

Impressum

Ashutosh Vardhana: A call to doubt

(Dedication accepted by Taslima Nasrin)

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EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

The author, a British Hindu, discusses the current campaign (1) against terrorism in religious terms. Christian and Muslim ethics alike (unlike Hindu ethics) put man's duties towards God and authority (commandments 1 to 5: only one God, no images, no blasphemy, sabbath; honour your parents) above his duties towards men (commandment 6: no killing). This can be used to legitimise terrorists.

Fanaticism can be undermined by sowing doubt in the infallibility of scriptures and gurus, and there are traditional ways for doing so. This approach is more subtle and effective in the long run and less dangerous than brute force, or political correctness and legislation.

**Ashutosh Vardhana:
A call to doubt:
A British Hindu reflects on the campaign against terrorism**

This essay is dedicated to Taslima Nasrin (2),
the secular-Muslim writer who,
in her novel 'Lajja' (Shame),
defended Hindus against Muslim violence.

I am a Hindu. Single. My closest friends are Muslims. So close that we are practically one family. We support each other in every possible way. I have rejoiced with them when their children were born and have mourned when their mother died, who was like a mother to me.

My friends, or 'my family' as I call them, take their religion seriously. They try to do the will of Allah as they understand it and as they have been taught it. Their beliefs and practices are different from Christian and secularist ones and they insist on following them with the same earnestness with which well brought-up English people insist on their arbitrary table manners or on sending Christmas cards. That earnestness does not mean that English people or practising Muslims are fanatics or fundamentalists.

We are very fond of each other, even though they eat meat whereas I am a strict vegetarian and will not even eat fish and eggs (for religious reasons), but I too am not a fundamentalist.

The first and highest commandments of the Jew and the Christian, and therefore by and large of the Muslim, specify his duties towards God and authority:

- 1 Worship only one God.
- 2 Do not make images.
- 3 Do not blaspheme.
- 4 Keep the Sabbath.
- 5 Honour your parents

The commandment 'Do not kill', against which the Manhattan terrorists (1) offended, comes only as number 6, halfway through the set.

By contrast, my highest precept (which makes me, like Gandhi, into a vegetarian) is 'ahimsa' (3): do your best not to harm any living creature, human or subhuman, including chicken, fish, cows, the environment, and, a fortiori, human beings, be they Jews, gypsies, homosexuals, women, outcasts, dark or white races, adherents of other religions, heretics, atheists, intellectuals,

or Americans, to give just some examples of groups which have been persecuted or treated as sub-humans from time to time.

I am therefore unhappy about the murder of six million Jews in German concentration camps (4) and the million who died in the communal violence in Rwanda in 1994 (5). I am unhappy about the thousands of Muslims and Hindus who died in the rioting after the demolition of the Babri mosque in Ayodhya in 1992 (6) (God does not give a damn by what name she is called and whether she is worshipped in a mandir (7) or a mosque.) I am unhappy about the millions of animals that are slaughtered in the stockyards of Chicago every year or the 7,000 people killed in the attacks on Manhattan and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001.

My religion gives me hardly any precepts of my duties towards God. I owe her nothing. (8) My ultimate aim is to gain first-hand knowledge of, and eventually be entirely united with, her. The best way of getting closer to this goal is for me to do generously my duty towards my fellow men (and regard my duties as more important than my rights). Knowledge of God will come to me in due course as a bonus (aka 'grace') (9).

As Hindus we learn expressly: your parents are God, your wife is God, your husband is God, your teacher is God, and your guest is God. We worship God by worshipping men. This, at least, is the duty which my guru taught me as the ideal.

Of course none of us ever fully lives up to that ideal. Hindus, too, have perpetrated unpardonable violence. Hindus, too, have been fanatics and offended against the spirit of their religion. But the ideal has been formulated and continues to exist as something to aim at. It is definitely good for people: and if God exists, it is good for her as well.

In the Yoga Sutras (10) we have ten traditional precepts (yamas and niyamas) (11). They can be adjusted to meet the changing needs of society (our religion develops like a living organism) (12), just as we have not only one incarnation of God: God continues to appear on earth again and again when she is needed. (13) However, she is not easy to recognise.

The idea of a last prophet, a prophet for all times, is inconceivable to us. We continue, forever, to need teachers, prophets and gods on earth. We meet them with respect and with doubt.

My guru (peace be upon him) taught me the three highest precepts as follows (and any religion and society would do well to adopt and propagate them):

- 1) Do not harm any living creature (a fortiori: kill neither human beings nor animals).
- 2) Doubt everything said or ordered by a religious teacher, especially if he speaks in the name of God. Your doubt must extend even to the Holy Scriptures and to the pronouncements of your own guru. The consequence of doubt is rejection, acceptance or waiting.
- 3) Disseminate doubt, for doubt is a virtue.

