

BLASPHEMY



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Structure

I. Meaning

II. Blasphemy in Christianity

- I. The Old Testament (Leviticus)
- II. Punishment
- III. Attitudes and actions of blasphemy
- IV. Forgiveness

III. Blasphemy in Islam

- I. The Quran
- II. Punishment
- III. Actions of blasphemy

IV. Blasphemy in Europe

- I. Different situations across Europe.
- II. The affair of the cartoons of the prophet, from the Netherlands to France (2004-2015)

V. Elements of the debate around blasphemy

What is it?

- the act of insulting or lack of respect to God
- offending deeply held religious belief
- sin against a virtue of religion



What does it mean to blaspheme ?

- To speak with contempt about God
- To be defiantly irreverent the written or oral reproach of God, His name, attributes or religion
- Expressed in speech, thought or in act

Kinds of blasphemy

- 1. heretical – “God is cruel and unjust“
- 2. imprecatory - “Away with God“

- I. Direct
- II. Indirect – no intention

Blasphemy in Christianity

- Only Bible speaks and is concerned with blasphemy
- Strictly forbidden in The Commandments
- The Old Testament – harsh punishment:
 - *Leviticus 24:16 “Anyone who blasphemes the name of the Lord is to be put to death. The entire assembly must stone them. Whether foreigner or native-born, when they blaspheme the Name they are to be put to death.”*
- → serious crime in the law God gave to Moses



Punishment

- Hanging (the last hanged for blasphemy in GB, Thomas Aikenhead in Scotland 1697)
- Stoning
- Followers – responsible to make sure their behaviour doesn't incite others to blaspheme God



Attitudes and actions of blasphemy

- Blaspheming God
- Blaspheming Christ
- Blaspheming the Holy Spirit
- Blaspheming the Word
- Blaspheming the Church

Can be forgiven?

- “Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven” (Matthew 12:31).
- Any sin for which one seeks forgiveness through God’s prescribed plan can be forgiven
 - (“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).
 - Shift from the Old Testament Meaning

Blasphemy in Islam

- action against God, Muhammad or anything considered sacred in Islam
- The Quran notice blasphemy, but doesn't specify punishment + Quran doesn't prescribe punishment for abusing the Prophet
- Islam teaches to be sensitive to the sensibilities of others



Examples of blasphemy

- I. Blasphemy against holy personages
- II. Blasphemy against beliefs and customs
- III. Blasphemy against artifacts – Quran, mosque



Punishment of blasphemy

- Vary by jurisdiction
- Punishments imposed on various societies
- Convicted blasphemer – lose all legal rights
- The Quran does not mention any wordly punishment
- Different punishments vary between schools



- Different punishments vary between schools:
 - Hanafi – repentance, if not, death
 - Maliki – death for Muslim man is mandatory
 - Hanbali – death is mandatory for man and woman
 - Shafi'i – repentance accepted, if not, death
 - Ja'fari - death for Muslim



Blasphemy in Europe.



« In a Republic, the blasphemy does not exist ».
Mélenchon.

Blasphemy in Europe.



- Blasphemy is present in the articles 10 and 11 of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, of 1789.
- In the EU laws, no prohibition of the punishment of blasphemy.
- There are still countries with a blasphemy law, rule or policy at some level of the government.

The reality of blasphemy in Europe, the case of the cartoons of the prophet.

- Reminding the facts:
 - 2004 : Theo Van Gogh, killed in Amsterdam, because of a film about islam
 - 30 sept 2005: the 12 cartoons of the Jyllands Posten (Denmark)

- 8 feb 2006, Charlie Hebdo published the cartoons (to support the cartoonists)
- But they also added one of their own cartoon :

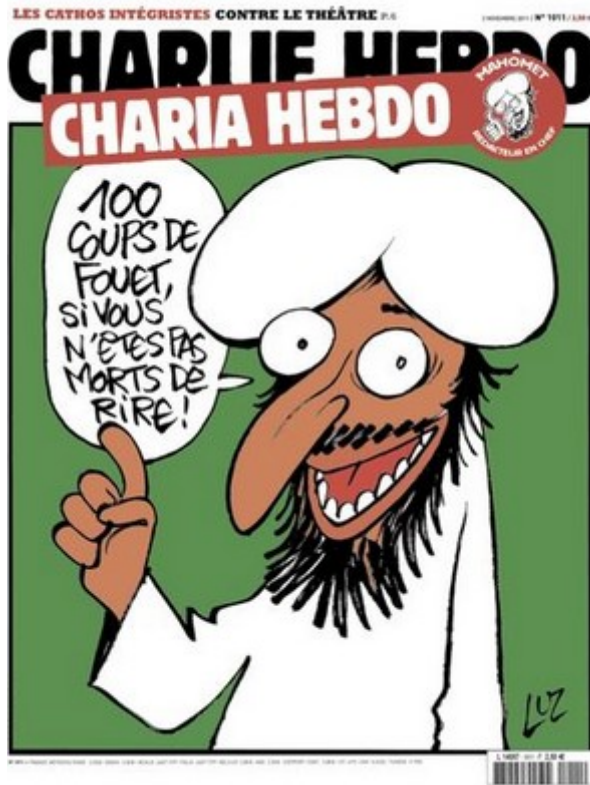
Mohammed
overwhelmed
by the integrists



It is hard to
be loved by
morons...

400 000 copies.

2011, first attack of Charlie Hebdo.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mPk0kU2fujU>

2015 and what happened after.

- 7 January: 12 people are killed in a terrorist attack, 9 of them were members of the redaction.
- Je suis Charlie.



The next cover and the some European reactions

- Journalist from all around the world were putting pressure on the few cartoonists to have the cover to show to the audience but at the end

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9yg2XBni9g>

Which elements in the debate around the right of blasphemy ?

Arguments to limit blasphemy

- Can offend the believers
- Religions are sacred → cannot laugh about it
- Exacerbate the tensions inside the population
- « put oil on the fire »

Arguments for the blasphemy

- Blasphemy is the fundamental part of the freedom of expression, thinking
- It is allowed to criticize a dogma
- Every representative of a monotheism is blasphemous for another religion.
- Blasphemy is the guardian of the laïcité, and democracy
- Fight the fear of fundamentalism
- Nobody force the believers to read this expression of blasphemy
- « it is the right to believe or not »
- « unlike fundamentalism, blasphemy doesn't kill ».

Conclusion : blasphemy religious or political question ?

- The affairs of the cartoons, symbol of the problem of integration of the Muslim community in Europe ?
- Is it necessary to impose restrictions on the freedom of blasphemy ?
- Self-censorship: sign of tolerance or weakness toward fundamentalism ?

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