

Tolerant Islam and Fundamentalism: Some Theological Remarks

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In the Name of God, the Most Merciful:

My friends, I ^{come to you as a scholar and outsider,} ~~bring you greetings from tolerant, believing people~~ ^{theologian}
of New England, ~~the 'Blue' and non-fundamentalist states of the USA.,~~
^{to} ~~and we~~ ^{most} wish you all a blessed and holy Ramadan.

~~The Islamic Republic of Iran represents a state which has raised
violence against its population, especially women and minorities, into~~

~~key strategic policy for control of a disheartened and disgusted
population. At the same time, the mullahs in Tehran claim to speak for~~

~~all Islam, and presume to think that they have the right to say what is
and is not true Islam. I come here today to dispute that~~ ^{right} ~~view~~ ^{on}

~~theological grounds, and to propose a logical response to such grandiose
claims by the ruling theocracy. Since Iran has taken the position that it~~

~~is, uniquely, an Islamic state, it is only fair to evaluate their policies and~~

~~behavior from within an Islamic theological and social framework. This is
critical becos the regime has presented itself to
the world as the upholder, and indeed the key
player in defining what an Islamic state
should be.~~

~~policies of Iran as a fulfillment of the glory of their religion, or even as a first-line, noble or quixotic, attempt to defend Islam from the West.~~

Let me demonstrate how the theocracy in Iran has strayed from the Straight Path, and does not represent the Islam of the Prophet.

1. The Quran in Process: A view from linguistic analysis and translation studies

~~The~~ Islam cannot be fundamentalist in its approach to religious truth because of the very nature ^{its holy book} of the transmission of the Qur'an

^{to have been a revelation} from a divine messenger, the angel Jibril ~~or Gabriel~~, ^{is said} to a human ^{one} messenger, the prophet Muhammad (PUB). The name itself means ^{Quran}

'that which is called aloud'—that is, The Recitation, and it took place over 23 years of conversation ~~or discourse~~ between the angel and the man. ~~No modern or ancient translation can 'be' the Sacred Text;~~ it is ONLY the valid Sacred Text when it is recited aloud in its original language, the 7th century poetic dialect of the Prophet.

~~Now, certainly, you know all this!~~ But have you thought of the implications of a Sacred Text revealed through ongoing dialogue? Can you imagine that each and every time Jibril spoke to the Prophet, he did so at the same time, ^{of day} or place, or in the same circumstances? Assuredly not, if the process covered a time span of

23 years! Every time Muhammad heard the Word told to him, he was born anew as a hearer: each time, he was in a different moment ~~in time~~, a different social circumstance, and seeking to answer a different need ^{for} in the people ~~in accordance with Jibril's revelation~~.

Thus, the reason why the text must STILL be recited aloud and in its original language is because each new person who hears it needs to ^{personally} hear it in their own time and place, reflecting on their own experience and how it relates to the revelation.

So, how could there be only ONE proper way to interpret the Quran? To think so is to hold the Sacred ^{Recitation} Revelation frozen in space and time, irrelevant outside of 7th century Arabia. ~~For those~~ ^{For those who} ~~think the Revelation is relevant in all places and times, it is clear that~~ Hence, it follows that many interpretations must be made, should be made, and are being made by every hearer and reader. No one may foreclose on the new meanings the Quran grows as it moves through time with its human conversation partner. ^{Is not the Most Merciful One} ~~always in~~ dialogue with the heart of the believer? The Mullahs have no ~~theological right to restrict 'truth' in Islam to their narrow, self-serving ideology of rejection of the modernity and the West. Islam~~ has much to offer the whole world, not just a sword ~~or a stoning~~.

2. The Theological Content of the Quran: Tawhid or the Oneness of God

~~When we consider not just the dialogue process of the~~
~~transmission of Islam, but turn to~~ ^{When we} ~~theology, we find again that the~~
Mullahs have twisted the content of the ^{Quran} ~~Recitation, to try to bolster~~
~~their own claims to power.~~ It needs to be understood ~~by them~~ that

any quality pertaining to God's own self, as shown to the world, also
^{an echo,} has a human correspondence in the believer [&] even the non-believer.

