

Sayyid Qutb

- The Islamic understanding of Freedom™, or *hurriyya*, is - as [Ibn Arabi](#) (d. 1240) the lionized “Greatest Sufi Master,” expressed it - “[perfect slavery to Allah.](#)” [Bostom](#)
- Qutb’s 18 volume *In the Shade of the Qur'an* has an [entire book](#) of 252 pages commenting just on chapter 9 ([12 pages Pickthal](#)), the 2nd to last chapter of the Koran chronologically.

Excerpts from *In the Shade of the Qur'an*, Vol. VIII

The Sword Verses

Islam is a practical movement that progresses from one stage to the next, utilizing for each stage practical, effective and competent means, while at the same time preparing the ground for the next stage.

[...]

The Final and Provisional Rulings

[...]

Some defeatist elements are overwhelmed by the pressures resulting from the desperate situation of present-day Muslims, who have nothing of Islam other than its name, and from the wicked attack by the Orientalists on the concept of *jihād*. Hence they try to find excuses by relying on provisional rulings and ignoring the true basis of the Islamic approach that moves forward to liberate mankind from servitude to other human beings, so that they can worship God alone. Its aim is to destroy tyrannical forces and regimes which force people to submit to a rule different from that of God, and apply a law other than His own.

Such defeatists quote verses like: “*If they incline to peace, then incline you to it as well, and place your trust in God.*” ([8: 61](#)) “*As for such who do not fight against you on account of your faith, and neither drive you forth from your homelands, God does not forbid you to show them kindness and to behave towards them with full equity.*” ([60: 8](#)) “*Fight for the cause of God those who wage war against you, but do not commit aggression. Indeed, God does not love aggressors.*” ([2: 190](#)) ...

They go on to say that Islam, then, does not fight anyone other than those who fight against the people in the land of Islam, within its area, or those who threaten it from outside... This defeatist logic means that Islam has nothing to do with the rest of mankind. It does not, or should not, care what deities they worship, or if one group of people are made lords over others, as long as it is safe within its own territory. This smacks of disrespect for Islam and God Almighty, resulting from a feeling of utter defeat.

What is worse, when these people feel unable to change the miserable conditions of today's Muslims, or face up to international forces hostile to Islam, they do not see that their weakness is the result of their moving away from Islam. On the contrary, they persistently try to attribute their own weakness and defeat to Islam, the noble faith God has laid down for mankind.

The texts to which they resort are provisional ones, addressing a particular situation. The state of affairs they addressed may happen again. In such conditions, the provisional rulings may be applied because the Muslim community lives a similar situation to the one they addressed the first time. But this does not mean that these are the ultimate rulings, and the approach they follow is the final one Islam provides. What it means is that the Muslim community needs to persist in trying to improve its situation, removing any impediments standing in its way, until it can apply the final rulings given in this last sūrah.

And in relation to the people of earlier revelations, the final rulings are: "*Fight against those who — despite having been given scriptures — do not truly believe in God and the Last Day, and do not treat as forbidden that which God and His Messenger have forbidden, and do not follow the religion of truth, till they [agree to] pay the submission tax with a willing hand, after they have been humbled.*" ([9:29](#))

If the Muslims today, in their present situation, cannot implement these final rulings, then they are not, now and for the time being, required to do so. For God does not charge anyone with more than he or she can do. They may resort to the provisional rulings, approaching them gradually, until such a time when they are able to implement these final rulings. But they may not twist the final texts in order to show them as consistent with the provisional ones... Let them... not attempt to weaken God's faith under the pretext of showing it to be a religion of peace. It is certainly the religion of peace, but this must be based on saving all mankind from submission to anyone other than God. Islam is the code God has given to mankind... It is not devised by any human being. Hence, its advocates must not be ashamed of declaring that their ultimate goal is to destroy all forces that stand in its way of liberating mankind from any shackle that prevents the free choice of adopting Islam.

[...]

