Chapter Four
TERROR IN THE SPREAD OF ISLAM:
AN ALLEGATION OR TRUTH?

Among the most widely believed myths about Islam in the west today is the myth of forcible conversion to Islam. Many do believe that Islam is widespread in the world today simply because of a ‘holy campaign of terror’ carried out by the early Muslims to convert non-Muslims to Islam. Non-Muslims were offered the freedom to choose either Islam or death.

In a syndicated column appearing in over 30 papers (on July 23rd 1994) entitled. “Muslim persecution of Christians increasing” the author blames many Muslim countries for persecuting Christians then he quotes the Qur’an “There is no compulsion in religion” and ends the quote by rudely writing, ‘Really’?!

Did Muslims really force others to convert to Islam? Is there any evidence for consistent forcible conversions throughout the Islamic history? How to confront such misconceptions, shouldn’t we search for the truth and present it as it is. This is how Allah has instructed in the Qur’ān.

“Say: the truth from your lord and let him who will believe and let him who will reject”. (18:29)

VIEWS OF NON-MUSLIMS:

Many distinguished western historians have attested that, there is no such evidence of forcible conversion found anywhere in the history of Islam. Foremost among whom is Sir Thomas Arnold in his book The Preaching of Islam written in 1896 he said that

“Among the sixty- six millions of Indian Musalmans, there are vast number of converts or descendants of converts in whose conversion force played no part and the only, influences at work were the teaching and persuasion of peaceful missionaries”.²

At another place the same author argues:

“How little was effected towards the spread of Islam by violence on the part of the Muhammadan rulers may be judged from the fact that even in the centre of the Muhammadan power such as Delhi and Agra, the Muhammadans in modern times did not form one fourth of the population”.³
Also there is De lacy O Leary who gave the best reply to this misconception in her book *Islam at the Cross Road*.

“History makes it clear however that the legend of fanatical Muslims sweeping through the world and forcing Islam at the point of the sword upon conquered races is one of the most fantastically absurd myth that historians have ever repeated”.4

The famous historian, Thomas Carlyle, in his book *The Hero as prophet* refers to the misconception about the spread of Islam:

“Much has been said of Mahomet’s propagating his Religion by the sword. The sword indeed: but where will you get your sword! Every new opinion, at its starting is precisely in a minority of one. In one man’s head alone, there it dwells as yet. One man alone of the whole world believes it, there is one man against all men. That he take a sword, and try to propagate with that, will do little for him. You must first get your sword! On the whole, a thing will propagate itself as it can”.5

It was Carlyle’s laconic reply to those who questions about Islam’s rapid expansion, unequalled by any other religion. In his reply, he meant that ‘First get your sword. You must win men’s heart before you can induce them to imperil their lives for you; and the first conquerors of Islam must have been made Muslims before they were made fighters on the path of God’.

Also there are many western writers who nullify this misconception like Marshall G. Hodgson in his book *The venture of Islam*, Albert Hourani in his book *A History of the Arabs People*, Ira Lapidus in his book *History of Islamic Societies*, L.S. Starorianos in his book *A global history, the human heritage* and many other.6

The question that remains to be answered is why then so many people have chosen Islam throughout the more than 1400 years of its history. Islam has penetrated the Middle East, North Africa, Spain, West Africa, East Africa, Eastern Europe, Asia Minor, the Caucasus, Central Asia, Afghanistan, India, western China and the Malay Archipelago. Islam in all these regions replaced so many other well established religions like Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Hinduism, pagan and animism. What are the reasons behind the triumph of Islam over all these religions in so many different Places at so many different times?
The answer has been given by **L. Browne**, about the false assertion that people in conquered countries been converted to Islam under threat:

> “Incidentally these well-established facts dispose of the idea so widely fostered in Christian writings that the Muslims, wherever they went, forced people to accept Islam at the point of the sword”.

The same author in his book, *The Prospects of Islam*, goes on to say that the real motive behind the Muslims’ conquest was the brotherhood of Islam.

> “The vast majority of Muslim lands throughout history continued to treat the members of other religions with the utmost tolerance and respect. Within the borders of all Islamic states, both Jews and Christians lived in safety and enjoyed freedom”.

Professor **Marshall G. Hodgson** has explained in his book, *The venture of Islam*, the reasons for the popularity of Islam as follows:

> “Muslims made a personal appeal to people’s religious consciousness. On the level of straight argument, they often put forward the populist intelligibility of Islam. Muslims commonly ridiculed in the name of intellectual good sense, the more mythically convoluted teachings of older traditions. This could seem attractively straightforward to people dissatisfied with taking things on faith from a learned priest whose mysteries they could not comprehend. A single Creator to be worshipped by each person for himself, on the basis of revelation that had been given to a famous prophet, whom millions already acknowledged. This was at once intelligible and plausible”.

