GREEN BOOK

HM2F
HOMOSEXUAL MUSLIMS of FRANCE

Coming-out & *Tawheed*

Or the unconditionnal Love of Diversity

TOME III

الكتاب الأخضر

International Day against HOMOPHOBIA & TRANSPHOBIA

17th of May 2012

HM2F - an initiative of the citizen network for a truly inclusive Islam of France & secularism respectful of all beliefs

World Day against
homophobia, lesbophobia, biphobia & transphobia

Miembro de la Federación LGBT y miembro del Centro LGBT de Paris
Coordinador Internacional de la conferencia inclusiva, CALEM
Miembro de la Red de Víctimas de la Discriminación, RAVAD

CALEM
Confederation of Associations LGBT European & Muslim

In collaboration with our brothers & sisters of INIMuslim - our Inclusive Muslim European network's program - and our sister organizations LGBT *or* European *or* Muslim:
http://www.calem.eu/INIMuslim-international-network-of-inclusive-Muslims.html

Preface - مقدمة [1]

ABDENNUR PRADO - Spain [2]

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

Bismillahi ar-Rahman ar-Rahim

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

We can analyze the verses about the people of Lot ﷺ[3], to show that the Quran does not condemn homosexuality (love between same sex individuals), but mass rape and rejection of foreigners. We can analyze the transmission chains of some alleged misogynistic hadeeth, to prove they are false. We can analyze the condemnation of sexual relations between same sex people in traditional Islamic jurisprudence, to demonstrate that it has no basis whatsoever in the Quran or the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ. We can finally analyze the homophobic laws in force in most Muslim

[1] Thanks to our sister organization from Amsterdam for the use of their image: info@stichtingsecretgarden.nl

[2] Former president of *Junta islamica catalan* (Spanish Islamic council), which organizes a conference about Islamic feminism each year; he says that Islam and homosexuality are not incompatible; President of the International Congress on Islamic Feminism - http://feminismeislamic.org/cast/.

[3] May peace be upon him.

countries, to attest that they have no basis in Islam. But, having done this exegetical work, we feel a void.

What arguments can be put forward to someone who thinks that homosexuality is a sin, something against nature, which should be prosecuted and convicted? What can we say to address the plight of our Muslim gay brothers and lesbian sisters? What can we say to such obvious lack of the most basic feelings and values of Islam, such as compassion, respect for others and a sense of right and wrong?

It's time to say that this issue is not a matter of divergent interpretations: it is a basic issue for the survival of Islam as a way of life based on transcendent values, rooted in the depths of the human heart. In this sense, the Green Book that we present goes beyond the foregoing issues, to address the issue from the very heart of Islamic spirituality.

I thank Allah for giving us the opportunity to participate in this struggle; against the single thought, towards a more spiritual life, stripped of lies, prejudices and invented precepts, toward a life of fulfillment based on the precedence of *Rahma* [4]and the eternal values of Islam. I ask Allah to heal the hearts of those who justify discrimination against homosexuals in the name of Islam. I ask Allah to make them reconsider their views and make love prevail over hate, inclusion over exclusion and acceptance over rejection, insha Allah.

[4] "Mercy".

MATTHEW SIMONDS – United States of America[5]

"Religion," some conservative Muslims say to their queer brothers and sisters, "is not a fashion that it should change with the seasons to suit one's 'lifestyle'"; or, "there are some things in Islam that cannot be changed, and accepting homosexuality is one of them." Some even claim that Islam has never changed in 1400 years and will remain unchanged forever. But a faith without change would be a dead faith, not a living, breathing one, for any living thing that fails to change and grow will die. The challenge facing Islam in the 21st century is whether it will continue to grow and mature and be in the spiritual vanguard as it was when it was first revealed to our beloved Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, or whether it will stagnate and become degraded? Will it adapt to changing circumstances and respond to new problems, becoming more egalitarian and more just; or will it continue to be monopolized by often oppressive, homophobic and misogynistic interpretations of what it means to be a Muslim.

This question and others are addressed in this Green Book which shows the importance for us as Muslims of reclaiming the spirit of our foundational texts and using the resources of our Islamic heritage such as *ijtihad*, *tajdid*, and good or praiseworthy innovations[6] to make it once more a "middle nation" rather than one in which it is increasingly considered by some that "every innovation is misguidance." We can, by that means, open marriage to same-sex couples, and empower women and others who have been oppressed. Moreover, although we are called upon by

[5] Ph.D. in Near Eastern Studies, University of California, Berkeley ; member of the MPV association (Muslim For Progressive Values - http://www.mpvusa.org/).

[6] *bid'ah hasanah or bid'ah mahmudah.*

God in the Qur'an to reflect upon our differences,[7] the concept of *Tawheed* also requires of us that we look past our differences and our diversity and be cognizant of our common humanity and dignity and our basic equality in the face of our Creator.

As the testimonies in this Green Book show, without reform, many LGBT[8] Muslims will continue to live double lives or have compartmentalized lives in which their sexuality is separated from their faith; or they will leave their faith altogether or even in some tragic cases commit suicide, not being able to bear the heavy burden placed upon them by their families and their faith. And yet, no LGBT Muslim should ever feel that they must bear such a crushing burden. As the Qur'an says, "*On no soul doth Allah place a burden greater than it can bear*".[9] Islam is for all people, including LGBT people. As one young gay Muslim said in the testimonies in this Green Book, "*He's my God too.*"[10]

Ultimately, dogmatic, heterosexual Muslims owe it to themselves to transcend homophobia, lesbophobia, biphobia and transphobia and acquire their own authentic, personal and intimate relationship with the Divine, one that recognizes that their own worth is not based on being better that someone else, but exists because of their being in relationship with God. That is far superior for them than to believe that they are better than others or that their sexuality is better than that of others, for that is the sin of pride, the sin of *Shaitan* who said, "*I am better than him.*"[11]

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[7] Qur'an: 49.13

[8] Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender.

[9] Qur'an: 2:286

[10] Tsetimony of the young *Mohsin*, p.49.

[11] Qur'an: 2.30

ANAS GILGAMESH - Iraq[12]

Al-Salam Allikum!

First thing I did is to login to CALEM website[13] to read more, and although that the Arabic pages are not fully completed but I can have more answers at the English ones. I am really so proud that there is now a Islamic networks for LGBTQ groups, when I read about both operational & strategic goals of CALEM I just feel that I am part of it.

As for me, I am LGBTQ Rights Activist that is mostly working in hidden as you know how the situations for LGBTQs community & activists inside Iraq[14]. In many of Arab communities it is very difficult to organize around issues of sexuality and gender identity and gender expression, and the models from other regions for this kind of organizing may not make sense in my own contexts, and thus I need I think to establish my own model that is culturally appropriate with societies of the Arab World.

I used to work on this as hidden person, not using my real name and actual info especially that it is still dangerous here in Iraq comparing within the other Arab countries. All of my work in LGBTQ rights are volunteering since that I believe that this is my rights and I must living for it not living by it, so that I am involving in some of activities most of it are web-based like Facebook, Twitter, e-mail groups, etc.

It shall be so interesting to have this valuable chance to be part of your vision, this will helps me a lot to know what are the steps that you walked on it so that you reach the nowadays.

Yours respectfully, Anas.

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[12] http://www.facebook.com/gayofiraq

[13] http://www.calem.eu/

[14] After the killing of gay - or looking like « gays » - young Iraqis, Anas send us a message to certify us he was safe and sound - https://www.allout.org/en/actions/operation_relocation

NEVIN ÖZTOP - Turkey[15]

Nevin is offering us a unique perspective on their engagement against homophobia: "Why Regional? Creating the Regional Network Against Homophobia aims to provide a solidarity shelter for all the individuals suffering from hate based on homophobia, transphobia and sexism in and around Turkey. We live in a region popular for its border problems and religious clashes; however when it comes to different kinds of hate forms, there seems to be no borders or clashes. We as the LGBTs in Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Palestine, Iran, Iraq, Tunisia, Algeria, Israel, Serbia, Lebanon, Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Turkey, Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania, we do not stand only against heterosexism but also against nationalism and militarism that go hand in hand with it. Our regional network aims to create a ground to stand up for each other as we share similar political patterns and break mental and physical borders that separate us. We want to live with each other; we want to live for each other."

[15] Representative of KAOS GL - Turkish LGBT organization, Ankara ; leader of the RNAH (*Regional Network Against Homophobia*) -; editor-in-chief of Kaos GL Magazine - http://www.kaosgldergi.com/anasayfa.php

MARWAN BENSAID - Morocco[16]

Homosexuality in the Arab world

This is so that among the third world countries, especially in the Arab-Muslim world, the subject of homosexuality continues to be a taboo which we do not talk about, because some believe that talking about topics related to sexuality in general - and homosexuality in particular - is contrary to decency; that the issue of homosexuality is set and its legal status, under Islamic law, is obvious.

They base this on the history of the people of Lot, which is recounted in the holy Qur'an. Besides other voices, in order to deny the existence of such practices within the society, stressed the fact that homosexuality is a Western lifestyle, which is not compatible with Arab societies.

To date Arab LGBT community is still far behind, and we find ourselves as Arab LGBTs facing a battle against ignorance, first, before even we can fight homophobia, since the major part of the Moroccan people still see homosexuality as a deviance and contrary to human nature, striking against the wall all the research and studies showing otherwise.

With regard to the marginalization and stress we feel as a gay, as result of the rejection by the society, we are also exposed everyday to various forms of verbal and physical violence and discrimination in the Street, the place of our studies and the workplace...

[16] Marwan is founder of an LGBT Moroccan organization and editor in chief of the gay magazine ASWAT ("the Voices") - http://aswatmagazine.blogspot.fr/

In the Arab-Muslim countries, where all problems are classified in these societies vis-à-vis the lawful issue of licit - halal - and illicit - haram -, Islamic law is seen as the weapon and primary justification for rejection of all forms of violence faced by homosexuals, by society, law, family...

Furthermore, although there are several schools of Islamic jurisprudence, which virtually never agreed on almost all religious issues, yet these schools are all agreed on the fact that homosexuality is illicit; the only element of jurisprudence on which Muslim scholars diverge, about this subject, is how to execute homosexuals who would be found, without any possible doubt, engaged in sexual practices of this type.

These problems listed above, on which Muslim scholars publish without any awareness on their part as to the reality of the facts they describe, is equivalent to encouraging the violence by giving carte blanche and invite people to commit violence, to increase homophobia, while making licit these acts of violence against these marginalized minorities.

There is not long ago, the Shiite cleric Ayatollah al-Sistani, has published on its website a statement permitting anyone to kill homosexuals, by applying Islamic law. There was also this statement saying that "homosexuals should be killed in the most brutal way"; a statement which was behind the killing of homosexuals in Iraq, since a large number of homosexuals were executed without any evidence of crime. One of the survivors reflects the fact that "the killers entered the houses; people were taken from the streets and tortured, before being killed, to obtain the names of other potential victims."

Through internet, television news and social networks, have circulated many photos of some of the homosexuals who were killed because of their homosexuality. As the BBC reports about one of these gay Iraqi, someone would have told his brother: "in these times of chaos, it is possible to kill your gay brother, without incurring any penalty and end this disgrace."

The Arab Spring and the fight for LGBT rights!

The Arab Spring was a watershed in the fight against the barrier of silence and repression, which was supported by the Arab peoples, since it is now enjoying a much greater freedom of expression about our claims in all areas that relate to our society. These revolutions have worn slogans of freedom and rejection of repression, oppression and marginalization, and they have fulfilled their goals by breaking this cycle of tyranny that lasted for years ... And as long as homosexuals will be an integral part of this society, things will change and we will continue to strive for recognition, justice and peace. This movement appears so clear to claim the rights of homosexuals, including on Arab general websites and on social networks in particular...

After this came the Tunisian magazine GAYDAY, who was the first Tunisian e-magazine gay oriented. It was a great success and many Arab media have referred to it as an excellent initiative. Other magazines have been out, like our magazine "Aswat": an electronic magazine produced by young Moroccans. This magazine has a great success, and its first issue in April 2012 has been downloaded more than 22,000 times. This magazine has a wide audience and has followers all over the Arab world... In addition, such groups and organizations actively defend those rights, after the Arab spring, to get rights for all groups, without distinction.

Homophobia in the Arab world! What is the solution?

To date, Arab societies still consider homosexuality superficially, in terms of sexual practices only; a perspective that does not benefit from the full breadth of culture or sex education. Everything they represent is the relationship between a man and a woman, and everything that comes out of this configuration is similar, according to them, to a practice against nature... All of this drives us back to our fight against homophobia.

First, we focus on clarifying the definition and representation of these homosexual tendencies, despite these prejudices implanted by an Arab conservative culture. When people will

understand the exact meaning of sexual orientation, only then we will be able to convince people of the legitimacy of our claims, which have nothing to do with the sexual histories about the people of Lot.

LAURE RODRIGUEZ QUIROGA - Espagne[17]

Construction of lesbian identity, especially in the case of Muslim women, is a long and painful process. Sometimes it never happens. For a woman to consider herself lesbian the first step to follow is that of awareness of the category "lesbian" to be able to identify to. There is a whole inner struggle between tradition and the deeper feelings that erupt in a patriarchal society built from heterosexual experience.

The majority of lesbians Muslim women question their identity during their lives. First question is: "Who am I?" Which is in general responds according to the gaze of others and which is closely linked to the second question: "How to present myself to others?" It's a constant struggle between identifications felt by the woman and own identifications imposed by the community.

[17] Activist and thinker of the contemporary Islamic Feminism, was chosen by her country as one of the 100 most influential people in Latin America (2010). For nearly 20 years, Social Worker, having spent most of her work to the struggle for women's rights. Is a Research and Executive Committee Member of the Institute of Euro-Mediterranean Studies at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, being the head of the Department of Maghreb and the Middle East. Currently chairs of the Union of Muslim Women in Spain, and co-director of the International Congress on Islamic Feminism. She is Director of Social and Intercultural Consulting Tower of Babel, with gender advisor for the government and various organizations.

The majority of women interviewed during my research feel identified as lesbians. That is to say they feel emotionally and sexually attracted to other women and most have taken the step towards the interpretation of this attraction as that of lesbian identity. Most, however, keeps this secret to the outside world.

Some believe that homosexuality is not dependent on them and that their sexual identity is linked to the essence of their own existence. For this, lesbo-erotic attractions are seen as inevitable. However, others maintain that their feelings and desires are the work of the *Shaytaan* and struggle not to fall into the temptation to commit an illegal and perverse act.

All recounted painful stories about the denial of their homosexual orientation and the difficulties to identify their own feelings due to the suffering that implies the choice to live as a lesbian. In general, Muslim women assume they have not chosen their sexual orientation, but if the opportunity to live or not in this orientation.

