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**Christianity and Islam - III**

**Lead: For many Muslims, jihad represents an internal spiritual struggle. For others it is a fight against evil, with the mouth, the pen, the hand and the sword. Over the centuries, this created unavoidable conflict with Christianity.**

**Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: Theologian Charles Kimball points out that one of the tragic misplaced tendencies in religion today is to compare the ideal of one's religion with the worst behavior of other faiths. Yet, much of**

**the conflict in today's world arises out of the conviction of certain proponents of Islam that violent, even terrorist activity against unbelievers is justified. It is defended as being taught in the Qur'an and permitted by the Prophet Mohammed. This arises in part from the Islamic world view and a complex seemingly contradictory presentation of jihad in the Qur'an.**

**Fundamental to Islam is the idea that peace and justice are synonymous with the triumph of the Muslim state. Politics and religion are inextricably unified in Muhammad's dream of a world dominated by Allah and his followers. Christianity, on the other hand, has always made a**

**distinction, in theory if not always in practice, between the Kingdom of Heaven and the kingdoms of Earth. Often there has been an alliance between church and state in Christian nations and much blood has been spilled in the name of God by Christians against each other and those of other faiths. Such a bond, however, was never so unified among Christians as in those areas dominated by Islam. Because of this some Muslims feel that force is justified in the service of Allah.**

**During the 450 years of Islamic Ascendancy following the Hjirah, the faith was spread at the point of the sword. This was consistent with the behavior and teaching of the Prophet**

**Muhammad. He and his successors promised submissive Jews and Christians a special status if they refrained from proselytizing or preaching against Islam. They were People's of the Book, but their special status was also second-class status, certainly nothing akin to modern toleration.**

**That said the view of jihad in the Qur'an is far more complex than extremists are willing to acknowledge. While the sword has always been in play among Muslims, there is also the jihad of the heart (spiritual struggle), the jihad of the mouth (apologetics and saber-rattling to wear down opponents of Allah), the jihad of the pen (written defense of the faith) and**

**the defensive jihad (fighting back when attacked).**

**There is no direct parallel in Christian belief to expansionist jihad. Without a doubt, Christians have taken up the sword often with disastrous consequences. Most of the Crusades, the post-Reformation wars of religion, the Inquisition, and pogroms against the Jews, all violated Jesus' fundamental teachings of tolerance, mercy, peace, forgiveness and, of course, the powerful Christian tradition of pacifism.**

**Despite many similar beliefs and practices, as long as Christians are vigilant in their belief that Jesus is the Son of God and Muslims consider this**

**blasphemy, any reconciliation will depend on the level of tolerance and grace each side can muster. Liberal or moderate Muslims may live side by side with non-believers with little inclination to seek their conversion. Those in circumstances where they are in a minority (and thus unable to influence public policy) are perhaps content to wage the jihad of heart or mouth or pen seeking conversion by persuasion. They seek victory for Allah in the non-coerced and willing transformation of non-believers.**

**For other Muslims, however, far more extreme, such a regime of toleration is impossible. They pursue another ancient tradition of Islam, that of expansionist, violent jihad.**

# **At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

## **Resources**

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**Ye’or, Bat. *The Dhimmi*. ,1985.**

**[www.fordham.edu/halsall/islam/islamsbook.html](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/islam/islamsbook.html)**

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