People of all eras have been ready to embrace Islam for a wide variety of reasons but perhaps the foremost one, as pointed out by **Muhammad Asad**, a Jewish convert to Islam, is that:

> “Islam appears to me like a perfect work of architecture. All its parts are harmoniously conceive to complement and support each other, nothing lacking with the result of an absolute balance and solid composure. Everything in the teaching and postulate of Islam is in its proper place”.

And **A.J Arberry** holds the same view:

> “The rapidity of the spread of Islam is a crucial fact of history...the sublime rhetoric of the Qurʾān, that
inimitable symphony, the very sounds of which move men to tears and ecstasy”. 

This, and the urgency of the simple message Islam carried, holds the key to the mystery of one of the greatest cataclysms in the history of religion.

“When all military, political and economic factors have been exhausted, the religious impulse must still be recognized as the most vital and enduring”.

A SURVEY OF SPREAD OF ISLAM:

In the global cultural and political atmosphere, after the event of September 11, Islam was portrayed to the world as a religion of terrorism and that it had spread through its campaign of “Holy Jihad” in other words “Holy terrorism”. It would be appropriate to check these allegations here religiously as well as historically:

Religiously: one of the explicit concepts in Islam is that there is no compulsion in religion.

“Let there be no compulsion in religion: truth stands out clear from error: whoever rejects evil and believes in God hath grasped the must trustworthy hand hold, that never breaks and God hearth and knoweth all things. (2:256)

Allah has also instructed in the Qurʾān:

“Say: the truth from your Lord and let him who will believe and let him who will reject”. (18:29)

At other place it is mentioned that:

“We sent down the Qurʾān in truth and in truth had it descended”. (17:105)
“Put your trust in Allah for you are on the path of the manifest truth”. (27:79)

The other fact is that Islam never declared the concept of converting others into the faith as part of the Muslim’s duties. On the contrary, Islam limited the duties in this respect to the conveyance.

“If then they turn away: we have not sent you as a guard over them. The duty is but to convey (Message)”. (42:48)
“Wilt thou compel men to become believers? No soul can believe but by the permission of God”. (10:99,100)
In addition Islam does not hold Muslims responsible for the deeds of the other nations:


Say: “ye shall not be questioned as to our sins, nor shall we be questioned as to what ye do”. (34:25)

Brockelmen, usually very unsympathetic and partial also recognizes Islam’s religious values as the main factor for its spread.\(^{13}\)

The holy Qur’\(\text{\char13}n\) declares in clear terms:


“Invite (all) to the way of their Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation and argue with them with that which is the best”. (16:25)

The words to be marked are “Inviting”, “exhortation” and “argue”. All these envisage friendly discussions and the right to dissent. The teachings imply that superior ways and wisdom of Islam will win, and nothing else. Thus religiously there is no need for Muslims to force others to embrace Islam.

The famous Jewish American convert to Islam, Maryam Jameelah, cited the Qur’\(\text{\char13}n\) as the major factor of her conversion. After a deep study of both the Old Testament and the Qur’\(\text{\char13}n\), the contrast between the two scriptures become increasingly evident to her until she firmly believe that the Qur’\(\text{\char13}n\) was indeed God’s message to human race.\(^{14}\)

In the Gospel of Matthew:


“Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.”

The word “compel” has been interpreted in St. Augustine’s “Kingdom of God” as sanctioning forcible conversion. This ignores what is said further on the subject in the same gospel.


“And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.”

The original Christian scriptures too had not given a call for death or destruction in order to convert forcibly.\(^{15}\)

According to John L Esposito, one of the famous historian and writer of modern time:


“The religious rationale (as distinct from the practical political and economic motives), for conquest and expansion was not to force conversion to Islam upon other faiths that had their own prophets and revelations. The Qur’\(\text{\char13}n\) states clearly, “there is
no compulsion in religion” but rather to spread its righteous order that ignorance and unbelief could be replaced by just societies throughout the world”.\textsuperscript{16}

Even Sayyid Qutb (who is widely acknowledged as the intellectual godfather for the various modern radical Islamic movements including al-Qaeda)\textsuperscript{17} rejected forced conversion, believing instead that a successful jihad included the possibility of conversion as a likely result once people were free to choose:

“It is not the intention of Islam to force its beliefs on people, but Islam is not merely ‘belief’…. Islam is a declaration of the freedom of man from servitude to other men. Thus it strives from the beginning to abolish all those systems and governments which are based on the rule of man over men and the servitude of one human being to another. When Islam releases people from this political pressure and presents to them its spiritual message appealing to their reason it gives them complete freedom to accept or not to accept its beliefs. However this freedom does not mean that they can make their desires their Gods or that they can choose to remain in the servitude of other human being, making some men lords over others”.\textsuperscript{18}

