

Sayyid Qutb. *Milestones*. (Revised translation) Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1990)

## Chapter IV

# JIHAD IN THE CAUSE OF ALLAH

The great scholar Ibn Qayyim, in his book *Zad al-Ma'ad*, has a chapter entitled “The Prophet’s Treatment of the Unbelievers and the Hypocrites from the Beginning of his Messengership Until his Death.” In this chapter, he sums up the nature of Islamic Jihad.

“The first revelation from Allah that came to the Prophet—peace be on him—was *Iqra, bism Rabbika ladhi Khalafa*. (“Read, in the name of they Sustainer, Who created” [Qur’an 96:1]).

This was the beginning of his Prophethood. Allah commanded the Prophet—peace be on him—to recite this in his heart. The commandment to preach had not yet come. Then Allah revealed *Ya ayyuha al-Muddathir, qum fandhir* (“O you who are enwrapped in your mantle, arise and warn” [Q 74:1-2]). Thus, the revelation of “Iqra” was his appointment to Prophethood, while “Ya ayyuha al-muddathir” was his appointment to Messengership. Later Allah commanded the Prophet—peace be on him—to warn his near relatives, then his people, then the Arabs who were around them, then all of Arabia, and finally the whole world. Thus for thirteen years after the beginning of his Messengership, he called people to Allah through preaching, without fighting or *jizyah* [head-tax required annually of adult male Jews and Christians living under Islamic rule], and was commanded to restrain himself and to practice patience and forbearance. Then he was commanded to migrate, and later permission was given to fight. Then he was commanded to fight those who fought him, and to restrain himself from those who did not make war against him. Later he was commanded to fight the polytheists until Allah’s *din* [religion] was fully established. After the command for jihad came, the non-believers were divided into three categories: those with whom the Muslims had peace treaties; the people with whom the Muslims were at war; and the *dhimmi*s. The Prophet was commanded that as long as the non-believers [44] with whom he had a peace treaty met their

obligations, he should fulfill the articles of the treaty, but if they broke the treaty, then they should be given notice that he considered the treaty broken. Until then, no war should be declared. If they persisted, then he should fight them. When the *Surah Bara'ah* [Qur'an chapter 9] was revealed, the details of treatment concerning these three categories of non-believers were described. It was also explained that war should be declared only against those from among the 'People of the Book' who declare open enmity, until they agree to pay *jizyah* or accept Islam. Concerning the polytheists and the hypocrites, it was commanded in this surah that jihad be declared against them and that they be treated sternly. The Prophet—peace be on him—carried on jihad against the polytheists by fighting and against the hypocrites by preaching and argument. In the same surah, it was commanded that the treaties with the polytheists be terminated at the end of their agreed term. In this respect, the people with whom there were treaties were divided into three categories: first, those who broke the treaty and failed to keep its terms. He was ordered to fight against them and was victorious. Then there were those with whom the treaty was made for a stated term, and who had neither violated this treaty nor helped anyone against the Prophet, peace be on him. Regarding them, Allah commanded that these treaties be completed to their full term. The third category consisted of those with whom there was no treaty but they were not at war against the Prophet, peace be on him, or those with whom he had a treaty without any stated term of expiration. Concerning these, it was commanded that they be given four months' notice, at the end of which they should be considered open enemies and engaged in combat. Thus, those who broke the treaty were fought against, and those who did not have any treaty or had an indeterminate period of expiration were given four months' period of grace, and terms were kept with those whose treaty was due to expire. Those in the last category embraced Islam even before the term expired, and the non-Muslims paid *jizyah*. Thus, after the revelation of the *Surah Bara'ah* [Qur'an chapter 9], the unbelievers were of three kinds: [1] adversaries in war, [2] people with treaties, and [3] *dhimmis*. The people with treaties eventually became Muslims, so there were only two kinds left: [1] people at war and [2] *dhimmis* [protected minorities allowed to retain their religions, that is, Jews and Christians]. The people at war were always afraid of him. Now the people of the whole world were of three kinds: the Muslims who believed in him; those with whom he had peace; and the opponents who kept fighting against him. As far as the hypocrites were concerned, Allah commanded the Prophet, peace be on him, to accept their appearances and leave their intentions to Allah, and carry on jihad against them by argument and persuasion. He was

commanded [45] not to pray at their funerals nor at their graves, nor to ask forgiveness of Allah for them, because their affair was with Allah. So this was the practice of the Prophet, peace be on him, concerning his enemies among the non-believers and the hypocrites.

In this description we find a summary of the stages of Islamic jihad presented in an excellent manner. In it we also find all the distinctive characteristics of the dynamic movement of the true *din* or way of life. We should ponder over them seriously. Here, however, we will confine ourselves to a few explanatory remarks.

