

**Keynote: Hedieh Mirahmadi, "Religious Liberty in Islam"**

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I would like to thank Georgetown University and the Berkley Center for hosting us today to celebrate this very important topic of religious liberty especially on the eve of 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 9-11. I also want to give special thanks to Dr. Kelly who had a vision for this book and brought it into a reality.

When I think about religious liberty in Islam I am reminded of a story we are taught in Islam about Prophet Abraham and the Zoroastrian. It is a wonderful example of how faith teaches us to love one another, regardless of our individual religious paths. The story goes like this:

The Prophet Abraham never liked to eat alone. He felt that food was a divine blessing and, as such, should be shared with others, particularly those in need. Therefore, he made it his constant practice that before a meal he would invite someone to eat with him. One day, Abraham invited a fire worshiper to have a meal with him. On sitting down to eat, Abraham asked him to begin in God's name and to recite, "In the Name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful." The Zoroastrian said, "You want to buy my religion with your one meal? I am a fire worshiper, why must I take God's name?"

This shocked Abraham who preached of the One God, the Creator, while this person wanted to eat in the name of his fire. Unable to tolerate this idolatry, Abraham asked the man to leave his table, which he did. The Lord immediately sent a revelation to Abraham: "For the past ninety years this person has not taken My Name at all, in spite of which I have been feeding him without fail, while you found it difficult to feed him just this one meal. Regardless of whether he takes My Name or not, you cannot eat until you bring him back and make him happy."

The story highlights so much of what I find true and beautiful in my faith, Islam. In portraying Abraham as an exemplar of good behavior, it connects Islam to the teachings of previous prophets and religions. I find that much of Islam's teachings are like this, incorporating the stories of earlier prophets, messengers, and saintly figures to illustrate a moral lesson, or solution to an ethical dilemma.

This story also demonstrates the importance of generosity, humility, hospitality, and most importantly, the ideal of self-sacrifice in Islam. Few of us today would consider inviting a stranger to share a meal, much less to enter our home; yet Abraham refused to partake in a meal without finding someone to share it with.

But, the most significant part of this story is its emphasis on going beyond *tolerance* in our everyday ethical behaviors, and striving to reach *acceptance* of the other—a distinction that it is a fundamental part of religious liberty and a cohesive society. As the story so aptly portrays, God, in His divine wisdom, created all kinds of people. Some worship Him, some worship others, and some do not worship at all. However, God does not withhold His divine gifts and mercy from any of them. The Lord does not demand all of creation to accept only one faith, so why would we?

Modern-day Muslim scholars often repeat the catch-phrase, "Islam tolerates other religions," however I believe this is an inadequate representation of the faith. "Tolerate," as defined in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, is to "endure, put up with, to bear." According to this definition, tolerance allows one to develop only superficial or shallow relationships devoid of compassion, empathy, and mutual understanding. In Islam it is not sufficient to simply tolerate others. Rather, Islam encourages Muslims to listen to and observe others so that we may truly

understand them and accept them as part of God's creation. Acceptance—more so than tolerance—breathes life into social structures; potentially shifting them from a stance of conflict to one of mutual respect.

The injunction for acceptance was established when God said in the Holy Qur'an: "O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other, not that ye may despise (each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of God is (he who is) the most righteous of you."<sup>1</sup> This verse is generally the strongest affirmation of Islam's belief in the unity of mankind and the equality of each soul, applying to both men and women, regardless of race, or ethnicity. It emphasizes that the true measure of value is not a person's wealth or status, but rather his or her moral character or "righteousness."

The principle of human dignity and unity is also emphasized repeatedly in the Qur'an: "Now indeed, We have honored the children of Adam, and borne them over land and sea, and provided for them sustenance out of the good things of life, and favored them far above most of Our creation."<sup>2</sup> Humankind, having been descended from one father and one mother, are unified at the root of the tree of human existence. For that reason, Muslims believe that all of humanity are brothers and sisters, and the familial relationship holds priority despite any material differences that may exist.