\textit{Qur’ān} reveals very clearly in its passages about Islam’s acceptance of a diversity of religious beliefs and Laws

“Surely the believers, the Jews, the Sabians and the Christians- whoever believes in God and the last Day and does good deeds- they shall receive their reward from their lord. They shall have nothing to fear and they shall not grieve”. (5:69 & 2: 62)

Rosenthal writes:

“The more important factor for spread of Islam is religious law of Islam which was designed to cover all manifestations of life”.\textsuperscript{19}

Some unbiased western writers have admitted that: Muslims, according to the principles of their faith are under an obligation to use force for the purpose of bringing other religions to ruin (probably, he means jihad, which is unfortunately misinterpreted and not for the purpose he claims) yet, in spite of that, they have been tolerating other religions for some centuries past. The Christians have not been given orders to do anything but preach and instruct, yet, despite this, from
time immemorial they have been exterminating by fire and sword all those who are not of their religion. We may feel certain that if western Christians instead of the Saracens and Turks, had won the dominion over Asia, there would be today not a trace left of the Greek church and that they would never have tolerated Mohammedanism as the ‘infidels’ have tolerated Christianity there, we (Christians) enjoy the fine advantage of being far better versed than others in the art of killing, bombarding and exterminating the human race.  

Toynbee praises the Muslims’ tolerance towards the peoples of the Book after comparing it with the Christian’s attitude towards Muslims in their land. Historically: it is also evident that the expansion of Islam was neither due to the power nor the number of Muslims. Within the first hundred years of Islam, they had become master of an empire greater than that of Rome at the Zenith of its power. Said Arnold

“It is the spirit of truth in the hearts of believers which cannot rest, unless it manifests itself in thought, words and deed: which is not satisfied till it has carried its message to every human soul, till what it believes to be the truth is accepted as the truth by all members of the human family.”

**ISLAM GAINS A FOOT HOLD IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF INDIA:**

Trade relation between the Arabs and Indian existed by recorded history. The conversion of the Arabs to Islam, in all probability changed the Arab settlements into centres of dissemination of information about Islam. This was a period of religious controversy in the south. Brahmanism was waging a war upon Buddhism and Jainism; these two religions had been worsted in the North and were now on the defensive in the South. Polemics and controversy were the order of the day, Brahmanism backed argument with political pressure and persecutions and even with massacres of the followers of the politically helpless faiths. Hence religion must have been uppermost in the minds of the populace. In such circumstances new religious ideas have great opportunities. The egalitarian and democratic teachings of Islam aroused greater respect in the sight of politically weak group of population in the midst of inequalities inherent in the system of untouchables. Thus the Arabs were therefore, well protected and received every consideration at the hands of the rulers as well as the populace to whose prosperity they contributed.
**North Western part of India:** There were nests of pirates on the Sind coast, which were strong enough to disrupt the even flow of commerce between the Arab ports and the commercial centre of south India and Ceylon. The Umayyad government had for sometimes been protesting to the rulers of Sind about the depredations of the Sindhi Pirates upon Muslim commerce; matters came to a head when they interpreted some presents sent by the ruler of Ceylon to Hajjaj, the Umayyad governor of Iraq. When the Arab government demanded action the ruler of Sind expressed his inability to suppress the pirates. On this the Arabs decided to invade Sind, which resulted in its annexation by Muhammad bin Qasim in 712-13. The young conqueror excelled him in setting up an administration on liberal principals.\(^{25}\) It is on record that the Arabs not only did not exercise any pressure upon the population to accept Islam but they also gave them all the facilities which they extended to the *dhimmis* in other areas which they conquered.\(^{26}\) After the completion of the conquest, places of worship were left unmolested and we read of the existence of some of these temples for several centuries in the accounts of the Arab travellers and geographers.\(^ {27}\) These people were permitted to retain the administration, their personal laws, and religious institutions, local and communal affairs. The special position of the Brahmins in Hindu society was recognized.\(^ {28}\)

**Gujarat** came into contact with Islam as early as south India, because it had the same tradition of maritime trade with the Persians and the Arabs. There is no evidence regarding organized missionary activity; in all probability the Muslim traders and their theologians did some missionary work. Undoubtedly there was a good deal in the beliefs and conduct of the Arabs to win admirers for their way of life.\(^{29}\)

