

# The Anachronism of Apostasy



By: Amil Imani

April 13, 2023

Whereas the practice of slavery enslaves the body, the dogma of apostasy ensnares the mind. Whereas slavery is a shameful practice of the past, some shameless religionists still use the doctrine of apostasy to intimidate and severely punish people who elect to choose their own beliefs.

Islam is extremely possessive of its subjects. It is a religion that admits anyone into its fold by the person simply uttering a one-sentence statement of faith, shahada: I bear witness that there is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is Allah's messenger. By so saying, one becomes Muslim for life and surrenders the right of ever leaving it. Anyone who leaves the Islamic fold is murtad (revert), apostate.

The notion of apostasy is best understood within the overall Islamic dogma. Islam forms a binding covenant with the believer. Once a person is Muslim, he and his issues are considered Muslim forever. In this covenant, Islam promises to bestow its beneficence on the faithful conditional on the person's total and unquestioned surrender to it in all matters. Some of the rewards offered by Islam to the truly obedient believer, particularly the privileged males, are of this world as well as a great deal more promised to him in the next. If a Muslim faithful does not reap the rewards of his devotion in this world, Islam assures him of his inestimably cherished and limitless compounded rewards in the next world.

Islam demands the subjugation of the individual's will to that

of Allah and permeates the thinking, actions, and speech of Muslims by prefacing commitments they make contingent on the will of God (inshallah)

This total surrender and submission to the will and decree of Allah also absolve the individual from taking full responsibility for his conduct or honoring commitments he may make. For it is Allah who has the unquestioned authority to consummate or contravene any action or promise made by a faithful.

Within this overall framework of complete acceptance of Islam as the perfect living charter for the believer, the rules pertaining to apostasy can be better understood. Islam considers an apostate as a person who unilaterally breaks the covenant he has made with the faith. An apostate is condemned as guilty of turning his back on Allah's immutable eternal religion. Anyone born to Muslim parents and leaving Islam is stigmatized as *murtad fitri* (natural apostate) because he was born genetically Muslim and rejected his gift of birth. And anyone who converts to Islam and later leaves it is condemned as *murtad milli* (a person who has turned his back to the Ummah).

The severe stricture against leaving Islam is consistent with other main principle beliefs of the religion. Islam is a faith of surrender and not that of free will. A Muslim is to surrender his freedom of thoughts and actions to the will and dictates of Allah. The very principle of freedom is alien to the Islamic belief system.

With regard to apostasy, the two main branches of Islam, the Sunni, and the Shiite, are in considerable agreement. The great majority of Muslim scholars of both major camps agree that the Quran stipulates death for the apostate.

Islam, by its very nature, is an all-encompassing belief system that proscribes and prescribes every detail of the

person's and society's conduct. The Sharia law, a comprehensive code of Islamic jurisprudence, purportedly is based on the Quran, and the Hadith (the reported enunciation of Muhammad and his conduct.)

Furthermore, Islamic societies rule by the Islamic laws of Sharia. Any new societal legislation must be harmonious with those of the Sharia which are conclusively anti-democratic. Sharia law is in explicit contradiction and violation of the foundation of democracy. Sharia law places Allah's dictates and rules over the people's sovereignty. It discriminates against non-Muslims to the extreme of disenfranchising them from their rights of citizenship of Baha'is barring them from jobs, higher education, worship, etc., not only in Iran but Saudi Arabia, and even Egypt. It is blatantly discriminatory against women, Muslim or not. Men have a greater claim to the inheritance, their testimony in the court of law is worth twice that of women and they may marry multiple women at the same time. It stipulates even different rules and privileges governing free Muslim men as opposed to slave Muslims, implicitly condoning slavery. Saudi Arabia, the flagship of Islam, was finally forced by the free world to abandon slavery, I believe, only in late 1960, but it has been reported that it has not been completely abandoned.

Apostasy is defined both in the Quran as well as the Sharia and its punishment is clearly stipulated.

