

Comments on the Handout of Muhammad’s “Last Sermon”

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On April 7, 2014, Muslim-Americans visited the Iowa state capitol and provided numerous handouts about Islam to state elected-officials. These handouts were supposed to help those officials to better understand Islam.

One of these handouts purported to be the text of Muhammad’s *Last Sermon* (or *Farewell Speech*). This hand-out included the below paragraph in which Muhammad explained how to treat women:

O People, it is true that you have certain rights with regard to your women, but they also have rights over you. Remember that you have taken them as your wives only under Allah’s trust and with His permission. If they abide by your right then to them belongs the right to be fed and clothed in kindness. Do treat your women well and be kind to them for they are your partners and committed helpers. And it is your right that they do not make friends with any one of whom you do not approve, as well as never be unchaste.

I have seen Muhammad’s speech reported in a number of authoritative Islamic works, and **the above “quote” left out Muhammad’s statements about beating women**. It appears that the Muslim-Americans relied on *Wikipedia* for the wording of this hand-out of Muhammad’s *Last Sermon*. But the *Wikipedia* article in which this sermon was found also pointed out that this version of Muhammad’s sermon was “fraudulent”:

http://wikiislam.net/wiki/List_of_Fabricated_Hadith#Muhammad.27s_Farewell_Sermon, Section, 3.3.2;

On the other hand, here is how three authoritative Islamic scholars reported this segment of the speech (the underline is my emphasis):

You have rights over your wives and they have rights over you. You have the right that they should not defile your bed and that they should not behave with open unseemliness. If they do, God allows you to put them in separate rooms and to beat them but not with severity.

The Life of Muhammad (Ibn Ishaq), p. 651

Now then, O people, you have a right over your wives and they have a right over you. You have [the right] that they should not cause anyone of whom you dislike to tread your beds; and that they should not commit any open indecency. If they do, then God permits you to shut them in separate rooms and to beat them, but not severely.

The History of al-Tabari: The Last Years of the Prophet, p. 113

Fear God with regard to women, for you took possession of them under God's protection. You have rights over their private parts according to the word of God. Surely, you have rights over them: that they do not bring to your bed one you detest. If they do so, strike them without hurting them.

The Life of Muhammad: Al-Waqidi's Kitab al-Maghazi, p. 539

Here are similar reports from authoritative *hadith*¹ collections about this statement Muhammad made about women during the *Last Sermon*:

Your rights over them are that they should not allow anyone whom you dislike to sit on your bedding. If they do that, then hit them, but in a manner that does not cause injury or leave a mark.

Sunan Ibn Majah, Vol. 4, No. 3074, p. 226

If they do that [evil behavior], then abandon their beds and beat them with a beating that is not harmful.

Jami' At-Tirmidhi, Vol. 2, No. 1163, p. 531

And your right upon them is that they do not allow anyone that you do not like to tread on your bedding. If they do (some sin), hit them without causing any wounds.

Sunan Abu Dawud, Vol. 2, No. 1905, p. 430

¹ The *hadiths* (pronounced "hadeeths") are reports about the examples, ways, and teachings of Muhammad believed to have come from those who were with him and observed and heard them. They are second only to the Koran in importance to Islam. And the Koran cannot be understood without relying on the *hadiths*.

In case you're wondering why Muhammad said the beating was not to be severe, here is the explanation. On one occasion, while giving a sermon, Muhammad said this about the treatment of women:

It is not wise for anyone of you to lash his wife like a slave, for he might sleep with her the same evening.

Sahih Al-Bukhari, No. 4942

Such a lashing could tend to spoil the mood.

This *Wikipedia* version of the *Last Sermon* on the handouts also included the following statement that Muhammad supposedly said:

...an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over a black nor a black has any superiority over white except by piety and good action.

It is wonderful sounding, except ***it is fiction***, and this fact was also noted in that same *Wikipedia* article.

But Muhammad did say that Muslims would rule the Arabs:

...Abu Jahl said to them: 'Muhammad alleges that if you follow him you will be kings of the Arabs and the Persians. Then after death you will be raised to gardens like those of the Jordan. But if you do not follow him you will be slaughtered, and when you are raised from the dead you will be burned in the fire of hell.' The apostle [Muhammad] came out to them with a handful of dust saying: 'I do say that.'

The Life of Muhammad (Ibn Ishaq), p. 222

However, the reality is that Muslim doctrine divides the world into two parts: The House of Islam (*Dar al-Islam*) and the House of War (*Dar al-Harb*, the world of non-Muslims). People are divided into Muslims (believers) and non-Muslims (disbelievers).

Here are some of the things Muhammad really had to say about this:

It was narrated from 'Amr bin Shu'aib, from his father, from his grandfather that the Messenger of Allah said: "A Muslim should not be killed in retaliation for the murder of a disbeliever."

Sunan Ibn Majah, No. 2659

It was narrated from Ibn 'Abbas that the Prophet said: "A believer should not be killed in retaliation for the murder of a disbeliever, and a person who has a treaty should not be killed during the time of the treaty.

Sunan Ibn Majah, No. 2660

It was narrated from 'Amr bin Shu'aib, from his father, from his grandfather, that the Messenger of Allah ruled that the blood money for the People of the Book is half of that of the blood money for the Muslims, and they are the Jews and Christians.

Sunan Ibn Majah, No. 2644

Abu Huraira reported that Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) had said: Do not greet the Jews and the Christians before they greet you and when you meet any one of them on the roads force him to go to the narrowest part of it.

Sahih Muslim, No. 2167

And here are some words of Allah from the Koran to further emphasize that division between Muslims and non-Muslims:

Chapter 4, Verse 101: *...verily, the disbelievers are ever to you open enemies.*

Chapter 48, Verse 29: *Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. And those who are with him are severe against disbelievers, and merciful among themselves...*

Chapter 98, Verse 6: *Jews, Christians, and non-Muslims in general are the worst of creatures.*

Chapter 98, Verse 7: *Muslims are the best of creatures.*

So when it comes to understanding Islam, where are you going to look: *Wikipedia*, or authoritative works of Islam? In 2014, Muslims in Iowa apparently looked to *Wikipedia*.