Maxime (2) is encouraged by some respectable authorities:

- Bhagavad Gita: 'Learn by reverence, by inquiry and by serving your teacher' (i.e. by observing him living closely together with him). (14)
- St Paul: 'Do not despise prophetic speech. But check everything, and accept what is good.' (15)
- Qur'an: 'Do not uphold what you have no knowledge of. For the hearing, eyesight, and mind, all these are held responsible for that.' (i.e. do not accept information on faith; critically evaluate it with your reason and senses.) (16)
- Brecht: 'Check the invoice, it's you who has to pay it.' (Prüfe die Rechnung: Du mußt sie bezahlen.) (17)

Observing precepts (2) and (3) will make it easier for society to avoid gross offences against precept (1).

It is the absence of doubt that permits people to commit acts of mass cruelty in the name of an ideal or idol, e.g. the God of whose existence they cannot be sure and whose voice they cannot physically hear or verify.

It is the absence of doubt which enabled the Nazis to run their killing apparatus. It is the absence of doubt which enabled the Inquisition to function. It is the absence of doubt which enabled the French paratroopers to torture their Muslim victims during the Algerian war of 1954 to 1962. (18)

It is the absence of doubt which made the countless massacres and punitive expeditions of the colonial powers (including America) possible. They are still well remembered in the third world. And are we now to add another punitive expedition to the list -- to show that we, the West, are stronger?

The terrorists who destroyed Manhattan, and their guru, had no doubt that they were the forces of good fighting the forces of evil. That conviction made them different from criminals and made them, in effect, saints, people who sacrificed their lives in a good cause. Beware of saints!

Jews, Christians and Muslims are taught to admire Abraham's readiness to commit child-murder in the name of God, as a sign of total obedience, in a situation where God's command conflicted with common sense, natural compassion and parental love: God orders Abraham to sacrifice (kill) his son Isaac. Abraham unquestioningly agrees to do so, the count-down starts, the knife is raised over Isaac's chest, until God (a Deus ex machina), satisfied with Abraham's obedience, grants a last-second reprieve.

Jews and Christians have this story in Genesis 22:1-19, Muslims in Surah 37:99-111, and an important Muslim festival, Id-al-Adha, is devoted to it. The story is recited to Christians during the Easter Night service every year as a good example and a precedent for God's willingness to sacrifice his son Jesus and Jesus's obedience to his father. These are roots of all three faiths, and they have borne fruit (by which we shall know them) (19) in Manhattan. We Westerners are part of the plot.

The terror pilots and their Master were neither suicides nor cowards. They believed that they were doing the will of God: we can doubt that but we cannot refute it! They were willing, like Jesus, to sacrifice their own lives in God's cause, and regrettably God did not, at the last minute, reprieve them and their six thousand victims. I am reliably informed that the victims had only one thing in common: at some time in their lives they all had thoroughly enjoyed watching the film 'Towering Inferno', imagining it to be real. Their dream had come true and they had joined the cast.

Saints put God's will above everything else. God can break and override human laws, feelings and intuitions. He who acts in the name of God can do the same. Therefore we should never act in the name of God! We should never do what we cannot defend by our own, merely human, standards.

People acting in the name of God, even if they defend animal rights or the right to life for unborn humans, fuel my instinctive dislike of saints. We are better off without saints. I prefer sinners. They do less harm and are more fun.

The worst thing about saints is their first sin: they have eaten from the tree of knowledge (20) and therefore they know so clearly what is good and what is evil.

It was certainly not good to crash those planes into the World Trade Center. But the correspondingly evil face of America showed itself in the immediate (ill-considered) verbal response to the catastrophe.

It showed itself in the voice of the provincial American woman, shown outraged on television, who said: 'This is America. How dare they!' Her national pride had been hurt.

It showed itself in the voice of the President when he declared that America would continue the fight of good against evil until evil had been eradicated. (21) Even Jesus has not managed that, to say nothing of God.

It showed itself in the disgraceful name given to the big revenge operation: 'Operation Infinite Justice'. (22) After all, the terrorists believed that they were carrying out 'infinite justice': that's why they felt justified to sacrifice so many human lives. Both sides do not doubt that justice (infinite justice!) is on their side and justifies any sacrifice.

