

165408 - Specious argument from a Christian who claims that there are verses in the Qur'an which contradict the verse {There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion} [al-Baqarah 2:256]

the question

A Christian put this question to me, and I would like an answer to it so that I can send it to him. He says that in the Qur'an, in Soorat al-Baqarah, it says *{There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion} [al-Baqarah 2:256]*, but elsewhere it urges its Muslim followers to kill the polytheists: *{then kill the polytheists wherever you find them} [at-Tawbah 9:5]*; and there are many other verses which urge the Muslims to kill those who differ from them in religion. Is this not a contradiction?

Detailed answer

There is no contradiction, praise be to Allah, between the statement that there is no compulsion in (acceptance of) the religion and the command to fight the polytheists. The command to fight the polytheists is not for the purpose of forcing them to enter Islam, otherwise the Jews, Christians and others would have been forced to enter Islam whenever the Muslims defeated them and they came under their authority. But it is well known to anyone who has the slightest knowledge of the history of Islam that this did not happen, because the Jews and Christians continued to live under the authority of the Muslim state, and they enjoyed religious freedom.

Rather what is meant by fighting is two things:

1.. Fighting those who want to attack the Muslims in their own lands, and to spread the influence of disbelief and its followers in the Muslim lands. This is Jihad in defence of Muslim territory, and it is something that has occurred in every nation and state known to history, no matter what their religion, otherwise there would be no state and no authority at all.

2.. Fighting those who bar people from the religion of Allah and prevent the Muslims from calling people to the religion of their Lord and spreading His light so that it may be seen by anyone who seeks guidance, or they prevent non-Muslims from learning about this religion or entering it if they want to. This is jihad in pursuit of the enemy. Both types of jihad are prescribed in Islamic teachings.

Ibn al-'Arabi al-Maaliki (may Allah have mercy on him) said: ... The words of Allah, may He be exalted, *{then kill the polytheists wherever you find them}* [at-Tawbah 9:5], are general in meaning and apply to every polytheist, but the Sunnah specifies that it excludes those referred to above, namely women, children, monks and ordinary, insignificant people, as explained above. What remains are those who are in a state of war against the Muslims or are preparing to fight them and cause them harm. Thus it becomes clear that what is meant by the verse is: kill those polytheists who are fighting you.

End quote from *Ahkaam al-Qur'an* (4/177).

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said: What is meant by the words of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him): "I have been commanded to fight the people until they bear witness that there is no god worthy of worship except Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, and establish prayer and give zakaah" is: fighting those at war with the Muslims, whom Allah has given us permission to fight. It does not mean fighting those with whom the Muslims have a treaty, with whom Allah commanded the Muslims to uphold the treaty.

End quote from *Majmoo' al-Fataawa* (19/20).

And he (may Allah have mercy on him) also said: What is meant by fighting is fighting those who fight us to prevent us from spreading the religion of Allah, as Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): *{Fight in the way of Allah those who fight you but do not transgress. Indeed. Allah does not like transgressors}* [al-Baqarah 2:190].

End quote from *Majmoo' al-Fataawa* (28/354).

That is also indicated by the report which was proven from Buraydah, who said: When the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) appointed commanders for an army or expedition, he would advise them to fear Allah, may He be exalted, and to be good to those of the Muslims who were under their command. Then he said: "... When you meet your enemy among the polytheists, offer them three options, and whichever one they choose, accept it from them and refrain from (fighting) them. Invite them to Islam and if they respond, then accept it from them and refrain from (fighting) them. Then invite them to migrate from their land. ... If they refuse, then ask them to pay jizyah. If they respond, then accept it from them and refrain from (fighting) them. If they refuse that, then seek the help of Allah and fight them....

Narrated by Muslim (1731).

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said, regarding what we learn from this hadith: ... that jizyah may be taken from any disbeliever. What this hadith appears to mean is that no disbeliever was excluded from that, and it cannot be said that this applies only to the People of the Book, because the wording cannot be interpreted as meaning that it applies only to the People of the Book. Moreover, the expeditions and armies of the Messenger of Allah were mostly engaged in fighting the Arab idol worshippers, and it cannot be said that the Qur'an proves that this verse applies only to the People of the Book. For Allah, may He be glorified, enjoined fighting the People of the Book until they pay the jizyah, and the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) enjoined fighting the polytheists until they pay the jizyah. Thus it may be taken from the People of the Book according to the Qur'an and from all the disbelievers according to the Sunnah. The Messenger of Allah took it from the Zoroastrians who are fire worshippers, and there is no difference between them and the idol worshippers.

End quote from *Ahkaam Ahl adh-Dhimmah* (1/89).

It is clear that when the reports indicate that a group was allowed to continue following their religion and jizyah was taken from them, then it was not enjoined to fight them or force them to enter Islam.

Please see the answer to question [27180](#) as it is important. For information on the wisdom behind the prescription of jihad, please see the answer to question no. [34647](#) . For information on the ruling on jihad and types thereof, please see the answer to question no. [20214](#) .

And Allah knows best.