Therefore, it is clear that Islam did not intend to ban friendships with people of other faiths, despite misinterpretations by those who seek to isolate Muslims. On the contrary, there are countless stories of Muslims and non-Muslims living together peacefully side-by-side. For example, Dr. Ahmad Mohamed El Tayeb, the current head of the world's foremost Islamic educational institution in Egypt, Al Azhar, narrates,

“Muslims have always coexisted with other religions—with Christians and Jews in the western flank of Islamic dominions and with Hindus and Buddhists in the eastern flank. One can always find examples, for a bonding of people that springs from the inner gestures of a humanity deeply enriched by its life of faith..”<sup>3</sup>

The relationship between Muslims and their non-Muslim neighbors and fellow citizens must be one of courtesy, friendly social intercourse, mutual welfare, and cooperation for the sake of righteousness; this is what true Islam calls for. Friendship should be afforded even to those who fought the Muslims, despite their enmity, God says in the Qur’an: “It may be that God will grant love (and friendship) between you and those whom you (now) hold as enemies. For God has power (over all things); And God is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”<sup>4</sup>

Because the Prophet Muhammad is the exemplar of conduct for Muslims, it is important to consider his relationship with people of other faiths. A famous example is one day a funeral of a Jewish person was passing, and the Prophet Muhammad stood up for it, out of respect. Some of those present expressed surprise, since it was not one who believed in Islam or acknowledged it as a religion. The answer of the Prophet was this: “but is it not a human soul?” This practical demonstration on the part of the Prophet of Islam signifies the equality of human beings.

As this story illustrates, right from beginning, the Prophet did not treat the Jews as the “religious other.” He tried to integrate them in a political community through what is known as the *Mithaq-i-Madinah* (Pact of Medina). This agreement was between the nascent Muslim community, the various Jewish tribes, and the pagan tribes. It should be noted that even the tribal “other” remained an important constituent.<sup>5</sup>

The Pact of Medina, drawn up by the Prophet himself, demonstrates his notions of freedom, his spirit of inclusiveness, and his innovative approach to a modern, complex society.

He described this community as *ummah wahidah*, that is, “one community,” while in other empires of the world, religious minorities were tolerated but not given any political rights. In this document, the non-Muslims were given security rights equal to all the other groups, as well as equal political and cultural rights equivalent to the Muslims. Religious freedom was guaranteed, and all groups were accorded rights to self-governance and autonomy.<sup>6</sup>

Although some Muslim leaders deviated from the Prophet’s example over time, rulers within the Umayyad Dynasty of Greater Syria, the Abbasid Era in Baghdad and Cairo, the Mughals in Greater India, or Sultanates of the Far East serve as excellent examples of leaders who successfully governed diverse people with separate languages, cultures and doctrinal beliefs. Their success lied in their commitment to learn from the nations over which Muslims held influence and various cultures were adapted and adopted, instead of being destroyed.<sup>7</sup>

Having respect and acceptance of other faiths, does not mean we will not disagree about matters of faith and society. However, traditional Islamic law and the Qur’an reinforce the belief that such disagreement should not lead to violence. Traditionally, Muslims believe that it is better for mankind to pursue good deeds, to submit ourselves to the will of God and to abide by the moral boundaries of social justice—and to let God ultimately decide on matters of faith. There is a passage in the Qur’an where the Prophet said: “I believe what God has revealed of the Book, and I am commanded to do justice between you. God is our Lord and your Lord. For us are our deeds; and for you your deeds. There is no contention between us and you. God will gather us together and to Him is the eventual return.”<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the commandment to avoid hostility and disagreement in faith is extremely clear. The real message of the Qur’an is to excel each other in good deeds. Unfortunately, people waste excessive time disputing with each other about beliefs rather than competing with each other in acts of kindness.<sup>9</sup>

God says in the Holy Qur'an:

Verily the ends you strive for are diverse.<sup>10</sup>

And if God had so willed, He could surely have made all mankind one single community: but [He willed it otherwise, and so] they continue to hold divergent views.<sup>1112</sup>

Indeed, of all the religious traditions, Islam is one that acknowledges that God did not intend for all mankind to be a single faith. It is upon this principle that Islam was instituted, not upon the principle of homogeneity, which we often see imposed on Muslims today by groups, scholars, and governments who adhere to very strict, literalist, and simplistic understandings of the faith. These groups do Islam a great disservice, by making it seem showing it as primitive in its approach, and unable to adapt to the changes inherent in the social and cultural fabric of a “new world culture” which has come about with the advent of globalizing technology.