The President implied that America knows and decides what is good and what is evil, that America is incapable of doing evil. ('He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone at her.')(23)

That horrendous strength of conviction, that certainty (and the resulting policies and actions over the years) combined with military and economic power is evil. It is the reason for the hatred of those who are powerless against America's gentle stranglehold, powerless against being suffocated by its love and its smiles, powerless except by the devious methods of terrorism.

Reasserting that power, proving yet again to the world that America is invincible (for invulnerable it is no longer!), that America decides what is right and what is wrong, will never eradicate terrorism. Terrorism is resistance, and there will be resistance as long as there are human beings who do not accept America's (or anybody else's) ideology. Terrorism is the weapon of the weak against the strong.

Neither evil nor terrorism can ever be eradicated from this world.

However, they can be weakened by the spreading of doubt. That is not a campaign of limited duration, e.g. 20 years or 100 years, but a never-ending task -- like trying to keep one's body clean, that inherently self-soiling organism.

If the President thinks that religion as such is too sure of itself, too sure of the will of God, then he can start with his own religion and ask (with Max Müller, 1901) (24): What makes you so sure that the Bible is God's word? You are not infallible: therefore how can you claim, with absolute certainty, that the Bible is infallible? The human authors of the Bible may be deceived or lying if they claim infallibility for themselves. Your parents, your priest or the Pope are not infallible. Their testimony that the Bible is God's word (i.e. infallible) is therefore not worth much, certainly not if the Bible tells you to stone to death homosexuals, adulterers and heretics. (25) We can rely on the infallibility of the Bible only if the person who claims it to be infallible is himself infallible. Nobody is infallible. Therefore nobody can know whether the Bible is infallible (even if perhaps this is actually the case).

Each time we convert a person to that kind of doubt it is a tiny step on the road towards tolerance and reduces the danger of terrorism.

There is an ancient story (26) from the life of the Holy Prophet. Muslims believe that the Holy Qur'an is literally God's word as dictated to the Holy Prophet by the Archangel Gabriel. The merchants of Mecca were reluctant to give up the worship of their pre-Islamic deities, especially three very popular goddesses, al-Lat, al-'Uzza and Manat.

The Holy Prophet, in the name of Allah, wanted them removed entirely. The merchants of Mecca tried to achieve a compromise. If such a compromise could be found, they would embrace Islam.

The proposed compromise was that the goddesses should no longer be worshipped (like God) but that they may be invoked for intercession (much like saints in the Roman Catholic church).

One day, in front of the assembled merchants, the Archangel Gabriel (as it appeared to the Holy Prophet) put the following words on his tongue, and the Holy Prophet uttered them:

'Have ye considered al-Lat and al-'Uzza, and Manat, the third, the other? These are the swans exalted, whose intercession is to be hoped for'.

Thereupon the Holy Prophet and all the men assembled prostrated themselves.

Then the Archangel Gabriel appeared to the Holy Prophet and said: 'You have to retract the verse you uttered. It was not me who gave that verse to you but Satan, who had assumed my form in order to deceive you. The correct continuation of the verse is as follows:

"Have ye seen Lat and 'Uzza and another, the third goddess, Manat? What! For you the male sex and for Him, the female? Behold, such would be indeed a division most unfair! These are nothing but names which ye have devised, -- ye and your fathers, -- for which God has sent down no authority whatever... (19-23) ... How many-so-ever be the angels in the heavens, their intercession will avail nothing.(26)" '

This is how it appears in the Holy Qur'an, Surah 53:19-26, to this day.

The false verse coming from Satan was dubbed 'the Satanic verse'.

Ordinary Muslims do not know the story and are not meant to know it because even to contemplate its possibility, and even its falsity, inevitably leads to doubt.

Muslim scholars know the story. Many of them declare that it is not historical and a malicious invention of non-Muslims bent on spoiling the reputation of the Holy Prophet.

This objection, however, may well be a form of wishful thinking, for the earliest books in which the story is found are Qur'an commentaries written by devout Muslims.

However, the story is so pernicious, so corrosive in the way in which it spreads doubt, that no-one who has ever heard and understood it can ever again be completely untainted (free of doubt). Like baptism, this story creates a character indelebilis (27), an indelible impression.

If the story is true, then it means that the Holy Prophet was, at least once, deceived. If deceived on one occasion, in one verse, how can we know that he was not deceived in some other verses? If he could not tell the Archangel from Satan during the first utterance, how could he tell them apart during the second. Perhaps the first was authentic and the second was not? Which was the Satanic verse?

If the Holy Prophet could be temporarily deceived, the Holy Qur'an is no longer the literal word of Allah to be believed and followed without question. We must decide for each verse whether we accept it or not, and what it means. We have to put ourselves above the 'word of Allah', for we do not know for sure what is the word of Allah and what is not.

