

“The Quran Teaches That All Human Beings Are Equal”: Beliefs (Part I)

by Hugh Fitzgerald

In the latest example of Muslim propaganda, the Dallas chapter of the Islamic Circle of North America [has put up twelve billboards](#).

Though there is a generic appeal to viewers to find out more about Islam by calling a hotline, 877-whyislam, or going to the website whyislam.org, the specific message that targets African-Americans on each billboard is this: ISLAM=Racial Equality. And with that assurance, when you have called that hotline and found out all kinds of good things – “the volunteers are trained to tell the callers that the religion promotes peace and does not condone any violence” – you will certainly want to Come To-Islam.

Where shall we start with this travesty? With a dozen, or several dozen, quotes from the Qur’an that mandate the killing, in various gruesome ways, of non-Muslims who refuse to convert, or to endure lives of permanent dhimmitude? If Islam “promotes peace and does not condone any violence,” then why are Muslims commanded in the Qur’an to tolerate non-Muslims, but to make constant war against them until they submit – some peace! And then non-Muslims are forced to endure all sorts of disabilities under the rules – some tolerance! – that insist on permanent submission to Muslims.

But, it might be argued, this inequality is not based on “race” but on “belief” – non-Muslims being considered permanently inferior to Muslims. The Dallas reporter sought validation for the billboards’ claims from none other than John Esposito, tireless Defender of the Faith, who is

described as an “Islamic Studies professor at Georgetown University.” Esposito is also the head of the Prince Alwaleed bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, an impressive-sounding title for some, a suspect one for others, given that the Center receives many millions of dollars in contributions from a Saudi prince. If you check out that Center’s activities [here](#), you find that it appears devoted less to instructing and more to misleading ill-informed Christians about Islam, under the guise of disinterested scholarship. What the world gets are parodies of real scholarship, sanitized studies of Islamic doctrine, soothing sanctimony about all the terribly unfair attacks on an inoffensive Islam, and a manic focus on “Islamophobia” – that about sums up the “Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding.”

Esposito, asked about the billboard campaign, did not disappoint. He declared that “the billboards’ message that Islam promotes racial equality is a valid one.” And he added that “the Quran teaches that all human beings are equal, regardless of race, sex or beliefs.” Apparently the reporter didn’t dare to take issue with this absurd statement; after all, Esposito is that impressive thing, a full professor, and what’s more, heads his own Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding. Surely that is Authority enough?

But we who are disinclined to simply accept Esposito’s claim that “the Qur’an teaches that all human beings are equal regardless of race, sex, or beliefs” may want to take a closer look. Where shall we start with this travesty? Why not with Esposito’s tossed-off claim that the Qur’an teaches “that all human beings are equal, regardless of ‘beliefs’”? In other words, Esposito is claiming that in Islam, non-Muslims are equal to Muslims. What do we find if we actually read the Qur’an? It’s accessible, it’s right on the Internet, and when you encounter textual difficulties, simply consult the commentary at “Blogging the Qur’an,” which is also online [here](#).

We find many dozens of quotes that expand upon the description of non-Muslims as the "vilest of creatures" against whom war should be waged by Muslims, the "best of creatures," until they submit. If they are *Ahl al-Kitab*, that is, People of the Book, Christians or Jews, they have available three options: to convert to Islam, or to submit to the many disabilities that non-Muslims must endure under Muslim rule, including the exaction of the capitation tax, or Jizyah, or to be killed. Those who are not People of the Book have it even worse: Hindus and Buddhists from India to the East Indies found that initially their only options were to be converted or to be killed. But after a while, their Muslim rulers wanted to leave some alive, and not require them to be converted. This was a policy based not on a sudden attack of tolerance, but rather reflected budgetary considerations, for if all non-Muslims were killed or converted, who would be left to continue to finance the Muslim state through the Jizyah?

When so much of the Qur'an and the Hadith are devoted to describing and prescribing war against non-Muslims, insisting that they are permanently inferior to Muslims, and describing in detail the often gruesome punishments they deserve, it seems extraordinary that anyone, least of all an "Islamic Studies professor," who surely has read the Qur'an dozens of times, would dare declare that in Islam people of all beliefs are "treated equally."

If they are treated "equally," as Esposito claims, then why is it that Muslims are commanded to impose severe social, political, and economic disabilities on those non-Muslims who wish to remain alive, but not to convert? Why have Muslims engaged in the wholesale destruction of churches and synagogues, of Hindu and Buddhist temples, if in Islam all "beliefs" are "treated equally"? Why can't non-Muslims repair their places of worship, or build new places, without the approval of Muslims? Just how "equal" are those People of the Book, Christians and Jews, against whom the Qur'an inveighs,

and against whom so many stories are told in the Hadith? And even worse is the treatment meted out to Buddhists and Hindus who, not being *Ahl al-Kitab*, or People of the Book, have two options only, either to convert or die, according to the texts of Islam. (As noted above, some were kept alive as quasi-dhimmis so that they might continue to supply the Jizyah needed by the Islamic state).

Does this fit the claim of John Esposito, "Islamic Studies professor," and recipient of millions of dollars of Saudi largesse for his Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding," that the "Qur'an teaches that all human beings are equal, regardless of... beliefs"? Would it not be truer to say that the Qur'an is uncompromisingly a Manuel of Inequality, which sets Muslims above non-Muslims, and for all time, and that the main, obsessive theme of Islam – in the Qur'an, Hadith, and Sira – is the tremendous unbridgeable gulf between Muslims ("the best of peoples") and their permanent inferiors, that is, all non-Muslims ("the vilest of creatures")?

In making his casual claim that "the Quran teaches that all human beings are equal, regardless of race, sex or beliefs" Esposito shows his contempt for his audience, for he must assume that they are so ignorant of Islam, so unlikely of critically checking up on his remarks, so likely to be impressed by mere titles (Professor of Islamic Studies, Head of the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding), that he can get away with making such a preposterous claim, that Islam teaches that those who have different beliefs are treated "equally." How wonderful it would have been if the Dallas News reporter had challenged this remark, if only by quoting in his piece a few of the Qur'anic verses that flatly contradict Esposito – say, 98:6, 3:110, 9:5, 9:29 – with the remark that "in light of these verses, perhaps Professor Esposito may want to revise his views." But no one ever does bother to check, or to challenge such remarks, whether from laziness, or simple *parti pris*.

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