

A Christian's Guide to the Koran, Lesson 7, Islamic persecution of Christians: a challenge.

It is chilling to know that the study on which I now embark could give me a death sentence in a Muslim country, even as a former book I wrote, *Scarlet Threads*, would have sealed my doom in Romanist Medieval times, or even some modern Catholic areas. Being a Christian and speaking the truth about Jesus and His Word is pretty dangerous, even today, even here...

As my study on Islam and the Koran begins, Fox News and many other media sources have been following the story of an Iranian Christian Pastor who has been jailed and is being threatened with death because he has decided not to come back to Islam.

Youcef Nadarkhani, 34, was recently given Islamic literature while in jail, and told that there would soon be a discussion of these materials. The standard Muslim line of the corruption of Old and New Testament texts is presented in these books, and the superiority of Islam is touted. It is not clear whether the coming discussion is meant to trap the pastor or show him Allah's mercy if he will submit to Islam, which ironically means "submission." Pastor Youcef is being advised by lawyers to keep silent.

A normally vindictive Islamic way is being held in check by international outrage in this case. Sharia Law demands severe penalties for daring to leave Islam. Youcef went beyond that. He actually asked that the Christian church he pastored be allowed to register with the state. He was arrested, then released. After his release he dared to complain to local officials about Islamic indoctrination of children in the local schools. This led to another arrest. He has been in an Iranian jail since that time. You simply do not speak against Islam in Iran.

By Islamic standards, Youcef should be sentenced to death by hanging. This was in fact the decision of the original court. An appeal to the Supreme Court did not overturn it but merely asked that it be confirmed that Youcef was a practicing Muslim from age 15 (adulthood in Islam) to age 19, when he converted to Christ.

In fact Youcef wasn't a Muslim at that time. But the apostasy charge stuck because he had been born into a Muslim family. Muslims are bound for life by the accident of birth. [The strange and exceptional case of one Barack Obama is the subject of much speculation in this regard. There is no question that he was born into a situation that demanded he be a Muslim all his life!]

Given three chances to recant, Youcef rejected all three.

Only intense international support by Christian and human rights groups keeps him alive to this day (November, 2011). But now the word is that the charges are changing. The international [non-Muslim] community cannot accept killing an apostate, but a rapist maybe...

How typical is Youcef's case? We believe, very typical, not only in Iran, but throughout the Muslim world. Muslim persecution of Christians, when Muslims are in - or rising to- power in a given nation dates back to the very beginnings of Islam. As Jews and Romanists and Communists and repressive regimes of all time have discovered, the Person and Message of Jesus Christ runs counter to the messages of this world and all its religions. Jesus and His people will continue to draw fire.

It would seem that the sensible thing for a government to do would be to let the religions be free to be who they are in a given culture, then allow the people the choice of whom they will serve. Joy then could fill the hearts of "the faithful" who win converts on the merits of their message, as opposed to the power of their weaponry. Rome and Mecca and the rest have put a sword to the throat and a book in the hand and said, Convert. Not amazingly, conversion of a sort is what has happened.

By contrast, men of God have placed the Saviour before mankind, and with no further motivation much of mankind has come to Him.

We challenge Islamists to fight this sort of battle alone, the battle of Truth, to see just how long Islam could exist in a world made aware of the facts in the case.

But the challenge I suggest is only a temporary offer. Eventually the Son of God, the True Fact in the Case, will appear, to rule, not from Rome, Mecca, Medina, or Moscow, or even Washington D.C. "Yet have I set my King on my holy hill of Zion," says a laughing God in Psalm 2. God speaks there of a King Who will rule with a rod of iron and dash in pieces all of His enemies. The age of grace and choosing and waiting and praying for the repentance of those who hate Christ will have ended. The age of the manifested Kingdom of God where Truth and Beauty and Righteousness shall reign, will have begun. Lord, Haste the day!

(For those who may not know, Zion is a small hill in the city of Jerusalem, Israel.)