First, the method of this *din* is very practical. This Islamic movement treats people as they actually are and uses resources that are available in the best manner possible under the prevalent conditions. Since this movement comes into conflict with a *jahiliyyah* that prevails over ideas and beliefs, and which shapes and controls practically all life, and enjoys full support of political and economic powers, the Islamic movement had to come up with parallel means and resources to confront this jahiliyyah. This movement uses the methods of preaching and persuasion to reform ideas and beliefs. And it uses physical power and jihad to abolish the organizations and authorities of the *jahili* system which prevent people from reforming their ideas and beliefs, forces them to follow deviant ways, and make them serve other humans instead of their Almighty Lord. This movement does not confine itself to mere preaching to confront physical power, just as it also does not use compulsion to change the ideas of people. These two principles are equally important in the method of the Islamic *din*. Its purpose is to free those people who wish to be freed from enslavement to men so that they may serve Allah alone.

The second aspect of this *din* as a practical movement is its progression stage by stage, so that at every stage it provides resources to meet the practical needs of a particular situation while at the same time preparing the ground for the next one. It does not face practical problems with abstract theories, nor does it confront various stages with unchangeable means. Many 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 to each stage. Thus, when they speak about jihad, they may speak clumsily and mix up the various stages, distorting the whole concept of jihad in an effort to use the Qur'anic text to establish general principles and rules for which there exists no justification. This is because they regard every verse of the Qur'an as if it were the final principle of the *din*. This group of thinkers, which is a product of the sorry state of the present Muslim

generation, has nothing but [46] the label of Islam and has laid down its spiritual and rational arms in defeat. They say, “Islam has prescribed only defensive war” and think that they have done some good for their faith by divesting it of its method, which is to abolish all injustice from the earth, to bring people to the worship of Allah alone, and to bring them out of servitude to servants into the service of the Lord of servants. Islam does not force people to accept its belief, but it wants to provide a free environment in which they will have the choice to believe. What it wants to abolish is those oppressive political systems under which people are prevented from expressing their freedom to choose whatever beliefs they want, and after that it gives them complete freedom to decide whether to accept Islam or not.

A third aspect of this universal *din* is the compatibility of the new resources or methods which it used during its progressive movement with its fundamental principles and aims. From the very first day, whether the Prophet, peace be on him, addressed his near relatives, or the Quraish, or the Arabs, or the entire world, his call was one and the same. He called them to submit to One Lord and to reject the lordship of other men. On this principle there is no compromise nor any flexibility. To attain this purpose, it proceeds according to a plan, which has certain stages, and every stage has its own resources, as we have just described.

A fourth aspect of the Islamic movement is the legal basis it provides for the relationship of the Muslim community with other groups, as is clear from the quotation from *Zad al-Ma'ad*. This legal formulation is based on the principle that Islam—that is, submission to Allah—is a universal Message which the whole of mankind should either accept or accommodate. No political system or material power should put obstacles in the way of preaching Islam. Every government and nation should leave every individual free to accept or reject it. If someone wants to accept Islam, no one should prevent him or fight him. If someone does so, then it is the duty of Islam to fight him until he either is killed or declares his submission.

When writers with defeatist and apologetic mentalities write about “jihad in Islam,” and try to remove this ‘blot’ from Islam, they mix up two things: first, this *din* forbids the imposition of its belief by force, as is clear from the verse: “There is no compulsion in religion.” Secondly, it tries to annihilate all those political and material powers that stand between people and Islam, which forces some people to bow before other people and prevent them from accepting the sovereignty of Allah. These two principles are independent of each other, and there is no justification for mixing them up. These defeatists, however, mix the two aspects confining jihad to what today [47] 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. The causes of Islamic jihad should be sought in the very nature of Islam and its role in the world, and in its high principles, assigned to it by Allah and for the implementation of which Allah sent the Prophet, peace be on him, as His Messenger and declared him to be the last of all Prophets and Messengers.

This *din* is a universal declaration of the freedom of man from slavery to other men and to his own desires, which is also a form of human servitude. It is a declaration that the sovereignty belongs only to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds. It challenges all such systems based on the concept of the sovereignty of man, I.e., where man attempts to usurp the attribute of Divine sovereignty. Any system in which the final decisions are referred to human beings, and in which the source of all authority are men, deifies human beings by designating others than Allah as lords over men. This declaration means the usurped authority of Allah be returned to Him and the usurpers thrown out—those who by themselves devise laws for others, elevating themselves to the status of lords and reducing others to the status of slaves. In short, to proclaim the authority and sovereignty of Allah means to eliminate all human kingships and to announce the rule of the Sustainer of the universe over the entire earth. In the words of the Qur'an:

He alone is God in heaven and on earth.<sup>1</sup>

The command belongs to Allah alone. He commands you not to worship anyone except Him. This is the right way of life.<sup>2</sup>

Say: O People of the Book come to what is common between us: that we will not worship anyone except Allah, and will not associate anything with Him, and will not take lords from among ourselves besides Allah; and if they turn away, then tell them to bear witness that we are those who have submitted to Allah.<sup>3</sup>

The way to establish the rule of Allah on earth is not to give some consecrated people—the priests—the authority to rule, as was the case with the rule of the Church, nor to appoint some spokesmen of Allah as rulers, as is the case in a 'theocracy.' To establish Allah's rule means to enforce His laws so the final decision in all affairs be according to these laws.