Someone could always ask about another verse: could this possibly be the result of a deception, a Satanic verse?

You may argue that Allah, all-powerful as HE is, prevented any deception except for the first one. If so, why did he not prevent the first deception, which, after all, diminishes faith and certainty? Why did he not prevent the creation of this allegedly anti-Islamic 'legend'? He did want his word believed, did he not? Why then did he allow unconditional belief to be undermined at the beginning?

However, even if the story were demonstrably untrue and if every narrator grants this before telling it: it is a possible story, and thinking of the mere possibility is a potent seed of doubt. The question will always arise: how did the Holy Prophet know that the 'person' speaking to him, or the voice in his mind, was the Archangel Gabriel and not some malevolent spirit, or that he did not imagine his revelations.

No Muslim claims (and I do not claim) that he imagined them. We cannot know for sure. But even believers will sometimes ask themselves whether he did. That is the trouble. It creates restlessness and uncertainty in our hearts.

With 1% or 5% doubt in my mind, I will happily respond to God's command by supporting widows and orphans, refraining from rape,

murder and theft, praying and fasting and going on the Haj, but I will not blow 7000 Americans (not even Americans!), however materialist, sky-high: if I doubt in the slightest, the risk of my being mistaken about the will of God is too great for that.

Therefore the best (even though quite unspectacular) and entirely non-violent means of combating terrorism (including a US state terrorism, if there were to be such a thing) is the spreading of doubt, e.g. the propagation of this story (or of Max Müller's questions about the infallibility of scriptures).

The results are not measurable (like the number of terrorists killed or arrested), but they will be there, they are unfailing and they spread like a virus. Spreading doubt does not require an army, and we all can participate in the campaign of doubt and reason.

It would be well, of course, if the campaign were not only one of spreading doubt but if it were accompanied by a campaign of spreading love, especially towards people who, right now, are unjustly under suspicion or attack.

Ordinary Muslims are the most warm and kind-hearted people you can imagine. Television does not show that. But I know: from years of living happily in an English town with a huge Muslim population. Muslims are hospitable, generous and honest. (So, of course, are the Americans, so are the British, the Christians, so are we all, all honourable men.) (28). But Muslims are no less kind than any of them. They are human beings, they are not a priori stupid, cruel or inferior. They, having been much provoked and persecuted over the centuries, can say, like Shylock:

He hath ... laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, heated mine enemies; and what's his reason? I am a Muslim. Hath not a Muslim eyes? hath not a Muslim hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? if you tickle us, do we not laugh? if you poison us, do we not die? and if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? (29)

Some years before the Gulf War, I worked in Iraq. I was scared when I arrived, thinking that I was entering a nest of terrorists, as was the general fear at that time. In fact I was received, by ordinary people, with more warmth than is customary anywhere in Western culture.

Muslims will show that warmth to us if we non-Muslims show it to them. In the USA and in Britain they are in the minority. It is therefore our duty to make the first move, just as the Iraqis reassuringly did when I was a lone stranger in their country.

Especially at this terribly difficult time for them, Muslims in non-Islamic countries need our support and encouragement. They are innocent of the deeds of the terrorists and are deeply hurt by the unfair suspicion that falls upon them.

It is not enough for us to tolerate them, to refrain from attacking them: we should go out of our way to be friendly towards them in the street, greet them with a smile, a 'Hello' or an 'Assalamu aleikum' (Peace be with you!) (30), invite them to our homes, to demonstrate to them that we do not wish them any harm. Friendliness towards strangers ('bloody foreigners' (31), 'bogus asylum seekers' (32), as abusive British parlance has it), smiling in the street, is not something that comes easily in English or European culture (there is something we can learn from other, more temperamental cultures!), but it would be good for all of us if we at least tried to overcome our cultural inhibitions and prejudices. I know from my time in Iraq how good it feels, and how necessary it is, for the foreigner.

That is even a biblical injunction: 'And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.' (33)

And what about inviting Afghan refugees or asylum seekers into our homes, no matter whether their refugee status has been confirmed or not? They did not leave their country for fun, and they must feel terrible when they see that their country is about to be destroyed by the people whose guests they are, and that they are living in the midst of people who regard them as fraudsters and enemies. They must be given the reassurance that ordinary English people respect them and like them. If we cannot like them, it is our fault, our narrow-mindedness, and we must learn to overcome it.

I practise my religion (but do not ask me whether I 'believe in God', for I do not understand the question). I believe that all of us need religion (if only the minimalist religion of atheism, but a religion all the same).

