

10/07/2002

Bill does Islam no honour

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FOWLER'S advice: Know before you start what it is you want to say. I knew exactly what I wanted to write for this column: hudud a la Pas, which was railroaded through the Terengganu State Assembly on Monday.

It is a Bill which metes flawed justice, and is a political ploy to assist Pas retain the confidence of the Terengganu voters in 2003 or 2004.

You must have read our editorial yesterday: the Bill, like its predecessor in Kelantan, is not motivated by justice. It is as clear as the Terengganu blue sky that it is driven by politics and is bound for cold storage because it contravenes the Federal Constitution.

One thing non-Muslims and enlightened Muslims should know - if they still do not after being repeatedly warned by me - that Pas is always consistent and insistent when it comes to its belief in the formation of a theocratic Islamic state as preconceived by it. In its theocratic state, the Syariah takes precedence over all man-made laws, and more. You must submit yourself to Arab culture though Islam and Arabism are not synonymous.

Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang, the Menteri Besar and acting Pas president, is hudud personified. He demanded stoning (for adultery), lashing and jail (for imbibing alcohol), amputation (for theft), crucifixion (for blasphemy and apostasy) and harsh punishments for sodomy, incest, bisexuality, homosexuality and lesbianism. The death penalty is mandatory for proven adulterers and apostates.

I have said several times before that Hadi is long-termist; he doesn't change his religio-political commitments according to the latest change in the public mood. Hudud is not like shoving a thermometer into Wan Muda's throat, and if the temperature has gone up, then change the policy.

If all this caused no apprehension nor led to any emotions and condemnation among middle-class and enlightened Malaysians, I am afraid Hadi, the clerics and the ultra-conservative Islamists will conclude that the majority of Malaysians, sans Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his Cabinet, are not unhappy with hudud.

Say your piece now, or forever keep your peace.

Thirty-five years ago (and he did it many years before that in Parliament), our founding father, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra, said in his column something to this effect: that stoning people to death for adultery was "out of date" in the "atomic and neutron age". Besides, he added, there might not be enough stones available to cast at the sinners. I rather agree with the dear old man who left us some 12 years ago.

It's absurd, in a multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-cultural society - with 45 per cent of the population made up of non-Muslims - to even think about it, let alone enact laws for stoning, amputation, lashing, torture and sending a person to jail for a tipple.

Imagine Muslim men and women, their hands tied behind their backs, being stoned to death as non-Muslim crowds watch in horror. I believe only an idiot will be caught having illicit sex in full view of four model-Muslim witnesses, all of whom must be men!

Would, I ask, potential offenders be deterred by hudud? No. Saudi Arabia and Pakistan are cases to be pointed out. I also beg: stand up, the person who has led a blameless life to cast the first stone.

Granted, some may not touch liquor or gamble, but too many womanise and are corrupt. Allah also abhors immorality, viciousness, unscrupulousness,

defamation and greed, but why is Pas so obsessed with women and drink? What about divorce which is so common? It is a sin to divorce a woman today in order to take another tomorrow. A good 60 per cent of marriages in Kelantan and Terengganu end in divorce, and why not a word about it? This obsession with sex and drink - as if it is a matter of life and death - does little credit to Muslims. We are put up to contempt and derision.

All religions rigorously forbid adultery, but it still happens and will continue to occur for as long as there are men and women who will risk all for a few seconds, perhaps a few minutes, of pleasure.

Polygamy is permitted, but no one ever emphasises the restrictive rules that make it impossible to practise. Still, polygamy is seen by some religious people as a protection from the evils of adultery and prostitution that are allegedly encouraged by enforced monogamy. Have adultery and prostitution disappeared from the so-called Islamic States in South and West Asia? Of course not.

In some societies, even in contemporary Europe, due to the decline in the influence of religion (and long before that), there exists an "aristocratic code of honour" that permits adultery among them, and them with others, and vice-versa.

Many Christians fail to live up to the moral teachings of Jesus; on many points, they have implicitly rejected him.

Prince Charles and Camilla Parker-Bowles are both regular churchgoers, but they do what they want, first latently, and now openly. As did Charles's great-uncle, the Duke of Windsor and Mrs Wallis Simpson.

I was brought up in an enlightened but religious family. By six, I knew the prescribed five daily prayers and, by rote, was familiar with the Quran and its related traditions. I fasted, performed the haj in 1971 together with Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, accompanied by the then Mufti of Kelantan, the late Datuk Mohamad Noor Ibrahim or Tok Guru Haji Noor Penambang.

I have a strong sense of belonging to the Ummah. However, I disapprove of hypocrisy. I have noticed that the view of life reflected in a religion is not necessarily typical of the people who, with part of their minds, believe in it.

I am not opposed to God's laws. But I strongly believe that Pas' hudud is devoid of the very precepts of justice underlying the Syariah and rational Islamic scholarship. History has shown us that it was the suppression of rational scholarship that saw the long-term decline of Islam as a progressive and dynamic religion.

Islam is not a "Nay-saying" religion, as is perceived mistakenly by its ignorant followers, its detractors and enemies. It doesn't say that life is all-suffering: make good life while on this earth, but prepare for eternal life in the hereafter.

Malay, Indonesian, Indian, Pakistani and even enlightened Arab Muslims are among the liveliest and most cheerful people; some of the most "Yea-saying" people on earth.

For sure, Allah has not chosen Terengganu or Kelantan as the focus of His purpose with mankind. He has chosen The Holy Land to be the territory of His people's religious fulfilment.

Let us first do the practical things that Islam prescribes besides the five pillars: working for a livelihood instead of begging, (including depending on government handouts), caring for one's family and dependants, acquiring knowledge, accumulating wealth and distributing them to the deprived, and leaving behind endowments for scholarships, building of hospitals, schools, universities and mosques. Make yourself strong so that you can help the Ummah. These have to be performed as tasks God has laid before us.

Must Muslims subscribe to hudud to be good Muslims? No. Must they wear Arab robes? No.

For other Malaysians I have this advice: You must decide now: support whole-heartedly the moderate Umno leadership or prepare yourself to