In the region of **Uttar Pradesh** and **Bihar** there is very little evidence of mass conversion and absorption of isolated individuals, who, at one time or the other, changed their convictions and became Muslims. Ordinary individuals do not emphasize their origin too much; to some who sought the sanctuary of Islam for the discriminations of the caste system because they belonged to the lower strata of the society. Such a memory would be painful and humiliating, hence their efforts would be directed towards obliterating it.\(^{30}\)

In **Bengal**, lives one of the largest Muslim populations anywhere in the world and in addition the Muslims form a fairly high percentage of the total
population. Buddhism survived longer in Bengal. Hinduism had been revived in Bengal by the Hindu Rulers of the Sena dynasty; their method was not always peaceful persuasion. The bitterness left in Buddhist hearts and expressed at the time of the Muslim conquest indicates that the Hindu monarchs had adopted a policy of persecution and degradation of the Buddhists. The result was that they looked upon the Muslims not as invaders but as their deliverers from the tyranny of Hindu rule and the avengers of their humiliation at the hands of the Brahmins. Besides this, Sufi missionary efforts have been successful in Bengal. On account of the silent and self-effacing methods adopted by Sufi missionaries it is as difficult to reconstruct a history of their efforts in Bengal as it is elsewhere. People contain sentiments of respect and admiration for Islam and a faith in its ultimate destiny. The success that was achieved by Islam in Bengal, Kashmir or Sind, mainly by Sufi’s silent missionary effort is unparalleled with any other areas.

This brings to the end of brief survey of missionary efforts. The question which needs some discussion is whether political coercion in any form played a part in gaining converts? In the course of several centuries in such a large area it cannot be expected that all the rulers were free from religious bias or the desire to win converts even by corrosion; but it is generally recognized that its extent was very limited. The largest expansion has come through patient missionary efforts. The pseudo Muslims who conquered and plundered did not do so as a result of a religious zeal (they were spiritually dead) but out of desire for power and dominion.

Sir Alfred C. Lyall puts it right when he says:

“The military adventurers who founded dynasties in Northern India and carved out kingdoms in the Deccan, cared little for things spiritual; most of them had indeed no time for proselytism, being continually engaged in conquests or in civil wars. They were usually rough Tartars or Mughals; they ill grounded in the faith of Mahomet, and untouched by the true Semitic enthusiasm which inspired the first Arab standard bearers of Islam. The empire they set up was pure military, and it was kept in that state by the half success of their conquest and the comparative failure of their spiritual invasion. They were strong enough to prevent anything like religious amalgamation among the Hindus and to check the gathering of tribes into nations; but so far were they from converting India, that among the Mohammedans themselves their
own faith never acquired an entire and exclusive monopoly of the high officers of administration”.  

Prof Arnold also makes the following points of conversions on the aftermath of a Muslim invasion by Mohammed b. Qasim:

“That the conversions were in the main voluntary, may be judged from the toleration that the Arabs, after the first violence of their onslaught, showed towards their idolatrous subjects, the people of Brachmamabad, for e.g., whose city had been taken by storm, were allowed to repair their temple, which was a means of livelihood to the Brahmans, and nobody was to be forbidden or prevented from following his own religion and generally, where submission was made, quarter was readily given, and the people were permitted the exercise of their own creeds and laws”.  

Besides all, history tells us the fact that Muslims ruled India for about a thousand years. If they wanted, they had the power of converting each and every non-Muslim of India to Islam. Today more than 80% of the populations of India are non-Muslims. All these non-Muslim Indians are bearing witness today that Islam was not spread by the sword. No religion has even gained a lasting hold upon soul of men by the force of its sensual permissions and fleshy promises…. Decidedly Islam itself was the main cause for its triumph. Muslims who were the lords of Arabia for 1400 years, for a few years the British ruled, and for a few years the French ruled. Overall the Muslim ruled Arabia for 1400 years. Yet today, there are 14 million Arabs who are Coptic Christians i.e. Christians since generations. If the Muslims had used the sword there would not have been a single Arab who would have remained as Christians.  

The impact of the Muslim traders through their individual social interactions and their role in commercial dealings, their moral example led to the conversion of many people in the Far East and West Africa. This was conversion without a single army approaching these areas. Islam was embraced in Indonesia and its neighbourhoods in the absence of the Muslim state, while the rulers of the region were Christians. Traders, not the soldiers were the ones who introduced Islam there. Indonesia is now a country that has the maximum number of Muslims in the world. Muslim ruled Spain for about 800 years. The Muslims in Spain never
used the sword to force the people to convert. Later the Christian crusaders came to Spain and wiped out the Muslims. Prof. Arnold in his book states that

“The rapid success of Arab invaders in Africa was largely due to the welcome they received from the native Christians, who hated the Byzantine rule not only for its oppressive administration, but also and chiefly on account of the bitterness of the theological rancour (orthodox adherents of the court)”\(^{38}\)