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<sup>1</sup>Qur'an 43:84

<sup>2</sup>Qur'an 12:40

<sup>3</sup>Qur'an 3:64

Preaching alone is not enough to establish the dominion of Allah on [48] earth, to abolish the dominion of man, to take away sovereignty from the usurper and return it to Allah, and to bring about the enforcement of the Divine *shari'ah* and the abolition of man-made laws. Those who have usurped the authority of Allah and are oppressing Allah's creatures are not going to give up their power merely through preaching. If it had been so, the task of establishing the *din* of Allah in the world would have been very easy for the Prophets of Allah! This is contrary to the evidence from the history of the Prophets and from the struggle of uncounted generations.

This universal declaration of the freedom of man on earth from every authority except that of Allah, and the declaration that sovereignty belongs to Allah alone and that He is the Lord of the universe, is not merely a theoretical, philosophical, and passive proclamation. It is a positive, practical, and dynamic message with a view to bringing about the implementation of the *shari'ah* of Allah and actually freeing people from their servitude to other men in order to bring them into the service of Allah, the One without rivals. This cannot be attained unless both "preaching" and "the movement" are used. This is so because appropriate means are needed to meet any and every practical situation.

Because this eternal *din* proclaims the freedom of man on earth from all authority except that of Allah, it confronts every period of human history—yesterday, today, and tomorrow—the obstacles of contrary beliefs and concepts, physical force, and political, social, economic, racial, and class structures. Another obstacle is corrupted beliefs and superstitions mixed with genuine Islamic principles coexisting with it and leaving a permanent mark on people's hearts and minds.

Preaching confronts beliefs and ideas while the "movement" tackles material obstacles. Foremost among these is political power resting on a complex of interrelated ideological, racial, class, social, and economic structures. These two approaches—preaching and the movement—in unison confront 'the human situation' with all the necessary means to achieve their common goal. For the achievement of the freedom of man on earth—of all mankind throughout the earth—it is necessary that these two methods be employed simultaneously. This is a very important point and cannot be over-emphasized.

This *din* is not merely a declaration of the freedom of the Arabs, nor a message confined to the Arabs. It addresses itself to the whole of mankind, and its sphere of operation is the whole world. Allah is the Sustainer not merely of the Arabs, and His providence is not limited to those who believe in the faith of Islam. Allah is the

Sustainer of the whole world. This *din* aims at bringing back the entire human race to its Sustainer and to free it from servitude to anyone other than Allah. [49] In the sight of Islam, the real servitude is obeying laws devised by man. Anyone who serves someone or something other than Allah in this sense is outside the *din* of Allah; although he or she may claim to profess Islam as a religion. The Prophet, peace be on him, clearly stated that, according to the *shari'ah*, “to obey” is “to worship.” It was in this background when the Jews and Christians elevated others as lords whom they obeyed and “disobeyed,” they were dubbed as those who “associate others with Allah.” Tirmidhi has reported on the authority of ‘Adi ibn Hatim that when the Prophet’s message reached him, he ran away to Syria (he had accepted Christianity before the Prophet’s time), but his sister and some of the people of his tribe became prisoners of war. The Prophet, peace be on him, treated his sister kindly and gave her some gifts. She went back to her brother and invited him to Islam, and advised him to visit the Prophet, peace be on him. ‘Adi agreed. When he came into the presence of the Prophet, he was wearing a silver cross. The Prophet, peace be on him, recited the verse, “They (the People of the Book) have taken their rabbis and priests as lords other than Allah.” At this, ‘Adi reports: “I said, ‘They do not worship their priests.’ Allah’s Messenger said, Isn’t it true that whatever their priests and rabbis declare permissible, they accept as permissible, and whatever they say is forbidden, they consider it forbidden. And thus they worship them.” This explanation of the above verse by the Prophet, peace be on him, makes it clear that obedience to human laws and judgments is a sort of worship, and anyone who does this is considered out of the *din*, because he or she is taking some men as lords over others, whereas the *din* seeks to annihilate such practices, declaring that all men and women should be free of servitude to anyone other than Allah.

When they have no such freedom, then it becomes incumbent upon Muslims to launch a struggle through individual preaching as well by initiating an activist movement to restore their freedom, and to strike hard at all those political powers that force people to bow to their will and authority, defying the commandments of Allah, and denying people the freedom to listen to the message of Islam, and to accept it even when they wish to do so. After annihilating the tyrannical force, whether political or a racial tyranny, or domination of one class over the other within the same race, Islam establishes a new social, economic and political system, in which all men and women enjoy real freedom.

Islam does not force its beliefs on people, but Islam is not merely “belief.” As we have pointed out, Islam is a declaration of the freedom of every man or woman from

servitude to other humans. It seeks to abolish all those systems and governments that are based on the rule of some men over others, or the servitude of some to others. When [50] Islam liberates people from these external pressures and invites them to its spiritual message, it appeals to their reason, and gives them complete freedom to accept or reject it. This freedom, however, does not mean that they may elevate their desires into gods, or that they may willingly remain in the servitude of other human beings, some men lords over others. Whatever system is to be established in the world ought to be based on the authority of Allah, deriving its laws from Him alone. Then every individual is free, under the protection of this universal system, to adopt any belief he wishes to adopt. This is the only way in which *din*, which is a comprehensive way of life, can be purified for Allah alone. The word *din* here includes more than belief; it means a complete way of life based on Islamic belief. But in an Islamic system there is no room for people to follow their own divergent beliefs, while obeying the laws of the country based on the Divine authority.