Religions or their assertions are not true or false. Rather they reflect and influence the attitudes of the cultural communities in which they grow, give them a coherent approach to the problems of life, hold them together, provide us with tools for gaining an understanding of God (whatever she may be) and comfort us in our afflictions better than the cleverest secular alternatives.

Like the European economic community I am against monopolies! I am therefore glad that there are many religions in this world and would not like to make converts to mine or see any religion die out, if only because the existence of alternatives needles the followers of some religions, kindles doubt in them (or should do so) and ensures that they do not become too overbearing. American Christianity and secularism in its isolation and in combination with economic and military power tends to be so.

Isolation combined with power makes it unnecessary for people to listen. That provokes terrorism. The Manhattan terrorists broke

through America's shell and forced it, and the western world, to listen. They demonstrated, even to the deaf, that there are alternative points of view in the world, and they want to be heard.

All of a sudden (speeches on 2 October 2001) the American president wants to give the Palestinians their own state. All of a sudden Tony Blair wants to transform Africa into a blossoming continent and is convinced he can do it. All of a sudden Afghanistan is to be converted into green paradise. Suddenly world idealism blossoms: bread for everyone. Yet again a turning point in world history (Blair).(34)

My incitement to doubt and to the spreading of doubt is therefore not part of a programme to undermine or destroy any religion or religion as such but merely a way to induce followers of any religion to practise theirs with common sense and **moderation** (35) and to put the interests of human beings above the interests of God. God can look after herself: vulnerable human beings cannot. We do not exist for God, she exists for us.

Christians and atheists know what is good and what is bad. We ignorant Hindus must be more humble: we merely know what is better and what is worse. For us nothing is purely good and purely bad.

The aim of the war against terrorism is not to destroy evil, for we can never be quite sure what it is: the aim is to eradicate certainty.

^ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ashutosh Vardhana is a Hindu. He grew up in Europe and lives in Yorkshire, England. He studied at London University. He is a keen student of comparative religion and now writes fiction, poetry and essays. He has produced many academic publications. His 'creative' work has been published in Dipika (London), Writers' Forum (Bournemouth, UK), Scavenger (Osage City, Kansas, USA), The World of English (Peking), Asian Image (Blackburn, UK), Gujarat-Samachar (London) and Pphoo Magazine (Calcutta).

^FOOTNOTES

- (01) Campaigns against terrorism in response to the Manhattan attacks of 11 September 2001
- (02) Taslima Nasrin. Born: 25 August 1962. Her novel 'Lajja' (Shame) was written and first published in Bengali. Translated into over 19 languages, including English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Arabic. The German translation, 'Scham', was published by Hoffmann und Campe Verlag. A fatwa (death sentence) was pronounced on her by Islamic fundamentalists, for her modernist and liberal writings on many issues. (see more under Ayodhya, Footnote (6), below)
- (03) ahimsa (Sanskrit) = non-violence
- (04) the Holocaust, the Shoah
- (05) Rwanda is a country in South East Africa. Genocide against the Tutsi tribe took place there during the Civil War in 1994. See: Paul Rusesabagina (2006): "An Ordinary Man - The True Story Behind Hotel Rwanda", Viking Penguin, New York, USA (autobiography, Rwanda genocide)
- (06) Ayodhya: town in India; believed by Hindus to be the birthplace of God Rama, a Hindu Bethlehem, so to speak. In 1992, a derelict mosque (built by the Muslim Moghul conquerors in 1528) on the site believed to be the site of that birth was demolished by Hindu fundamentalists who insisted on erecting a temple there and sparked communal riots between Hindus and Muslims all over India and Bangladesh, in which many people were killed. Taslima Nasrin wrote her novel Lajja to castigate the Muslim participants of the violence in Bangladesh, where Hindus were attacked and killed, who, obviously, had nothing to do with the events in Ayodhya. After many years of legal hussles and delays, in 2019, the Supreme Court of India gave permission for a new incomparably splendid temple to be erected on the site of the demolished mosque and over the exact spot where traditional belief said that Lord Rama was born before time immemorial. On 22 January 2024 the new, partially built, temple was inaugurated.
- (07) mandir = Hindu temple
- (08) God, she, her: reference to God is made in the feminine, in defiance of current linguistic conventions, to shake up an irrelevant ancient prejudice, which helps to suppress doubt.
- (09) aka = also known as

- (10) Yoga Sutras: a summary of Hindu practice written by Patanjali (perhaps several authors) sometime between 2 cent. BC and 5 cent. AD)
- (11) yamas and niyamas: positive precepts (things to do) and prohibitions (things to abstain from)
- (12) Our religion develops like a living organism: Goethe (in "Urworte, orphisch: Dämon") describes this as "geprägte Form, die lebend sich entwickelt": a shape which starts like a minted coin but is alive and develops.
- (13)

Whenever there is a decline of righteousness
and rise of unrighteousness, O Arjuna,
then I send forth (incarnate) Myself. (4:7)

For the protection of the good,
for the destruction of the wicked
and for the establishment of righteousness,
I come into being from age to age. (4:8)

(Bhagavad Gita, chapter 4)

The Bhagavad Gita is the Holy Scripture of Hinduism, here translated by Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888-1975), Indian philosopher and second president of India (1952-1962).

