

THE TEST FACED BY MIDDLE EAST'S CHRISTIANS

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BACKGROUND

Five years ago, the White House ordered the release of Abu Bakr al Baghdadi from Camp Bucca (1), as part of President Barack Hussein Obama's less than informed attempt to pull out of Iraq. Al Baghdadi, who also goes by the 'Abu Duaa, had been an Al-Qaida leader before he was arrested and detained by American forces in 2005. According to one US intelligence report, 'Abu Duaa was connected to the intimidation, torture and murder of local civilians in Al-Qa'im, an Iraqi town located nearly 400 km northwest of Baghdad near the Syrian border (2). This city is now *de facto* the domain of the Islamic State, although it remains *de jure* part of the nation of Iraq.

During their campaign of terror, the Islamic State consistently engages in demonic acts, which place them far beyond the pale of what it means to be human. Their unmatched evil cannot even be realistically described in terms that people can begin to fully understand it. Destroying ancient Islamic and Christian sites, throwing women children alive down wells, daily beheadings for petty offenses, violent blood baths, mass graves, et cetera. Not to mention crucifixions, rapes, theft, forced conversion, and other deplorable acts; are all part of the Islamic State's modus operandi of obtaining control and compliance through terror. Behaviour that their leaders, no doubt, learned and were trained while in American custody.

Once leaving U.S. custody, they received the support of the American regime, including people like President Obama and Senator John McCain, who fought hard to fund the Islamic State in Syria, to try to overthrow their democratically elected President, Mr. Bashar Assad, a secular leader from the peace-loving minority 'Alawī'yah sect of Islam, representing about 12 per cent of the Syrian population. (3)

WHAT THE QURAN SAYS ABOUT JIHAD

Most Christians have never read the Quran, if for no other reason than they don't have time to indulge in literature that they don't feel has any direct effect on them personally. And although this makes sense, it is sometimes important for us to examine other points of view, in order to contextualise our own.

In the west the term "*jihad*" is spouted off as if it were something terrible, foreign and completely out of control. However very few western materialists would disagree with what the Quran itself says about *jihad*. That's because it means *self-defence*, and in some sense also *retribution*, which are both concepts that western culture holds very near and dear.

Truly the Quran is the way of the world, and reading the Qur’anic passages relating to Jihad clearly show us that it very closely mimics the materialist worldview of the west. In just a few short verses the Quran takes the position that *“Permission is given to defend yourself”* (Quran 22:39), and *“fighting is prescribed upon you |and| ... is good for you”* (Quran 2:216) *“Fight in the cause of God, those who fight you”* (Quran 2:190), *“and turn them out from where they have turned you out”* (Quran 2:191)... *And why should you not fight in the cause of Allah and of those who, being weak, are ill-treated (and oppressed)? – Men, women, and children, whose cry is: ‘Our Lord! Rescue us from this town, whose people are oppressors; and raise for us from You, one who will protect; and raise for us from You, one who will help.’* (Quran 4:75)

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT SELF-DEFENCE

The 8th Commandment is *“Thou shalt not kill”* (Exodus 20:13, Deuteronomy 5:17, Matthew 19:18, Mark 10:19, Romans 13:9). Jesus Himself says that this Commandment, and the nine others which Moses brought down from Mount Sinai are still binding and effective on all of His followers; that *“not one yod, not one stroke of the Law shall pass”*. (Matthew 5:17-18*)

Jesus tells us to flee from those who persecute us... *“When they persecute you, flee from this city and go to another, for truly I say to you that you will not see all of the cities of the House of Israel before the Son of Man returns.”* (Matthew 10:23 *)

“Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse them... Do not repay anyone evil for evil; be concerned for what is noble in the sight of all. If possible, on your part, live at peace with all.” (Romans 12:14 ^{KJ21}) *“Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord. (Hebrews 10:30 ^{NIV})* On the contrary: *“If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.”* (Romans 12:19-20 ^{NIV})

YAH (YHVH) Himself says that he takes *“no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his ways and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways!”* (Ezekiel 33:11).

Jesus gave a stern warning to *“Return the sword to its place for all of them who take up the sword, will die by the sword.”* (Matthew 26:51-52*, and see also: John 18:10)

The idea that breaking the Commandment not to kill can be justified was opposed by ALL of the Early church fathers, including (but not limited to...) Aristeides, Arnobis (300 A.D.), Clement of Alexandria, Cyprian of Carthage (250 A.D.), Irenæus (180 A.D.), Justin Martyr (150 A.D.),

Justinus (150 A.D.), Lactantius (300 A.D.), Lucifer bishop of Calaris (291 A.D.), Origen (240 A.D.), and Tertullian, (to name only a few) all agree that participating in war is not a Christian value and should always be opposed. In fact, there is not even one voice from the fathers of the early church opposing the idea that killing is wrong, until the reign of the Emperor Constantine.

This very particular teaching of peace used to set Syriac Christians quite apart from all previous religions, and from most that have come after it. Even during the time of the Crusades Syriac Christians did not take up arms against the invaders (Christian or Muslim)!