Anyone who understands this particular character of the *din* will also understand the purpose of *jihad bil saif* (striving by the sword), which is to clear the way for freedom to strive through preaching in support of the Islamic movement. He will understand that Islam is not a “defensive movement” in today’s narrow technical sense of “defensive war.” This narrow meaning is ascribed to it by those who are puzzled under the pressure of circumstances and are confused by the wily attacks of the Orientalists, who distort the concept of Islamic jihad. It is a movement to wipe out tyranny and to introduce true freedom to mankind, using resources practically available in a given human situation, and it had definite stages, for each of which it utilized new methods.

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 forces that limit his freedom. These forces may take the form of beliefs and concepts, as well of political systems based on economic, racial, or class distinctions. At the advent of Islam the world was full of such systems just as the present-day *jahiliyyah* abounds in various systems.

When we take this broad meaning of the word “defense,” we understand the true character of Islam, in that it proclaims the universal freedom of every person and community from servitude to any other individual or society, the end of man’s arrogance and selfishness, the establishment of the sovereignty of Allah and His Lordship throughout the world, and the rule of the Divine *shari’ah* in human affairs.



Those superficial thinkers who interpret Islamic jihad in the narrow sense of defensive war, claim that the battles fought in Islamic jihad were all for the defense of the homeland of Islam—some of them considering the homeland of Islam to be just the Arabian peninsula— [51] against the aggression of neighboring powers. These people fail to understand the nature of Islam and its primary aim.

Can anyone say that if Abu Bakr, ‘Umar, or ‘Uthman had been satisfied that the Roman and Persian powers were not going to attack the Arabian peninsula, they would not have striven to spread the message of Islam throughout the world? How could the message of Islam have spread in the face of such material obstacles, the political tyranny of an absolutist state, socio-economic system based on races and classes, and supported by the military might of tyrannical governments? It would be naive to assume that a call to free the whole of humankind throughout the world may be effected by preaching and exposition of the message alone. Indeed, because “there is no compulsion in religion,”<sup>4</sup> it strives through preaching and exposition when there is freedom of communication and when people are free from all extraneous pressures. But when the above-mentioned obstacles and practical difficulties are put in its way, it has no recourse but to remove them by force so when it is addressed to peoples’ hearts and minds, they are free to accept or reject it with open minds.

Since the objective of Islam is a decisive declaration of man’s freedom, not merely on the philosophical plane but also in the actual life, it must employ jihad. It is immaterial whether the homeland of Islam—in the true Islamic sense, *dar al-Islam*—is in a condition of peace or whether it is threatened by its neighbors. When Islam calls for peace, its objective is not a superficial peace requiring only that the part of the earth where the followers of Islam are residing remain secure. The peace of Islam means that *din* (I.e., the law of the society) be purified for Allah, that all people should obey Allah alone, and every system that permits some people to rule over others be abolished.

After the Prophet, peace be on him, only the final stages of the movement of jihad are to be followed; the initial or middle stages are not applicable. They have ended, and as Ibn Qayyim states: “Thus, after the revelation of the *surah Bara’ah*, the unbelievers were of three kinds: adversaries in war, people with treaties, and *dhimmis*.<sup>5</sup> The people with treaties eventually became Muslims, so there were only

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<sup>4</sup>Qur’an 2:256

<sup>5</sup>*Dhimmis* (Arabic) non-Muslim subjects of an Islamic state living under its *dhimmah* (protection).

two kinds left: people at war and *dhimmis*. The people at war were always afraid of him. Now the people of the whole world were of three kinds: the Muslims who believed in him; those with whom he had peace; and the opponents who kept fighting against him.” These are the logical positions consonant with the character and purpose of the universal *din*, and not what is understood by the people [52] who are defeated by present difficult conditions and confused by the attacks of the wily Orientalists.

Allah held back Muslims from fighting in Makkah and in the early period of their migration to Madinah, and told them, “Restrain your hands, and establish regular prayers, and pay zakat.”<sup>6</sup> Next, they were permitted to fight when war was waged against them, because they were oppressed, and Allah was able to help them. These were the people who were expelled from their homes without cause. The next stage came when the Muslims were commanded to fight against those who fight against them: “Fight in the cause of Allah against those who fight you.”<sup>7</sup> And finally, war was declared against all the polytheists: “And fight against all the polytheists, because they all fight against you;”<sup>8</sup> “Fight against those among the People of the Book who do not believe in Allah and the Last Day, who do not forbid what Allah and His Messenger have forbidden, and who do not consider the true religion as their religion, until they are subdued and pay *jizyah*.”<sup>9</sup> Thus, according to the explanation by Imam Ibn Qayyim, the Muslims were first restrained from fighting; then they were permitted to fight; later on 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, peace be on him, in praise of jihad, and with the entire history of Islam, which is full of jihad, the heart of every Muslim rejects the 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.