- (14) Bhagavad Gita: 'Learn by reverence, by inquiry and by serving your teacher' (i.e. by observing him living closely together with him), i.e. keep asking questions ("inquiry") but remain polite. Bhagavad Gita 4:34
- (15) St Paul: 'Do not despise prophetic speech. But check everything, and accept what is good.' (Bible, New Testament, 1. Thessalonians, 5:20-21)
- (16) Qur'an: "Do not accept information on faith; critically evaluate it with your reason and senses."
Source: Edip Yüksel (et al) (eds) (2007): "Quran: A Reformist Translation". Brainbow Press, London, 521 pp: The exact text of Yüksel is 'Do not uphold what you have no knowledge of. For the hearing, eyesight, and mind, all these are held responsible for that.' (Qur'an 17:36)
- (17) Bertolt Brecht: 'Check the invoice, you have to pay it.'
(Prüfe die Rechnung, du mußt sie bezahlen). From: 'Lob des Lernens' (In Praise of learning).
- (18) About the French, ultimately unsuccessful, attempts to impose their will on the Algerians and the brutal methods they used, read

- Henry Alleg (2006): "The Question", translated by John Calder, University of Nebraska Press. 70 pp (originally: Henri Alleg: "La question" (The Question: Torture; preface by Jean-Paul Sartre; 1958)
- Frantz Fanon (1995): "A Dying Colonialism" (originally published in France in 1959 as "L'An Cinq, de la Revolution Algerienne" (The Fifth Year of the Algerian Revolution)

Fanon said: "Having a gun, being a member of the National Army of Liberation, is the only chance the Algerian still has of giving a meaning to his death. Life under the domination has long been devoid of meaning." A similar situation exists in Jewish-occupied Palestine.

- (19) fruit (by which we shall know them): 'Ye shall know them by their fruits.' (Bible, New Testament, Matthew 7:16)
- (20) Adam and Eve in paradise ate from the 'tree of knowledge'. That was their first sin: Bible, Genesis, chapter 2.
- (21) I have not yet been able to recover that exact quote. For the record, here are some of the well-preserved things President Bush did say after the 9/11 attack. George W Bush was US president from 2001 from 2009.

See Bush and Bin Laden speeches side by side:

- George W. Bush, Address to the Nation, October 7, 2001, taken from the New York Times, Monday, October 8, 2001, p. B6
- Osama bin Laden, Videotaped Address, October 7, 2001

Source: <https://press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/481921texts.html>

"Our military has put the terror training camps of Afghanistan out of business, yet camps still exist in at least a dozen countries. A terrorist underworld -- including groups like Hamas, Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad, Jaish-i-Mohammed -- operates in remote jungles and deserts, and hides in the centers of large cities."

State of the Union Address, January 29, 2002

Source: Link: <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html>

- (22) The code name "Infinite Justice" was soon changed to "Operation Enduring Freedom" because Muslims objected that "such finality is considered something provided only by God". Source: BBC NEWS, 2001-09-25: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/1563722.stm>

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- (23) He that is without sin ... cast the first stone...: Bible, New Testament, John 8:7
- (24) Max Müller (1823-1900), born in Germany, Professor of Sanskrit at Oxford, edited and first published the Vedas. His autobiography was published posthumously in 1901. Max Müller (1901): "My Autobiography". Charles Scribner's Sons, New York
- (25) homosexuals, adulterers, heretics: Biblical fatwas: death penalty
- for adulterers: Bible, Leviticus 20:10,
 - for homosexuals: Leviticus 20:13,
 - for blasphemers: Leviticus 24:14
- (26) The Satanic Verses: The incident of the Satanic Verses is discussed in detail in: W Montgomery Watt: "Muhammad at Mecca", Oxford 1953.

This verse is not the only verse in the Qur'an which was changed ("on second thoughts," as malevolent people say).