A Fight Until Submission

[Repeats [\(9:29\)](#)]

The condition which the Qur'ānic verse lays down for not fighting them is not that they should accept Islam. No. There is simply no compulsion in matters of faith, and no one

is forced to accept Islam at any time. The condition is simply that they should pay the tribute, or the submission tax, with a willing hand and that they be utterly subdued.¹

Excerpts from *Milestones*

If we look at the sources and foundations of modern ways of living, it becomes clear that the whole world is steeped in *Jahiliyyah*, [Ignorance of the Divine guidance] and all the marvelous material comforts and high-level inventions do not diminish this ignorance. This *Jahiliyyah* is based on rebellion against Allah's sovereignty on earth. It transfers to man one of the greatest attributes of Allah, namely sovereignty, and makes some men lords over others... claiming that the right to create values, to legislate rules of collective behavior, and to choose any way of life rests with men, without regard to what Allah Almighty has prescribed... Thus the humiliation of the common man under the communist systems and the exploitation of individuals and nations due to greed for wealth and imperialism under the capitalist systems are but a corollary of rebellion against Allah's authority...²

[...]

Our whole environment, people's beliefs and ideas, habits and art, rules and laws-is *Jahiliyyah*, even to the extent that what we consider to be Islamic culture, Islamic sources, Islamic philosophy and Islamic thought are also constructs of *Jahiliyyah*!

[...]

... Our aim is first to change ourselves so that we may later change the society.

... Our aim is to change the *Jahili* system at its very roots, this system which is fundamentally at variance with Islam and which... is keeping us from living the sort of life which is demanded by our Creator.³

[...]

This religion... is a practical movement which progresses stage by stage, and at every stage it provides resources according to the practical needs of the situation and prepares the ground for the next one... Those who talk about Jihad in Islam and quote Qur'anic verses do not take into account this aspect, nor do they understand the nature of the various stages through which this movement develops, or the relationship of the verses revealed at various occasions with each stage. Thus, when they speak about Jihad, they speak clumsily and mix up the various stages, distorting the whole concept of Jihad...

This is because they regard every verse of the Qur'an as if it were the final principle of this religion. This group of thinkers, who are a product of the sorry state of the present Muslim generation, have nothing but the label of Islam and have laid down their spiritual and rational arms in defeat. They say, "Islam has prescribed only defensive war! ..."

¹ [Sayyid Qutb, *In the Shade of the Qur'an*, Volume VIII, Surah 9](#)

² Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, pp. 26-27, this online edition

³ Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, pp. 34-35, this online edition

[...]

When writers with defeatist and apologetic mentalities write about "Jihad in Islam," trying to remove this 'blot' from Islam, then they are mixing up two things: first, that this religion forbids the imposition of its belief by force, as is clear from the verse,

"There shall be no compulsion in religion....." ([K-2:256](#))

while on the other hand it tries to annihilate all those political and material powers which stand between people and Islam, which compel a people to bow before another and prevent them from accepting the sovereignty of Allah. These two principles have no relation to one another nor is there room to mix them. In spite of this, these defeatist-type people try to mix the two aspects and want to confine Jihad to what today is called '*defensive war*'. The Islamic Jihad has no relationship to modern warfare, either in its causes or in the way in which it is conducted.⁴

[...]

If we insist on calling Islamic Jihad a defensive movement, then we must change the meaning of the word '*defense*' and mean by it '*the defense of man*' against all those elements which limit his freedom...

[...]

It would be naive to assume that a call is raised to free the whole of humankind throughout the earth, and it is confined to preaching... Indeed, it strives through preaching... when there is freedom of communication and when people are free from all these influences, as '**there is no compulsion in religion**'; but when the above mentioned obstacles and practical difficulties are put in its way, it has no recourse but to remove them by force...

[...]

When Islam strives for peace, its objective is not that superficial peace which requires that only that part of the earth where the followers of Islam are residing remain secure. The peace which Islam desires is that the law of the society be purified for Allah, that the obedience of all people be for Allah alone...

[...]

Allah held back Muslims from fighting in Makkah and in the early period of their migration to Medina, and told them,

"Have you not seen those who were told, 'Restrain your hands (from fighting) and establish prayer and pay zakah'?....." [4:77](#)

Next, they were permitted to fight:

"Permission (to fight) has been given to those are being fought, because they were wronged. And indeed, Allâh is able to give them victory." [22:39](#)

These are the people who were expelled from their homes without cause. The next stage came when the Muslims were commanded to fight those who fight them:

⁴ Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, pp. 65-66, this online edition

“Fight in the way of Allah those who fight you but do not commit aggression. Indeed, Allah does not like aggressors.” [2: 190](#)

And finally, war was declared against all the polytheists:

“... ([9:36](#)), ([9:29](#))”

Thus, according to the explanation by Imam Ibn Qayyim⁵, the Muslims were first restrained from fighting; then they were permitted to fight; then they were commanded to fight against the aggressors; and finally they were commanded to fight against all the polytheists.