"Those who blasphemed and back away from the ways of Allah and die as blasphemers, Allah shall not forgive them." [Qur'an 4:48]

Islamic law does not allow the freedom to choose one's religion.

"Let there be no compulsion in the religion: Clearly the Right Path (i.e. Islam) is distinct from the crooked path." [Qur'an 2:256]

The Quran also specifically addresses the issue of murtad milli:

“But those who reject faith after they accepted it, and then go on adding to their defiance of faith, never will their repentance be accepted; for they are those who have (of set purpose) gone astray.” [Qur’an 3:90]

The Hadith further restates the provision of the Quran regarding the punishment of the apostate.

The Sharia law stipulates that any Muslim who turns his back on Islam should be given a chance to revert to the religion. For an un-repenting male apostate, death is the punishment, and life imprisonment for a female apostate.

“Kill whoever changes his religion.” –Sahih al-Bukhari 9:84:57

“The blood of a Muslim who confesses that none has the right to be worshiped but Allah and that I am His Apostle, cannot be shed except in three cases: In Qisas for murder, a married person who commits illegal sexual intercourse and the one who reverts from Islam (apostate) and leaves the Muslims.” –Sahih al-Bukhari 9:83:17

At present, apostasy is illegal in most Islamic countries. Although execution of the apostate is not common, it does take place from time to time by frequently buttressing the “crime” with additional charges. The Islamic Republic of Iran, for instance, often adds the charge of mohareb (one who wars with God) to further legitimize its execution of apostates. A case in point pertains to the treatment of the religious minority Baha’is by the Islamic Republic. A number of Baha’is have been charged as apostates and mohareb, executed and some secretly buried in unmarked graves.

The late Ayatollah Khomeini in his Tahrir al-Wassilah adjudicates how a person’s apostasy is established: “Apostasy is proven in two ways: First, the person himself confesses to

his apostasy twice. Second, two just and truthful men bear witness to the person's apostasy. But women's testimonies do not prove apostasy in any case; either they bear witness individually, in a group, or beside a man."

The misogynistic nature of Islam is once again evident in Ayatollah Khomeini's blanket disqualification of women's testimony solely on the basis of gender.

"Apostasy – or the formal renunciation of religion – is already punishable in Iran with death. But now, Iran wants to make the death penalty for apostasy part of the penal code. The European Union is concerned and has asked Iran to reconsider." Who is an apostate according to the legislation? Anyone in the world, not just Iranians, born to a Muslim parent; also, any convert to Islam who leaves it. Only one parent needs to be a Muslim at the time of conception for Islam to own that child for life. Islam is Ummahist. Islam doesn't recognize nationalities and national boundaries. And these Islamist zealots are very serious and have no sense of humor. Some say they have no sense at all, and they may be right. They certainly have a thirst for blood, particularly for the blood of infidels and apostates.

It is noteworthy that Islam considers the world as its Ummah and overarches national boundaries. Hence, Islamic clerics feel free to issue fatwa and other adjudications regarding any person, group, or nation anywhere in the world. A celebrated case of this practice was the fatwa of Ayatollah Khomeini against the British author Salman Rushdie for his book *The Satanic Verses*. Hence, individual Muslims anywhere in the world take it upon themselves to carry out fatwa issued by Islamic high divines. In another high-profile case, the killing of Theo van Gogh, a Dutch film director, and the recent attack on the Danish cartoonist, Kurt Westergaard, clearly demonstrates this primitive practice that runs counter to the civilized world's due process and has a seriously intimidating impact on the freedom of expression.

Free people and nations should not sacrifice their God-given liberty to please the Islamists by muzzling dissenters and even endangering their safety and their lives.

The concept and practice of apostasy are a shameful stain on the conscience of humanity. It is despicable for any belief system to stubbornly cling to the dehumanizing anachronism of apostasy while its counterpart, slavery, is already buried in mankind's graveyard of past infamy.

© 2023 Amil Imani – All Rights Reserved