

Do You Prefer Hanging Under Secular Laws Or Pardoning Under Sharia Laws?

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By MT Webmaster

The thing is, either you have Sharia laws or you do not have Sharia laws. You cannot have Sharia laws and then argue that you want the more modern or mild version. You get hanged in Malaysia for 'waging war against the King' while under Sharia laws you do not. Under Sharia laws you are allowed to lay down your arms and will be pardoned if you do. So do you prefer hanging under Secular laws or pardoning under Sharia laws?

NO HOLDS BARRED

Raja Petra Kamarudin

I have just completed my course on the downfall of the Roman Empire and one of the interesting discussions we had was regarding why the Roman Empire fell, and I gave my opinion on the matter as follows:

"I think the invasions were not the cause but rather the symptoms of a 'disease'. The invasions was a symptom that Rome was weak and could no longer defend its borders. Why did Rome become weak and could no longer defend itself when in the past it was the aggressor? That goes back to the argument that you need a strong economy to have a strong military. So it is all about money in the end."

And this is what my tutor said:

"Petra is probably correct here. I say 'probably' because anyone who can prove with certainty why the western empire fell is in line for a Nobel Prize. (Possibly for economics, as there was certainly a financial element)."

The fall of Rome to the barbarians from the north

In short, I was talking about cause and effect. The reason for the downfall of the Roman Empire was because of invasions from the north. But then the northerners migrated south all the way into Rome because they themselves were facing invasions from the east. So to save themselves they migrated south in search of food and shelter.

Meanwhile, Rome had spread itself thin, all the way to England, so it was short of soldiers. And if you want more soldiers you need more money to pay for the military expansion. So Rome discarded their 'gold standard' and started minting more money. Eventually inflation set in and Rome's money got devalued and became worthless (like the Japanese 'banana money').

In short, overspending and 'printing' more money screwed up the economy and the weak economy screwed up Rome's military strength. And that meant the borders of the Roman Empire also became weak and hence were prone to penetrations. It became worse when the battle-hardened soldiers were sent out to fight, such as in England, while the border soldiers were locally-sourced and not battle-hardened.

But why did Rome expand to the point of implosion and eventually collapse? It was all because of image and ego. To become emperor you needed to be strong and 'strength' was proven on the battlefield. The emperor had to be in front of his soldiers and fight for his life (and a number of emperors died in the process). Then he marches back to Rome triumphant and claims the 'throne'.

So the citizens of Rome paid for the glory of Rome, which is actually the glory of the Emperor of Rome. And this eventually bankrupted Rome and triggered the downfall of the Empire. It may have taken 500 years but the Western Roman Empire collapsed in the end with the Eastern Roman Empire surviving another 1,000 years before the Ottomans took over.

Statue of the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great near Minster in York

What would have happened had the Roman Empire remained strong? Well, first of all, Constantine would not have needed to use the Christians to strengthen his political position. And that means Christianity would not have become Rome's official religion. Furthermore, the Nicene Creed would not have been invented and Catholicism would not have been born. On top of that, Christianity would have remained divided into hundreds of many different sects or versions and would have not become 'united under Rome' like it has today (early Christianity was a mess and would not be recognisable today).

So Christianity or Catholicism was a useful tool for Constantine to 'save' the Roman Empire and reinvent the Roman Empire as the Holy Roman Empire, which then lived for another 1,500 years until the 1800s. Hence Christianity was very much 'political Christianity' as Islam was, and still is, 'political Islam'.

Constantine 'organised' Christianity but remained a pagan, until (it was rumoured) a few hours before he died (it is said he was baptised on his deathbed)

Yesterday, the Kelantan State Assembly unanimously passed the Sharia Amendment Bill or RUU355, supported (or unopposed) by Muslims from both sides of the political fence. This means the debate regarding separation of church and state, that has gone quiet for awhile, is going to emerge yet again.

Actually, the concept of separation of church and state was invented by Napoleon Bonaparte so that he could usurp or take over the power of the church. In the 1800s, the church was very powerful and you could not become Emperor of France unless Rome crowns you Emperor. Basically, what Napoleon did was precisely what Henry VIII did in England 300 years earlier.

Napoleon did not need the Pope to crown him Emperor. He crowned himself and then crowned his wife the Empress.

By separating from Rome and by creating his own church, overnight England escaped bankruptcy and Henry became the richest monarch in Europe. By removing the powers of the church, Napoleon could become the Emperor of France without the need for Rome's 'approval'. Napoleon did not need the Pope to crown him Emperor. He crowned himself and then crowned his wife Joséphine de Beauharnais the Empress.

So there you have it. That was why Henry separated the church from the state in the 1500s and Napoleon did the same 300 years later in France and then in Europe. And now some Malaysians are asking that the same be done in Malaysia.

But that is not possible. The only way this can be done would be to abolish Sharia laws totally and have just one set of Secular laws. Then, just like in England, France and the rest of Europe, gay marriages will no longer be a crime (or sodomy for that matter), and no one can be arrested for gambling, drinking, khalwat, adultery, extra-marital sex, participating in beauty contests, 'indecent' dressing, being a 'drag queen', and so on.

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