THE ROHINGYA—AN EXAMPLE FOR THE WORLD (condensed)

I’ve been getting to know the Rohingya people by following them daily on LinkedIn—reading about them and corresponding personally with many of the over a hundred who have connected with me over the past six months. And although humanity has allowed ugly chaos and crises to develop in its world, I have come to see that Rohingya as a people should be admired and seen as an example the world would do well to follow.

In 2017, over 750,000 Rohingya refugees fled to Bangladesh, desperately trying to save their lives following the military crackdowns occurring in their homeland of Myanmar Rakhine State. They joined previous influxes of Rohingya who had fled the country in the 1970’s and 90’s.

Today, well over a million Rohingya refugees live in Bangladesh, most of them in Cox’s Bazar district. They found safety through the kindness of Bangladesh, provided with food and shelter at a time they desperately needed help. It put a tremendous strain on this host country.

They had done nothing wrong except that they were an ethnic minority—hated by those with different religions. They suffered great atrocities, simply because they existed. As a people, they are—even today, eight years later—slowly being destroyed.

In the Bangladesh camps, Rohingya have no right to work, no real education, no freedom of movement, and little hope. With this lack of freedom to be the people they know themselves to be, has gradually come a deterioration of the communities. The camps have become “sprawling slums, rife with violence, drug trafficking, gender-based abuse, and depression.”

But I believe the Rohingya I have personally come to know should be admired. Most of the refugees are not part of this trend. The world should see them as an example of what it means to live justly and survive in the darkness of the times we live in. I have seen how they bravely responded to the great injustices that they had been subjected to—relentlessly living by the faith that had been part of their tradition for many generations.

Through my daily readings and virtual conversations with individual refugees, I have witnessed a resilience not often seen. In the world we live in, far too many have abandoned their God and forgotten the faiths that upheld them in the past.

In the Rohingya I see a people who cling tightly to their faith and everything connected with it, despite the great discrimination they suffer—despite the atrocious way they are being treated, even today in 2025. I see a people who are struggling to do the best they can to help themselves, seeking the dignity they deserve.

Today, as I’ve mentioned in previous writings, they are living in similar ways Jesus did while he walked the earth two thousand years ago. “. . . with no place to lay their heads,” (Matthew 8:20) with no country they can call their own. They are a people who have faced discrimination and persecution, no matter where they’ve tried to settle, even when all they had done was to flee from a people filled with hatred for them.

As I pondered their plight, I remembered the words to the hymn. *A Mighty Fortress is Our God*, written by Martin Luther ca 1527. It was said to have been sung by persecuted people on their way to exile, and by martyrs at their death.

The words are a paraphrase of Psalm 46 in the Bible, speaking of God’s control over the earth and His ability to protect His people. A similar concept is expressed in the Muslim Surah Al-Baqarah 2:255.

I best like the words to the second stanza:

*And though this world, with devils filled,  
Should threaten to undo us,  
We will not fear, for God hath willed  
His truth to triumph through us:  
The Prince of Darkness grim,  
We tremble not for him;  
His rage we can endure,  
For lo! his doom is sure,  
One little word shall fell him*.