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Subject: [Translating Jihad] Kuwaiti Journal: "Killing the Apostate Does Not Conflict ...

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The following is translated from balagh.com, which reprinted it from the journal published by the Kuwaiti government, 'Alim al-Fikr ("World of Thought"), First Volume, 1971. This essay includes the oft-repeated argument that the apostate from Islam is killed not because of his belief, but because he essentially commits high treason by coming out publicly against Islam, i.e. the state (the Muslim Brotherhood-linked European Council of Fatwa and Research makes the same argument here).

What I found most interesting here was the contention that one of the proofs of Islam's truth is the fact that hardly any Muslim "apostatizes from his religion after tasting its sweetness." Therefore it is the insecurity of Muslims about their religion which forces them to kill apostates, for if anybody did voluntarily attempt to leave Islam, that would show in their minds that there is something wrong with Islam. Thus the apostate must be branded a conniving and dishonest hypocrite, and must be killed in order to dissuade others from trying to leave. This is the attitude seen throughout Islamic history, such as that recorded in Ibn Ishaq's "Life of Muhammad," or that portrayed in the 1970s pro-Islam film "The Message."

Ruling on the Apostate

The traditional opinion in Islamic jurisprudence is to kill the apostate from Islam, whether a man or a woman. This might cause some to say that this is against the principle of freedom of religious belief and of not compelling one to remain in a religion he doesn't believe in. To this we give the two following responses:

First: It is clear that killing the apostate is not a punishment for mere belief or for abandoning the Islamic religion. The evidence for this is the fact that Islam has guaranteed and defended the religious freedom of non-Muslims such as Jews and Christians, without compelling or persecuting them. Thus it must needs be that this killing be a punishment for high treason and religious intrigue which is committed by the apostate when he falsely claims to enter Islam, then announces his departure therefrom with the intent of causing harm to it and

defaming it. Then he joins the ranks of its conspiring enemies, who use all means to make war against it. This includes what has been termed in the present day as psychological or spiritual warfare. This is what is decreed in the Noble Qur'an. It tells us of the Jews at the inception of the Islamic call, for they declared their entrance into Islam, and their joining—hypocritically—its ranks, then quickly departing therefrom. They did this as a means of plotting against and harming the call to Islam, and in an attempt to dissuade people from believing in it, and to turn Muslims away from it. Almighty Allah said: “A section of the People of the Book say: “Believe in the morning what is revealed to the believers, but reject it at the end of the day; perchance they may (themselves) Turn back; “And believe no one unless he follows your religion.” Say: “True guidance is the Guidance of Allah: (Fear ye) Lest a revelation be sent to someone (else) Like unto that which was sent unto you? or that those (Receiving such revelation) should engage you in argument before your Lord?” Say: “All bounties are in the hand of Allah: He granteth them to whom He pleaseth: And Allah careth for all, and He knoweth all things” [Qur'an 3:72-73]. It has been transmitted from Ibn 'Abbas that 'Abdallah bin al-Sayf, 'Adi bin Zayd, and al-Harith bin 'Awf, that they [the Jews] said to each other: “Come and let us believe in what what was sent down to Muhammad and his companions in the morning, and we will disbelieve in it in the evening, so that we deceive them in their religion, that perchance they will do as we do, and turn away from their religion.” Thus Allah Almighty sent down: “Ye People of the Book! Why do ye clothe Truth with falsehood, and conceal the Truth, while ye have knowledge? A section of the People of the Book say...” [Qur'an 3:71-72]. It has also been related that some of the People of the Book said: “Accept their religion at the beginning of the day, and disbelieve in it by the end of the day. For thus it is more likely that they will trust you, and believe that [when you followed Islam] you found in it that which you despise. This is more likely to turn them away from their religion.” It has also been narrated that the religious leaders of certain Muslim villages—there were twelve of them—said to each other: “Enter the religion of Muhammad in the beginning of the day, and say: “We testify that Muhammad is true.” Then at the end of the day, disbelieve and say, “We returned to our learned men and leaders, and asked them, and they told us, “Muhammad is a liar, and you have nothing. We returned to our religion, which to us is much better than your religion.” Perhaps they will doubt and say, “Weren't these with us at the beginning of the day—what's with them?!” But they did this, and did not stop at words. Ibn Harir narrated that some of the Jews performed the morning prayer with the Prophet, and disbelieved by the end of the day, plotting to make the people think that it had become clear to them after they followed us that we had erred.