Take lesbian identity is in most cases a long process that does not always coincide with the beginning of physical contacts or the attraction of the same sex. For that to happen this self-identification as lesbian or bisexual must be taken into account various factors: access to information on LGBT, preconceptions about homosexuality, ability to build an identity consistent with the experience, etc.

There is a widespread feeling of guilt, fear or anxiety when they begin to assume their sexual orientation. There is especially a strong psychological impact on time to act out their sexual identity because they are afraid of failing to honor their family and do something contrary to Islam.

MUBEEN AL-RASHEEDO - Azaannia [18]

The *Green book* about Coming-out and Tawhid is a very engaging book in that it is trying to deal with many issues at the same time. It is trying to deal with the concept of Tawhid which by any measure is probably larger than the universe as we know it in our limited ignorance. At the same time it is trying to engage with coming-out and dealing with the acceptance of the expression of sexuality variation. I am making the assumption that inherent in Creation, sexuality variation already exists, but that it's the expression that becomes a source of discriminating between the powerful core and the purposefully marginal in society. And finally the last part of the book deals with a colourful mosaic of social narratives of individual people in very different circumstances that have to engage firstly with sexual disparity and then sexual similarity. Language of words cannot adequately describe that pain and yet at the same time, a blessed and conscious way of walking the road to the very Divine Source of Compassion that we abandoned at birth.

My first engagement with the book had me thinking of my own journey and one in which coming out was not an option. And what originally started off as an engulfing neurosis of fear of not wanting anyone to know, took a very different direction. Instead of seeking the affirmation of my earthly difference from other people, without fully understanding what it all meant for me; I went through my journey of coming out to myself first. Earthly difference very quickly became spiritual indifference.

[18] Imaginary country (*Azaan* - the call - and *Nia* - the intention) on the other side of the world, where our special contributor is a human rights activist.

In "*The Book of Sufi Healing*" by Sheikh Hakim Moinuddin Chisti [19], the author starts off the last chapter – titled: '*The Infallible Remedy*' – with a quote by Sheikh Bayazid Bistami (RA):

"Once I saw the Most High God in a dream.
He asked me, "Bayazid, what do you want?"
I replied, "I want what You want."
The Most High God was pleased and said,
"I am yours and you are Mine."

So I guess self-definition and coming-out is as overrated to sexuality as snow is to Europe. It becomes irrelevant in the bigger scheme of things, in the larger creation similarity, and difference is of no consequence. Any difference, be it rank of any kind is not the differentiating factor. In Verse 31 of Surah *Ali-'Imran* (the family of Mary) Allah reminds us, yet again, that Forgiveness and Mercy are for all those that love and align themselves with the very source from which we all originate : Divine Compassion. It is this divine revelation, complimented by the words of Sheikh Bayazid Bistami[20], that requests of us to see our troubles – of this earthly existence – as distraction and unnecessary detail to our ultimate journey, i.e. Being at one with that which we are a part off.

There are a few assumptions in that last statement. It assumes that we are comfortable with ourselves; that we have forgiven ourselves of our transgressions and transgressors and are ready to move on. But we all know that is mostly true in a utopian existence. So we all carry with us a saboteur, an inner saboteur that is with us most of the time. This saboteur is afraid of self empowerment and most times (in varying degrees) can be self destructive, or have the need to undermine and exclude others. In my humble opinion, a saboteur struggles with (self) restraint.

[19] Published by *Inner Traditions International*, Vermont, 1991. Also known as *Gharīb Nawāz* "Benefactor of the Poor" (نواز بےغر), he was born in 1141 and died in 1230 CE. He is the most famous Sufi saint of the Chishti Order of the Indian Subcontinent.

[20] Tayfur Abu Yazid al-Bustami (804-874) was a famous Persian sufí.

So how do we go on track and walk the journey of our "spiritual DNA", which will take us back to that uncreated Immensity which we have abandoned when we chose to enter this physical existence? In his book "Futuh Al-Ghaib – The Revelation in the Unseen" by Ghaus-Al-Azam Sheikh Muhiuddin Abdul Qadir Gilani[21] he speaks of a roadmap that is essentially instructed by our spiritual DNA. He speaks of three stages, *Fana, Baqa* and *Liqa*.

Fana[22] is the total subjugation, or rather the prayerful surrender of our whole being to Allah. In the language of the Quran, *Fana* is referred to as *Istiqama*. If we could thrive in this, especially when we are blessed with trials and tribulations, then we could experience the state of Baqa.

Baqa is when we operate with restraint: not sabotaging ourselves, violating the rights of others and disturbing a balance that Allah has created in all social forms with uncreated Love. Instead the intoxication of *Baqa* is about operating from a space of Allah consciousness, no fear nor sorrow and ultimately from a place of self-realisation and alignment with our Divine Source. This can only but lead to the benefit of the people around you, humanity and to the rest of creation. In this way the Quran is extremely astute on the discourses of socio-political rights (class, race, gender etc) and even ecological issues, beyond a legal or constitutional framework.

Liqa is the final part of this journey, where belief, authenticity and devotion then become irrelevant. Instead the experience of engaging with Allah becomes tangible. In such a condition, the experiences of our inner wounded child, societal distortions and judgement becomes totally immaterial to our existence. This all becomes a distraction from the one true secret of all of creation and uncreation: just pure unadulterated Divine Love.

So how and where do we get this spiritual map? I believe that the answer lies in Sura Baqara V238, where Allah affectionately reminds us: "Guard the prayers, especially the middle prayer...". In his book, "The Secrets of Secrets", Sheikh *Muhiuddin Abd Al-Qadir Al-Jilani*[23] tells us that the actual *salat*[24] that we daily offer to Allah is the worship of the material self. There are many movements and actions involving different parts of our body with the recitation of Divine Revelation involving our senses. Hence the word 'prayers' in that Surah is in the plural, as prayer is the engagement of

[21] Islamic Book Service, New Delhi, 1998

[22] Annihilation of ego.

[23] Born in Iran, Mazandaran, in 1083 and died in 1166; he occupies place in history of sufism.

[24] Prayer.

different parts of our physical existence. But the middle prayer is about prayer of the heart which is ultimately where the true mosque is built. The congregation is our inner faculties, remembering and meditating on the Names and the Unity of Allah. The leader of this prayer is our irresistible wish to align ourselves to our natural course. And finally the *Qiblah* [25]of this prayer is towards the oneness of Allah. *Rumi's*[26] challenge to all of us then is his adage: "Are you just going to admire the jug or are you actually going to drink the water?"

Here is a final argument to consider, *Salih of Qazwin*[27] once said: "Knock and the door will open." *Rabi'a Al-Basrî*[28] responded by saying that the door was never closed in the first place. Rumi beautifully closes this triangular engagement about the lover and the Beloved when he exclaimed: "I knocked and the door opened, but I found that I had been knocking from the inside."

With respect, the title of the book: "*Coming-out and Tawheed or the unconditional love of Diversity*", is effectively irrelevant. So is the discrimination of any form of rank that we engage with almost all the time on a daily basis, sexuality and sexual preferences included. What are ultimately relevant are our engagement with our faith and an alignment with our spiritual home. No passport, no visa, or boarding pass or luggage needed: just our true naked beings!!! By virtue of our creation, we are already reserved on that journey. All we have to do is to show, feel and act out intent.

[25] Direction of Mecca towards which Muslims turn their face to pray five times a day.

[26] Famous sufi poet (Balk, 1207 - Konya, 1273) that profoundly influenced the representation of the islamic mysticism.

[27] Persian sufi.

[28] Saint sufi woman (717–801) from Basra, Iraq.

LOUIS-GEORGE TIN - France[29]

Most religions want a world of love, peace and serenity. Yet everywhere there are men who, under the guise of religion, spread hatred, violence and tumult. Most religions invite for dialogue, harmony and justice. And yet men, everywhere, in the name of God, impose ban, exclusion and brutality. Most religions invites to meditation, sharing and openness. Yet everywhere there are "religious" who preach in favor of invective, of selfishness and rejection.

These men do not speak of God: they speak of a fictional character, full of energy, rage and malice, a kind of superhuman psychopath, they have created in their image. A character who looks more like what they would like to be more than what could be the divinity itself.

It is found in Islam, as elsewhere. People who know better than Allah what Allah thinks. People who in the name of respect for their God, insult the men at any time. People talking about that we should not judge, but who condemn every day, and kill.

Gays, lesbians, bi and trans are victims of these fanatics, of course. On the occasion of the World Day against Homophobia and Transphobia, I can only see, say and repeat it. And I can only support CALEM, this confederation that unites you, and that strengthens us.

But religions, it must be remembered, are also victims of these fanatics, who tarnish and debase the divine message and the world of men. Victims of these people who live more in the dogma more than faith, in the certainty more than piety, in the belief more than spirituality.

You who are Muslims, you who are simultaneously homosexuals, you call to fight against homophobia. You call to fight against Islamophobia, too, that plagues Western societies. You call to

[29] Founder of the IDAHO, *International Day Against Homophobia*, *Transphobia* - http://www.idahofrance.org/

wear the colors of hope, courage and dignity. You are called to spread this message of peace, which is the essence of Islam, which is also the essence of LGBT activism.

In other words, you are called to become the prophets of that time...

ARUS PELANGI - Indonésie [30]

Islam is an important factor in the struggle for our rights; Arus Pelangi does not focus in particular on religion. Rather we focus on human rights issues. I am not Muslim myself, though my colleagues and my life partner are. We are in contact with several progressive Muslim scholars on the issue of homosexuality and gender identity. Some of their writings can be found on our website. Sometimes we invite them to speak in public discussions to highlight the diversity in interpretations of the Quran. Indonesia is often seen as a possible shining example of how Islam and democracy can work together. Sadly, the reality is that we are far from being a gay paradise. We are living under constant threat of attacks by hard-line Muslim groups, while law enforcement hardly makes any effort to stop them. Despite the absence of criminal laws on homosexuality, the government has until now refused to acknowledge the existence of LGBTIs as a legitimate minority with the same rights as other citizens. That is our biggest challenge.

AMINA WADUD - United States of Amercia [31]

[30] LGBT Indonisian Federation - http://www.aruspelangi.or.id/ ; statement collected thanks to the organization MOI (homosexual Muslims in Italy) - http://www.ilgrandecolibri.com/p/moi-musulmani-omosessuali-in-italia.html

[31] Amina WADUD, the famous university professor, struggling for an Islamic feminism, wrote: "The oppression of sexes is (...) opposed to Islam and it is for those who are aware of the complexity of human existence to create a living reality that challenges the oppression of gender or any other form of oppression based on race, class, ethnicity or sexual orientation" - more information at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amina_Wadud

"I had a retreat with queer Muslims and their allies. Really the sisters and brothers there put more heart and soul into our worship together, I thought, this is what community is all about".

Tawheed ***or the uniqueness of our humanity***

"O mankind! Lo! We have created you male and female, and have made nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo! The noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct. Lo! Allah is Knower, Aware".[32]

Islam, in Arabic means *to be at peace*. It is a grammatical form that implies a process of being under an *in-progress evolution,* which is theoretically based on the knowledge of the self, the knowledge of others and the proactive respect for diversity. Thus, we ask, how can the knowledge of Islam, especially the representation that "new Islamic theologies" are trying to develop[33], help combat homophobia, lesbophobia, biphobia and transphobia peacefully? How can knowledge of the *Islamic theology of liberation*, and in particular the contribution of LGBT and feminist intellectuals or activists in this field, add value to human consciousness? In a word, how can the Islamic *Tawheed*[34] doctrine enable individuals belonging *de facto* to a sexual minority to live better and empower themselves?[35]

Tawheed must be understood as the apex of a humanity able to transcend differences; even more, to make it the basis of our human consciousness. According to the Qur'anic verse quoted at the opening of this book, the diversity of human cultures is the fertile ground in which our human consciousness is rooted; a human consciousness that is based on knowledge of the self and others that makes us, always according to the Qur'an, beings more valorous than angels of light.

[32] Qur'an: 49.13.

[33] It was the main subject of Amina Wadud's presentation, at the CALEM 2011 conference at the EHESS (High School of Social Studies - Paris). Videos of that presentation are available online - http://www.calem.eu/publications.html#CALEM__2011

[34] The uniqueness of our humanity, mirroring the uniqueness of God.

[35] What we commonly call «*coming-out*».

Chapter BLACK - فصل أسود

Consciousness of Tawheed, the remedy against the axiological dysphoria[36] ?

It is said in the Qur'an: "And when thy Lord said unto the angels: Lo! I am about to place a viceroy in the earth, they said: wilt Thou place therein one who will do harm therein and will shed blood, while we, we hymn Thy praise and sanctify Thee? He said: Surely I know that which ye know not. He taught Adam all the names, then showed them to the angels, saying: Inform me of the names of these, if ye are truthful. They said: Be glorified! We have no knowledge saving that which Thou hast taught us. Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Knower, the Wise. And when We said unto the angels: Prostrate yourselves before Adam, they fell prostrate, all save *Iblis*. He demurred through pride, and so became a disbeliever"[37]. Only the Devil - the most destructive of our humanity, "the momentum of death"- refused to recognize the universality of God's gift to humanity. What argument *Iblis* - the "devil" - then used to not kneel before the Divine breath contented in each parcel of human consciousness? *Iblis*, according to the Qur'an, said: "I am better than him. Thou createdst me of fire, whilst him Thou didst create of clay"[38]. The devil used the argument of *nature, that*: Adam is made of clay - the momentum of life - and the devil himself, who feels better by nature, is made of fire - the momentum of destruction, a symbol also of regeneration among Zoroastrians, in Japanese philosophy, and for Middle Age Christians. One element, however, is complementary to the other; no so-called human "nature" shall be considered better than another.

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[36] *Axiology* (from Greek ἀξία, axiā, "value, worth"; and -λόγος, -logos) is the philosophical study of value. It is either the collective term for ethics and aesthetics: philosophical fields that depend crucially on notions of value—or the foundation for these fields, and thus similar to value theory and meta-ethics; Dysphoria (from Greek δύσφορος (dysphoros), from δυσ-, difficult, and φέρειν, to bear) (semantically opposite of euphoria) is medically recognized as a mental and emotional condition in which a person experiences intense feelings of depression, discontent and indifference to the world around them (sources wikipédia).

[37] Qur'an: 2.30-34.

[38] Qur'an: 38.76.

