

Conversation Pieces

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Everyone remembers the puzzlement over the poster that appeared first in Winchester, Massachusetts in mid-September, and then in many other places in North America and Europe. It read simply: "Islam is RIGHT about women." There was considerable consternation. Some thought it might have been put up by a Muslim, in which case it would have been acceptable, even admirable, and the message perfectly correct; others thought it might have been put up by someone sarcastically endorsing the misogyny of Islam, and in that case, it would have been intolerable, "racist" and "islamophobic."

But what was most welcome was the discussion that the poster prompted, for it gave people a reason to talk and argue about the position of women in Islam, to bring to bear all they knew about it, including such things as the right of Muslim men to "beat" their wives if they merely suspected them of disobedience, to "manage their affairs" because "Allah has

made the one superior to the other,” to practice polygyny, to obtain a divorce simply by uttering the triple-talaq. A daughter ordinarily inherits half that of a son. And a woman’s testimony is worth only half that of a man, which Muhammad himself explained was justified because of the “deficiency of her – woman’s – intelligence.” All of this can be adduced in the most outwardly amiable way, in a kind of youth-wants-to-know spirit, in order to disarm Muslim defenders of the faith. And those who listen in on such conversations, live or online, will come away with an understanding of that Islamic misogyny that Muslims would prefer be kept undiscussed.

There are many other posters that might be put up, not to offer a puzzlement that prompts discussion, but simply to familiarize people with the most disturbing parts of the Qur’an, one verse at a time. Here are some possibilities that come swimmingly to mind:

2:191. And kill them wherever you find them, and turn them out from where they have turned you out. And Al-Fitnah is worse than killing. And fight not with them at Al-Masjid-al-Haram, unless they fight you there. But if they attack you, then kill them. Such is the recompense of the disbelievers.

3:151 We shall cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve, because they joined others in worship with Allah, for which He had sent no authority; their abode will be the Fire and how evil is the abode of the Zalimun [evildoers]

4:89. They wish that you reject Faith, as they have rejected (Faith), and thus that you all become equal. So take not Auliya’ (protectors or friends) from them, till they emigrate in the Way of Allah. But if they turn back (from Islam), take (hold) of them and kill them wherever you find them, and take neither Auliya’ (protectors or friends) nor helpers from them.

5:51: “O you who believe! do not take the Jews and the Christians for friends; they are friends of each other; and

whoever amongst you takes them for a friend, then surely he is one of them; surely Allah does not guide the unjust people.”

8:12: Your Lord inspired the angels: I will cast terror into the hearts of those who have disbelieved, so strike them over the necks, and smite over all their fingers and toes...

9:5: Then when the Sacred Months have passed, then kill the Mushrikun [wrong-doers] wherever you find them, and capture them and besiege them, and prepare for them each and every ambush. But if they repent and perform Salat, and give Zakat, then leave their way free. [for they have become Muslims]

47:4. So, when you meet those who disbelieve, smite at their necks till when you have killed and wounded many of them, then bind a bond firmly.

98:6: Surely the vilest of beings in Allah's sight are those who disbelieve.

These are a mere handful, a kind of starter kit, of the verses that could be made into legible posters, with large easy-to-read-from-afar letters, to be placed on utility poles, trees, bulletin boards – wherever it will do the most good. The sura and ayat should come after the verse.

Thus:

Your Lord inspired the angels: I will cast terror into the hearts of those who have disbelieved, so strike them over the necks, and smite over all their fingers and toes... (Quran 8:12)

So, when you meet those who disbelieve, smite at their necks till when you have killed and wounded many of them, then bind a bond firmly. (Qur'an 47:4)

And a few quotes from the Hadith could be put on a single poster, such as the following:

Muhammad said: "War is deceit." (Sahih Bukhari, 52:269)

Muhammad said: "I have been made victorious through terror."
(Sahih Bukhari, 4:52:220)

Let's see what can come of these conversation pieces. Go ahead. It's worth a try.

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