Early in Islamic history, a heretical group of Muslims, known as the *Khawarij*, asserted that they alone possessed the “true” understanding of the religion and that all who disagreed with them were unbelievers, despite their profession of the Islamic faith. Ali, the son-in-law and cousin of the Prophet and the fourth caliph of the early Muslim community, considered this extremist aberration so dangerous and contrary to Islamic teachings that he made it a crime for anyone to preach such tenets. However, he predicted that modern forms of this heresy would plague the Muslim nation throughout its existence.

Whoever thinks that human beings must be identical, all adhering to one system and one way, is in fact an enemy of freedom and diversity or believes in a totalitarian ideal which is impossible to fulfill and contrary to Qur'anic teachings. It is contrary to the original spirit of discourse in Islam to stifle intellectual freedom and debate about the varied approaches to law

and society. Stifling debate is like imposing a dictatorship on religion, utterly confining its scope. The Prophet said to his companions, “The differences among you are a blessing.”<sup>13</sup>

It is only through our diversity that we are able to learn; for without diversity in thinking, competition is eliminated, and humanity would fall to the lowest common denominator. Intellectuality requires competing stimuli and the exchange of ideas in order to function. The appearance of varied approaches is the fruit of mental and spiritual labor. Rather than restricting Muslims to keep to themselves, the Prophet encouraged them to learn from others. This is clear from his famous saying: “Seek knowledge even if it is in China.” This statement and many like it—another example that says, “Be learners from the cradle to the grave”—endowed the Muslim nation with a drive to learn and seek knowledge even if it was “not invented here.”

Based on the principle of diversity, one finds its corollary in the freedom to choose a religious path. In the Quran, God said, “There should be no compulsion in the matter of faith.”<sup>14</sup> This principle is so important in Islam that if a person is coerced to become a Muslim, his acceptance of Islam is considered legally invalid.

As an Abrahamic faith, Islam embraces Christians and Jews as monotheists and believers in one God. In the Quran, God praises their prophets and says, “Who then sent down the Book which Moses brought? A light and guidance to man.’ ... We sent Jesus the son of Mary, confirming the Law that had come before him: We sent him the Gospel: therein was guidance and light, and confirmation of the Law that had come before him.”<sup>15</sup> The Quran further recognizes their holy books, the Torah and Bible, as Divine revelations to mankind and honors Christians and Jews as “People of the Book.”

The People of the Book were afforded not only the freedom of belief, but they were allowed to maintain their own religious law and practices—even those which conflicted with the

teachings of Islam. Over time, additional religious groups were afforded similar rights. One of the major jurists of Islam, Imam Malik ibn Anas opined that Zoroastrians should be treated under the same terms as the People of the Book by the Prophet and his successors.<sup>16</sup> In the early eighth century, the first Muslim prince to rule India, Muhammad bin Qasim, vowed to protect not only Muslim mosques and shrines, but even Hindu places of worship. During the Arab rule of Sindh from the eighth to the tenth centuries, Islamic law was adapted to include Buddhists as People of the Book.<sup>17</sup>

During the Muslim empires of the past, People of the Book were able to administer their own laws in lieu of Shari`ah. For example, they were allowed to consume the food “of their religion,” including items that were prohibited by Islam such as pork or wine. Even in social affairs, such as marriage, divorce, and charity, non-Muslims had the freedom to govern their community as they wished, without conditions or limits.