With these verses from the Qur'an and with many Traditions of the Prophet in praise of Jihad, and with the entire history of Islam, which is full of Jihad, the heart of every Muslim rejects that explanation of Jihad invented by those people whose minds have accepted defeat under unfavorable conditions and under the attacks on Islamic Jihad by the shrewd orientalists.

[...]

Thus, this struggle is not a temporary phase but an eternal state - an eternal state, as truth and falsehood cannot co-exist on this earth. Whenever Islam stood up with the universal declaration that Allah's Lordship should be established over the entire earth and that men should become free from servitude to other men, the usurpers of Allah's authority on earth have struck out against it fiercely and have never tolerated it. It became incumbent upon Islam to strike back...

[...]

The reasons for refraining from fighting during the Makkan period are easily understood. In Makkah preaching was permitted... At this stage there was no need for the use of force. Besides this, there were other reasons and I have detailed these reasons in my commentary, *In the Shade of the Qur'an*, in explanation of the verse,

“Have you not seen those who were told, ‘Restrain your hands (from fighting) and establish prayer and pay zakah’?.....” [4:77](#)

It may be useful to reproduce 65 parts of this explanation here:⁶

[...]

- They will not be reproduced here, but you see the kind of detail that goes into this, and how weak it is when someone tries to prove Islam is Tolerant™ by cherry picking and taking out of context a single Peaceful™ Tolerant™ verse like that last one - if Muslims do it Qutb calls them “defeatists”.

⁵ More on Ibn Qayyim on the [28 Classic Jurists Opinions on IS&J](#) page

⁶ Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, p. 76, this online edition

[...]

It may happen that the enemies of Islam may consider it expedient not to take any action against Islam, if Islam leaves them alone in their geographical boundaries to continue the lordship of some men over others and does not extend its message and its declaration of universal freedom within their domain. But Islam cannot agree to this unless they submit to its authority by paying Jizyah, which will be a guarantee that they have opened their doors for the preaching of Islam and will not put any obstacle in its way through the power of the state.⁷

[...]

Islam is the way of life ordained by Allah Almighty for all mankind, ... and orders practical life in all its daily details. Jihad in Islam is simply a name for striving to make this system of life dominant in the world.

[...]

"In Islam the meaning of *Shari'ah* is not limited to mere legal injunctions, but includes the principles of administration, its system and its modes.... By the *Shari'ah of Allah* is meant everything legislated by Allah Almighty for ordering man's life; it includes the principles of belief, principles of administration and justice, principles of morality and human relationships, and principles of knowledge.... It includes political, social and economic affairs and their principles, with the intent that they reflect complete submission to God alone....It deals with the morals, manners, values and standards of the society...."⁸

Ibn Warraq notes "You cannot get more totalitarian than that".

A Muslim has no country except that part of the earth where the Shari'ah of Allah is established and human relationships are based on the foundation of relationship with Allah Almighty; a Muslim has no nationality except his belief, which makes him a member of the Muslim community in Dar-ul-Islam; a Muslim has no relatives except those who share the belief in Allah, and thus a bond is established between him and other Believers..."⁹

... we must realize the fact that we live in the midst of *Jahiliyyahh*, ... and that the change from *Jahiliyyahh* to Islam is vast and far-reaching. The chasm between Islam and *Jahiliyyahh* is great, and a bridge is not to be built across it so that the people on the two sides may mix with each other, but only so that the people of *Jahiliyyahh* may come over to Islam, ... and enjoy those blessings which we have tasted ... If not, then

⁷ Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, p. 84, this online edition

⁸ Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, p. 120, this online edition

⁹ Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, pp. 132-133, this online edition

we shall say to them what Allah Almighty commanded His Messenger - peace be on him - to say: "**For you is your religion, and for me is my religion.**" ([K-109:6](#))¹⁰

¹⁰ Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, p. 156, this online edition