What kind of a man is he who, after listening to the commandments of Allah and the traditions of the Prophet, peace be on him, and after reading the whole history of Islamic jihad, still thinks that it is a temporary injunction related to transient conditions and that it is concerned only with the defense of borders? In the verse

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<sup>6</sup>Qur’an 4:77

<sup>7</sup>Qur’an 2:190

<sup>8</sup>Qur’an 9:36

<sup>9</sup>Qur’an 9:29

permitting Muslims to fight, Allah informed them that He checks one group of people by another, a law laid down by Him, so that the world may be cleansed of corruption.

“Permission to fight is given to those against whom war is made, because they are wronged, and verily, Allah is able to help them. These are the people who have been expelled from their homes in defiance of right—(for no cause) except that they say, ‘Our Lord is Allah.’ Had Allah not checked one people by another, then surely synagogues and [53] churches and mosques, in which the name of Allah is remembered often would have been pulled down.”<sup>10</sup> Thus, this struggle is not a temporary phase but an eternal state, because truth and falsehood cannot co-exist on this earth. Whenever Islam made the universal declaration that Allah’s Lordship be established over the entire earth and men be free from servitude to other men, the usurpers of Allah’s authority on earth have struck out against it fiercely; they never tolerated it. Islam was obligated to strike back and free man throughout the earth from the clutches of these usurpers. The eternal struggle for the freedom of man will continue until all religion is for Allah, and man is free to worship and obey his Sustainer.

The command to refrain from fighting during the Makkan period was a temporary phase in a long journey. The same reason was operative during the early days of *hijra*, but after these early phases, the reason for jihad was not merely to defend Madinah. Indeed, its defense was necessary, but this was not the ultimate aim. The aim was to protect the resources and the center of the movement—the movement to free mankind and demolish the obstacles that prevented mankind from attaining this freedom.

The reasons for refraining from fighting during the Makkan period can be easily understood. Initially, in Makkah preaching was permitted. The Messenger, peace be on him, was under the protection of the Banu Hashim and hence he had the opportunity to declare his message openly; he had the freedom to speak to individuals and to groups and to appeal to their hearts and minds. There was no organized political power that could prevent him from preaching or prevent people from listening to him. At this stage there was no need for the use of force. Besides this, there were other reasons as explained in my commentary, *Fi Zilal al-Qur’an*, in explanation of the verse, “Have you seen the people to whom it was said, ‘Restrain

<sup>10</sup>Qur’an 22:39

your hands, and establish regular prayers, and pay zakat?”<sup>11</sup> It may be useful to reproduce parts of this explanation here:

A reason for prohibiting the use of force during the Makkan period may have been that this was a period of training and preparation in a particular environment, for a particular nation, and under particular conditions.

Under these circumstances, an important factor in training and preparation was to train the individual Arab to be patient under oppression to himself or those he loved, to conquer his pride, and not to make personal revenge or revenge for one's [54] dear ones the purpose of one's life. Training was also needed so that he could learn control of his nerves, not lose his temper at the first provocation—as was his temperament—nor get excited at the first impulse, and so that he could develop dignity and composure in his temperament and in his actions. He was to be trained to follow the discipline of a community under the direction of a leader, and to refer to this leader in every matter, and to obey his injunctions, even though they might be against his habit or taste. The aim was to develop individuals of high character who would constitute the Muslim community, who would follow the directions of the leader, and who would be civilized and progressive, free of wild habits and tribalism.

Another reason for prohibiting may have been that the Quraish were proud of their lineage and honor, and in such an environment only persuasion could be most appealing and effective. At this stage, fighting would have resulted in kindling the fires of revenge. There was already much tribal warfare based on blood feuds, such as the wars of Dains, Gabra and Basus, which continued for years and annihilated tribe after tribe. If blood feuds were to become associated in their minds with Islam, then this impression would never have been removed. Consequently, Islam, instead of being a call toward the true religion, would have become an unending sequence of tribal feuds and its basic teachings would have been forgotten at the very beginning. Another reason may have been the desire to avoid sowing the seed of discord and bloodshed in every household. At that time, there was no organized government torturing and persecuting the believers; the believer was persecuted, tortured, and “taught a lesson” by his own peers. Under these circumstances, permission to fight would have meant that every house would have become a battlefield.

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<sup>11</sup>Qur'an 4:77

The people would have said, "So, this is Islam!" In fact, this was said about Islam, even though fighting was not permitted.

During the season when the people of Arabia came to Makkah for pilgrimage and commerce, the Quraish would have gone to them and would have said, "Muhammad is not only dividing his nation and his tribe; he is even dividing sons from fathers! What kind of a religion is this which incites the son to kill his father, the slave to kill his master, in every house and in every locality? One reason may have been that Allah knew that a great majority of those who persecuted and tortured the early Muslims would one day become the loyal soldiers of Islam, even its great leaders. Was not 'Umar ibn [55] al-Khattab one of them? Another reason may have been that the sense of honor of the Arabs, especially in a tribal framework, comes to the help of the person who is persecuted but does not concede defeat, especially if the persecuted are honored by the people. Several such incidents can be quoted to support this thesis. When Abu Bakr, who was an honorable man, left Makkah in order to migrate to some other place, Ibn al-Daghna could not bear it and restrained him from leaving because he considered it a disgrace to the Arabs; he offered Abu Bakr his own protection. The best example of such an incident is the tearing up of the contract under which the Banu Hashim were confined to the Valley of Abu Talib and the period of their hunger and privation seemed unreasonably long. This chivalry was a peculiarity of the Arabs, while in ancient "civilizations," which were accustomed to seeing people humiliated, those who suffered and were persecuted were laughed at, ridiculed, and treated with contempt, and the oppressor and the tyrant were respected.

