

Islamic court condemns author who depicts Jesus as homosexual, The Independent, Oct 30, 1999

By James Lyons

An Islamic court in Britain has imposed a death sentence against Terence McNally, the writer who depicted Jesus Christ as a homosexual in his play *Corpus Christi*. The fatwa was passed by the Shari'ah Court of the UK to coincide with the opening of the play in London on Thursday night.

An Islamic court in Britain has imposed a death sentence against Terence McNally, the writer who depicted Jesus Christ as a homosexual in his play *Corpus Christi*. The fatwa was passed by the Shari'ah Court of the UK to coincide with the opening of the play in London on Thursday night.

Muslims regard Jesus as a "Messenger of God", thus the play was declared blasphemous by the Al-Muhajiroun group (The voice, the ears, the eyes of Muslims). Supporters of the group, which claims around 800 UK members, passed out copies of the fatwa, signed by Sheikh Omar Bakri Muhammad, judge of the Shari'ah Court, outside the production's debut at the Pleasance Theatre. Police are understood to have alerted Mr McNally at his home in New York.

His play, which shows a gay Jesus betrayed by his lover Judas and crucified as "king of the queers", provoked fury among Christians when it opened in Edinburgh during this year's festival.

Sheikh Omar yesterday insisted the death sentence must stand. "The fatwa is to express the Islamic point of view that those who are insulting to Allah and the Messengers of God, they must understand it is a crime," he said.

The London-based Muslim leader criticised Christian churches for not taking stronger action against the play. "The Church of England has neglected the honour of the Virgin Mary and Jesus," he said. "It is blasphemy for them not to take action."

Fortunately for Mr McNally, the fatwa should only be carried out by an Islamic state. "We would warn individual Muslims not to try to carry it out," Sheikh Omar said. However, he added that the playwright would face arrest and execution if he travelled to Muslim countries. "This should only happen on their own soil. We do not believe in political assassination, but obviously he would face capital punishment."

Islamic law states that Mr McNally can only escape the fatwa by becoming a Muslim, the sheikh said. If he simply repents he would still be executed, but his family would be cared for by the Islamic state carrying out the sentence and he could be buried in a Muslim graveyard. The Charity Commission pledged to investigate after it emerged that the copies of the fatwa handed out at the demonstration had been produced by the Muslim and Cultural Society of Enfield and Haringey, a registered charity. Sheikh Omar is a trustee of the charity and Anjem Choudary, chair of the trustees, is a supporter of the court.

"If the charity is happy about this that would be a cause for concern," a commission spokesman said.

However, Mr Choudary, a 32-year-old solicitor from Beckton, east London, was unrepentant, saying the charity had a duty to pass on details of the death sentence.

“We have made it clear to the Charity Commission before that the Muslim Cultural Society was in touch with many different groups in the community. We are an educational trust and if that is the position according to Islam we can’t ignore that.”

www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/.../islamic-court-condemns-author-who-depicts-jesus-as-homosexual-743509.html