

Burning Bibles and Qurans: “Should we condemn St. Paul?”

By Randall Terry

Most of us are troubled – or at least concerned and perplexed – at the possibility of burning the Quran on September 11, 2010. When I heard the news, I was not happy.

The powerful from all four corners have rushed to condemn the planned burning of Qurans. I have prayed and searched the scriptures, and pondered the history of the early Church. I submit the following for your consideration.

Two questions should be asked: Is burning a Quran *just*? And next, is it *prudent*? Historical and theological perspective – unclouded by current passions – can help answer these questions.

But first, let us not forget that U.S. military commanders in Afghanistan recently burned hundreds of Bibles – printed in the two dominant tongues of the Afghan people – for fear of offending Muslims, and to keep the Bibles from being handed out to Afghan Christians and Muslims. See the CNN story.

<http://edition.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/asiapcf/05/20/us.military.bibles.burned/index.html>

Ignoring this troubling hypocrisy, let us ponder Quran burning.

Throughout the Old and New Testaments, fire is a sign of the judgment of God.

Fire came down on Sodom and Gomorrah; Moses burned the golden calf; Joshua burned cities in Canaan; God ordered enemy chariots and “sacred” pagan idols to be burned in fire; Elijah called fire down to consume military men who came to capture him; when Israel forsook God, God brought the Babylonians to burn Jerusalem – including its palaces and Solomon’s temple – to the ground.

Christ said, “Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire...” (Matt. 3:10) and “I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled!” (Luke 12:49)

Similar to burning a Quran, St. Paul the Apostle oversaw the burning of “sacred” books on witchcraft (See Acts 19:19); and of course, the lake of fire is the final place of torment for all who reject the Lord and his Christ (See Rev. 21:8).

In the Christian era, the “sacred” places of pagan Greek and Roman deities were desecrated; many of their idols were defaced and burned. In Rome, the Pantheon was stripped of its idols; its niches were filled with Catholic icons, and an altar for the Holy Eucharist is now the central point of the interior.

Delphi and the Roman Forum – the respective centers of pagan Greco/Roman deities – both lie in ruins; the stones of their “sacred” temples were taken away to build Catholic churches, including St. Peter’s Cathedral.

The historical and theological (Judeo/Christian) proof is inescapable: the “sacred” books, images, and locations of false religions – and their false prophets and priests – are destined for the flames of this world or the next.

Let us beware, lest the current frenzy cloud our judgment.

Should we condemn St. Paul for burning witchcraft books? Should we condemn Joshua for burning the pagan cities of Canaan? Should we condemn the heroes of the Old Testament for burning pagan chariots and idols and desecrating pagan temples? Should we condemn the ancient Catholic Church that conquered the pagan Greco-Roman deities through much suffering, and then destroyed their idols and plundered their temples?

Should we condemn our spiritual forebears because they did not “show respect” to the religious beliefs and buildings and books of false religions?

And should we – I speak as a fool – condemn God himself for burning Sodom and Gomorrah, for ordering the burning of countless idols and temples, and for sending his enemies into the lake of fire for all eternity?

On a theological, metaphysical, and historical level, if Christianity is true, Islam cannot be true. And if Islam is not true, and Christianity’s history and theology repeats itself (as with the pagan religions of Greece and Rome), Delphi and the Roman Forum are the signposts of Islam’s future.

Now let us consider the prudence of Quran burning. Some Christians, politicians and military personnel have warned that burning Qurans on September 11 – the day that thousands of innocent Americans were dispatched into eternity by fire ignited by men inspired by the Quran – could cause American military personnel and Christians worldwide to be in physical danger.

Sadly, this is probably true. And herein lies the hypocrisy and irony.

Christ is blasphemed and belittled every day by great and small, yet no violence follows. The U.S. military burned hundreds of Bibles, and not a peep of protest was heard. In Muslim lands, Christian men are killed and imprisoned; Christian women are raped and enslaved; yet no cry is heard from Secretary of State Clinton, or President Obama, or the U.S. military, or the bulk of the U.S. media.

But when a small church in Florida plans to burn a Quran – a book which is arguably false; a book that has helped spur acts of violence and oppression for nearly 1400

years, including the atrocities of 9/11/2001 – the Western elite cries foul, and the Muslim world girds itself for war. The double standard is offensive.

The irony is that perhaps the “prudence” of burning Qurans will be seen in how the adherents of the “peaceful religion of Islam” react. Is Islam a “peaceful religion” or not? After all, if Islam is an venerable, peaceful religion, bringing peace and brotherhood and justice to the world through Sharia law, what could we possibly have to fear?