The Qur'an uses another parable to illustrate this fact. The *djeen* – a spirit, repeatedly cited in the Qur'an – would be a reference to the duality of the human being caught in the microcosm of its existence, and the macrocosm of its universality. We are developing this issue here because several of our dogmatic brothers and sisters come to us saying that we are gay or transgender, because a *djeen* – a term used in this case to describe an "evil spirit" – possesses us. The *djeen* who is repeatedly described as blinded by his pride, even after eons of worship of the Lord, also refers generally to "what is inside [the psyche of] the human being"[39]. Recall also the pride of what God in the Qur'an called *Shaitan*, saying: "I am better than him [when God asked him, and to the angles, to prostrate in front of Adam]. Thou createdst me off fire, whilst him Thou didst create of clay"[40]. Pride is therefore to think that some of us are inherently, *by nature*, better than others; a pride that is swept by regenerator fire. Thus the fire, "the higher elements" according to the *Akbarian* mysticism[41], leads to pride; and that kind of pride, so far not attributed to any particular object during the creation of human beings, leads the *djeen* – the inner part of ourselves – to rebellion and turns some human tendencies into demons – *Shayaateen*[42]. Our pride should be in the regeneration of post-modern Islamic sciences, and not in the exclusion of the weakest or the minority among us. Is it not exactly the regeneration of the Islamic Sciences, criticized by many conservative and dogmatic individuals, which feminists, LGBT Muslim activists and intellectuals have been trying to achieve for decades!?

These questions about the true meaning of the messages that believers consider to be revealed, are not inherently exclusive to Islam. In the Bible it is said: "*The Lord says: "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is based on merely human rules they have been taught. Therefore once more I will astound these people with wonder upon wonder; the wisdom of the wise will perish, the intelligence of the intelligent will vanish*"[43]. Similarly, it is said in

[39] Ibn 'Arabi (2002). « *The Meccan revelations* ». Pir Pubns, New York.

[40] Qur'an: 38.76.

[41] That of Ibn 'Arabi, called the « master of masters of sufism ».

[42] Ibn 'Arabi, « *Meccan revelations* ». Op. cit. That does not mean that we should not believe entirely, totaly, absolutely in what our reason does not entirely understand of our Lord's revelation in the Qur'an: «*He it is Who hath revealed unto thee (Muhammad) the Scripture wherein are clear revelations. They are the substance of the Book . and others (which are) allegorical . But those in whose hearts is doubt pursue , forsooth , that which is allegorical seeking (to cause) dissension by seeking to explain it . None knoweth its explanation save Allah. And those who are of sound instruction say: We believe therein; the whole is from our Lord; but only men of understanding really heed*» (Qur'an: 3.7).

[43] Isaiah: 29.13-14.

the Qur'an: "Allah knoweth that which every female beareth and that which the wombs absorb and that which they grow. And everything with Him is measured. He is the Knower of the invisible and the visible, the Great, the Nigh Exalted. Alike of you is he who hideth the saying and he who noiseth it abroad, he who lurketh in the night and he who goeth freely in the daytime. For him are angels ranged before him and behind him who guard him by Allah's command. Lo! Allah changeth not the condition of a folk until they (first) change that which is inside of them"[44]. These verses illustrate very clearly, from our point of view, what we just testified: a theology truly adapted to the human beings, truly liberating and transcendent, immanent, based on the love of God and of our humanity, rather than fear and intellectual dogmatism. The Qur'an teaches us, as the Books that preceded it, that it's up to us to free ourselves from our fears – including fear of "the Other" – to transcend this difference respectfully, and thereby to be fully aware of what "human *being*" can mean. This verse speaking of the prophet Isaiah shows that religion should be seen as a manifestation of our human spirituality that transcends temporal and cultural particularities. Another verse which speaks about the pure *Tawheed* of Abraham, who disrupted the social idols (and ideals, social standards) that allowed the wealthiest to oppress the weakest, ends with: "*Abraham, the upright, who was no idolater*"[45], certainly points to the fact that Abraham was a monotheist. But more than that, Abraham was in favor of a united humanity, *one and indivisible*. Mohamed Iqbal tells us about such stories contained in the Qur'an, adding that "the Qur'an often communicates through these stories the teaching of a value or philosophical content rather than providing a historical account. It does this by removing the names of characters and locations likely to set the story in a historical context, and also by removing specific details (…). This method is not unusual; it is more often used in non-religious literature, for example, the story of Faust, to which the genius of Goethe gave an entirely new meaning"[46]. Thus, as Imam Daayiee Abdullah said[47]: "Islam is a living religion, it must breathe"[48]. Diversity as sacred, unified yet differentiated human nature: that is the "social contract" that the Qur'an has offered for fourteen centuries. And the Arab-Islamic civilization, known until recently for its tolerance, was to some extent its vivid illustration.

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[44] Qur'an: 13.8-11.

[45] Qur'an: 6.161.

[46] Iqbal, M. (1999). *«Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam»*. Kazi, Chicago.

[47] Homosexual himself and in charge of the LGBT branch of the MPV - Muslims for Progressive Values (www.mpvusa.org) -, during the AIR conference in 2010 (Cape Town).

[48] During the AIR conference in 2010 ; a report in French only is available on: http://www.homosexuels-musulmans.org/AIR_TIC-HM2F_avril-2010_7eme_rencontre_internationale_des_homosexuel-le-s_musulman-e-s_LeCap_Afrique-du-Sud.html.

One unique human dignity

Thus, the metaphor of *shirk* – literally translated as "polytheism" – referred to, by the Qur'an, is the worst social evil. *Shirk* can be understood to be a *profusion of humanities*. It would mean, for example, that one would consider that some are not fully human, or are inferior to other humans who are considered "normal", belonging to a so-called elite. Just because of the color of their skin, their beliefs – their atheism – or the fact that they belong to a sexual minority. In Tawheed however, we are all, according to the Qur'an and by Divine decree, equal before the face of the Eternal, our Lord. We are all subject to a single divine law, that of knowledge, diversity and self-definition, which makes us all different human beings, but also all equal. This is the basic concept of *Tawheed*, of an Islam that is "*the purest monotheism*", as Maimonides said[49]; primarily because there is no intermediary between God and humans, which also implies that the individual is placed at the center of axiological values and systems of belief; and even much more according to some Muslim philosophers: *Tawheed* would be the spiritual union of all in a single Creator. The uniqueness of *Tawheed* is therefore the symbol of the universal union; the symbol of the potentially divine identity in every part of our humanity! On this point, many thinkers and Sufi ascetics such as Bayazid Bastami, Shaqeeq Blake, or the sadely famous Mansur al-Hallaj – known as the *Christ* or the *martyr of Islam*[50]–, have postulated that the major religious axiologies are likely to converge, by different routes, toward a unified view of the diversity of the divine plan: "at the end of my flight, which exceeded all limits, I wandered the plains of proximity, then looked in the mirror of water, and thus could not see beyond my face"[51]. It is Ibn'Arabi, the master of masters of Sufism, who teaches us that "it is from ourselves that we conclude to Him; we ascribe in Him no quality without embodying ourselves that capacity, excepting the principled autonomy. Since we know Him by us and from us, we attribute to Him all that we attribute to ourselves and that is why, secondly, the revelation was given to us by the mouth of the interpreters [prophets], and why Allah describes Himself to us through us. Contemplating Him, He contemplates Himself, although we are evidently numerous regarding individuals and *genders*; we are united, indeed, in a single essential reality, but

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[49] Maïmonide, or *Abou Omrane Moussa ibn Maimoun ibn Abdallah al-Kourtoubi al-Yahoudi* («Moses son of Maïmoun son of Abdallah the cordoban jewish»), was an andalou rabbi of the XII.th century (Cordoba, 1135-1204), considered to be one of the most important figure of Judaism; Interview of Jacques Attali, 1st of March 2007 - http://www.lemondedesreligions.fr/archives/2007/03/01/jacques-attali-je-ne-peux-pas-comprendre-le-monde-sans-une-metaphysique,8731903.php.

[50] Ruspoli, S. (2005). « *Le message de Hallâj l'Expatrié* ». Cerf, Paris.

[51] Al- Hallâdj - Abû Al-Murhîth Al-Husayn – (1992). "*Diwan*". Points, Paris (tranlsation from the French text by L.Zahed).

there is a distinction between individuals, otherwise, by the way, there would be no *diversity in uniqueness*"[52]. Thus we might call this path, which leads to the transcendence of our difference and the unconditional love of diversity desired by Allah, incarnation – or *houloul*[53]–, *Jnana Yoga* and *nirvana*[54], or *Tawheed* and *fana*[55] : as the Indian mystic *Ramakrishna Paramahamsa* said: "all paths lead to God, but all paths are not God"[56]. Of course, all these conceptions of the relationship to God are not to be confused, but it is plausible to think of them like the branches of one *tree of faith and knowledge,* that makes us move towards the Universal. This convergence of the diversity represented by our humanity is one of the fundamental Islamic values that, at a time not so long ago, was recognized and praised even by some European thinkers as Edgar Quinet[57]: "The Mohammedans [Muslims] reached religious and social unity before us before; we offer to deprive them from it and to enter with us into contradiction. How would they accept the exchange?"[58]. Yes indeed, how?!

Being deprived from the blessing that the Qur'an enjoins us to follow, is to forget the spirit of Islam, fundamentally marked with peace, and is to retain only the institutionalized dogma of a politico-religious elite, formed on the basis of racial, ethnic, sexual and religious prejudices. In the Qur'an, God addresses the Prophet of Islam ﷺ, "We narrate unto thee (Muhammad) the best of narratives in that We have inspired in thee Qur'an, though aforetime thou wast of the heedless"[59]. And also: "In their history verily there is a lesson for men of understanding. It is no invented story but a confirmation of the existing (Scripture) and a detailed explanation of everything, and a guidance and a mercy for folk who

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[52] Ibn 'Arabi (1980). «*The Bezels of Wisdom (Classics of Western Spirituality)*» . Paulist press, USA.

[53] That is the word that designates the incarnation of God within a human being; Christ would be the best example of such incarnation according to Christianity.

[54] For the Brahmanism, the millenary Indian Vedic mysticism.

[55] For Sufi Islamic mysticism, it is the annihilation of ego.

[56] Remark attributed to him after he tried various forms of mysticism, including Sufism - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramakrishna

[57] French historian and writer, a great figure of the republican philosophy, his work revisits the history of France, slays the influence of the church on society and develops a philosophy for the future which earned him the respect of the *Collège de France* where he taught literature (he was also exiled of twenty years in Belgium and Switzerland).

[58] Quinet, E. (1857). *« Le christianisme et la révolution française »* ; 3, 115-129. Pagnerre, Paris.

[59] Qur'an: 12.3.

believe"[60]. Thus, these prophetic stories are there for us to extract from them – according to human diversity, that God has made us to incarnate – the metaphorical sense; and they certainly do not have one unique possible interpretation. Some Sufis, the greatest thinkers of what some considered to be "the golden age" of Islam, already at the Middle Ages CE, boasted of being able to find up to seven thousand (!) interpretations of a single verse[61]. Therefore, concerning the question of individual axiological values, of personal ethics and *self-definition*, the position of Islam seems to have been a metaphysical position of vanguard spirituality, such as it was in the context of the seventh century revelation. This is the ideal posture of a Muslim who is therefore "submitted to peace" – internal and social peace – of his Lord, using the spirit in order to differentiate between good and evil, using the examples offered by the spiritual tradition, with no intermediaries between himself/herself and God!

The story of Abraham and other prophets thus allow us to place the debate about homophobia and Islam at the heart of a debate which is actually much broader and quite real, which is about the respect, and even more the proactive promotion of the respect, for individual freedom and inalienable human rights – not alienating for each and every individual. This is no doubt a new representation, enlivened, ecumenical, egalitarian, universal and thus *secular*[62]. It is a representation of Islam that we believe is opposed to "soft fundamentalism», which some traditionalist Arab-Muslims are trying to import today into Europe and across the Arab and Asian Muslim world[63]. It is our responsibility, we the believers, to bring our stone to the human spiritual building, in this era of globalization and "global community" that we hear so much about. Is it not that also the deeper meaning of the *hadeeth* of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ[64], which was proactively committed to respect all forms of gender identities[65] and religious diversity[66]: "My position in relation to the prophets who came before me can be explained by the following example: A man erected a building and

[60] Qur'an: 12.111.

[61] Schimmel, A.-M. (1978). *«Mystical Dimensions of Islam».* The University of North Carolina Press.

[62] Consult for instance one out of MPV's ten principles, «Separation of Religious and State Authorities» - http://www.mpvusa.org/our_principles.html.

[63] The long term strategy of dogmatic Muslims in Egypt - http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2011/jul/14/egypt-victorious-islamists/

[64] May peace and blessings be upon him.

[65] Consult, amongst others, the article published on HM2F's website called « *Homosexuality is not a sin by nature according to Islam* » - http://www.homosexuels-musulmans.org/homosexuality-is-not-a-sin-perversion-according-to-islam.html

[66] Consult for instance this website where letters attributed to the Prophet ﷺ, addressed to estimated Christians of his time - http://darvish.wordpress.com/2006/10/20/the-prophets-letters-to-christians/

adorned this edifice with great beauty, but he left an empty niche, in the corner where just one brick was missing. People looked around the building and marveled at its beauty, but wondered why a brick was missing from that niche? I am like unto that one missing brick and I am the last in the line of the Prophets"[67]. You'll notice he did not say he was sent to eradicated any other form of religion on earth or to enclose all the world in a rigid, predefined mold, for this would go against the very nature that has been assigned to each and every one of us, and a significant part of this nature lies in every individual's gender identity and sexual orientation. On the contrary, our Prophet ﷺ taught us that Islam is here to fit harmoniously into a building of preexisting human metaphysical beliefs, in agreement with a diversity of human genders and identities that could be seen as sanctified by the Qur'an! This is the essence of the wonderful poem by Rumi who states:

"*Lit in one place, are ten lamps. They all have different shapes, but when you see the light they shed together, it is impossible to say what light comes from this or that particular lamp. Regarding the area of the spirit, there is no partitioning, not the least individualization*"[68].

Only the evolution of our consciousness of *Tawheed*, the cognitive representation of uniqueness of faith that each of us has built, individually and in relation to our human community, will allow us to change the conception we have of our *dignity* as a human being, that some are quick to assume that we do not have, we homosexuals, transsexuals, intersexuals, and so on – therefore reducing a human being to their sexuality or gender identity only. The reform of the representation we have of Islam can, thus, only allow us to proactively accept and sustain the complexity of our human identities, far from any form of axiological dysphoria.

[67] Bukhari: 56.735.

[68] Poem of Djalâl ad-Dîn Rûmî, quoted by Majid Tehranian in is book (2008): «*Global Civilization: A Buddhist-Islamic Dialogue*» . I. B. Tauris, London.

Chapitre GRIS - فصل رمدي

Same sex unions[69]: a pragmatic, fair, necessary innovation.