These verses are said to have been "abrogated". The Qur'an itself provides for this possibility, a verse first having been uttered and then superseded by another. "Any revelation We cause to be superseded or forgotten, We replace with something better or similar. Do you [Prophet] not know that God has power over everything?" (Sura 2:106) (Translation: "Qur'an: A new translation by M A S Abdel Haleem". Oxford University Press, 2004)

Abrogated verses are listed in the following article:
https://wikiislam.net/wiki/List_of_Abrogations_in_the_Qur%27an

Here is a list of books which discuss the Satanic Verses either on their own merits or in connection with the violence following the publication of Salman Rushdie's novel, "The Satanic Verses", in 1988

**THE FOLLOWING BOOKS DISCUSS THE SATANIC VERSES
IN THEIR OWN RIGHT, I.E.
WITHOUT MENTIONING RUSHDIE'S NOVEL:**

- Ahmed, Shahab: Before Orthodoxy - The Satanic Verses in Early Islam
(Ahmed argues that the early Muslims accepted the Satanic Verses incident as truth.)
- Ibn Ishaq (1955): "The Life of Muhammad", translated by A Guillaume, Oxford University Press, Karachi and Oxford, England. 860 pp. (This is the oldest record of the Satanic Verses episode. Ibn Ishaq lived c. 704–767 CE.)
- Mattson, Ingrid (2013): "The story of the Qur'an: its history and place in Muslim life". Second Edition. John Wiley & Sons, Oxford, GB. 355 pp
- Qureshi, Nabeel (2016): "Allah or Jesus? A former Muslim investigates the evidence for Islam and Christianity". Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA. 346 pp
- Rodinson, Maxime (1971): "Mohammed". Transl from the French by Anne Carter. Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, Middx, GB. 381 pp (classical Biography).pdf
- Spencer, Robert (2012) - "Did Muhammad Exist: An Inquiry into Islam's Obscure Origins." ISI Books, Wilmington, Delaware, USA. 264 pp
- Warraq, Ibn (1995): "Why I Am Not a Muslim." Prometheus Books, Amherst, New York, USA. 673 pp
- Warraq, Ibn (ed)(2000): The Quest for the Historical Muhammad. Prometheus Books, Amherst, New York, USA. 554 pp
- Warraq, Ibn (ed)(2013): "Koranic Allusions: The Biblical, Qumranian, and Pre-Islamic Background". Prometheus Books, Amherst, New York, USA, 380 pp.
(The references to the Satanic Verses episode are very technical.)

**THE FOLLOWING BOOKS DISCUSS THE SATANIC VERSES
IN CONNECTION WITH
SALMAN RUSHDIE 'S NOVEL**

- Brooks, Geraldine (1995): "Nine Parts of Desire: The Hidden World of Islamic Women". Anchor Books, Random House, New York, USA, 233 pp
- Caldwell, Christopher (2009): "Reflections on the Revolution In Europe: immigration, Islam, and the West". Doubleday, New York, USA, 328 pp
- Erickson, John D. (1998): "The view from underneath: Salman Rushdie's Satanic Verses". Islam and Postcolonial Narrative. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press
- Ghattas, Kim (2020): "Black Wave: Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the Forty-Year Rivalry That Unraveled Culture, Religion, and Collective Memory in the Middle East". Henry Holt and Co, New York, USA. 444 pp. (Detailed discussion of the Rushdie affair.)
- Hazleton, Lesley (2009): "After the Prophet: The Epic Story of the Shia-Sunni Split in Islam". Doubleday, New York, USA, 329 pp
- Husain, Ed (2018): "The House of Islam: A Global History". Bloomsbury Publishing, New York, USA. 325 pp
- Klausen, Jytte (2009): "The Cartoons That Shook the World." Yale University Press, New Haven and London. 263 pp
(This book discusses the Rushdie affair in the context of other "blasphemy" incidents, but does not mention the original Satanic Verses episode in the history of the Holy Qur'an)
- Murray, Douglas (2017): "The Strange Death of Europe: Immigration, Identity, Islam". Bloomsbury Publishing, London, 286 pp (Much discussion of the Rushdie affair)
- Nickel, Gordon D (2020): "The Quran with Christian Commentary: A Guide to Understanding the Scripture of Islam" (Quran translation by A J Droge). Zondervan Publishing, Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA. 1159 pp
- Spencer, Robert (2002): "Islam Unveiled: Disturbing Questions About the World's Fastest-Growing Faith". Encounter Books, San Francisco, California, USA, 228 pp (fiercely anti-Islamic)
- Spencer, Robert (2006): "The Truth About Muhammad." Regnery Publishing, Washington, DC, USA. 244 pp (This is a virulent attack of Islam.)
- Spencer, Robert (2015): "The Complete Infidel's Guide to ISIS". Regnery Publishing, Washington, USA, 323 pp
- Warraq, Ibn (ed) (2003): "Leaving Islam: Apostates Speak Out". Prometheus Books, Amherst, New York, USA. 599 pp
(This book contains articles from 37 contributors from various countries, starting in the Middle Ages. One of them is entitled: "The Poet of Doubt: Umar Khayyam: Medieval and Modern Iranian Freethought"). For a striking example for the absence of doubt, see immediately after the next book title.
- Yüksel, Edip (et al)(eds)(2007): "Quran: A Reformist Translation". Brainbow Press, London, 521 pp