M. N. Roy, a very famous author expressed his thought against the allegation

“It is altogether a misconception that the Arabian progress was due to the sword alone. The sword may change an acknowledged national creed, but it can not affect the consciences of men”. \(^{39}\)

In another place the same author mentioned that

“The cause of the dramatic success of Islam was spiritual as well as social and political. On this important point, Gibbon testifies: “More pure than the system of Zoroaster, more liberal than the laws of Moses, the religion of Mohammad might seem less inconsistent with reason than the creed of mystery and superstition which, in the seventh century, disgraced the simplicity of the Gospel”. \(^{40}\)

These facts put us face to face with the sources through which Islam spread in the world, like-

- Commerce,
- Travel,
- Military conformation,
- Scholarly interaction,
- Social interaction and more scientifically,
- The effects of the glorious Islamic civilization on the world.

In the words of John Cogley

“Christianity has always been at a disadvantage, when competing with Islam. This has caused its missionaries and most Orientals to present Islam as a regressive and vulgar religion of uncivilized peoples”. \(^{41}\)
JIZYA: A SWORD OF MAINTAINING PEACE

Tackling the issue of Jizyah so often raised by anti-Muslim missionaries, Prof Arnold writes:

“The extent of toleration—so striking in the history of the seventh century—may be judged from the terms granted to the concurred cities, in which protection of life and property and toleration of religious belief were given in return for submission and payment of Jizyah”\(^42\).

But this Jizyah was too moderate to constitute a burden, seeing that it released them from the compulsory military service that was incumbent on their Muslim fellow-subjects. Conversion to Islam was certainly attended by a certain pecuniary advantage, but his former religion could have had but little hold on a convert who abandoned it merely to gain exemption from the Jizyah; and now instead of Jizyah, the convert has to pay the legal alms, “Zakat”, annually levied on most kinds of movable and immovable property.\(^43\)

The same topic has also been discussed by the historian De Lacy O’Leary; in her simple words she described:

“Islam remained substantially an Arab religion and apparently, every discouragement was put in the way of conversion. Every conversion meant a loss of tribute to the ruling Arabs and a new claimant to share in the spoil of war, whilst on the convert side it meant the loss of all liability to military service, for which the agricultural population of Syria and Persia had no inclination”.\(^44\)

It remained a moot point whether the imposition of Jizyah had any bearing upon conversion in the subcontinent or not. It is quite true that the conversion meant freedom from the tax. This could also be gained by joining government service of any kind because Jizyah was not levied on government servants.\(^45\) History is witness that there is no period of Muslim rule in any part of the subcontinent when non-Muslims were excluded from the civil and military services. It was therefore theoretically possible for any non-Muslims to escape from Jizyah. And if Jizyah had been a crushing burden upon the non-Muslims, it could lead to conversion, but it was not too heavy a burden. It was levied only on able bodied male adults who had a surplus of income after meeting the necessary expenses of maintaining themselves and their families. The religious classes like
priests and monks were exempt from this. The rate charged were the equivalent in local currency of 12, 24, 48 dirhams, depending upon the income of the assesses. The assessment seems to have been lenient because at no time did Jizyah form an important source of revenue, and a very large percentage of the non-Muslim population was exempt for one reason or another. Therefore, it does not seem likely that Jizyah helped, in any significant manner, conversion to Islam. When Alamgir I reimposed Jizyah after a lapse of 115 yrs, no sudden spurt in the number of conversions is recorded. 46

Afzal Iqbal in his book The Culture of Islam noted that the usual rate of tax payable by the adult non-Muslim population of a country submitting to the sovereignty of Islam was one dinar per head per year. This was too paid either in cash or kind. In return for this nominal payment of the tax, the non-Muslim population of a country submitting to the sovereignty of Islam was offered complete protection.

The Muslim population on the contrary, had to pay a compulsory annual tax of 2-1/2% or their wealth and holdings, not only that even though they paid much higher taxes than the non-Muslims, the Muslims were liable to be conscripted in the event of war while the non-Muslims had no liability whatever in this regard. The non-Muslims were accorded all the rights and obligations of citizens and were given the additional privilege not permissible to the Muslims, of being immune from conscription and military duty: in case, however they were employed on military duty, the nominal tax payable by them was no longer due to the treasury. These citizens were called as Ahl- Dhimmah, i.e. those for whose protection state was responsible. Woman, widows, children and disabled or old men did not have to pay any tax to the state. The state was responsible for their maintenance and they were supported out of the proceeds collected from Zakat, which was obligatory on the Muslims. 47

Makarios, a seventeenth- century orthodox Patriarch of Antioch, compared the poles’ harsh treatment of the Russian orthodox to the ottomans’ tolerant attitude towards orthodox Christians and prayed for the sultans. 48

REFUND OF JIZYA:

In Homs, the governors returned the tax of Tribute back to its people following an order by Abu Obaid (RA). They were commanded to give back the money when they deserted it (Homs) to rejoin the Muslim army who were
preparing to fight the Romans. They (the governors) said to the people of Homs:

‘We are returning back your dues because news has reached us that a huge army is preparing to fight us. You made it a condition that we protect you in return for your payment of the tax and since we are not able to meet this condition we forfeit the Jizya. But if Allah grants us victory, then we will fulfill the covenants between you and us.’