The Prophet Muhammad himself respected the prophets who came before him. When he and his companions victoriously entered the Arabian city of Makkah, he ordered the destruction of all the idols inside the Ka’bah, with the exception of one image, which he covered with both his hands in a gesture of protection. When they had finished removing the other images, the Prophet took away his hands, revealing the image he had carefully hidden: the child Jesus with his mother Mary. This image, on an interior column, was the only image that remained inside the Ka’bah.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to the Prophet’s example, the Holy Qur’an commands Muslims to afford autonomy, and respect for world religions and their practices. In chapter 109, verse six, God states, “Unto you your religion, and unto me my religion.” Muslim jurists have concluded for centuries that religious freedom is a core principle in Islam.

It is important to highlight some historical examples of religious tolerance and support for non-Muslim communities after the time of the Prophet Muhammad, to demonstrate that some of the current interactions between Muslims and non-Muslims have greatly diverged from their historical roots.

Whether it's the destruction of Christian holy sites in Egypt, the demolition of Buddhist statues in Afghanistan, or the mass exodus of Christians from Iraq, the despicable violence against these communities is antithetical to the legacy of previous Muslim societies. Unfortunately, some Muslim leaders and fringe groups are greatly damaging the reputation of Islam and the way the world perceives Islamic law and our notions of justice.

I would like to run through some historical examples of social cohesion, compassion, and justice in Muslim societies which provides Muslims with the evidence they need to reverse the tide of interreligious enmity and malevolence. It also provides non-Muslims with the hope and reassurance that such balance and harmony could someday return.

In 628 AD, the Prophet Muhammad wrote a letter, granting a "Charter of Privileges," to the monks of St. Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai. An early example of religious freedom and tolerance towards Christians, it ensures several human rights, such as the freedom of worship and movement, freedom for Christians to appoint their own judges and to maintain their own property, exemption from military service, and the right of protection in war. The entire text of the letter follows:

This is a message from Muhammad ibn Abdullah, as a covenant to those who adopt Christianity, near and far, we are with them. Verily I, the servants, the helpers, and my

followers defend them, because Christians are my citizens; and by God! I hold out against anything that displeases them.

No compulsion is to be on them. Neither are their judges to be removed from their jobs nor their monks from their monasteries. No one is to destroy a house of their religion, to damage it, or to carry anything from it to the Muslims' houses. Should anyone take any of these, he would spoil God's covenant and disobey His Prophet. Verily, they are my allies and have my secure charter against all that they hate. No one is to force them to travel or to oblige them to fight. The Muslims are to fight for them.

If a female Christian is married to a Muslim, it is not to take place without her approval. She is not to be prevented from visiting her church to pray. Their churches are to be respected. They are neither to be prevented from repairing them nor the sacredness of their covenants. No one of the nation (Muslims) is to disobey the covenant till the Last Day (end of the world).<sup>19</sup>

During the rule of the fourth caliph, Caliph Ali wrote to his companion Malik Al-Ashtar about governing with compassion towards Muslims and non-Muslims alike:

Remember, Malik, that amongst your subjects there are two kinds of people: those who have the same religion as you have; they are brothers to you, and those who have religions other than that of yours, they are human beings like you. Men of either category suffer from the same weaknesses and disabilities that human beings are inclined to, they commit sins, indulge in vices either intentionally or foolishly and unintentionally without realizing the enormity of their deeds. Let your mercy and compassion come to their rescue and help in the same way and to the same extent that you expect God to show mercy and forgiveness to you. You must always appreciate and adopt a policy which is

neither too severe nor too lenient; a policy which is based upon equity will be largely appreciated.<sup>20</sup>

This letter was used in the 2002 United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Arab Human Development Report as an example of good governance for the Arab world.