Still another reason may have been that the Muslims were few in number and they lived only in Makkah, as the message of Islam had not reached other parts of Arabia or had reached them only as hearsay. Other tribes considered it a domestic quarrel of the Quraish. They were watching for the outcome of this struggle. Under these circumstances, if fighting had been allowed, this limited warfare would have resulted in the complete annihilation of the Muslims. Even if they had killed a great number of their opponents, they would still have been completely annihilated. Idolatry would have continued and the dawn of the Islamic system would never have arrived and would never have reached its zenith, so that Islam could be revealed as a practical way of life for all mankind.

Fighting was prohibited in the early Medinan period as well. The reason for this was that the Prophet, peace be on him, had signed a pact with the Jews of

Madinah and with the unbelieving Arabs in and around Madinah, an action that was necessary at this stage for several reasons.

First, there was an open opportunity for preaching and persuasion. There was no political power to circumscribe this freedom. The whole population accepted the new Muslim polity and agreed upon the leadership of the Prophet, peace be on him, in all political matters. In the pact, it was agreed by all parties that no one would make peace or declare war or establish relations with any outsider without the express permission of [56] the Prophet, peace be on him. Thus, the real power in Madinah was in the hands of Muslim leadership. The doors were also open for preaching Islam and there was freedom of belief.

Secondly, at this stage the Prophet, peace be on him, wanted to conserve all his efforts in order to combat the Quraish, whose relentless opposition was a great obstacle in spreading Islam to other tribes, which were waiting to see the final outcome of the struggle between the two groups of the Quraish. This is why the Prophet, peace be on him, hastened to send scouting parties in various directions. The first such party was commanded by Hamza ibn Abdul Muttalib, and it went out during the month of Ramadan, only six months after the migration.

Other scouting parties were sent out. One during the ninth month after *hijra*, another in the thirteenth month, and yet another sixteen months after *hijra*. In the seventeenth month he sent a party under the leadership of Abdullah ibn Jahash. This party encountered some resistance and some blood was shed. This occurred during the month of Rajab, which was considered a sacred month. The following verse of *Surah al-Baqarah* refers to it: "They ask you about fighting in the sacred months. Say: Fighting in them is a great sin, but to prevent people from the way of Allah, and to reject Allah, and to stop people from visiting the Sacred Mosque, and to expel people from their homes are a much greater sin, and oppression is worse than killing."<sup>12</sup>

During Ramadan of the same year, the Battle of Badr took place which was reviewed in *Surah al-Anfal*.

If this stage of the Islamic movement is viewed in its proper perspective, then there is no justification for saying the basic aim of the Islamic movement was

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<sup>12</sup>Qur'an 2:217

“defensive” in the narrow sense of this term. The guidance of the Qur’an on this point, however, is quite clear:

They ought to fight in the way of Allah who have sold the life of this world for the life of the hereafter; and whoever fights in the way of Allah and is killed or becomes victorious, to him shall We give a great reward. Why should you not fight in the way of Allah for those men, women, and children who have been oppressed because they are weak and who call, “Our Lord! Take us out of this place whose people are oppressors, and raise for us an ally, and send for us a helper.” Those who [57] believe, fight in the cause of Allah, while those who do not believe, fight in the cause of tyranny. Then fight against the friends of Satan. Indeed, the strategy of Satan is weak.<sup>13</sup>

Say to those who deliberately deny the truth that if they desist, then whatever they have done before will be forgiven them; but if they turn back, then they know what happened to earlier nations. And fight against them until there is no oppression and all religion is wholly for Allah. But if they desist, then Allah is watching over their actions. But if they do not, then know that Allah is your Ally and He is your Helper.<sup>14</sup>

Fight against those among the People of the Book who do not believe in Allah and the Last Day, who do not forbid what Allah and His messenger have forbidden, and who do not consider the true religion to be their way of life, until they are subdued and pay *jizyah*.

The Jews say: “Ezra is the Son of Allah,” and the Christians say: “The Messiah is the Son of Allah.” These are mere sayings from their mouths, copied from those who preceded them and disbelieved. Woe to them; how they are perverted! They have taken their rabbis and priests as well as the Messiah, son of Mary as lords other than Allah, although they were commanded to worship none but Allah, the One. There is no god but He, glory be to Him above what they associate with Him! They desire to extinguish Allah’s light with their mouths, and Allah intends to perfect His light, although the unbelievers may be averse.<sup>15</sup>

The reasons for jihad described in the above verses are these: to establish Allah’s authority on earth; to arrange human affairs according to the true