The people of Homs replied:

"May Allah return you to us, and give you victory over them, for if it was them they would have returned nothing that they may have taken and kept everything to themselves, your loyalty and justice is by far the more beloved to us than the tyranny and transgression that we were in."49

Letters and treaties written by commanders of Islamic armies are recorded in many books of history today. Among them is:50

1) Khalid Ibn Al-Waleed’s (RA) letter to Salouba Ibn Nastouuna when he entered the Euphrates. This is the actual text of the letter:

‘This is a letter from Khalid the son of Waleed to Salouba the son of Nastuona, and his people:

I have promised you my protection in return for your payment of Jizya. It is upon you to pay Tribute and upon me to protect you (if you do not pay Tribute I will not protect you)." Written in the twelfth year (after Hijrah), in the month of Safar.’

Abu Obaida (RA) did exactly the same with Damascus when he was preparing for the battle of Yarmuk.

3) The treaty between Soweed Ibn Moqrin, one of Umar’s army leaders to Rasban, and the people of Dahistan, and all the inhabitants of Jarjan-it reads as follows:

‘This is Soweed Ibn Muqrin’s letter to Rasban, the son of Zarban and the people of Dahistan and the rest of people of Jarjan, that for you is security, and upon us is your protection in return for your payment of Tribute, each according to his ability. And that whosoever’s assistance we require will be exempted from the tax in exchange for his efforts, and that your souls, belongings and laws will be protected and none of them will be changed.’

To this bore witness Sawad Ibn Qutba, Hind Ibn Umar, Sammak Ibn Mukhramah and Utbah ibn An-Nahaas, and it was written in the eighteenth year
after Hijrah (At-Tabari).

The position and importance of Zimmis is also evident from the event when the Tartars made a sudden assault on Syria and took countless men from Muslims, Jews and Christians as prisoners, Sheikh-a-Islam Ibn-e Taimiyah talked to the Tartar chief about the release of the prisoners. The chief gave his assent for the release of the Muslims prisoners but refused to do so in case of the Jews and the Christians. But Shaikh-al-Islam did not agree and insisted on the release of the Jews and the Christians, who, he told him, were the zimmis of the Islamic state and were bound to them; they could not let even one individual remain in captivity whether he belong to their own community or from those living under them as covenant. 51

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND THE HIGHEST MORALS SHOWN BY SUPER CIVILIZED PEOPLES:

Civilized life started again and members of the three monotheistic faiths returned to peaceful coexistence”. 52

History showed us the Christian ‘heroes’ actions during the crusaders, in their first savage conquest in 1099, “when ‘Godfrey and Tancred’ rode through streets, chocked with the dead and the dying, when defenceless Moslems were tortured, burnt, and shot down in cold blood from the towers and roofs of the temple, when the blood of wanton massacre defiled the honour of Christendom and stained the scene where once the gospel of love and mercy had been preached,

“Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy” was a forgotten beatitude when the Christians made shambles of the Holy city. Fortunate were the merciless, for they obtained mercy at the hands of the Moslem sultan”. 53

Ninety years after this dreadful slaughter and bloodshed, Salahuddin Ayyubi conquered Bait-al-Maqdis. The reason quoted by Esposito for invasion is:

“In the 1180s, Reginald of Chatillon, a European noble from Jerusalem, broke a truce with Muslim leader Saladdin, Nur ad-Din’s Nephew, and attacked a caravan. Saladin then declared a jihad against the crusader kingdoms” 54 ....