Under the Ummayyad Caliphate in the ninth century, the heartland of the Muslim empire was Southern Spain, or Andalusia. This region played an active role in promoting multi-cultural learning and religious tolerance. Christians, Jews, and Muslims lived in peaceful coexistence and Christians and Muslims used to pray together in the Great Mosque of Cordoba (today, the Cordoba Cathedral). It was at this time that the writings of ancient Greek philosophers were preserved and translated by Muslim scholars. Non-Muslims living in Andalusia were not forced to live in ghettos or other segregated places; they were not prevented from practicing their faith; they were not forced to convert or die under Muslim rule; neither were they were banned from any particular ways of earning a living. Not only were Jews and Christians able to contribute to society and culture, but they could also work in all branches of civil service.

*Edict from Sultan of Morocco*

The tradition of religious liberty continued for centuries when the The Sultan of Morocco, Muhammad ibn Abdullah, issued the following edict on February 5, 1864 to advise Moroccan governors how to treat their Jewish populations:

To our civil servants and agents who perform their duties as authorized representatives in our territories, we issue the following edict:

They must deal with the Jewish residents of our territories according to the absolute standard of justice established by God. The Jews must be dealt with by the law on an equal basis with others so that none suffers the least injustice, oppression, or abuse.

Nobody from their own community or outside shall be permitted to commit any offense against them or their property. Their artisans and craftsmen may not be scripted into service against their will, and must be paid full wages for serving the state. Any oppression will cause the oppressor to be in darkness on Judgment Day and we will not approve of any such wrongdoing. Everyone is equal in the sight of our law, and we will punish anyone who wrongs or commits aggression against the Jews with divine aid. This order which we have stated here is the same law that has always been known, established, and stated. We have issued this edict simply to affirm and warn anyone who may wish to wrong them, so the Jews may have a greater sense of security and those intending harm may be deterred by greater sense of fear.<sup>21</sup>

These edicts and practices are part of the real legacy of Prophet Muhammad to civilization. From these examples, it is evident that hard-line Islamists today are making up their own faith. Moreover, their calls to revert back to Islamic practices of the seventh century are entirely false because they have no intention of following the early Muslim communities' examples of interfaith tolerance, acceptance and peaceful coexistence. It is also significant to note that many of the worst examples of Muslim/non-Muslim tension are occurring in modern times—after the advent of militant Islamist doctrine.

Even within the sensitive field of Islamic law, Muslim jurists had an openness to learn from Christian and Jewish counterparts. The Qur'anic exegesis known as the *Isra'īlyāt* emerged from such conversations. The experience of being around knowledgeable Christian and Jewish scholars who debated, analyzed, and rigorously critiqued the laws of religion helped the Muslims develop their own sacred law (*kalām*) by which they were able to answer theological questions

and counter theological attacks. This led the Muslims to develop the classical systems of Islamic jurisprudence that have influenced Islamic practice ever since.<sup>22</sup>

In short, Muslims historically found themselves immeasurably enriched by the knowledge, experience, and wisdom of other communities and traditions; and the greatness of the civilization they built was very much influenced by that sharing. In a way, then, we can see the Muslims actively manifesting the Qur'anic command to come to know the "other" and to "compete" in the pious race to do good works.

In terms of religious liberty for both men AND women in Islam, the sacred law has a rich tradition of gender equality. There is no distinction between a Muslim man and woman: both have the same rights and obligations, and are promised equal rewards in heaven. Even though the principle of equality is illuminated throughout the Quran, the wife of the Prophet Muhammad, Umm Salamah, once asked him why women were not specifically mentioned by God in the Quran.<sup>23</sup> Soon after the following verses were revealed to the Prophet Muhammad:

Verily, for all men and women who have surrendered themselves unto God, and all believing men and believing women, and all truly devout men and truly devout women, and all men and women who are true to their word, and all men and women who are patient in adversity, and all men and women who humble themselves [before God], and all men and women who give in charity, and all self-denying men and self-denying women, and all men and women who are mindful of their chastity, and all men and women who remember God unceasingly: for [all of] them has God readied forgiveness of sins and a tremendous reward.<sup>24</sup>