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<sup>13</sup>Qur’an 4:74-76

<sup>14</sup>Qur’an 8:38-40

<sup>15</sup>Qur’an 9:29-32

guidance provided by Allah; to abolish all the Satanic forces and Satanic systems of life; to end the lordship of some men over others, since all men are creatures of Allah and no one has the authority to make others his slaves or to make arbitrary laws for them. These reasons are sufficient for proclaiming jihad. One should always keep in mind, however, that there is no compulsion in religion; that is, once the people are free from the lordship of men, the law governing civil affairs will be purely that of Allah, while no one will be forced to change his beliefs and accept Islam. [58]

The purpose of jihad in Islam is to secure complete freedom for every man throughout the world by releasing him from servitude to other human beings so that he may serve Allah, Who is One and who has no associates. This is what motivated the early Muslims to fight in the cause of Allah. If they had been asked, "Why are you fighting?" none would have answered, "My country is in danger; I am fighting for its defense," or "The Persians and the Romans have attacked us," or "We want to extend our dominion and want more spoils." They would have answered the same as Raba'i ibn 'Amer, Huzaifa ibn Muhsin and Mughira ibn Sh'uba answered when the Persian general Rustum asked them one by one during three successive days before the battle of Qadisiyyah: "For what purpose have you come?" Their answer was the same: "Allah has sent us to bring anyone who wishes from servitude to men into the service of Allah alone, from the narrowness of this world into the vastness of the hereafter, and from the tyranny of religions into the justice of Islam. Allah raised a Messenger for this purpose to teach His creatures His way. If anyone accepts this way of life, we turn back and give his country back to him, and we fight with those who rebel until we are martyred or become victorious." These are the reasons inherent in the very nature of the universal *din*. Similarly, its proclamation of universal freedom, its practical way of combating actual human conditions with appropriate methods, its development of new resources at various stages, has also been inherent in its message from the very beginning, and not because of any threat of aggression against Islamic lands or against the Muslims residing in them. The reason for jihad lies in the nature of its message and in the actual conditions it finds in human societies, and not merely in the necessity for defense, which may be temporary and of limited extent. A Muslim fights with his wealth and his person "in the way of Allah" for the sake of these values in which for him neither personal gain nor greed is a motive.

Before a Muslim steps into the battlefield, he has already fought a great battle within himself against Satan, against his own desires and ambitions, his personal interests and inclinations, the interests of his family and of his nation;



against anything that is not from Islam; against every obstacle that comes into the way of worshipping Allah and implementing the Divine authority on earth by returning this authority to Allah and taking it away from the rebellious usurpers.

Those who say that Islamic jihad was merely for the defense [59] of the “homeland of Islam” diminish the greatness of the Islamic way of life and consider it less important than their “homeland.” This is not the Islamic point of view; it is a creation of the modern age and is completely alien to Islamic consciousness. The soil of the homeland has, in itself, no value or weight. From the Islamic point of view, any homeland has value only to the extent that on it the rule of Allah is established and His guidance is followed, so that the homeland becomes a fortress for Islamic belief, a homeland for its way of life, and a center for the movement for the total freedom of man, so that one’s homeland becomes a “homeland for Islam.” In this case the defense of the “homeland of Islam” means the defense of Islamic beliefs, the Islamic way of life, and the Islamic community. This, however, is not the ultimate objective of the Islamic movement of jihad but is a means to establish the Divine authority within making it the headquarters for the movement of Islam, which is then to be carried throughout the world to the whole of mankind, because the object of this *din* is all humanity and its sphere of action is the whole earth.

As we have described earlier, there are many practical obstacles in establishing the rule of Allah on earth, such as the power of the secular state, elitist social systems and traditions, and, in general, the overall conditions prevalent in a society. Islam uses force only to remove these obstacles so that no barrier remains between Islam and individual human beings; Islam releases them from these material constraints and addresses their hearts and minds, while giving them freedom of choice to accept or reject its call.

We ought not to be deceived or embarrassed by the attacks of the Orientalists on the origin of jihad, nor lose self-confidence under the pressure of present conditions and the weight of the great powers of the world to such an extent that we seek ostensible reasons for Islamic jihad contrary to the nature of this *din* by trying to show that it was just a defensive measure under temporary conditions. The need for jihad remains, and will continue to remain, whether these conditions exist or not! In pondering historical events, we should not neglect the relevance of elements inherent in the nature of the eternal *din*, especially its declaration of universal freedom and its practical approach. We ought not to confuse these with temporary needs of defense.

No doubt Islam must defend itself against aggressors. Islam's very existence as a general declaration of the universal [60] Lordship of Allah and of the freedom of man from servitude to any being other than Allah, its commitment to organize a movement with a new leadership after removing the present jahili leadership, and its effort to create a distinct and permanent community based on Divine authority and submission to the One God, Allah, are sufficient cause for the surrounding *jahili* society, which is based on human authority in some form or another, to rise against it in order to preserve itself by suppressing Islam. Clearly, under these conditions, the newly-organized Islamic community will have to prepare itself for defense. The question of Islam liking or disliking such a situation, is irrelevant for it is imposed upon Islam. This is quite natural for two systems that cannot co-exist for long. Islam has no choice but to defend itself against aggression.

But still there is another more important fact. By its very nature Islam liberates human beings everywhere from servitude to anyone other than Allah. It cannot be restricted within any geographic or racial confines, because this would leave mankind in evil, chaos and servitude to lords other than Allah.