But the issue of reforming the representation we have of our own heritage of worship, the main cause of dysphoria, is no doubt included in a necessary axiological r-evolution - the term in Arabic is *tajdid wa Islah*[70]; a conciliatory, inclusive, appeased reform, by a constant and dynamic renewal of the representation we have of ourselves as Muslims, and the relationship we have with the Other: our co-religionists, as well as all the rest of our sisters and brothers. The reform of Islam is clearly a process of reclaiming Islamic Text's: on this particular point, the most progressive as well as the most dogmatic seem to almost all agree[71].

Some Sufi mystics of the Middle Ages, shortly prior to the monopolization of Islamic interpretation that was carried out by highly politicized Islamic sects, found founts of knowledge and inspiration in Far Eastern mysticism as well as in the ancient Mediterranean philosophy; whereas today it seems difficult to envisage that Sources held sacred by the majority of Muslims - the Qur'an and *Sunna*, or prophetic tradition - are there primarily as examples, to protect the innocent against injustice and prejudice, especially minorities, and that there were not to be used to establish a rigid, patriarchal, dogmatic and hegemonic social order. Yet, as the most sublime Averroes said, the use of reason is a "speculation about the universe as it does teach us about the Artisan"[72]. He encouraged the study of philosophy

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[69] While we advocate the opening of civil union and marriage to all citizens, irrespective of their gender or sexual orientation; we are not trying to impose marriage on all as a social norm, but simply seeking to highlight the need for establishing an equal status for all citizens before the law and for the recognition of unions based on love and respect between two individuals; very concretely, the abrogation of that discrimination shall allow, for instance, binational same-sex couples to live freely in the same country - in France -, or transgender couples to have their love and common life recognized by their community and country.

[70] Renewing and conciliation of what we Muslims generally consider to be the Islamic "Law".

[71] T., Ramadan (2008). «*Radical Reform: Islamic Ethics and Liberation*». Oxford University Press, USA.

[72] Badawi, A. (1998). « *Averroès, Ibn Rushd* ». Librairie philosophique J. Vrin, Paris (translation from the French version by L.Zahed).

as it seeks to make the Creator known. "The fact of philosophy consists in nothing else than the rational consideration of beings, and in fact, thinking on them reflects that they are proof of the existence of the Artisan (...). Thus it is clear that the act referred to under this name [of philosophy] is, under the revealed law, either *mandatory* or recommended"[73]. The study of science and the use of reason – called *ijtihad* in Arabic – is crucial to an understanding of what Islam is, without excess in one way or the other, as the Qur'an reminds us that reason is more complex but at the same time more fragile than the spider's house; since "the frailest of all houses is the spider's house"[74]. The fact remains that Rûmi[75] told us that "reason consists in the fact that, constantly, day and night, she is worried and tormented by the thought, effort and attempts to seize the God Almighty, although He is elusive. The reason is like the moth [nocturnal butterfly], and the Beloved is the candle. As the moth flows on the flame, it burns and is emptied. But the moth is the one who, while being burned and tortured, cannot bear to be away from the flame [of the wisdom of God]"[76].

However, since the earliest days of Islam, like any monotheistic religion, the problem of the dynamic, and the reform of the representation of the relationship we maintain with our heritage of worship, is thus defined by two reefs which Islam keeps more or less maneuvering between since its foundation: on one side that of an excessive innovation, the *bid'a*, which would lead us to create a wealth of an endless liturgy, making Islam no longer a tradition, an example, a *path to enlightenment*, but a real axiologico-liturgical cabinet of curiosities; on the other side the total lack of dynamic and continuous reform of the relationship we entertain to our spirituality, especially achieved through the use of reason and *ijtihad*[77]. In the pre-Islamic context for example, the condemnation of idolatry by the

[73] Averroès (1996). *« Discours décisif ».* Traduction de Marc Geoffroy ; Flammarion, Paris (translation from the French version by L.Zahed).

[74] Qur'an: 29.41.

[75] *Celaledîn Rûmî Mevlâna* (1207 - 1273) was a 13th-century Persian[4][5][6][7][8][9][10][11] Muslim poet, jurist, theologian, and Sufi mystic.[12] Rūmī is a descriptive name meaning "Roman" since he lived most of his life in an area called "Rum" (then under the control of Seljuq dynasty) because it was once ruled by the Eastern Roman Empire.[13] He was one of the figures who flourished in the Sultanate of Rum.

[76] Rumi & Vitray-Meyerovitch, E. (2011). «*DISCOURSES OF RUMI (OR FIHI MA FIHI) BASED ON THE ORIGINAL TRANSLATION BY A. J. ARBERRY*». ACEND, Iowa - USA. These debates around the use and limitations of the reason are very old. From the early centuries of Islam, in fact, theologians have understood that they could not decouple the understanding of the religion from understanding the world. This is what we call in Islam *usul al-fiqh*: the foundations of understanding of the Law (translation from the French version by L.Zahed).

[77] Using enlightened reason to reform the representation that each individual can develop toward the spirit of Islam.

prophet Mohammed ﷺ was considered an innovation, a real threat to the social tribal order of Arabia. The Prophet ﷺ took the opposite side of his accusers – the conservative notables of Mecca in particular – by turning the controversy about the *bid'a* on its head, in this case, by saying that Abraham ﷺ was a patriarch and the monotheistic Arabs have deviated from the practice of this patriarch. Thus the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ cleverly used the concept of bid'a for his own benefit. With the advent of Islam, the term sunna came to be closely linked to the normative education and conduct of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, while the Sunnah before the advent of Islam was referring to the tribes' customs and practices. Later, after the Prophet's death ﷺ, bid'a came to be defined in contrast to the sunna (his example) ﷺ. And today we see how the Muslim community is taken to extremes, either you follow the strict Sunna or you make a *bid`a*: the golden path of our beloved Prophet ﷺ, the middle way, is difficult to follow. Yet the Qur'an constantly reminds us in several verses: "Thus We have appointed you a middle nation, that ye may be witnesses against mankind, and that the messenger may be a witness for you"[78]. We cannot say that everything is a bid'a in the literal sense; otherwise we should question everything that came into effect after the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ died.

Marriage & coming-out: the rational use of reason and Ijtihad

The question is not whether or not all Muslims should get married: this is an issue on which traditionalist Muslim scholars themselves do not agree[79] ; moreover, our main goal is always the well-being and empowerment of LGBT Muslims or those LGBT individuals who are from a Muslim background. From this point of view, the question is therefore rather to know how equal rights for all, especially the opening of marriage to same sex couples, can enable LGBT Muslims to better empower themselves[80], and therefore to better live their

[78] Qur'an: 2.143.

[79] In the early days of Islam, the special practice of *zawadj mout'a* - marriage of convenience -, allowed two people to be married for a limited period of time, without consulting anyone else. Some Shia Muslim still practice this type of marriage, while the Sunni Muslims are generally fiercely opposed to it. To learn more: http://www.zawajalhalal.com/fb_cb/89c837a62566d7add68851ae8b665909/video/cheikh-explique-et-justifie-pratique-islamique-al-zawaj-muta-mariage-temporaire.html. Eventually, remember that some authors point out rightly that *zawj* - "spouse" in Arabic - is neutral (voir Habib, S. (2009). "*Arabo-Islamic Texts on Female Homosexuality, 850 - 1780 A.D*". Teneo press, Londres); and since nowhere does Islam condemn gender and sexual diversity as such, then everyone would be free to develop his own choices, at peace with the nature that God has given him/her (see the article "*Homosexuality is not a sin by nature according to Islam*" online http://www.homosexuels-musulmans.org/homosexuality-is-not-a-sin-perversion-according-to-islam.html).

[80] Because they have been raised in Muslim families where they were educated in a way that they generally seem to give great importance to marriage, children and filiation matters. Not to mention the very positive

gender identity and sexual orientation. Therein, according to what we just said, what about the opening of an *inclusive marriage* to all[81], particularly to same sex partners? Is it an "*excellent bid'a!*"[82] !? Or should we then state, as some extremely dogmatic Muslims do, that "every innovation is misguidance, and [that] the way of any misguidance leads to the fire"[83]? Ibn Abd al-Barr, a famous Andalusian Maliki scholar of the eleventh century, recalls the fact that bid'a is strictly ritual: "When we are dealing with innovations in the practical operation of this world, there is no restriction and no fault"[84]. In other words, technological progress, architecture, urban development, and *interpersonal relationships* – called in Arabic *mu'amalat*[85]–, do not constitute bid'a. The criterion of bid'a, therefore, imposes a restrictive framework for creative ideas to ensure continuity with the spiritual path and example given by the Islamic tradition, conformity with the spirit of the law, and to avoid any form of excessive liturgical innovation. This concept of *bid'a*[86] is thus reinforced in Islam by that of *ijtihad*, which is defined by Dr. Umar Faruq Abdallah as "critical legal thinking in search for answers to new problems"[87]. In this, the opening of marriage to all is simply a way to move beyond all forms of homophobic, misogynistic prejudice, a pragmatic response to "new problems" and a way for true equality between all citizens.

Moreover, Ibn 'Arabi said: "We are not saying that ijtihad is what the scientists call exoteric. Ijtihad for us is the effort that achieves the interior disposition by which one

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psychological effects, on self-esteem and facilitating the projection in the future among others, regardless of the origin of the individuals concerned, that may have the simple freedom to choose: to choose to marry, or not, to conceive or adopt children, or not.

[81] Recall that seven European countries, including Spain and Portugal, have opened marriage to same sex couples, while France, in this election period, is still debating about it; learn more: http://www.touteleurope.eu/index.php?id=5560

[82] The Caliph Omar has a dynamic representation of the spirit of Islam and was known to adapt the prophetic example - *sunnah* - to daily contingencies; Bukhari: 32.227

[83] A prophetic tradition that seems to warn against excessive wealth in Islamic law - Abu Dawud: 4607; Tirmidhi: 2676; Ibn Majah: 43.

[84] Yusuf ibn 'Abd al-Barr (1999). "*Al-Tamhid li-Ma fi al-Muwatta' min al-Ma'ani wa al-Asanid*", volume 18; 4:93-95, 100. Al-Faruq al-Haditha li-al-Tiba'a, Cairo.

[85] And all *mu'amalat* are allowed, according to all the main Muslim schoilars from the early centuries of Islam, until Islamic "law" - *fiqh,* or "understanding" - says why exactly one of them should be prohibited for a precise, reasonable cause - or *'ilat*; see T., Ramadan (2008). «*Radical Reform: Islamic Ethics and Liberation», chapter I.* Oxford University Press, USA.

[86] From the radical *bid'*, «begin a new action»

[87] President of the American foundation *Al-Nawawi*, named after the famous hadeeth scholar and commentator of the 13th century - http://www.nawawi.org/downloads/article4.pdf.

becomes able to host this particular inspiration that no prophet or messenger sent could accommodate at the time of the prophecy - provided that this revelation may not undermine legal status firmly established by Envoy ﷺ"[88]. This also suggests that "what the law is silent about is no less fortuitous than what it says. If each word in the *shari'a* has a sense, the absence of a word has also one and man [human beings], should not transgress the word of God, should also not fill the silences of God. The "holes" in the Law are part of its fullness"[89]. This implies that one cannot add requirements, much less bans, which are not clearly mentioned in principal Islamic texts: namely the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ. Ijtihad is therefore an intellectual process, fair, pragmatic and measured. Al-Baji, also an Andalusian jurist, a contemporary of Ibn Hazm, defined ijtihad as "expending one's fullest [intellectual] capacity in search of the *right* ruling"[90]. Dr. Fazlur Rahman speaks of ijtihad as "the effort to understand the meaning of a relevant text or precedent in the past, containing a rule, and to alter that rule by extending or restricting or otherwise modifying it in such a manner that a *new situation* can be subsumed under it by a *new solution*"[91]. George Makdisi, Professor Emeritus of Arabic and Islamic studies at the University of Pennsylvania, notes that Ijtihad is obviously related to the existence of the classical schools of Islamic thought; it was the imperative to perform it that led to the formation of the classical schools of Islamic law, many decades after the death of the Prophet ﷺ[92]. Finally, Abu Zayd al-Dabusi, a prominent Sunni jurist who died four hundred thirty years after the Hegira, noted that what may be allowable in one time or place may become prohibited in another, because of changing circumstances, just as what was prohibited may become allowable by the same criterion. He added that changing times and places are not the only considerations; there are others, such as *the particular realities of a person's social group*. What is beneficial for one segment of society may be harmful for another [93]. These are all designs of Islamic religious dialectic between the spirit of the law and human societies that embody them; an Islamic dialectic that seems in total agreement with the valorization of the dynamic evolution of a

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[88] Ibn'Arabi, «*Meccan revelations* » ; op. cit. (translation from French version by L.Zahed).

[89] Chodkiewicz, M., « *Mystique, culture et société* », organized at the Sorbonne in 1983 ; acte du colloque, p.30.

[90] Sulayman ibn Khalaf al-Baji (1973). "*Kitab al-Hudud fi al-Usul* " ; *Al-Zu'bi li-al-Tiba'a*, 64.. Nazih Hammad, Beirut.

[91] Fazlur Rahman (1982). "*Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*"; 7-8. University of Chicago Press.

[92] Makdisi (1984). "*Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West*"; 2, 66. Edinbourg University Press.

[93] Al-Dabbusi (1999). "*Al-Asrar fi al-Usul wa al-Furu' fi Taqwim adillat al-Shar'* " ; 3:115-116. Wizarat al-Awqaf, Amman.

humanity guided, not enslaved, by the spirit of the divine law, since one of the hadeeths of the Prophet ﷺ of Islam encourages critical thinking by saying that "If a judge passes judgment and makes Ijtihad and he is right, then he will have two rewards. And if he makes a mistake he will have one"[94].

Eventually we note, for those who refuse to recognize our love, simply because we embody a form of the creation's diversity they cannot understand, that ijtihad is not only good, it is obligatory. Those who do not practice it are poor scholars who apply jurisprudence of the Islamic schools of the past without thinking. The renowned Egyptian jurist of the thirteenth century, Abu Abbas al-Ahmad al Sanhaji Qarafi, said that there was scholarly consensus - *ijma* '- about the hardness of the reprimand vis-à-vis the religious scholars who make a decision mechanically, without performing legal ijtihad, and simply following the ancient texts in their books, literally, without regard to the new realities. The absence of such lawyers was inexcusable and was, according to him, disobedience to God[95]. The famous lawyer of the next generation, Ibn Al-Qiyyam, commented on the opinion of Al-Qarafi stating that "this is pure understanding of the law"[96]. And the Qur'an to bid us to reason and expertise in ethics, "ask people of science if ye know not"[97]. Finally, we could quote the French contemporary Imam Tarek Oubrou who tells us that, talking about postmodern Muslim scholars: "although some claim to be modern, stops at the popularization, of a work more on the form and literary aesthetics than on the substance"[98].