Although Prophet Muhammad taught his community by example to respect and honor women, this verse formalized the principle of gender equality and guaranteed several rights in a

time and place where women were often considered nothing but chattel. As prominent scholars, businesswomen, and activists, many women in the Prophet's family epitomized the symbols of moral excellence. Unlike the situation in many Muslim-majority countries today,<sup>25</sup> these women were prominent figures in the public sphere. Moreover, they were strong pillars in early Islamic society and served as role models for both men and women. Much has been written on their illustrious contributions from which we can learn from.<sup>26</sup>

Unfortunately people often have a different impression of Islamic mandates on women, but the fact is Islam gave women rights and freedoms that were not realized in the West until the twentieth century's women's movements. These rights include the right to life free from female infanticide; the right to an education; the right to choose, reject, or divorce a husband; the right to own personal property exclusive of anyone else; the right to a dowry and to keep her family name after marriage; the right to run a business, trade, and employ men, and to reserve and manage her wealth without a male figure.

The moderate majority of Muslims believe these rights help communities grow. Certainly we can agree these rights are inalienable, much like Thomas Jefferson's assertion of the human beings' inalienable rights to "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness...." And yet, in some parts of the world, these God-given rights have been systematically denied to women by religious fanatics.<sup>27</sup>

Historically, Islam has not only established and supported universal principles of human rights, but it has also fostered tolerance and acceptance of different religions and cultures. Unfortunately, the Islam I am describing—which is based on the example of the Prophet Muhammad, while practiced widely today, is under virulent attack.

One of the greatest threats to the practice and understanding of Islam today are religious extremists who have misinterpreted its foundational principles. Although they constitute a very small minority of Muslims, they are actively framing the narrative of Islam as a religion of hatred, religious intolerance, and violence. Online - and in the real world - it is difficult to separate fact from fiction; the inordinate attention extremists receive from the media has made them appear as if they are the predominate voice of Islam. Unfortunately many moderate Muslims are afraid to challenge extremists.<sup>28</sup> As a result, the mainstream majority has all but lost its voice to a rabid minority who use their draconian version of Islamic doctrine as an instrument of oppression and war for their own political purposes.

There is a grassroots effort in Muslim communities around the world to reclaim the image of Islam, as a religion that is equitable, just, and socially responsible. This is truly a struggle within the Islamic world for the very soul of Islam. However we should be mindful that it is part of a long process that will take generations to unfold. Just as the West took centuries to progress from the world of Dante's Christianity to that of Martin Luther King or Desmond Tutu, so too the Islamic world is in the midst of its own transformations. We must realize that if this process is to be truly organic—real social growth and development will take time.

I hope that in the course of that time, the democratic reality of classical Islam—as it was practiced for centuries—will assert itself, and the middle way will prevail. It is interesting to note that today the most widely read poet in America is the great Muslim Sufi poet, Jalaluddin Rumi. He was and remains a perfect exemplar of the pluralistic Islam that I am describing and one that apparently finds sympathetic reverberations in the hearts of many.

There have always enemies of tolerance at the extreme ends of society and the biggest danger is allowing their loud voices to win. In my work around the world with Muslim

communities I find the worrisome phenomena of faith communities becoming increasingly isolated from one another. Sure leaders come together to “dialogue” but then everyone retreats to their fellow believers and that’s often where the interaction ends. It is very important for there to a focus on interfaith activism. People of all faiths need to come together and serve humanity together, to break bread together, introduce each other to our families, and to concretely contribute to the social fabric of the society. The media plays a big role perpetuating negative stereotypes and feelings of antagonism, which lead people to avoid the “other”. People of faith need to help rebuild-- and in some places create-- the bridges of cooperation if we want the principles of religious freedom to flourish.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Holy Qur'an 49:13.

<sup>2</sup> Holy Qur'an 17:70.

<sup>3</sup> Ahmad Mohamed El Tayeb, "Islam and the Other Religions," speech at Washington Cathedral, March 1, 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Holy Qur'an 60:7

<sup>5</sup> Asghar Ali Engineer, "The concept of "other" in Islam," *Center for Study of Society and Secularism*, Mumbai, September 2001.