What a peaceful mode of action was is in the process of evacuation of the Christians of the sanctum. The conqueror guaranteed security of life and property
to them, and taking a small amount not from everyone but only from those who could easily pay it and allowed them to leave the town. Eighty four thousand persons left the town in perfect safety, and when the Christian patriarch wanted to leave the place, the sultan permitted him to do so, he had much wealth amassed through churches, synagogues, Sakhrah, Aqsa and from ceremonies on the occasion of Easter whose count is known to God alone; some counsellors advised Salahuddin to confiscate his wealth, but the Sultan told them that he could not go back upon his plighted word. He realized the same amount of ransom, from him also as he had realized from an ordinary person. He provided guard for the safe transit of the evacuees. The escorts had been instructed to take them to the Christian habitations of their co-religionist in perfect safety. Salahuddin’s benevolent treatment to the western Christians during the crusades prima facie appears a tale.\textsuperscript{55}

The words of ‘Stanley’ expressed about Salahuddin:

“If the taking of Jerusalem were the only fact known about Saladin, it were enough to prove him the most chivalrous and great-hearted conqueror of his own and perhaps of any age”\textsuperscript{56}.

When Sultan Muhammad II conquered Constantinople he entered the cathedral of St. Sophia where all the priests had gathered to seek refuge, met them very courteously and assured them safety. Those who had sought shelter there out of fear, should rest assured and return to their home with an easy conscience. Christians could follow their personal Laws, religious obligations and the customs and usage of their particular churches. They freely elect their patriarch. On this occasion the Sultan also ordered celebration and gifted him a palace built for him. Then the Sultan proclaimed that he had sanctioned the laws of the Orthodox Church and the patriarch would protect them. It was due to this kind treatment of him that the people of Constantinople felt that under the new Islamic regime they were living in greater peace and religious freedom than under their former Byzantine rulers.\textsuperscript{57} Similarly, the other Ottoman rulers continued with kind treatment to their Christian subjects in the conquered neighbouring lands, for example, in Bulgarian and the Greek states, such treatment was not meted out to them anywhere in Europe itself. Thus in Hungary and Transylvania, instead of submitting themselves to the tyrannical rule of extremely bigoted sect of
Christians of the house of Habsburg, they preferred to live under the Turkish authority and rule for a long time.\textsuperscript{58}

During the seventh century the patriarch of Antioch, Makarios, compared the pole’s harsh treatment of the Russian orthodox to the ottoman’s tolerant attitude towards orthodox Christians and prayed for the Sultan:

“We mourn bitterly the loss of those thousands of martyrs enemies of the faith during the last forty or fifty years and whose number approaches seventy thousand. O ye traitors! And O ye unholy sinners! O ye hard hearted creatures! I ask you what was the fault of the nuns worshipping in the churches? Why did you put them to the sword? And now were general run of women sinning? For what crime were the children, virgins and young girls taken? Why did you put them to the sword? Why should I not call them the accrued and damned souls of Poland when they have proved themselves more debased and cruel than the mischief making idolaters perpetrating cruelty on the Christians? In oppressing the Christians they were labouring under the erroneous notion that they would be able to efface the orthodox church altogether. God in this infinite Mercy preserve the Turkish government for all time to come, who realize their dues (Jizya) and have no ill will against other religions- whether they are Christians, Nazarenes, Jews or Samaritans. But the polish damned ones did not stop at realization of taxes, in spite of the fact that the Christians were willingly prepared to serve them, but they handed over the Christians to the cruel Jews who are enemies of the Christians at heart, and did not permit the Christians to build even one church, nor left alive any priest among them who could teach them faith” \textsuperscript{59}

In contrast to Muslims what the European Christians did to their own brethren, the orthodox Christians when they conquered Constantinople. The statement quoted by Pope Innocent III.

“The duty of the followers of Jesus and the supporters of his faith was to turn the edges of their swords towards the greatest enemy of Christianity (Islam). But it is a pity they shed the blood of the Christians themselves, which was religiously forbidden to them. They did not care at all for it, and shed much blood. They neither respected the faith, nor discriminated between the sexes nor had they any regard for age, or youth in this bloodshed. They committed fornication and adultery in broad day light. The nuns, mothers of
children and virgins found themselves equally helpless before these lustful creatures and the sensual beats of this army, so to say, devoured them. These robbers and plunderers did not stop at robbing the king and other aristocrats of their riches, but ravaged and plundered the lands and other properties of the churches. They desecrated the churches also, robbing them of the sacred portraits, crosses and holy relics”.

The compassion and tolerance exhibited by Sultan Beyazid II applied to all the ottoman sultans. When sultan Mahmet the conqueror captured Constantinople, he allowed the Christians and Jews to live freely there. Andre Miquel, who is known for the valuable works he has written about the just and tolerant practices of Muslims and the world of Islam, says:

“The Christian communities lived under a well administered state that they did not have during the Byzantine and Latin periods. They were never subjected to systematic persecution. On the contrary, the empire, and especially Istanbul, had become a refuge for Spanish Jews who were tortured. People were never Islamized by force; the movements of Islamization took place as result of social processes”.