Some enemies of Islam may consider it expedient not to take any action against Islam, if Islam leaves them alone in their geographical boundaries with some men lords over others and does not propagate its message 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 Islam and will not put any obstacles in its propagation through the power of the state.

This is the character of this *din* and this is its function as a declaration of the lordship of Allah and the freedom of every man and every community from servitude to anyone other than Allah.

There is a great difference between this concept of Islam and the view that Islam is confined to geographical and racial boundaries and does not take any action except out of fear of aggression. In the latter case, all its inherent dynamism is lost.

To understand the dynamism of Islam with clarity and depth, it is necessary to remember that Islam is a way of life for man prescribed by Allah. It is not a man-made system, nor an ideology of a group of people, nor a way of life peculiar to a specific race. We cannot resort to external reasons to justify jihad unless we overlook this great truth and unless we forget that the basic point here is the sovereignty of Allah and the obedience of His creatures. It is impossible for a person to appreciate this cardinal truth and yet seek other reasons for Islamic jihad.

In the early stage of the Islamic movement one cannot appreciate the difference between the concept that war was forced upon Islam [61] by *jahiliyyah* because its very nature demanded that *jahili* societies would attack it, and the concept that Islam must take the initiative and enter into this struggle. In the early stages of the Islamic movement it is difficult to discriminate between these two concepts, because in either case Islam will have to do battle. In the final stages, however, when the initial battles are won, distinguishing the two concepts makes a great difference in understanding the purpose and significance of the Islamic message. And herein lies the danger.

There is also a great difference between the idea that Islam is a Divinely-ordained way of life and the idea that it is a geographically-bounded system. According to the first idea, Islam came into this world to establish the rule of Allah on Allah's earth, to invite all people toward the worship of Allah, and to make its message concrete in the form of a Muslim community where individuals are free from servitude to men and come together to serve Allah and follow the *shari'ah*. This Islam has a right to remove all obstacles in its path so it may address human reason and intuition without any interference or hindrance from political establishment. According to the second idea, Islam is merely a national system which has a right to take up arms only when its homeland comes under attack.

In the case of either concept, Islam has to strive and to struggle; but its objectives and its results are entirely different, both conceptually and practically.

Indeed, Islam has the right to take the initiative. Islam is not a heritage of any particular race or country. This is Allah's *din* and it is for the whole world. It has the right to destroy all obstacles in the form of institutions and traditions that restrict man's freedom of choice. It does not attack individuals nor does it force them to accept its beliefs. It attacks institutions and traditions in order to release human beings from their pernicious influence, which distorts human nature and curtails human freedom.

Islam has the obligation and the right to release mankind from servitude to human beings so that they may serve Allah alone, and so give practical meaning to its declaration that Allah is the true Lord of all and that all men are free under Him. According to the Islamic concept and in actuality, Allah's rule on earth can be established only through the Islamic system, as it is the only system ordained by Allah for all human beings, whether they be rulers or ruled, black or white, poor or rich, ignorant or learned. It has the same law for all, and all human beings are equally responsible within it. In all other systems, human beings obey other human

beings and follow man-made laws. Legislation is a Divine attribute. Any person who concedes this right [62] to any human claimant, whether he considers him Divine or not, in reality accepts him as Divine.

Islam organizes its followers in its own way which the hostile societies seldom tolerate; they seek to put obstructions in its path. This leaves no option for Islam but to fight against them in order to remove all obstacles from the path to universal human freedom. Only in this manner can life be wholly dedicated to Allah.

The Orientalists have painted a picture of Islam as a violent movement which imposes its belief upon people by the sword. These dishonest Orientalists know very well that this is not true, but by this method they try to distort the true objectives of Islamic jihad. When some of the Muslims scholars—these defeated people—search for the rationale of “defense” with which to refute this accusation, in their ignorance of the nature of Islam and its function, they ignore the fact that Islam has a right to take the initiative for human freedom.

These research scholars, with their defeated mentality, have adopted the Western concept of “religion,” which is merely a name for “belief” in the heart, having no relation to the practical affairs of life, and therefore they conceive of religious war as a war to impose a particular belief on other people by force.

But this is not the case with Islam, as Islam is the way of life ordained by Allah for all mankind, seeking to establish the Lordship of Allah alone—that is, the sovereignty of Allah—and directing practical life in all its daily details. Jihad in Islam is simply a name for striving to make this system of life prevail in the world.

Thus, wherever an Islamic community exists as a concrete example of the Divinely-ordained system of life, it has a Divinely-given right to step forward and establish political authority, so that it may establish the Divine system on earth, while leaving the matter of belief to individual conscience. When Allah restrained Muslims from jihad for a certain period, it was a question of strategy rather than of principle; this was a matter pertaining to the requirements of the movement and not of belief. Only in the light of this explanation can we understand those verses of the Noble Qur’an which are concerned with the various stages of this movement. In reading these verses, we should always keep in mind that one of their meanings is related to the particular stages of the development of Islam, while there is another general meaning related to the unchangeable and eternal message of Islam. We should not confuse these two aspects.