We could go even further; some only follow their own prejudices and those of their fathers before them, giving us vile names: "abominations", "wicked", etc. Yet does not God put us on guard against unjust traditions and false idols? "They are but names which ye have named, ye and your fathers, for which Allah hath revealed no warrant. They follow but a guess and that which (they) themselves desire. And now the guidance from their Lord hath

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[94] 'Ali ibn al-Qassar, ed. Muhammad ibn al-Husayn al-Sulaymani, "*Al-Muqaddima fi al-Usul*", (Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 1996), 114-115; Sulayman ibn Khalaf al-Baji, ed. "'*Abd al-Majid al-Turki, Ihkam al-Fusul Ihkam fi Ahkam al-Usul*", volume 2. (Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 1995), 2:714-716 ; 'Ubayd-Allah ibn 'Umar al-Dabbusi, ed. Mahmud Tawfiq al-Rifa'i, "*Al-Asrar fi al-Usul wa al-Furu' fi Taqwim Adillat al-Shar'*"; op. Cit., 3:114-116; Ibn Amir al-Hajj, "*Al-Taqrir wa al-Tahbir*", volume 3. (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1983), 3:306. Al-Kindi, "*Bayan al-Shar'*", 1:92-93.

[95] 'Adil 'Abd al-Qadir Quta, Al-'Urf: "*Hujjiyyatuhu wa Atharuhu fi Fiqh al-Mu'amalat al-Maliyya 'inda al-Hanabila*", volume 2, (Mecca: al-Maktaba al-Makkiyya, 1997), 1:64.

[96] "*I'lam al-Muwaqqi'in*" in 'Adil Quta, "*Al-'Urf*", 1:65.

[97] Qur'an: 21.7.

[98] Tareq Oubrou (2006). « *L'Unicité de Dieu. Des Noms et des Attributs divins* » ; [opuscule n°1], Bayane Editions ; p.25, note n°14 (translation from French of L.Zahed).

come unto them"[99]. What the people of this ilk usually respond: "We found our fathers following a religion, and we are guided by their footprints"[100]. "What! Even though the devil were inviting them unto the doom of flame?"[101]. Some Muslim jurists today (and also Islamophobic individuals or political organizations that say that Islam would be per essence misogynist, homophobic, transphobic) would better ask first what the expertise of human sciences think of individuals belonging to a sexual minority, or marriage between same-sex partners for instance - a social advance, which no lawyer through human history had had to face so far - before quoting schizophrenic jurisprudence, which are not appeased, fair or practical to say about a diversity of genders and sexualities willed by God. In this, let us not forget the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ who left us this pearl of wisdom: *"A Muslim is a brother to a Muslim. He should neither deceive him nor lie to him, nor leave him without assistance. Everything belonging to a Muslim is inviolable for a Muslim; his honor, his blood and property. Piety is here (and he pointed out to his chest thrice). It is enough for a Muslim to commit evil by despising his Muslim brother".*[102]

[99] Qur'an: 53.23.

[100] Qur'an: 43.22.

[101] Qur'an: 31.21.

[102] Hadith reported by Tirmidhi, quoted by imam al-Nawawi in his very famous book *Ryadh al-Salihin* - hadeeth n°234.

Chapter WHITE - فصل أبيض

Universal Islamic humanism and individual well-being.

Yes, to claim the legacy of the prophets, that of Abraham and Mohammed ﷺ, is above all to use reason and enjoy freedom of choice, in respect for human diversity. Yet it is clear that the Arab-Islamic dogma, to differentiate from universal values highlighted by Islam, has tremendous work to do on its own from this point of view. Abdenour Bidar explains that in his opinion it is not possible to continue to base our axiological choices on: "a traditional Islamic ethics that does define and recognize human being only as a slave creature whose rights as such are limited to "rights of submission" set by God. This is a frontal contradiction between dogmatic Islamic and human rights that Muslims should have the courage to face, in an open dialogue with the world. Because, of course, these rights refuse that a human being shall be a creature reduced to slavery. They proclaim the contrary, the principle of absolute sovereignty and freedom of every human being over herself/himself. Islamic thought has no right anymore not to take this into account"[103].

It is clear that the Arab-Islamic civilization - and we all suffer the consequences of that matter of fact here in Europe as its neighbors and / or its heirs - walks slowly out of this phase of the "Janus"[104], described by Victor Segesvary about to European society of the fifteenth century, still beset by wars of religion, yet also being reformed. We have to insist on the fact that Islam is leaving the 15th century of its era, according to the schedule of the Hegira. It seems to be the model of a civilization before the reform, which causes us to look too often to the past: a model, however, already carrying many hopes for the future! It seems that it is largely because the Arab peoples - who are still the main concerned by Islamic laws

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[103] Bidar, A. (2008). *« L'islam sans soumission: pour un existentialisme musulman », p.36*. Albin Michel, Paris (translation by L.Zahed).

[104] The question here is not about idealizing the "West" versus "the Orient", especially when one considers the relative freedom in the Ottoman Empire, for example, in connection with a Europe often described as puritanical until the modern era - see El-Rouayheb, K. (2009). "*Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World, 1500-1800".* University of Chicago Press. Epel, Paris ; ou encore Andrews, W., G. & Kalpakli, M. (2005). "*The Age Of Beloveds: Love And The Beloved In Early-Modern Ottoman And European Culture And Society*". Duke University Press.

(even thought the largest Muslim country in the world is Indonesia) – are developing right now their own representation of Islamic humanism[105]. Like in Europe, similarly, the humanism of the Enlightenment would have participated in the initiation of religious and political reform, mainly through the emancipation of the individual from the yoke, at the time, of "*res publica christiana*" based on the feudal concept of a European Christian nation, subject until then to the power of a clergy surpassed by the inevitable changes of the era: the sixteenth century and the future advent of modernity. But no doubt that, to some extent, European religious and political reform has also been sustained by the Protestant Reformation[106]; even if the free will of the majority of Protestant thinkers of the time stopped still at a critique of the sacred Text. Finally, this reform would have been mainly the result of a return to the axiological sources, which is always a form of rebirth, which some think was also the expression of a Europe in crisis, facing the strong power of a threatening Ottoman empire at the gates of Venice, Vienna and Buda. An Ottoman Empire "infidel" to the Christ, yet carrying a form of Qur'anic-truth, especially through the metaphysical posture of Mohammed ﷺ carrying another form of *message*, for a human being fundamentally conscious of his freedom? In peace? Even if most of the Protestant reformers condemn Islamic heresy – some even call Muhammad ﷺ the antichrist –, yet everyone seems to praise the unique righteousness of Islam which only accentuates the critics of Luther especially, but also of Calvin, toward a Catholic church which they said was far from the universal humanity, on which it was once founded by Christ. At any rate, if Muslims cannot, according to the axial theory of religious axiological dynamics[107], produce one way or another this return to the roots, the Islam of France, Europe and the Arab-Islamic civilization in general, will only postpone for a long time its postmodern "renaissance"; and of that we shall all suffer the consequences. Muslims in particular will be unable to participate at the concert of nations and will be condemned to reproduce the position of "Janus, the Roman god, with one face turned towards the past of humanity, full of events and ideas, and another towards the future of the human species, both beautiful and Dante"[108].

Once again, the Islamic contribution to universal humanism must reconnect with the seeds of its founding texts, enabling it to re-establish its humanism on one form or another –

[105] Although both - Islam and Arabic "culture" - are intrinsically linked, the Arab peoples have undertaken their societal revolutions, many years ago, of which political revolutions are considered to be a consequence - see Todd, E. (2011). « *Allah n'y est pour rien* ». Le Publieur, Paris. We reject the essentializing of Arabic "culture" (very diverse, not monolithic), just as we reject the essentializing of Islam as inherently misogynistic and homophobic.

[106] See the principles of the Protestant Reformation, among which the "universal Pp. 350-51 de « *Priesthood of All Believers* », L. Siegele-Wenschkewitz in *The encyclopedia of Christianity*, Eerdmans Publishing, 2005.
[107] Lenoir, F. (2008). « *Petit traité de l'histoire des religions* ». Plon, Paris.
[108] V. Segesvary (1998). *« L'islam et la réforme »*, p. 26. University press of America, Lanham-Maryland.

far from any religious extremism or nationalist political exclusivity –, close to a "*tselem elohim*" or "*capax dei*"; these representations of a kind of universal and ecumenical, Jewish or Christian humanism[109]. A kind of metaphysical concept that corresponds to one of the possible exegesis of the verse of the Qur'an where the Lord said to the angels: "I will establish a *caliphate* on earth". Elsewhere in the Qur'an that term is interpreted as "successor", but here the traditionalists exegetes did not dare to interpret this term as accurately, and translated it as *regent under the authority of God*. As if, says Abdenour Bidar, exegetes did not dare to attribute such freedom to humans. Human knowledge establishes the human being as a creator with God, "All that human being represents... All these are things inseparable from himself, inseparable from his essential self!"[110] Therefore, inalienable freedom given by God seems to be the cornerstone of humanism proposed by the Qur'an, stronger and also truer than the houloul – kind of incarnation of God in man. Islam teaches us, indirectly, that the noble purpose of spirituality is to help to learn, to fully own our love and human potential for compassion, rather than to "normalize" our behavior according to prejudices and pride. Islam is there to purify us through its dynamics, such as water movements like the great master Rumi says[111]. This understanding of Islam, the only one that could last [112], tells us therefore that it is up to us to *decide* what we want to be and *what kind of world we want to live in*. Besides, cognitive neuroscience and philosophy of mind teach us today that human beings have been endowed with an extraordinary mind beacause our brain is truly a "creator of possibilities"[113]!

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[109] Bidar, *« L'islam sans soumission: pour un existentialisme musulman », p. 47* ; op. cit.

[110] Shirazi, S., cited in Cobrin, H. (1979). *« Corps spirituel et Terre céleste, de l'Iran mazdéen à l'Iran shi'ite », p.194.* B.Chastel, Paris.

[111] Rumi said, concerning the great controversy about allegations of the first Sufi mystics - as *Mansur al-Hallaj* in the ninth century, named the "Christ of Islam" as he was crucified after saying "I am the Truth" - : "*Immersion* is acquired when the person moves outside the self, outside of the effort, outside of the action, outside of the movement. She [the person] is drowned in the water; every action that emanates from her is not hers, but that of water. Can we say she is drowned if she shakes hands and feet? (...) He who says "I am the Truth" [Ana al-Haq], that is to say "I'm not, everything is Him, but God there is no existence for anyone. I am a pure nil, I am nothing". The modesty of that person is high and people do not understand that if a human being behaves as a servant of God, then for God his servitude exists (...). This person has not drowned. Is submerged in water to whom remains no movement or action, but whose movements are those of the water " (translation from the French version of the book of Rumi, by L.Zahed); Rumi, «*DISCOURSES OF RUMI*»; op. cit.

[112] Geoffroy, E (2009). « *L'islam sera spirituel ou ne sera plus* ». Seuil, Paris.

[113] Berthoz, A. (2003). *« La décision ».* Odile Jacob, Paris.

Power, domination & vainness

Rumi says that "Jesus (peace be upon him) laughed a lot. John the Baptist (peace be upon him) laughed a lot [both were cousins]. John the Baptist asked Jesus: "Are you insured against the powerful and subtle tricks [of the devil] that you laugh so? Jesus answered, have you forgotten the graces and subtle, pleasant, extraordinary, powerful blessings of God that you cry so much? "A saint [wali] of the saints of God was present. He asked God, "which one is greater? God said, "He who has the better vision of me." That is to say, "I'm here where the thoughts of my servant are. What he imagines about me, that's where I am. Purify, O my creatures, your imagination, since it is my home and my residence"[114]. This is a concept yet that is so far removed from the dogmatic representation that all sides impose on us without valid reasons, and irrespective of the suffering of our brothers and sisters that this engenders. Indeed, this research on the path leading to the "Omega," the Lord our God, should be based on a total freedom of thought, coupled with the freedom of voluntary action. It is the only bulwark against *holocaust*: the indifference to the suffering of the *Other* that would mean the end of any justification for the existence of our Humanity.

It is the only way our human Caliphate could make us a true creator of possible realities, when we shall fully assimilate the fact that knowledge and thinking take precedence over power and strength. As evidence, we can look to the history of the illustrious prophet and King Solomon (peace on him), when he asked his servants to bring him the throne, a symbol of power, of the Queen of Sheba. The dark spirit of the human being – *al-djeen* [115] – proposed in a wink, the time it takes the nervous system to transmit from one neuron to another, to bring the power of Sheba in the hands of Solomon. Yet it was the man of science - embodying knowledge, reason - and not the *djeen* - the symbol of fire, the force of unfettered power - who was more ready to satisfy the desire of his master: "He said : O chiefs! Which of you will bring me her throne before they come unto me, surrendering? A stalwart of the Djeen said: I will bring it thee before thou canst rise from thy place. Lo! I verily am strong and trusty for such work. One with whom was knowledge of the Scripture said: I will bring it thee before thy gaze returneth unto thee. And when he saw it set in his presence, (Solomon said: This is of the bounty of my Lord, that He may try me whether I give thanks or am ungrateful. Whosoever giveth thanks he only giveth thanks for (the good of) his own soul: and whosoever is ungrateful (is ungrateful only to his own soul's hurt). For lo! My Lord is Absolute in independence, Bountiful. He said: Disguise her throne for her that we may see whether she will go aright or be of those not rightly guided.

[114] Rumi, «*DISCOURSES OF RUMI*»; op. cit.

[115] Ibn 'Arabi, «*Meccan revelations*»; op. cit.

So, when she came, it was said (unto her): Is thy throne like this? She said: (It is) as though it were the very one. And (Solomon said): We were given the knowledge before her and we had surrendered (to Allah). [in peace?]"[116]. True knowledge of the reality of this world, can offer us potentially much more power, over our fears and ignorance, than the political compromises and manipulations used for purposes of conquest and power. Truly understanding reality provides the power of immanent enlightenment.