When the Muslim army reached the valley of the Jordan and Abu Ubaiydhah pitched his camp at Fihl, during 633-639, Christian inhabitants of the country wrote to the Arabs saying:

“O Muslims, we prefer you to the Byzantines though they are of our faith, because you keep better faith with us and a more merciful to us and refrain from doing us injustice and your rule over us is better than theirs, for thy have robbed us of our goods and our homes”.

The people of Emessa closed the gate of their city against the army of Heraclius and told the Muslims that they preferred their government and justice to the injustice and oppression of the Greeks.

The history of the ill-fated IInd crusade presents us with a very remarkable incident told by Odo of Deuil, a monk of St. Denis wrote a graphic account:

“When the Christians were going the Bait al- Maqdis through Asia minor, they suffered a great defeat at the hands of the Turks in 1148 A.D. with great difficulty they reached Antioch by sea route. But those who are sick, wounded left at the mercy of Greeks. Louis paid
them (the Greeks) five hundred marks for their protection and treatment of the disabled and the sick. But hardly had the army left Italy when the Greeks informed the Turks of the presence of these unarmed crusaders; the Turkish army that had returned to the cantonment turned round with the idea of taking their victory to a conclusive end. Those Christians who escaped this calamity were despairing of their lives. But the Muslims were greatly moved by their pitiable plight, and instead of enmity, they nursed the sick and helped the hungry. The Greeks played a dirty joke on their own brothers, oppressed them but the pagans (Muslims) offered them security and shelter and most benevolent treatment.  

A historian of yore attested that

“We learn that more than three thousand of those returning alive joined the Turks. Alas! This kindness and mercy were more disagreeable than treachery. They certainly gave them bread but snatched from them their faith and beliefs, altogether it is true that they did not compel any one to abandon his faith, but confined their efforts to service and benevolence to them.”

One of the Crusaders, Raymond of Aiguilles, boasted of the violence and mass executions carried out by Christians:

“Wonderful sights were to be seen. Some of our men (and this was more merciful) cut off the heads of their enemies; others shot them with arrows, so that they fell from the towers; others tortured them longer by casting them in to the flames. Piles of heads, hands and feet were to be seen in the streets of the city. It was necessary to pick one’s way over the bodies of men and horses. But these were small matters compared to what happened at the Temple of Solomon, a place where religious services are normally chanted….in the Temple and Porch of Solomon, men rode in blood up to their knees and bridle reins”.

In two days, the Crusader army killed some 40,000 Muslims in the barbaric ways just described.  

Stanley Lane-Poole accepts:

“There must be something in the religion itself to explain its persistence and spread and to account for its present hold over so large a proportion of the dwellers on the earth… Islam has stirred an
enthusiasm that has never been surpassed. Islam has had its martyrs, its recluses, who have renounced all that life offered and have accepted death with a smile for the sake of the faith that was in them”.

In the last but not the least, as a concluding remark, let me finally quote one of the greatest leader of the world ‘Mahatma Gandhi’ who expressed his view in young India in 1920:

“I become more than ever convinced that it was not the sword that won a place in Islam in those days in the scheme of life. It was the rigid simplicity, the utter self-effacement of the Prophet, the scrupulous regard for his pledges, his intense devotion to his friends and followers, his intrepidity, his fearlessness, his absolute trust in god and his own mission. These and not the sword carried everything before them and surmounted every trouble”.
NOTES AND REFERENCES:


3. ibid, p. 262.


8. ibid, p. 15


12. ibid


27. E. G Al Baladhuri, p-437 mention that the great temple of Debal still existed in the reign of the Abbasid caliph, Mutasim (833-842) as quoted in Qureshi, p. 39.
30. Ibid, p. 65-69
31. Tara Chand, p. 213
32. Quraishi, p. 70-75
33. Arnold, p. 256.
34. Ibid, p. 272.
36. Arnold, p. 47
38. Arnold, p. 102
40. ibid, p. 45
42. Baladuri, pp. 74, 116, 121 as noted in Arnold, p. 56
45. R.P. Tripathy, Some aspects of Muslim administration, Allahabad, 1936, pp. 290-291
47. Afzal Iqbal, *The culture of Islam*, Delhi: idarahi Adabiyyat-i-Delhi 1985, pp. 86-87
50. Ibid
54. John L. Esposito, *The Islamic world, Past and present*, Vol 1st Oxford University pres. 2004, p. 120
60. Baladuri, p. 137 as quoted in Arnold, p. 55.
64. Arnold, p. 88
65. Ibid, p. 89
67. Ibid, p. 262
68. Stanley lane- Poole *studies in a Mosque*, Beirut Khayatas 1966, p 86-89
69. Young India, 1920, online at www.mkgandhi.org/g_communal/notes.htm.