Simply put, we believe that if God is Merciful, then the humans who love and follow that god must also be merciful; if God is just, then humans should be just, and so on.

~~Why is this so in the theologies of the Peoples of the Book?—for~~
~~we find similar principles at work in the sacred texts which the~~
Quran accepts as Holy: the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible) and the
New Testament. ^{Religions of the Book} ~~All three of these sources agree that God is the sole~~
creator of all that is, most especially and finally, the One who
brought humanity into being. ~~There is no division in this God,~~
~~though there are many aspects of God which are known to us~~
~~through our holy books and human experiences. Who would not say~~
~~that God's love for us is felt on the human level by a woman's love~~

^A The sacred texts of Judaism, Xty & Islam all agree that God is the sole creator, the One who brought humanity into being, and endowed us with reason. 87

for her children—~~or a mojahedin's sacrifices for her country's~~
future? Of course, the many loves of humans are grounded in and
reflect the tawhid of God's love and connection with us. We are as
we are, for God has made us so, and God is One. So we must be
One—somehow.

Now this might seem to play right into the hands of
Fundamentalists who want to claim there is only ONE authentic
Islam, their own bigoted and death-dealing brand. Surely there
should be only ONE interpretation of tawhid! But this is yet another
place where their reasoning is shallow and uninformed by the true
spirit of Islam. If God has created all creatures, and created ~~us~~ humans
~~glorious and~~ in the Divine Image, should any group deny that people
have the right to make their own decisions, and determine what is
true and good ~~and needful in their faith?~~ What is called 'tawhid' in
God is named 'democracy' among humans. ~~Every person made in~~
~~the image of God (and this certainly includes women and minorities).~~
~~must be honored for their ability to make choices. We humans are~~
~~all one, and that means each must make their own decision, their~~
~~own meaning for their time and place.~~ To deny democracy to one's
people is to insult the tawhid of God, for the two are intertwined at

the most fundamental level of being. How else do we account for such passages in the Quran as:

"Let there be no compulsion in religion. Truth stands out clear from Error: whoever rejects evil and believes in God has grasped the most truth worthy hand-hold that never breaks. And God hears and knows all things."

The Sura is 'The Cow', Sura number two, line 256:

Everyone must be responsible and choose; this is because we are created and reflect God's glory in human form. To deny humanity, as Iblis did, is to fall into a false faith as the Mullahs of Tehran have done. And notice too, that the right choice—rejecting evil—continues the aspect of close intimacy with God, just as hearing the Recitation makes a dialogue between God and humanity rather than a monologue. The person who makes the correct choice is rewarded with a 'most trustworthy hand-hold the never breaks'—again the image reminds us of that of a loving Parent who takes the hand of the child so that they do not fall as they learn to walk on their own.

~~If God is One, and humans are made in God's image, then each human is endowed with the intellect and spirit of choice. To say otherwise is to deny tawhid.~~

Heard so of every sort
The fundamentalists are wrong: their
on this point:
attempts to silence all views but their own do a great disservice to the

The Cow in Surah
Quran which tells us that we cannot compel right faith, we can only demonstrate *by our actions our concept of what is right,* *and let the world judge.*
~~it, argue for it, and help mediate it for those who think differently.~~
own

3. The Social Content of Quran in Islam

Perhaps the clearest demonstration of the theological error in Islamic Fundamentalism as practiced by the Iranian theocracy comes from their total disregard and misrepresentation of the content of the Quran on social questions of behavior and organization. Compared to the other traditions of Judaism and Christianity, Islam is indeed a revolutionary religion with respect to its view of women and slaves. I believe you have heard something of this from your own Theologian, Maraym Rajavi, so I need not add to what she has so rightly placed before you in lectures, writings and speeches. I will instead evaluate the objective evidence that proves that Tehran does not honor the Quran's teachings.