Political power and physical strength may seem heady: "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity"[117]. The illusion isn't in the belief that the real power of the Almighty is the brutal force? Like slaves of their own fears and illusions in the cave of Plato's *Republic*, we must look beyond what our senses seem to tell us[118]. In the verse quoted above, is it the throne that the Queen of Sheba means by this sentence, "as though it were the very one", and yet it was an illusion. In Arabic here the end of the sentence is *hu*, which is also the syllable from the testimony of the oneness of *Tawheed,* that every Muslim has to say: *la ilaha illa hoo* – "there is no God but Allah". A syllable almost "magical", a symbol of absolute creation, from the divine power of the Almighty. It turns out that this "magic" syllable has been used for centuries by many Sufi brotherhoods in their mystic trances. Some have also made the connection between the Muslim *hu* and *om*, the Hindu and Buddhist symbols that state the supreme enlightenment of the human being[119], according to the prayer: *Om Mani Padmé Hum*[120]. And the Qur'an says, "we knew this before her because we were at peace

[116] Qur'an: 27.38-42.

[117] Ecclesiastes: 1.2 - Ibn 'Arabi gives us a great theophany: "The divine order has spread within the existing as light propagates through the ether. So the causes, reasons and effective laws [of divine manifestation] appeared, while each existing, losing sight of its essential origin, its relativity and causality, proclaimed: "Me!" and swelled with importance. Beings have competed with pride, and they sought to prevail over each other, forgetting from Which they derived their pride and claims, considering with pride their lustrous relationship with Him and their divine causality. Thus appeared pride in the world, without the divine supremacy manifested in an appropriate way. For such an event, in fact, depends on who is filled with real pride, and that One is God, the August, the Most Wise (translation from the French version by L.Zahed). Ibn 'Arabi (2000). «*Le Livre des théophanies d'Ibn Arabi : Introduction philosophique, commentaire et traduction annotée du Kitâb al-tajalliyât»* (The Book of Theophanies); Theophany n°13.

[118] Plato (2008). «*Republic »*. Oxford University Press, USA.

[119] Guénon, R. (2000). « *L'homme et son devenir selon le Vêdânta* », chap. XI. Editions traditionnelles, Paris. According to Ibn 'Arabi, the science of letters is a secret science which is the privilege of insiders who have a pure heart, just as pure as prophets and saints'; a science that is the divine Breath and articulated elements of the Word - in Ibn 'Arabi, « *Le livre du Mîm, du Wâw et du Nûn »*. Al-Bouraq, Paris.

[120] Prayer known as the universal Compassion Buddha and meaning "*Peace be upon you, O jewel [hidden] in the lotus."*

[*muslimoum*]", while it describes the celestial journey of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, who was taken during his night journey to the confines of "paradise", where the glory of God appeared to him under the aspect of the tree of life called the "lotus of the outcome"[121].

In other words, as the archetypal human being is the articulation of the divine attributes, according to the Qur'an, the true nature of humans is not guilty, it's the opposite! We humans are, metaphorically, pillars of the universe, the reason for all creation, a reflection of the compassion of God on Earth, the only kind of creature potentially able to apprehend the infinite gentleness of our Creator. "Vision comprehendeth Him not, but He comprehendeth (all) vision. He is the Subtile, the Aware"[122], and "nothing could be compared to Him"[123], or the words of the Bible: "To whom will you compare me and make me equal? To whom will you compare me so that we can be alike?"[124]. This is what is called the *incognoscibility* of God, which the human mind is simply unable to conceive[125] ; as we are, for most of us, unable to understand the reasons for such a diversity of gender identities and sexual orientations. However, in the words of Ibn 'Arabi in his *Treaty on love*: "The celestial sphere makes its journey through the breaths of human beings, we will even say, through the breath of every creature that breathes (...). This is why the world continues to be intimately associated with humans"; and yet the word of God, he adds, is a word that God revealed [and yet] is understood by Him alone ("*the essence of my being is the form*")[126]. God has made us His Caliphates, His successors, the pillars of creation. Why did He create us so diverse and not otherwise!? Only God knows precisely. So far we have to fully accept it with joy, even if we do not always understand His plan in details. That is the *Mithak* – the pact – which God establishes with humans[127]; it is *al-Amanat* – the deposit of faith – God sealed in us[128] and that only humans are capable of beholding.

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[121] *Sadjaradou al-mountaha* - Qur'an: 53.14.

[122] Qur'an: 6.103.

[123] Qur'an: 42.11.

[124] Isaiah: 46.5.

[125] « *Théophanies d'Ibn 'Arabi* » ; op. cit., p.239.

[126] Ibn 'Arabi (1986). « *Traité de l'amour* ». Albin Michel, Paris. According to Maurice Gloton, the idea is that the human being is the ultimate manifestation of the "*divine Eros*".

[127] « *Théophanies d'Ibn 'Arabi* », n° 12.

[128] "Lo! We offered the trust unto the heavens and the earth and the hills, but they shrank from bearing it and were afraid of it. And man assumed it. Lo! He hath proved a tyrant and a fool" (Qur'an: 33.72).

The precise reason God created such diversity regarding genders and sexualities is unknown, but it might be seen as a test of our compassion and love for others; this is the type of disclosures that is accessible, according to Sufi mysticism, only to some elected saints that God blessed with the *kashf* – the unveiling of the truth[129]. It does not matter whether we believe or not in such concepts. The key is that the heart of Islamic mysticism enjoins us to trust in the projects of the Almighty. Ibn 'Arabi called this *al' ilm al-ladouni* – the immanent knowledge – that God grants "head-to-head on the mat of contemplation". It is the *theophany*[130], when ego and human reason collapse against the infinite lordship of God, like Moses gave up duality on Mount Sinai: "And when Moses came to Our appointed time and his Lord spoke to him, he said," Lord! Show yourself to me so I can see you. "God said," You will not see Me, but look at the mountain, if it remains in its place, then you will see Me. "But when his Lord manifested (His) glory to the mountain, it collapsed and Moses fell unconscious. When he came to himself he said: "Glory unto Thee! I turn unto Thee repentant, and I am the first of (true) believers"[131]. Thus "God alone knows the *Tawheed* that is worthy of Him"[132] ; only God knows the uniqueness that is worthy of our humanity. The poet Rumi tells us that "as the copper astrolabe is the mirror of the spheres, so are human beings the astrolabe". God says in the Qur'an: "*Verily We have honored the children of Adam*"[133]. When the Almighty has revealed Himself to the human being and made him aware of His existence, this human, in his own astrolabe sees all the time, at every moment, the influence of God and His Beauty like no other. And this Beauty is never absent from the mirror". After that Rumi adds to this wonderful and hopeful imagery, lines for a truly

[129] Particularly regarding the eschatological fact, dealing with the world of the afterlife and religious cosmogony - from the Greek *eschatos*, "last" and logos, "word". This is a rather complex notion around which Ibn 'Arabi seems to turn; it is a category of the mind that seems to completely escape the "categories" of Aristotle, but also to the "reason" of Descartes. This is the *Hayra* - this perplexity which, in its accomplished stage, becomes stupor. This is what Ibn 'Arabi calls "the Tawheed of contemplation" or the "white light" of knowledge - see theophany from 85 to 92 of the "*Book of theophanies*"; a concept of "vision" of God close to that of the "cloud of unknowing" of the anonymous Christian Platonist, or the discovery of "emptiness" - *shunyata* - of Zen Buddhism produced by the discovery of enlightenment - *satori*. In short, human reason, according to Islamic Sufism, cannot understand the reason that God chose to create us as we are, yet we are, potentially, the "*apple of His eyes*" according to Ibn 'Arabi.

[130] Theophany, from the Ancient Greek (Θεοφάνεια - *Theophaneia* meaning "appearance of God"), refers to the appearance of a deity to a human or other being, or to a divine disclosure (source: wikipédia).

[131] Qur'an: 7.143.

[132] « *Théophanies* », n°74

[133] "Verily We have honored the children of Adam. We carry them on the land and the sea, and have made provision of good things for them , and have preferred them above many of those whom We created with a marked preferment" - Qur'an: 17.70.

immanent serenity: "O thou who is a copy of the divine archetype, O thou who are the mirror of the royal beauty, apart from thou nothing exists outside in the world: what you want, seek it in yourself, for you are everything"[134].

Islamic ethic of unconditional love of diversity

Knowledge of the self and others is the key to this freedom that makes us creators of possible realities, true caliphate of God on earth, peaceful, united by the *Tawheed* of the universal, despite / through the diversity of humanity. While, according to Ibn 'Arabi, it is not enough to avail himself of the divine essence: "The lieutenant [*caliphate*] was assigned to Adam, to the exclusion of other creatures of the universe, because God created him according to His own shape. A lieutenant must have the attributes of the person he represents; otherwise it is not strictly a *'lieu-tenant'*"[135]. Ibn 'Arabi teaches us that only an exemplary character, free of jealousy, anger, all forms of violence, prejudice, discrimination towards others, can recover, here and now, the human being in his original theomorphism *in divinis*, mainly by dedicating him/herself to the prophetic tradition of tolerance and openness, for the well-being of the greatest number of lives consecrated to God[136]. It is now clear to us that the illusion driving power into the hands of those who give free rein to their passions, their prejudices, their thirst for domination, is vanity. A more just human order was never released and never shall be *biithni'Allah* from the discrimination of the minority among us. An immanent human immanent transcendence, here and now, is our responsibility. Thus it is an *Islamic ethic of unconditional love of diversity* brought by the "Other" that we must develop; a truly Islamic theology of equality and liberation.

The Qur'an enjoins us, in fact, many times to respect as our brothers, our sisters, our equals, all the humans created by God[137]. Ibn Arabi believed that the message of peace in Islam, issued by the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, "embraces all human beings without exception and His mercy, by which he [the Prophet ﷺ] was sent, embraces the whole universe towards which he was commissioned; they believe in him or not, all beings are part of His mercy"[138]. It is the great Jili[139] who said that, among all the attributes of God, it is that of

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[134] Rumi, «*DISCOURSES OF RUMI*»; op. cit. (translation from the French version by L.Zahed).

[135] Ibn 'Arabi, «*Meccan revelations*» ; op. cit.

[136] Idem.

[137] Reza Shah-Kazemi (2011). "*Common Ground between Islam and Buddhism*". Fons Vitae, Louisville.

[138] Ibn 'Arabi, «*Meccan revelations*»; op. cit.

mercy that encompasses them all, according to the word of God in the Qur'an: "Say (unto mankind): Cry unto Allah, or cry unto the Beneficent, unto whichsoever ye cry (it is the same). His are the most beautiful names"[140]. Isn't it in the name of this universal humanity, inspired by Islam, that Spain at the eighth century - especially in Cordoba and Granada - became one of the most prestigious academic centers in the world, attracting many students from Europe, among which some Jewish students, both in arts and sciences? And when the Muslims were expelled from Spain in 1492, Jews had to leave too. Majid Tehranian tells us that the "lesson of this episode is clear: diversity is a source of strength, conformism leads to cultural stagnation"[141]. Thus "Auschwitz has demonstrated the validity of the philosophical proposition that mere uniformity is death"[142]. Indeed, at the time of *al-Andalusia* already, Jews who were fleeing the pogroms that followed in Europe, have found refuge at the heart of the Ottoman Empire, where many of their descendants occupied highest offices of state, especially in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries[143].

In conclusion we would like to stress the fact that the representation of the universal humanism, which Islam can claim to be a part of, must therefore be refounded in part on the primacy of temporal rule of the human law, to support the development of a fair social dynamic. On the other hand, under the divine impulse (at least that's what you might be thinking if you believe in God), there is an axiological superiority of the divine "law's" example (*the spirit of the law*) on dogmatic traditions. This does not refer for us to a God who is so far from suffering in this world that He simply does not care anymore", as denounced Malcolm Edwards[144]. We mean rather by God as the ultimate goal of the journey of our humanity in this world, as "the union of the soul with God"[145]. The other pitfall to this bilateral representation of our axiological development would be to jump headlong into a backward-looking nostalgia, a rejection of postmodernism and a literal adherence to the creation myths; that would lead us to throw ourselves headlong into misogyny and homophobia that would, according to some, be the "natural" order of Creation. On the contrary, we firmly believe that God wanted to create that rich diversity, always maintaining the potential of *Tawheed*, causing us to constantly evolve towards greater humanity.

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[139] Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī, or Abdul Karim Jili, was a Muslim sufi saint and mystic who was born in 1366 at Jil in Baghdad. He is famous in Muslim mysticism as the author of *Universal Man*; Abd al-Karîm al-Jîlî (1995). "*Universal Man*". Beshara publications, Cheltenham (UK).
[140] Qur'an: 17.110.
[141] Tehranian, «*Global Civilization: A Buddhist-Islamic Dialogue*» ; op. cit. - p.50
[142] Adorno., T., W. (1978). « *Dialective négative* ». Payot, Suisse.
[143] Stanford J. S. (1991). «*The Jews of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic* », p.25. Mac Millan, Londres.
[144] Edwards, M. i n Stuart, E. (1997). «*Religion is a queer thing*». The pilgrim press, Ohio.
[145] Stuart, E. (1997). «*Sex in heaven»; in Davies & Loughin «Sex these days*». Sheffield academic press, England.

In other words: according to refined techniques of teaching, God in his infinite wisdom would have shown us the voice to be followed by examples – those played by our prophets, issued from different peoples ; while leaving us to find our balance in a society that has to remain free, submitted only to universal equality and fraternity. Thus, if we want to sustain the emergence of a renewed form of Islamic spirituality, we must return to the roots of Islam in order to realize God's plan for our generation. And that is, no doubt about it, to sustain a dynamic development of *new Islamic theologies* that take into account the views, experiences, aspirations to welfare of each and every minority. Like misogyny and homophobia are not Islam – because nowhere in the Qur'an nor the Sunnah is homosexuality condemned[146] – as well as interreligious dialogue is a duty, then the acceptance and the unconditional love of his family, his children, his human brothers and sisters should be brought to the pinnacle of our Islamic values. We must not divide ourselves in vain quarrels, reproducing or internalizing dehumanizing standards. No matter if our human sisters and brothers are gays or lesbians, or bisexuals, or transgenders, or Jews, or Buddhists, or Christians, or atheists, or rich, or poor, or powerful, or weak: to love unconditionally our human Diversity is a duty for every Muslim.

Since, once again, that Love goes through a proactive sustaining of Diversity; according to the Qur'an we are potentially better than angels described as the "*highest Synod*"[147]: "He taught Adam all the names"[148]. Knowledge is what makes our humanity a "khalifat"[149]. Our potential "khalifat" is nothing without knowledge, which is nothing without Diversity! Only the acceptance of diversity within our peaceful struggles, far from any kind of internalization or reproduction of any kind of infrahumanizing norm, could allow us to ease empowerment of individuals belonging *de facto* to a sexual minority. Thus, we have no choice but to be – just like the Muslim feminist – at the *vanguard of the reform* of the representation we are elaborating of Islam. We must work *united for the well-being of all* our human brothers and sisters, since "*Allah loveth those who battle for His cause in ranks, as if they were a solid structure*"[150].

