

Chapter Title: Foreword

Book Title: Apostates, Islam & Freedom of Faith

Book Subtitle: Change of Conviction VS Change of Allegiance

Book Author(s): AbdulHamid AbuSulayman

Published by: International Institute of Islamic Thought. (2013)

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvkc67s0.3>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



This book is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0). To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>.



JSTOR

International Institute of Islamic Thought is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Apostates, Islam & Freedom of Faith*

Foreword

IIIT's Occasional Paper 22, *Apostates, Islam and Freedom of Faith: Change of Conviction versus Change of Allegiance* by AbdulHamid AbuSulayman, explores the sensitive subject of *al-Riddah* (apostasy, or the act of exiting the Faith) and more importantly the controversial issue of capital punishment as possible penalty for those "guilty" of abandoning the religion. The essay forms part of an original larger work in Arabic entitled, *Al-Iṣlāḥ al-Islāmī al-Mu'āṣir: Qirā'āt Man-hajiyyah Ijtīmā'iyah* (2011).

The question is one of utmost importance. Mainstream media and critics of Islam delight in pointing to the death penalty as evidence of Islam's draconian tenets, moral flaws and flagrant disregard for human rights. This demonstrates a complete misunderstanding of what apostasy actually signifies in Islam (as many leave the faith freely and without penalty), ignorance of Islamic principles of justice, as well as failure to comprehend the manipulation of religion for political purposes. For instance the Qur'an values human life highly, so much so that taking the life of a person without just cause is, according to the Qur'an, the equivalent of killing the whole of mankind. The Qur'an also explicitly stipulates that, "There shall be no compulsion in matters of faith" (2: 256). Given this how is it possible that renunciation is supposedly a punishable offence. The position is plainly untenable.

So what is the correct perspective from an Islamic point of view? In other words where lies the evidence and how did the issue of apostasy ever historically come about? To understand this we must examine and be clear as to the fundamental teachings of the Qur'an, as well as the Sunnah of the Prophet (ṢAAS),* in addition to carefully sifting through and evaluating historical as opposed to scriptural postulates. It will be readily apparent that Islam teaches that human beings possess the freedom to choose the religion by which they wish to worship God (or not, whatever the case may be) and that the Qur'an stipulates no form of earthly punishment for apostasy whatsoever. We also discover that the Prophet never in his entire lifetime put an apostate to death.

Nevertheless much misunderstanding prevails. It is vital therefore, that in the interests of compassion, justice, and freedom of belief, this subject is clearly addressed once and for all. Muslims need not be put in a defensive position to justify what is clearly an execution not sanctioned by Islam.

For a more detailed analysis of the subject please refer to IIIT's earlier publication, *Apostasy in Islam: A Historical and Scriptural Analysis* by Dr. Taha J. Alalwani (2011).

The IIIT, established in 1981, has served as a major center to facilitate serious scholarly efforts based on Islamic vision, values and principles. The Institute's programs of research, seminars and conferences during the last thirty years have resulted in the publication of more than four hundred titles in English and Arabic, many of which have been translated into other major languages.

IIIT LONDON OFFICE

MAY 2013

* (ṢAAS) – *Ṣallā Allāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam*: May the peace and blessings of God be upon him. Said whenever the name of the Prophet Muhammed is mentioned.