~~Let me give a clear demonstration of the gap between Quranic teaching and the Mullahs' practice.~~ The Quran and ahadith are clear in their denunciation of slavery, or what we might now refer to as Human Trafficking. ~~Iranian Muslims are justly proud of this, and speak of it often in formal religious sermons at mosques and in street plays~~

body-trade between Iran and ^{Dubai} ~~the UAE~~ that Iranian girls command the highest price of all trafficked females in the region. What a blessing to the moribund economy the Mullahs' incompetence has produced in Iran!

^{Yet} This report I just cited ~~moved~~ ^{is} the regime in Iran ~~to the~~ ^{ed} class ~~of~~ as a Tier 3 Trafficking Countries, ^{Tier Three} the lowest level of compliance on Human Trafficking treaties and enforcement, ^{a rating} shared by only 11 other countries worldwide. ^{they?} Iran makes no attempt ^{to prevent} at ~~preventing~~ trafficking, does not provide law enforcement to combat trafficking, and makes no arrangements for the protection of victims of trafficking. Worst of all is the fact that the ONLY thing Tehran does about human trafficking is to publically punish the victims ~~of trafficking~~ for immorality: beatings, imprisonment, and execution of victims are common, but NO such penalties are ever levied on the government officials who can be shown to be involved with the trafficking trade. ~~If we factor in the practice of approved 'temporary marriage' or sigheh into the harsh and biased application of laws of morality by the Mullahs,~~ ^{The} ~~their~~ two-faced, double standard of punishing the victim but not the perpetrator takes on an even more stark character, once we read it against the teachings of the Quran.

Is THIS ~~fundamentalism a form of True~~ ^{the} Islam? ^{of the Prophet?} I think the

answer must be NO!

Conclusion: Iranian Fundamentalism is not ^{valid} 'true' Islam

We pronounce here, today as a part of the solemn celebration of ~~Ramadan~~, that Iran is a 'failed Islamic State', judging them based on their very own claims to be protectors of Islam, ^{valid} ~~which we have shown they are not~~. The Mullahs of Iran have knowingly perpetrated a hoax on the entire world and the household of Islam by presenting patriarchy and oppression as *the* essential teachings of the Muslim faith. By ~~not promoting gender mainstreaming and greater knowledge of world religions, the West has allowed the deception of this fundamentalist error masquerading as Islam to go largely unchecked, in the same way it refuses to examine the practices of~~ ^{Jewish} ~~Zionist and Christian~~ ~~fundamentalism~~. Tehran ~~is able to~~ ^S claim that any insistence on human rights is a Western attempt to deny good Muslims the freedom to practice their religion as they choose. The Mullocracy of Iran plays a ^S ~~shrewd~~ game, undermining their opponents by claiming to be the protectors of ^{true} ~~the~~ religion against the wicked, colonialist West. Dismantle their key claim ^S to religious purity, empower the diversity of opinion which exists

within Islam worldwide, and dissent and regime change are only a matter of time.

This challenge must be met from *within* the religion of Islam itself, not from the outside. I have tried to supply basic theological reasons for the rejection of the misogynist, fundamentalist Islam of Tehran. Now we must supply the ^{evidence} ~~practice~~ to go with the theology: there is ~~more~~ good and honest Islamic theology ^{in practice} in Ashraf City ~~than in Tehran~~, and we must let the world know it. * Through the work of the PMOI on the borders of Iran, and the NCRI throughout the world, may the religious charlatans in Tehran truly learn the meaning of the phrase, 'zan-zalil'!³

* Because of this, the residents of Ashraf City in Iraq go in fear of their lives, and are threatened in every imaginable way by Tehran. As a group whose practice gives lie to the theological ^{distortions} ~~lies~~ of a brutal, fundamentalist Islam, their survival is critical to the Muslim world of ideas and attempts to shape a better world. As PP under the 4th Geneva Con, the entire world

³ My thanks must go to Jennifer Shaw for her cheerful technical assistance in the preparation of these remarks

must respect their rights and insure their survival. As long as USA continues in Iraq, it is essential that they continue to control ¹² security checkpoints at Ashraf.