

Fast 28: The doctrine of “abrogation” — 7

- There is another verse in ch. 3 which shows that v. 85 of ch. 3 (“And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will not be accepted from him, and in the Hereafter he will be one of the losers”) is not abrogating the teaching regarding the importance of the principles that are common to Islam and previous religions:

<p>“Say: O People of the Book, come to an equitable word between us and you, that we shall serve none but Allah and that we shall not set up any partner with Him, and that some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allah. But if they turn away, then say: Bear witness, we are Muslims.” — ch. 3, v. 64</p>	<p>قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَ بَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُولُوا الشُّهُدَاؤُا إِنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾</p>
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The “equitable word” is what all sides can agree on. To worship none but God, not to set up partners with Him, thereby giving them some of God’s attributes, and not to take any persons in one’s community as lords to be obeyed like God, are the core and fundamental teachings in the Jewish and Christian scriptures. These are the ones that Islam calls people to accept in their pure, unsullied form. At the end Muslims are told to say to followers of previous religions: This is what makes us Muslims. So when, just a few verses later, v. 85 mentions those who seek “a religion other than Islam”, it means those who have deviated from the core and fundamental teachings of their own religions.

Another point to be noted is that in this v. 64 Muslims are, of course, inviting others to Islam. That’s the only thing Muslims can invite others to. But they are inviting them by opening up the crux of Islam and putting it before them. They are not simply saying to others: “Become Muslims” or “Embrace Islam”, and they are certainly not taught to say: “Become Muslims, or else!”

- As stated in Study 26, the doctrine of abrogation has been used to suppress and deny those injunctions of the Quran which show its attitude of tolerance towards other faiths, and peaceful and harmonious co-existence with their followers. This point is taken up in detail by a Muslim writer, AbdulHamid A. AbuSulayman, in his book *Towards an Islamic Theory of International Relations* (second edition, 1993). Under a sub-heading, ‘*Naskh*: Misinterpretation and Misconception’, he writes:
 - “In the area of external affairs, the most widely discussed and disputed issue has been the “Verse of the Sword”. ... some jurists took an extreme position in interpreting this verse. They claimed that this verse abrogated all preceding

verses pertaining to patience (*sabr*), persuasion (*husna*), tolerance (*la ikrah*). For instance, Ibn al Arabi and Ibn Salamah believed that the Verse of the Sword had abrogated a total of 124 verses. Mustafa Abu Zayd says that he found the number of verses that were abrogated by the same verse to exceed 140... Those who stressed the aggressive nature of jihad could only do so by applying abrogation to a wide category of Quranic verses. ... If this misconception is removed, then the misinterpretation and application of abrogation can be corrected. In this way, the damaging effects of the method of abrogation would be eliminated.” (p. 45–46)

- He writes about the concept of *naskh*: “Due to this concept, the different principles and values behind the Islamic experience in Makkah and early Madinah have fallen into disuse and been forgotten. In considering *naskh*, all that mattered to the jurists was the last position of the late Madinan period... It is as if the jurists considered the periods and stages prior to the last Madinan period as having been historically abrogated, and therefore unworthy of consideration. Contemporary Muslim jurists, though they have attempted to reinterpret many cases of *naskh*, seem to accept the same concept of permanent *naskh*. ... In their thinking, no attempt was made to disavow the concept, only to reinterpret it. The Verse of the Sword (*āyat al sayf*) is a good example of a *naskh* argument that abrogates all previous principles. ...”

“...most jurists of the second century AH considered war as a rule, rather than the exception between Muslims and non-Muslims. ... Their understanding of the Quran had been less critical owing to their having stopped at the literal meaning of each verse without making serious efforts to compare and reconcile verses that seemed to contradict one another. Instead, the jurists claimed that certain verses abrogated certain other verses. This juristic understanding is a clear reflection of conditions in their times.” (p. 83–84)

- The above author is disappointed that contemporary Muslim jurists only reinterpreted the application of abrogation, and did not disavow it. Maulana Muhammad Ali is the contemporary Muslim scholar who has thoroughly analysed the doctrine of abrogation as a whole, as well as specific examples of the so-called abrogating and abrogated verses, and refuted the entire concept as having no grounds in the Quran or in any statement whatsoever uttered by the Holy Prophet himself (see Study 25).
- Lord Pearson, a most hostile and bitter critic of Islam, has even raised the doctrine of abrogation in the House of Lords of the UK Parliament in a debate in that House on 7 December 2017. He asked that the UK Government should “encourage UK Muslim

leaders to re-examine the Muslim tenets of abrogation”. He went on to say about abrogation that it:

“holds that the later verses in the Koran cancel the earlier peaceful verses — the verses of the sword cancel the verses of peace. So, for example, the much-quoted early verse, “Let there be no compulsion in religion”, is nullified many times in later verses.”

- Regrettably, by upholding the doctrine of abrogation, Muslim scholars are themselves providing grounds to such bitter critics of Islam to present it as a religion of intolerance and violence.