



*What does the
Religion of Peace
Teach About...*

Apostasy

Question:

Does Islam proscribe death for the Muslim who converts to another religion?

Summary Answer:

Those who turn their back on Islam are to be put to death. This is confirmed by the words and deeds of Muhammad. There is no such thing as freedom of belief in Islam.

The Qur'an:

Sura (4:89) - *"They but wish that ye should reject Faith, as they do, and thus be on the same footing (as they): But take not friends from their ranks until they flee in the way of Allah (From what is forbidden). But if they turn renegades, seize them and slay them wherever ye find them"*

Sura (9:11-12) - *"But if they repent and establish worship and pay the poor-due, then are they your brethren in religion. We detail Our revelations for a people who have knowledge. And if they break their pledges after their treaty (hath been made with you) and assail your religion, then fight the heads of disbelief - Lo! they have no binding oaths - in order that they may desist."* This verse is speaking of infidels (ie. "slay the infidels wherever you find them" 9:5) who obviously became Muslim to escape the sword, but the Hadith make no distinction of how a Muslim came to be a Muslim. Apostasy is always punished by death.

Other verses that seem to support the many Hadith demanding death for apostates are **Sura (2:217)**, **Sura (9:73-74)**, **Sura (88:21)**, **Sura (5:54)**, and **Sura (9:66)**.

Muslim advocates for killing apostates have pointed out that the supporting hadith are reliable and thus qualify as law according to Sura (4:80) - "*Whoso obeyeth the Messenger obeyeth Allah.*"

From the Hadith:

The reason why executing apostates has always been well-ensconced in Islamic law is that there is an unarguable record of Muhammad and his companions doing exactly that.

Bukhari (52:260) - "*...The Prophet said, 'If somebody (a Muslim) discards his religion, kill him.'*"

Bukhari (83:37) - "*Allah's Apostle never killed anyone except in one of the following three situations: (1) A person who killed somebody unjustly, was killed (in Qisas,) (2) a married person who committed illegal sexual intercourse and (3) a man who fought against Allah and His Apostle and deserted Islam and became an apostate.*"

Bukhari (84:57) - "*[In the words of] Allah's Apostle, 'Whoever changed his Islamic religion, then kill him.'*"

Bukhari (89:271) - A man who embraces Islam, then reverts to Judaism is to be killed according to "*the verdict of Allah and his apostle.*"

Bukhari (84:58) - "*There was a fettered man beside Abu Muisa. Mu'adh asked, 'Who is this (man)?' Abu Muisa said, 'He was a Jew and became a Muslim and then reverted back to Judaism.' Then Abu Muisa requested Mu'adh to sit down but Mu'adh said, 'I will not sit down till he has been killed. This is the judgment of Allah and His Apostle (for such cases) and repeated it thrice.' Then Abu Musa ordered that the man be killed, and he was killed. Abu Musa added, 'Then we discussed the night prayers'*"

Bukhari (84:64-65) - "*Allah's Apostle: 'During the last days there will appear some young foolish people who will say the best words but their faith will not go beyond their throats (i.e. they will have no faith) and will go out from (leave) their religion as an arrow goes out of the game. So, wherever you find them, kill them, for whoever kills them shall have reward on the Day of Resurrection.'*"

Additional Notes:

Apostasy is taken so seriously by Muslims that it spawned the first of many major wars within Islam immediately after Muhammad's death when several tribes wanted to leave Islam and go back to their preferred religion.

Although it has been perfectly acceptable under Islamic law to kill Muslims who choose to embrace another religion, contemporary Muslims have realized how weak and draconian this causes Islam to appear. (A sound philosophy does not require death threats to retain believers). As such, there is a modern trend to deny fourteen centuries of Islamic teaching and even the very words of Muhammad himself - at least for Western ears.

Such defenders disingenuously quote [Sura \(2:256\)](#) which states "*Let there be no compulsion in religion, for truth stands out from error*" and a fragment of [Sura \(10:99-100\)](#), "*Wouldst thou (Muhammad) compel men until they are believers?*" But nearly all Muslim scholars agree that both verses were spoken by Muhammad during an earlier time in his teachings when he did not have the power to compel others. They are abrogated by later verses, such as [Sura \(9:29\)](#), which clearly commands Muslims to fight unbelievers until they relent and either accept Islam or a state of humiliation under Islamic rule (an obvious illustration of compulsion).

These apologists also ignore the fact that apostasy is not mere unbelief, but unbelief that follows belief, which neither of these verses address. Muhammad's recognition of the distinction is reflected in his own deeds, following his capture of Mecca and in those of his companions following his death.

There is also a difference between saying and believing. Whereas Muhammad knew that people could (and should) be **forced** to profess that there is no god but Allah, he also recognized that true belief cannot be forced, and this is the reconciliation between his contrasting remarks.

In any event, the damage is done. Islam expanded across the globe by conquering people of other religions and then making life miserable for those who didn't "embrace" Islam. Once spoken, a person was locked into the faith. Any sign of false witness, such as not raising their children to be Muslim, was punished with death. Thus did Islam gradually supplant other religions.

Tellingly, the same modern apologists who lie about Islam's mandate to kill apostates do not champion the right of other religions to evangelize in Muslim countries. In fact, they discourage it. They know as well as anyone that Islam cannot compete within the arena of free ideas and must rely on brute force at some level to retain believers.

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