The absolute belief that God is Life and that therefore one should not extinguish life under any circumstances truly has no previous religious parallel. The Aramaic and Neo-Aramaic (i.e. Syriac) word YAH (YHVH) literally means “*Life*”...

GOD USES AKELKARSTA TO TEST HIS PEOPLE

That God uses Satan to test His people is made clear in a number of different ways in the scriptures. God allowed Abraham’s Obedience to be Tested (See: Genesis 22:1-2), just as Israel was Tested in the Wilderness (See: Deuteronomy 8:2-20). YHVH allowed Satan to kill Job’s family and inflict him with disease in order to ascertain his worthiness to be a servant of YHVH. (See: Job 1:12) Joseph was tested by God in many trials (See: Psalm 105:19). YHVH allowed His *miltha* (His own Word and Substance) to be tempted and tested by Satan (See: Matthew 4:1, Luke 4:2), and Jesus Himself tested Philip (See: John 6:5-6) And now, God is using the *akelkarsta* (the “*Deceiver*”) to test His people in Iraq and Syria.

“Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of Life that the Lord has promised to those who love Him.” (James 1:12) “These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold – though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honour on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.” (1st Peter 1:7 ^{NLT})

“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the LORD, nor faint when you are reprovved by Him; for those whom the Lord loves, He disciplines and He scourges every son whom He receives. It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?” (Hebrews 12:6-7 ^{NIV})

“I (am) YHVH, Who examines the heart and tries the reigns, and gives to each according to his way, according the works of his deeds” (Jerimiah 17:10) “Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient.” (Ephesians 5:6 ^{NIV}). God “will repay each person according to what they have done. To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honour and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.” (Romans 2:6-10)

So can the people of God be convinced to kill? Do they truly believe in Life, or has the One True faith having been passed down in the neo-Aramaic been so perverted by the western materialists that it no longer has any respect for Life for God or for its own long held tradition of non-violence? This is the question that Satan has posed now; and this is God’s test. The test, that if *Shoebat* and others are to be believed, the Syriac speaking churches are failing gloriously... and truly, it seems, the faith has been lost.

CONCLUSION

The only Patriarch of the Middle East still calling for non-violence, calling for a total end to the violence and refusing to arm his own people is His Beatitude, Louis Mâr Raphaël Sakko the (Chaldean) Patriarch of Babylon. (4)

The Jacobite Patriarch, His Holiness Ignatius Mor Aphrem II, directly funds his people’s *jihad*. Meaning that anyone donating money to his churches in the west (5) directly funds terrorism in the Middle East. (6)

Even His Holiness, Pope Francis, has called for violence to be used in order to “end the violence”. (7)

All of these have the Christian fold and joined the ranks of those who by their own words and actions have made clear that they follow the Qur’anic rather than the Biblical teaching. They have failed the test which God has put before them; and by their own actions have cut themselves off from God, from Truth and from the Christian faith.

If the Christians of the Middle East are to pass this “test” they must do as Job did, and remain faithful to God, to His Commandments, and to His Image, will and desire, even in the face of the worst adversity. But narrow is the way, and few people will actually do God’s will. A fact that is

being proven again and again, as more and more “Christians” turn to violence, turn to Jihad, and in their souls turn to Islamic ideology.

If they are to remain Christians, then they must put down their weapons, and instead do as Jesus commanded them. to turn the other cheek... To flee... Or to accept martyrdom (which He demonstrated by His own example on the Cross)... This is what it means to be a Christian – it is the very basis and definition of what it means to be a Christian, and to follow the example of the Messiah.

Everything that happens in this universe happens because of God’s grace and mercy. God is no respecter of men or their passions and dreams, or ideas – instead He Is Life, in the most literal sense of the word. When God tests His people, it is a “test”, and it is always harsh, because people cannot be awakened without suffering.

In fact, unfair as it may seem to us, when carefully examined, all life is suffering. Love is sacrifice – so if we love God we must understand ourselves as sacrificing our own will and desire for His.

The choice must be made, by each man, woman and child individually, in their own heart, mind and soul – whether they will follow the unique and glorious teachings of Jesus – or the sick and worldly precepts of Islam. It is within the temple of their own bodies that these decisions must be made. Will they be born again into a new Life, or will they follow the path of the world? The test is here, it is with us now, and only the truly faithful ones will survive it.

For those who wish to stay and fight over land, over tribe, over race, over the territory they lost to the British long ago, they are welcome to do so. We will continue to pray for them, regardless, and for all those others who are suffering. But Life is also hope, and hope in the Gospel is the most powerful weapon that anyone has in this world – if only they have the courage to assimilate it.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

His Excellency, Hadrian Mâr Élijah Bar Israëï, is a scholar and naturopath who has also served as a long standing advocate for peace and non-violence in the Middle East and elsewhere. Consecrated bishop in 1995 at the age of twenty-one years old, he has served as Metropolitan (archbishop) of the Nazarani Church since 2012. With over two-hundred articles and books to his name, he remains an influential figure among for those who seek out the ancient faith of Jesus Christ and His apostles.