<sup>6</sup> Dr. Vincent J. Cornell, "Islam: Theological Hostility and the Problem of Difference," paper delivered at the Elijah Interfaith Academy Meeting of Board of World Religious Leaders, Seville, Spain, December 15, 2003. It is interesting to note that leading Islamic scholars of India quoted this political compact drawn up by the Prophet to oppose the separation of Pakistan from India. According to Dr. Cornell, they maintained that because the Prophet created a singular political entity for the heterogeneous community, the same should apply to an Indian Muslim state.

<sup>7</sup> Timothy J. Gianotti, "Sharing Wisdom: A Muslim Perspective," paper presented in preparation for the meeting of World Religious Leaders, 26-30 November 2007, Amritsar, India. Download version accessed 2 December 2010 at [http://www.elijah-interfaith.org/uploads/media/BP\\_Islam.doc](http://www.elijah-interfaith.org/uploads/media/BP_Islam.doc)

<sup>8</sup> Holy Qur'an 42:15.

<sup>9</sup> Asghar Ali Engineer, "The Concept of 'Other' in Islam," *Center for Study of Society and Secularism, Mumbai*, September 2001.

<sup>10</sup> Holy Qur'an 92:4.

<sup>11</sup> Holy Qur'an 11:118.

<sup>12</sup> Holy Qur'an 5:48.

<sup>13</sup> Hadith narrated by Abdullah ibn 'Umar and 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas

<sup>14</sup> Holy Qur'an 2:256.

<sup>15</sup> Holy Qur'an 5:44-46.

<sup>16</sup> Imam Malik ibn Anas, *Muwatta*, (translation by A'isha `Abdarahman at-Tarjumana and Ya`qub Johnson,) Volume: Zakat

<sup>17</sup> Alexander Berzin, "Islamic-Buddhist Dialogue"

[http://www.berzinarchives.com/web/en/archives/study/islam/general/islamic\\_buddhist\\_dialog.html](http://www.berzinarchives.com/web/en/archives/study/islam/general/islamic_buddhist_dialog.html) (accessed on 2 December 2010)

<sup>18</sup> Ahmad Mohamed El Tayeb, "Islam and the Other Religions," speech at Washington Cathedral, March 1, 2010.

<sup>19</sup> Dr. Akram Zahoor and Dr. Z. Haq, *Muslim History: 570 - 1950 C.E.*, English translation, ZMD Corporation. P.O. Box 8231, Gaithersburg, MD 20898-8231. Copyright Akram Zahoor, 2000, p. 167.

<sup>20</sup> "An Order to Maalik al-Ashtar." <http://www.al-islam.org/nahjul/letters/letter53.htm>, (Accessed April 4, 2011).

<sup>21</sup> Yusuf Qaradawi, , '*al-Aqaliyyat ad-Diniyya wa-Hal al-Islami*,' p. 58-59

<sup>22</sup> J. Gianotti, "Sharing Wisdom: A Muslim Perspective," paper presented in preparation for the meeting of World Religious Leaders, 26-30 November 2007, Amritsar, India. Download version accessed 2 December 2010 at [http://www.elijah-interfaith.org/uploads/media/BP\\_Islam.doc](http://www.elijah-interfaith.org/uploads/media/BP_Islam.doc)

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<sup>23</sup> Narrated by Imam Ahmad

<sup>24</sup> Holy Qur'an 33:35.

<sup>25</sup> See Fatima Mernissi, *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood*, Addison-Wesley Publishing, 1995.

<sup>26</sup> See Shaykh Muhammad Hisham Kabbani and Laleh Bakhtiar, *Encyclopedia of Muhammad's Women Companions and the Traditions They Related*, 1998. ISBN 1-871031-42-7.

<sup>27</sup> See Kecia Ali, *Sexual Ethics and Islam: Feminist Reflections on Quran, Hadith, and Jurisprudence*, One World, 2006; and Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate*, Yale University Press, 1993

<sup>28</sup> Akbar Ahmad, *Journey into America, the Challenge of Islam*, Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2010, page 5, 254.