people for mankind, you bring them in the

chains that are around their necks until they enter Islam.” Can people be brought in chains except in the case of jihad??

This is something for which Islam deserves to be praised, not condemned. The defeatists should fear Allaah lest they distort this religion and cause it to become weak on the basis of the claim that it is a religion of peace. Yes, it is the religion of peace but in the sense of saving all of mankind from worshipping anything other than Allaah and submitting all of mankind to the rule of Allaah. This is the religion of Allaah, not the ideas of any person or the product of human thought, so that those who promote it should feel ashamed to state its ultimate goal, which is that all religion (worship) should be for Allaah alone. When the ideas that people follow are all produced by human beings and the systems and laws that control their lives are all made up by human beings, then in this case each idea and each system has the right to live safely within its own borders so long as it does not transgress the borders of others, so the various ideas and laws can co-exist and not try to destroy one another. But when there is a divine system and law, and alongside it there are human systems and laws, then the matter is fundamentally different, and the divine law has the right to remove the barriers and free people from enslavement to human beings…

Fiqh al-Da’wah by Sayyid Qutb, 217-222.

It says in Fataawa al-Lajnah al-Daa’imah (12/14):

Islam spread by means of proof and evidence to those who listened to the message and responded to it, and it spread by means of force and the sword to those who were stubborn and arrogant, until they were overwhelmed and became no longer stubborn, and submitted to that reality.

And Allaah knows best.