THE ABSENCE OF DOUBT: AN EXAMPLE

Warraq quotes a conversation a traveller to Turkey had at the end of the nineteenth century.

"A high official once told me that Turkey gives to all her subjects the widest religious liberty. He said, "There is the fullest liberty for the Armenian to become Catholic, for the Greek to become an Armenian, for the Catholic and the Armenian to become Greeks, for any one of them to become Protestants, or for all to become Muhammadans. There is the fullest and completest religious liberty for all the subjects of this empire."

In response to the question, "How about liberty for the Muhammadan to become a Christian?" he replied, "That [is an] impossibility in the nature of the case. When one has once accepted Islam and become a follower of the Prophet, he cannot change. There is no power on earth that can change him. Whatever he may say or claim cannot alter the fact that he is a Muslim still and must always be such. It is, therefore, an absurdity to say that a Muslim has the privilege of changing his religion, for to do so is beyond his power." (Warraq (ed), 2003)"

- (27) character indelebilis: Latin: technical term in Christian theology. Baptism is said to impress an indelible mark on the person who has been baptised, a mark which can never be erased; one cannot renounce baptism. A person once baptised is baptised forever.
- (28) so are we all, all honourable men: Shakespeare: Julius Caesar, Act 3, Scene 2
- (29) Shakespeare: Merchant of Venice: Act 3, Scene 1
- (30) Assalamu aleikum (Peace be with you): Arabic: normal greeting among Muslims in all countries
- (31) 'bloody foreigner' = accursed foreigner, so frequently used in English that it has become a standard phrase and is used both in earnest and as a joke to characterise British xenophobia
- (32) 'bogus asylum seeker': This phrase has become very common during the past five years or so and is used by the popular press in their xenophobic campaign against people who claim that they are politically persecuted and need asylum whereas in fact they are merely 'economic migrants', i.e. people who come to England because they want to improve their economic conditions. The press campaign reached such a pitch that readers often wrongly assume that all asylum seekers are fraudulent, do not want to work, and want to exploit the provisions of the British social security system.
- (33) 'And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land ..'
(Leviticus 19:33-34)

(34) Speech of President Bush on 24 June 2002:

"For too long, the citizens of the Middle East have lived in the midst of death and fear. The hatred of a few holds the hopes of many hostage. The forces of extremism and terror are attempting to kill progress and peace by killing the innocent. And this casts a dark shadow over an entire region. For the sake of all humanity, things must change in the Middle East. /../"

In the situation the Palestinian people will grow more and more miserable. ****My vision is two states****, living side by side in peace and security. There is simply no way to achieve that peace until all parties fight terror. Yet, at this critical moment, if all parties will break with the past and set out on a new path, we can overcome the darkness with the light of hope."

Source: Speech: "President Bush Calls for New Palestinian Leadership".
<https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020624-3.html>

Tony Blair: "turning point in world history"

"In retrospect, the Millennium marked only a moment in time. It was the events of September 11 that marked a ****turning point in history****, where we confront the dangers of the future and assess the choices facing humankind.

It was a tragedy. An act of evil. From this nation, goes our deepest sympathy and prayers for the victims and our profound solidarity with the American people."

Tony Blair's Labour Conference Speech on 2 October 2001

Source:
<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2001/oct/02/labourconference.labour6>

(35) James Hilton, in his novel "Lost Horizons" (1933), describes a fictitious village ruled by a community of monks for whom moderation is a guiding principle. Illuminating quotes from that book will be given in the **next chapter**.

Moderation is also one of the Four Cardinal Virtues: Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, Temperance (= moderation). See Josef Pieper: "The Four Cardinal Virtues", chapter 4 on "Temperance".

Wikipedia summarises: "Temperance (σωφροσύνη, sōphrosýnē; Latin: temperantia): also known as restraint, the practice of self-control, abstinence, discretion, and **moderation** tempering the appetition. Plato considered sōphrosynē, which may also be translated as sound-mindedness, to be **the most important virtue**. σωφροσύνη was often used in reference to drinking and "knowing the right amount" to **avoid belligerence**."