Imam Muhammad 'Abduh said: “This type which the verse refers to when it talks about the Jews turning away from Islam is built on a natural principle of mankind. One of the signs of the truth is that he who knows it does not turn away from it. A certain Hercules from Rome

reasoned thusly, when he was asking Abu-Sufyan about the Prophet (peace be upon him). When he was called by Abu-Sufyan to Islam, this was one of the things he asked: “Does he who enters his [i.e. Muhammad's] religion then turn away from it?” “No,” Abu-Sufyan responded. This party wanted to lead the people away from this path, so that they would say: “If the falsehood of Islam had not become evident to them, they would not have turned away from it after having entered into it, and learned its secrets. For it is not logical for a man to desire to leave the truth for no reason after he has known it and embraced it.”

It is said that some have apostatized from Islam after entering into it, not desiring to deceive or plot against it as those did—what do we say about these? The response to this returns to another principle, which is that some people enter into something believing that they will gain some benefit thereby, not because they believe it is the truth. If it appears to such a person that he is not benefiting or is disappointed in what he had supposed, then he will depart from that thing.

Then he said: “It seems to me that the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not command the apostate to be killed except to scare those who were planning and plotting to turn people away from Islam by causing them to doubt it. For such plots, while perhaps they did not influence the strong ones among the companions (of the Prophet) who knew the truth and were certain of it, they could deceive the weak, for they knew what was in their hearts. Thus the hadith agrees with the verses which reject compulsion in religion...I have ruled according to how it appears to me...” [ellipses in original].

Yea, there hardly exists a real Muslim who apostatizes from his religion after tasting its sweetness and the loftiness of its principles, whether his conversion to Islam were authentic or casual. An examination of ancient and modern events supports this.

The cases of apostasy—in our present time—are not stirred up except due to another of the forms of deception and trickery. For in some Islamic countries, if some people are fortunate enough to declare their conversion to Islam, then they may be able to gain earthly rewards, or marry a woman, or divorce her. For one may declare his conversion to Islam in order to divorce his wife, if his religion will not permit him to divorce her. Or he may desire to marry a woman whose religion will not permit her to marry him if he remains in his religion. Or he may be running after an inheritance, where he may consider the difference of religion to be one of his obstacles with Muslims and others.

Work is underway to eliminate the hostility against this declaration, according to what is outwardly apparent, for Allah alone is the master of secrets. It has been related that Usama bin Zayd killed a man on the battlefield after he said, “There is no god but Allah.” The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: “Did you kill a man after he said, “There is

no god but Allah?” Usama said, “He said it under the heat of the sword.” The Messenger said: “Are you privy to the thoughts of his heart?”

These take religion as a mockery or a game, for they continue in their allegiance to their original religion, then declare their return to it simply to realize their purposes and desires. Or they despair from realizing them, yet remain safe from the consequences of this nonsense and deception.

Second: Killing the apostate—while he is an enemy to the Islamic state which relies on its citizens’ adherence to the Islamic religion, and whose banner protects those adhere to the other original religions—does not conflict with religious freedom, just as punishment for national treason does not conflict with the freedom guaranteed for citizens by their constitutions. For freedom carries with it obligations toward the public order which the state is built upon, including not coming out against it.

Among the clearest evidences of Islam’s tolerance and guaranteeing of freedom of conscience, is its permitting marriage to a non-Muslim woman from the People of the Book, according to the saying of the Most High: “This day are (all) things good and pure made lawful unto you. The food of the People of the Book is lawful unto you and yours is lawful unto them. (Lawful unto you in marriage) are (not only) chaste women who are believers, but chaste women among the People of the Book, revealed before your time...” [Qur'an 5:5].

This is one of the highest forms of tolerance and religious freedom, says Shaykh Muhammad ‘Abduh: “Islam has permitted the Muslim man to marry a woman from the People of the Book, whether Christian or Jewish. It has made it one of the rights of the wife from the People of the Book over her Muslim husband that she may continue to enjoy her religious belief, and carry out the obligations of her worship, and frequent her church or pledge her allegiance...” [...]

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