Texts of L. M. Ludovic Zahed – fondateur & porte-parole du collectif citoyen des HM2F ; international coordinator of CALEM's INIMuslim networking and empowerment programs.

[146] Article of L.Zahed for HM2F: "Homosexuality is not a sin by nature according to Islam, neither a crime, nor a perversion, nor a pathology" - http://www.homosexuels-musulmans.org/homosexuality-is-not-a-sin-perversion-according-to-islam.html
[147] Qur'an: 38.69.
[148] Qur'an: 2.30-32.
[149] Qur'an: 49.13.
[150] Qur'an: 61.4.

About Azzah W., *a transgender Muslimah* - Amsterdam

A devout Muslim, but 'trapped' in the wrong body, today, Azzah Hari-Wonmaly has chosen to live as a Muslimah.

At first glance, Azzah (40) is no different from thousands of Muslim women in the city of Amsterdam, Netherlands. A pair of eyes peeking out behind a tight black headscarf, skirt, overalls, and matching stockings. She is holding a trendy iPad bag. "*Hello, I am Azzah!*" She introduced herself. Five years ago, Azzah underwent a sex change surgery at the OLVG Hospital in Amsterdam. She was handled by a Muslim surgeon, R.B. Karim, and an assistant of Iranian descent.

"*I was allowed to wear my headscarf in the operating room. After the surgery, doctors put a Qur'an in the palm of my hand. I deliberately chose a Muslim surgeon. It feels more comfortable entrusting my body and post-operative care to people of faith*", continued Azzah. She became one of the speakers at the seminar entitled "*Homosexuality and Islam*" in Amsterdam on Saturday (19/2/2011).

These two themes are often considered a trigger of conflict. In fact, the flyer advertizing for the seminar included: "*lesbian, bisexual, gay, and transgender Muslims hit by this dilemma. They must choose between faith and love*". Azzah understands this problem. While still an androgynous man, she was the manager at one of the leading Dutch telecommunications company. Now, she works as a psychotherapist in a clinic.

Azzah was for a long time in a relationship with a man from Morocco. "*We loved each other, but did not live under one roof*", explained Azzah. *"He grew up among Muslim fanatics and his family began to suspect my identity. Our relationship would have brought disgrace if recognized"*, she continued. Azzah does not mention much about her own family. "*What is clear, is that it is still hard for them to accept my decision to change sex".*

Azzah, who is from Indonesian descent, spent her childhood in social institutions. She decided to become a Muslim at 30 years old. Today, Azzah accomplishes her five prayers a day, she eats halal products, and wants to marry a Muslim. However, sometimes she takes off her veil at work. "*There are some patients who feel awkward. I try to stay neutral in front of them*", said Azzah.

Before surgery, Azzah stopped over in Egypt (…). Islamic Courts pronounced a fatwa, stating that her male sex was not in line with the heart, soul, and body. Shortly thereafter, Azzah followed a gender identity disorder treatment at the VU Hospital in Amsterdam. "*After that, began my anthropological odyssey to find an identity,*" said Azzah.

She explained, "*Actually, Muslims are quite open about sexuality (…). I always emphasize, my decision is about to reconcile my feminity and not gender identity crisis. I had never demanded from anyone to acknowledge my gender. I know many married men who have intimate male friends secretly".*

According to Azzah, immigrants in the Netherlands were more tolerant toward accepting her. "*There was a local nurse who refused to touch me and sternly said she prefers to help people with a broken bone. Indeed, some cleaning employees, Muslims, were very enthusiastic and asked me to pray with them in a room. We sobbed together finishing the prayer",* recalled Azzah.

At the seminar on Saturday (19/2), Azzah outlined her plan to form transgender community of Muslims from mid-2011 in Amsterdam: "*Sort of a vehicle to exchange thoughts and information center for other Muslim brothers. We are not sinners or apostates. That's what we want to convey",* explains Azzah.

Resources and illustration: Daily NRC Handelsblad "Azzahs keuze voor lichaam en geloof" (19-02-2011) - videos of Azzah w. at the CALEM 2010 conference in Paris: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VPtz8gvDKFo&feature=player_embedded & http://www.calem.eu/publications.html

Salif*, *a 19 years old Visual arts student* – Cairo

«I grew up in a middle class family, typically conservative and religious. My mother is illiterate; my father comes from the countryside. In fact, I did not even know if what I felt was right or wrong.

I started surfing on blogs in English, and during a chat, a user told me that Allah would send me to hell. So I inquired about what Islam said. For three days, I prayed and read the Quran to stop thinking about men. I was in a terrible state of confusion, overwhelmed by the idea that God hated me. But after three days, I realized that I did nothing wrong. Today, I feel perfectly comfortable with who I am. Besides, I can tell you that being heterosexual in Egypt is not that great either.

All this suffering because we do not feel the same things like others ... It's very difficult to have a relationship of any kind, to find people who accept you as you are. If you hide those things, you feel lonely, uncomfortable. And if they knew, you could lose everything: friends, family, work... Perhaps even life. And it's not because you're gay you have always something to say to other gays. Not to mention the relationships: it's like friendship, but more than that you need to like them and share things like: did you come-out? Are you an atheist...?

In general, I do not speak. Or only when I'm really confident. I think the uprising has opened the eyes of some gays to the fact that there is much to do and it's not just about sleeping around. I have seen many gays on Tahrir Square. But for now, we must join the fight for freedom. The rest may come. Maybe the writers and directors could refer to the suffering of gays».

** Pseudo name; testimony available in the article of Albertine Bourget on 360° – http://360.ch/blog/magazine/2011/12/le-printemps-homo-devra-attendre/*

Photos: Denis Dailleux for 360° ; Translation, L.Zahed.

Sahar from *Secret Garden*[151], *married two kids* – Amsterdam & Iraq*

"My name is Sahar (pseudonym), I am thirty-six years old and I am a gay. I am very gay, but in secret. I cannot tell anyone that I am attracted to men, and I cannot share my experiences and feelings with anyone. It is not easy growing up with the feeling that everything you do with your sexuality is wrong and prohibited.

My parents were divorced. Actually my parents were not even married. I am the son of my mother and, so far, I still do not know who my father is. My mother went out with lots of men, particularly influential men in government such as army generals and men from the secret service. When I was small I remember many men coming to our house, and there was always lots of food and drinks.

It is very difficult to grow up in the Muslim community, because when your mother is not married and entertains men at home, she is considered a whore. I think my mother lived her life in her own way and was just trying to survive during Saddam Hussein's government. That wasn't easy, for a woman who got pregnant before marriage, and did not stay with the man who got her pregnant. She got a bad reputation in the neighborhood and her family never spoke with her again, because she damaged the honor of her family. That is how women who have chosen their own freedom and their own happiness are looked upon.

Growing in such an environment is not easy. It is a very hard life. People who don't like the way you live will not respect you, and will abuse you and sometimes even rape you. When I was very young I already knew was gay. My mother knew it as well, but we never talked about it. As long as I could keep it a secret and was careful in how I handled it.

When I was between 13 and 15 years old, I had sex with many young guys but also with men who visited our house. Sometimes men would come to our house while my mother was away. They would take me and give me money for it, but I had to promise them never to tell my mother.

I met my first love when I was 16 years old. That was also the year my mother passed away. I was very depressed, was left alone with my sister, who is older than me, and my other three brothers wanted nothing to do with me. My brothers all moved somewhere else, where they could escape the intolerance and misunderstanding of their surroundings, and where they could start a new life.

My new friend Jihan was also still young, but three years older than me. He was the man of my dreams. He went to the same school as me, and he saw how alone and depressed I was. In the beginning it was just a story of two young guys at the same school, taking the same courses and often hanging out together in school but also outside of school. He was always there for me, for whatever I

[151] [151] Secret Garden is a foundation for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) Muslims. Established in Amsterdam, Secret Garden has been set up in December 1994, with the intention to reach and bring together young Muslims who are transgender, or have homosexual or bisexual feelings.

wanted or needed. I became so used to his presence that I could not do anything without him. He meant everything to me, and if I had to spend a day without him I was always in a bad mood. My love for him grew every day and he began to treat me as his possession or 'his girlfriend'. He wouldn't allow me to talk to anyone, especially not to other boys. If he caught me with a boy, he would get very angry and yell at me. But still I felt happy with him. Like Romeo and Juliet. I say that because I do not know of any tale of two men in love with each other.

Jihan was everything to me – my friend, my brother, my father and my biggest love. I remember all our first intimate contacts. It happened at his parents' house. During the summer holidays his parents had to go to Amman, Jordan, with the entire family, but he did not want to go. Everything was planned so that we had the whole house to ourselves and nobody else was there. We made jokes and we laughed so hard. We were teasing each other and were running the house. Our first sexual contact also happened that summer, and then continued. We were cooking dinner together and he told me that he wanted to live like that: together with me, in our house, two guys who love each other. Then he hugged me and held me for several minutes. His hands started moving around my shaking body, and we started breathing faster. I couldn't resist any more.

But everything comes to an end. When he became an adult, his mother wanted him to get married. After six years of love, he had to get married, and so did I. But I could not fall in love with another boy, because he was still everything to me."

Sahar did indeed get married, to a woman, and now has two children: a boy and a girl. In 2003 he fell in love again with a boy, but it was not easy for them to be together. One day Sahar decided to rent an apartment. The owner of the apartment called him and got his wife on the phone. He told her that he arranged for everything and that Sahar could use the apartment when he wanted. His wife was surprised and she did not understand why her husband wanted to have a second home. When he came home, his wife asked him to explain why he needed a second house. He couldn't say anything, but his wife thought he was taking a second wife, and she was very angry. The fight about that grew bigger and at some point the whole family knew about it. They threatened to kill him if he would take a second wife. So his plan failed and he could only be with his lover in secret. He was only more careful now, because the family suspected something.

Sahar still lives with his family and he keeps seeing his lover in secret. Thousands of gay and lesbian youth lead double lives like that. The majority of them are married and have children while still living out their homosexuality in secret. This double life brings many challenges, and often leads to psychological problems. But can it really be different? Can homosexuals one day choose their own happiness, or will they keep choosing what family and society expects from them?

Hussam from *Secret Garden*[152], *23 years old* – Amsterdam & Morocco *

Every second Wednesday of the month Secret Garden has a movie night, showing a documentary followed by a discussion. Last year Secret Garden showed a series of documentaries about homo- and bisexuality, but also transgenderism and transsexuality. Films such as: *Hob Al Nisa, I cannot think straight, Me and Nuri Bala, Silent Stories, Sex Change in Iran* and more. The evenings had many visitors, starting with a meal together, some time to get to know each other and then followed by the documentary and a discussion.

On Wednesday, December 14 [2011], we showed *the Dancing Boys of Afghanistan*. For this night we had invited a few Afghan boys to participate in a panel discussion: Amin Sadat, (18 years old), Jafar Haidari (15 years old), Reza Haidari (16 years old) and their (straight) older brother Ali Haidari. The boys talked about the situation of homosexuals in Afghanistan. It was a very special evening.

Also that evening there was a new visitor and he was very impressed with the whole event. He later told us the following story:

"*My name is Hussam and I am 23 years old, of Moroccan descent. I have heard a lot about Secret Garden, but I never thought I would visit them one day. I live in Amsterdam, but my family lives here as well, that is why hanging out in the gay scene in Amsterdam is dangerous for me. I have no contact with other Arab gay youth. I am hiding my homosexuality, because I am afraid that my family might find out and then all kinds of terrible things will happen.*

I do receive information about the activities of the Secret Garden through email. I have tried several times to go to an event, but I didn't dare. I really wanted to do that, but I just could not. Early December 2011 I heard that the Secret Garden was organizing a movie night with the film Bacha Bazi, The Dancing Boys of Afghanistan. That's when I decided that I would go.

On December 14, around six in the evening, I went to the building of Secret Garden. I did not just go to see the movie, but also to meet new people. I stood at the door, but still hesitated to enter. It was nerve-wracking. I did not dare to press the doorbell, but then unexpectedly this guy opened the door. He said hello to me and asked me to enter.

I actually went inside and saw about twenty people of different ages. It was easy to make contact with the people there. I heard many different languages: Arabic, Farsi, French and Dutch. A few minutes later someone announced that dinner was ready. The Iranian food was served and the cook talked about the dishes served. I think he did that to make it clear to the attendees who are

[152] Op.cit.

Muslims that only hallal food was served. I too eat hallal and I liked the fact that the cook explained how he had prepared the dinner.

I also met Emir, the organizer of the event, for the first time. I knew his face; I had seen him a few times on the street. He is gay, a well-known gay person in Amsterdam. Apparently he has no problems with his homosexuality. I cannot be open about it myself. I think I have not accepted myself yet. I try to do my best, but I feel that I cannot do that yet, because if my parents found out I would get nothing but trouble.

An hour later all of us were asked to go to the second floor for the film and discussion. We all went upstairs and after a few minutes the documentary started. The documentary was subtitled in English. Everyone looked intently at the fifty-minute documentary. After the movie Emir came forward and talked about homosexuality in Afghanistan. He said that some Afghan youths were there that evening, and how special it was that the three brothers were there. Two of them are gay. They stepped forward and Emir began asking them questions about their sexual orientation. There was an interpreter who translated from Farsi into Dutch.

The two brothers talked about their feelings and the problems they had experienced in Iran and Afghanistan. Their straight brother talked about the government and social control in Afghanistan and the fact that being gay is very difficult. He said that when he lived in Afghanistan, he also hated homosexuality. But when he came to the Netherlands and met a few people around him who are also gay, he began to consider it more normal and that is why he now supports his two brothers.

When I heard that, I could not believe it: three brothers who were here together, unbelievable. I would really like to be able to talk to my brother about my feelings, but I'm too scared to do that. I am convinced that if I mention anything to any of my relatives, I definitely will get problems because it is not allowed and not possible.

Later I talked to one of the brothers, he was very nice. I got his phone number and he said I could call him whenever I want. I have also spoken with a few other guys and got their phone numbers as well. I will definitely call them. I think it is important to keep in touch with these guys. Maybe I will get the courage to make a choice for my own happiness and tell my parents about my sexual feelings; who knows".

Testimonies available on the Secret Garden's January 2012 newsletter; a huge thank to Emir Belatoui for his cooperation.

http://www.stichtingsecretgarden.nl/ - info@stichtingsecretgarden.nl

Saffiya, *a 22 years old bisexual Muslimah* – USA (East Cost)*

[When was the first time I realized I was not heterosexual?] *I was 18 and I got really close to one of my friends and realized it was different.* [I informed] *the girl I liked. Some of my friends know, but it is not public at all. I don't want to complicate things. I am fine with the way I'm living. I am married and pretty much happy with my family. My friends who know are supportive and do not have any problem with who I am. They respect my decisions and what I have done in my life and how I choose to live. Most of the people whom I have told are people that I know will not have a negative reaction to what I am telling them. They have been neutral and non-judgmental. They have just let me talk about my problems/relationships like any other issues in my life.*

I have friends who are bisexual and Muslim. They are not, in social terms, 'practicing' Muslims, but they are Muslim and we talk about our lives. I have not gone out and tried to connect specifically with these people, they were already my friends and we talk. I have a very good friend who told me she was bisexual way before I even figured it out about myself. She was the first person I went to talk to about my relationship. It really helps to have people like yourself to talk to because they can understand what you're going through. I have been with a Muslim girl. We have been together on an emotional and physical level.

[Do I foresee my relationships evolving from casual to a more sacred bond like marriage?] *No, I don't. I am married to a guy that I love and I am content with this relationship. Perhaps in another world where it would be okay to have that kind of bond. For now, all I can say is I wouldn't feel comfortable in an open relationship with a girl – maybe because I feel like it's wrong.*

[How do I reconcile my faith and my sexual orientation?] *I keep them very very very separate. I block out my faith and religion if I am with a girl. I completely ignore its existence. And when I pray and try to practice my faith, I ignore my homoerotic desires. I have a lot of internal conflicts as a result.*

[If someone reading this is struggling with their sexual identity, what advice would I provide to them?] *I honestly do not know what to say. I myself struggle with it, but I have chosen to ignore it for the most part because I am married and do not want to compromise my marriage or my family. Go with what your heart desires.*

[What message would I like to convey to Muslims about Muslims from the LGBTIQ community?] *There are worse things a person can do, and there are worse problems [facing] the Muslim community. We need to get rid of this taboo. Lying is bad; cheating is bad; oppression is bad; rape is bad, but being a gay/lesbian is a personal choice! What's the point if you're straight and a horrible person? Why should people like that be allowed to be Muslim, but a person who is not straight is seen as a heathen? We need to check our priorities.*

Mohsin, *a 24 years old gay Muslim* – London*

[When was the first time I realized I was not heterosexual?] *I was in year 6 or year 7 and I couldn't have been more than 11-12 years old. I had this friend called Umran. Like me, he too had shifted to Lahore, Pakistan from London the previous year and we had a lot in common. We used to hang out after school and spend our summer holidays together. Puberty hit and he developed this insane crush on this girl who I instantly took an intense dislike to. It wasn't just him, but all the boys around him as well. A few weeks later Umran & the girl started 'going out' and I was more than insanely jealous. I remember being devastated, crying at times. Whenever a group of boys would get together, the topic of discussion would ultimately turn to girls, rating them on a 1-10 scale, although I took part, I never really had any interest whatsoever. And that was my first inkling.*

[Who did I inform?] *No one. Even though I had no idea whatsoever what gay meant, I definitely knew I wasn't supposed to be liking other guys, the way they liked girls. That, quite frankly, scared the heck out of me. I've only very recently started coming out. I've told my closest friends, two of my sisters, and one of my nephews. Not out to the community at large. My nephew had the best response I could ever hope for: "You're still my uncle, and I still love you". I nearly started crying. Sister 1: "Eww, I don't want to talk about it." I think she's okay with it, as long as she knows nothing more.*

Sister 2 was the disappointment. She used to tell me everything about her life, how things were with her husband, the problems she was having, real heart to heart talks. She often remarked that I never shared anything with her, and she was right, I wasn't out to her, so I couldn't tell half the stuff that I wanted to without coming out to her. She accepts me, but doesn't want me to tell anyone else (rest of the family, mother, etc). Not telling the rest of my family forces me to lead a double life, which makes me miserable; which is why I want to come out to the rest of the family.

[How have Muslims reacted when I revealed my sexual orientation?] *It's not come up in conversation to be honest, and I don't go about telling everyone I meet, and when it does come up, I bite my tongue, take deep breaths, and walk away.*

[Have I connected with other Muslims from the LGBTIQ community? If so, how do I connect?] *I went to meetup group once for LGBT Muslims, when one of the guest speakers they had was Imam Daayiee*[153]*, a self-styled gay Imam and Scholar. He was quite the inspiring man, and I honestly liked him – having found him really well read and all round nice person. The others in the group however were a bit cliquey as they all knew each other and weren't inclusive at all of me. Let's*

[153] Imam Daayiee Abdullah, is a gay Muslim that aids in the fight against discrimination and hatred towards homosexuals and Muslims alike (source: Wikipedia).

just say I didn't fit in, different values, opinions, insights and they were a lot more conservative than me. Whilst I was beginning to feel more comfortable with my sexuality, they seemed to be struggling. And I didn't need that, especially since I had just reconciled myself (…).

[Do I foresee my relationships evolving from casual to a more sacred bond like marriage?] *I would eventually like to meet someone that I could spend the rest of my life with, but I feel as I'd be asking too much, frankly. I know I'd have to choose either family or love - and I don't know how I'm going to do it. The problem has caused me endless anxiety – When I do come out to them, will they still want to know me? Will they throw me out? Cut me off? I'm extremely close to my entire family.*

[How do I reconcile my faith and my sexual orientation?] *I'm working on that bit. I've been very angry for a very long time at Islam, Muslims and God for making me feel how I feel - why couldn't he just have made me 'normal?' I actually used to pray to be straight in my late teens, and when that failed, I lost faith. But recently I've started to come round because you know what? He's my God too. Not just the God of the people who want to condemn me to hell. In particular one verse of the Quran gives me strength from time to time: "On no soul doth Allah place a burden greater than it can bear"*[154]*. It feels hopeless at times, but I try to be a good person, keep my intentions pure, and my heart at ease (…).*

Let me live my life as I let you live yours. I'm responsible for my actions and you are responsible for yours (…). No amount of praying will make you straight. It's neither an illness nor a disease.

[Does safety ever concern me in terms of retaliations from the Muslim community? Have I been threatened?] *Personally no, but I've heard plenty of horror stories (…). It gets better. Stay strong. Breathe. To all those who think we don't exist: We exist. I could be your brother, your uncle, your cousin, your nephew. I am a caring brother, a doting uncle, a dutiful son. I'd like nothing more than to see you happy - in fact - what makes you happy makes me happy.*

To my family: I'll need you. Do you have any idea how terrifying it is? The idea of facing it without my family?

[154] Qur'an: 2:286.

Hamid, *a 19 years old gay Muslim* – Canada*

[When was the first time I realized I was not heterosexual?] *I think I realized I wasn't "normal" from childhood. I've only accepted it a year ago. My family in general is conservative especially with this issue. I hope they will not disown me in shame, but at this point I am scared to take the chance. I know my parents will be disappointed and feel it's their fault. I pray that one day I can be completely honest with them, but I never want to risk losing their love and support*

I have never interacted with any Muslims from the LGBT community offline, but have read about their experiences online. It was both touching and informative. It did provide me with a piece of mind to know there are people like me out there.

[Do I foresee my relationships evolving from casual to a more sacred bond like marriage?] *This topic scares me, no lie. Whenever I hear my parents talking about marriage and finding me a bride, I get sick. It's one thing to not come out, but to pretend to love someone you have no attraction to is something I cannot bring myself to do. As for marriage with a man, it is something I have given thought about and at the end of the day I think everyone wants to find someone they can spend their life with and share love.*

[How do I reconcile my faith and my sexual orientation?] *For a long time I just told myself this is a phase and I will change one day. I began to hate a big part of myself and was angry for being different/unusual. It took me a long time to come to the conclusion that a JUST God would not want someone to live a lie!*

I, like many other gay Muslims have probably read the ton of blog posts, articles and fatwas saying it's unnatural, disgusting, immoral and a deviation. It is very easy to say what is natural and what is not when you are not affected by the issue. That is all I can say because at this point I have heard it all and all I want is to find peace within myself and hope everyone can respect that.

[If someone reading this is struggling with their sexual identity, what advice would I provide to them?] *At the end of the day you need to be true to yourself.*

[Does safety ever concern me in terms of retaliations from the Muslim community? Have I been threatened?] *Thankfully living Canada I can say no, but that is not the case for many gay Muslims around the world.*

Lukman, *a 34 years old gay Muslim* – USA*

[My Faith?] *I really do not have one YET! I am on the fence between Islam and Judaism, and attend a Unitarian Universalist church.*

[When was the first time I realized I was not heterosexual?] *I realized in Kindergarten I had a crush on my best friend, and after telling him how much I liked him he made it REALLY clear that it was not "normal." I did not fully come out until I was in Junior in high school around 1993-1994. I told my absolute best friend Patty, she cried with me and became my strongest support and biggest advocate despite being the preacher's daughter. Everyone knows now. I have been with the same man for 12 years, and married for almost 7 years! I did not tell my parents until I was around 21. They handled it FAR better than I know they would have if I was open when I was in high school. Though they knew back then, we did not discuss it. When I came out in high school I was rejected, harassed, and pushed so far that I was suicidal. I lost my best friend and a few supposedly good friends. My real friends kept me from doing anything to myself, and did all they could to never leave me alone or get upset.*

Over the last 12 years I have become very interested in Islam, but have been terrified to become a Muslim because of attitudes towards gay people. I recently reached out to a local Imam, asking if he would help me become a Muslim, his response was: "From my position as Imam my heart and my intention is to help people in following the deen of Islam. This position includes encouraging people to do what Allah ﷻ asks of us and to stay away from those things that he has asked us to stay away from. Now you have said a couple of times in your email that you want to learn about Islam. And I say to you that I do not think that is entirely true. It is quite possible that you want to learn about Islam those things with which you already agree. Finding justification for one's beliefs in a religious tradition, and rejecting those things about that religious tradition which one does not believe in is not that uncommon."

This was entirely unfair of him and it only got worse. This is hard for me to recount as it has happened a couple of times when I reached out to Muslims. The reason why I do reach out is that I feel Islam is a communal religion: your prayers are meant to be said in UNISON with your community, the wider the ummah. Though I know I can technically say the Shahadah by myself, I keep reading that you should repeat it in front of a community of Muslims in order to make it more "authentic". The Imam continued on to say:

"Certain things are allowed and certain things are not allowed. One of the areas in Islam in which there are fairly clearly laid out restrictions has to do with sex. Sex between men and sex between women is simply not allowed. So in my mind, the performance of that is detrimental to your deen and puts all else in doubt. The second problem for me is the idea that two men or two women can marry. This is also not allowed in Islam. Actually it is so far removed from what marriage means in Islam that it is not even considered. As an Imam, I am asked to wed people according to Islamic law as found in the Qur'an and Hadith. There is no where in those laws and traditions (believe me I have looked), which could even be used to design a wedding ceremony for a same sex couple, much less a marriage." *For about the 8th time in my life my hope of being taught about Islam and become a believer was destroyed (…).*

[How do I reconcile my faith and my sexual orientation?] *Despite everything I keep reading, I feel a deep connection to God, Allah, or however you want to label the Divine. Having read the Hebrew Bible and the Qur'an, I do not see what people throw in my face about my sexuality. I actually feel comfortable with my sexuality and Islam or even Judaism.*

A lot of the condemnations I hear are more cultural or translation dependent, some from a time when science was only beginning and not nearly as advanced as it is now, yet Islam's message is above and beyond all cultures or time periods! (…) Safety is a concern for me, I have never been threatened but I am terrified due to reading many stories of others. We are alike. There is nothing to fear from us. We just want to be treated like the brothers and sisters we are! I think a lot of the fear comes from a misconception and misunderstanding of what it means to be LGBT.

With the rampant Islamophobia around the world, members of the LGBT community would be powerful allies in the fight against the lies and deceit. We have dealt with it, and still do unfortunately, and many of us do stand up and fight against Islamophobia. It would be amazing to be able to stand side-by-side and fight for equality and respectful treatment of all of us, **UNITED**.

These testimonies are available on « Organica: the story of an Arab American girl ».
http://organicmuslimah.blogspot.com/ - A huge thanks to the author, Cindy Abdelaziz.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

"And surely We shall try you with something of fear and hunger, and loss of wealth and lives and crops; but give glad tidings to the steadfast", Who say, when a misfortune striketh them: Lo! We are Allah's and Lo! Unto Him we are returning. Such are they on whom are blessings from their Lord, and mercy. Such are the rightly guided"[155].

"O People of the Scripture. Come to an agreement between us and you: that we shall worship none but Allah, and that we shall ascribe no partners unto Him, and that none of us shall take others for lords beside Allah"[156].

[155] Qur'an: 2.155-157.

[156] Qur'an: 3.64.

THANKS - شكرا

Islam in Arabic means "be in Peace". Thus, may peace be on all individuals and institutional partners who participated directly or indirectly in the elaboration and dissemination of the Green Book[157]. Thanks especially to Abdennur Prado, to Amina Wadud for their advice and their unshakeable support; to Samar Habib[158] for her wise enhancements to this book. Thanks to all members and supporters of the citizen network HM2F who participated, directly or indirectly, to the edition of this book; to Nasreen Amina and Qiyaam Jantjies-Zahed for their translations; and to all the experts, activists and volunteers that sustain the CALEM INIMuslim's networking and program[159].

Thank you in advance to those who have the generosity to publish this GREEN BOOK - Tome III (free from all rights) on their website or their personal blog.

Finally we thank the Lord, our beloved God.

الحمد لله رب العالمين

[157] All the Green Books are available on the website of HM2F - http://www.homosexuels-musulmans.org/Livres-Verts-contre-homophobie-islamophobie__Green-Book-against-homophobia-islamophobia.html

[158] Samar Habib received her doctorate from the University of Sydney, Australia. Her monograph *Female Homosexuality in the Middle East: Histories and Representations* was published by Routledge in 2007. Her critical translation of the Lebanese novel *Ana Hiya Anti / I Am You* by Elham Mansour was published in 2008. *Islam and Homosexuality*, a two-volume collection of essays, edited and introduced by Habib, has been published Pareger in December 2009. In addition to a number of published and forthcoming academic articles in *EnterText* and *Nebula* ; Habib has published a number of creative works including the novel *A Tree Like Rain* (Sydney: Nebula Press, 2005), the chapbook *Islands in Space* (Sydney: Nebula Press, 2008) and the novel Rughum & Najda (March 2012).

[159] http://www.calem.eu/INIMuslim-international-network-of-inclusive-Muslims.html

Thanks to the CALEM informal confederation, the INIMuslim international network[160]*,*

the French LGBT Federation and the IDAHO-Religions committee.

[160] INIMuslim : *International Network for Inclusive Muslims* - http://www.calem.eu/INIMuslim-international-network-of-inclusive-Muslims.html

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