based on two major principles of qur'ānic exegesis" (p. 6). The first major principle is that the Qur'ān is its best interpreter, meaning that it explains itself. The second major principle is that "there is no self-contradiction in the Qur'ān" (p. 6). Under the guidance of the first principle, the author sees it as his task to present as many as possible of the explanatory verses when he seeks to interpret any verse pertaining to love. In this way, the book is enriched with qur'ānic verses considered relevant to the subject of love. The author has indeed done a great service to people who are interested in having a comprehensive picture of the Qur'ān's teachings on love, for he has helped to provide such a picture. He himself claims that his work is the first to assemble in a single volume not only all qur'ānic verses on love but also all views on love to be found in the hadīths and qur'ānic exegeses. This is the second significance of the book.

Its third significance is the synopsis the author has provided in the last chapter (chapter 40). The synopsis may be viewed as a collection of essential Islamic doctrines on love that need not only to be intellectually understood but also spiritually realised in one's life. The fourth significance of the book is its message on the real meaning and significance of creation, which cannot be fully understood with the help of science alone. Chapter 5 deals with love as the root of creation. Divine love is the metaphysical principle of creation. Without knowledge of this principle, our knowledge of creation and the whole universe will always be haunted by unending doubts, riddles, mysteries, and incomprehension.

Although there are other things that are significant about the book, I would like to mention here just another one, namely its value to contemporary interfaith relations in the global community. As pointed out by Nasr, there is the erroneous but prevalent view that Muslims hold the view of God as a vengeful God who emphasises His justice alone at the expense of His love and mercy. This book is a powerful refutation of this erroneous view. As such, it may serve as a useful guide especially to Muslims who are concerned about presenting the true teachings of Islam in all its dimensions to people of other faiths and indeed the whole humanity. The book could well turn out to have more impact than the original Arabic editions.

**Reza Shah-Kazemi.** *The Spirit of Tolerance in Islam* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris Publishers in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies [IIS], 2012). IIS Occasional Papers 4. ix+165 pp. ISBN 9781780761312. GBP 7.19

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Once in a long while one meets an imaginative, carefully researched reflection on essential aspects of Islam's inclusive tolerant stance toward the 'Other' – other revealed religions, cultural polities, or contrasting metaphysical systems. Reza Shah-

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Kazemi, the Managing Editor of *Encyclopaedia Islamica* in London, has authored several penetrating works treating Islamic spirituality and valuable comparative studies (including Shankara and Ibn al-cArabī; or Buddhism and Islam), and has sensitively explored the qur'ānic vision of interfaith dialogue.

His *Spirit of Tolerance in Islam* constitutes a landmark in the contemporary search for convergence and reciprocity between universal Islamic ideals and the pressing need for Muslims to more adequately respond to global civilisational demands today. Not only is this work well written with fluent grace and intelligent persuasive force, it is accurate and instructive regarding historical and intellectual dimensions of the topic. Shah-Kazemi's book needs to be read by non-Muslims seeking an objective presentation of Islam's universal message of tolerant compassion. It needs especially to be studied by Muslims themselves—too often poorly informed concerning the implications of this profound message for their own lives and societies.

The virtue of *Spirit of Tolerance* is the combining of relevant historical case studies in Part One covering four major geographic polities – Ottomans, Mughals, Fatimids, and the Umayyads in Andalusia, and the delicate issue of protected minorities (*dhimmīs*); with the presentation of six essential themes unfolding from Islam's pursuit of tolerance in Part Two – tolerance and revealed knowledge, confirmation and protection, plurality of faiths, healthy competition, inevitability of difference, and the Prophetic paradigm of compassionate forbearance. Through this double approach linking historical experience with ethico-theological concerns in his enlightened comparative perspective, the author succeeds in offering a convincing portrait of Islamic ideals for co-existence and reciprocal recognition—without minimising the burden of Muslim shortcomings when upholding these ideals in the modern period.

In his Introduction, "The Trajectory of Tolerance" (pp. 1-19), the author provides a concise review of the course of Western attitudes towards Islam's traditions of religious tolerance, contrasting it with the historically evidenced Christian traditions of intolerance. Shah-Kazemi is quite right to insist upon the importance of Islam's primal vision of co-existence and tolerance with respect to rival revealed religions. Within the historical context of its original manifestation Islam represented a major rupture with the entrenched pattern of absolute exclusivist or successionist finality so common in antiquity, and which produced divisive conflicts between faiths as well as internal persecutions within a specific faith (e.g., the christological controversies). This feature led objective European observers during the Enlightenment to emphasise just how revolutionary the qur'anic and prophetic insistence on reciprocal toleration truly was. The author's citations from Sir Thomas Arnold, Bernard Lewis, George Makdisi, and his references to John Locke and Jacob Burckhardt are all apposite, and remind one of the potential contributions Islam may yet make to global harmony and understanding. Shah-Kazemi underlines "the extent to which it is incorrect to identify the intolerance of some contemporary Muslims with Islam per se; rather,

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such intolerance must be seen as a deviation from the norms established by Muslim praxis, and enshrined in Islamic principle" (p. 3). The challenge remains for Muslims to revivify and validate this venerable broad-minded tolerant tradition in their present social and political conditions. The study of this work might energise such efforts.

The historical case studies presented in Part One serve to show "how the Muslim spirit of tolerance is brought to light in these different dynasties" as well as to highlight particular features of this spirit within specific contexts. The four historical polities chosen for the author's purpose are eminently paradigmatic of Islam's compassionate equitable vision, and serves to demonstrate the varying degrees of success in time and place which this vision achieved. Although one frequently meets with studies on the humanist inclusive policies of the Spanish Umayyads, Indian Mughals, and Ottomans, it is refreshing to read about the remarkable record of the Fatimids in North Africa and the Levant in this regard (pp. 38-47). His treatment of the protected minorities or *dhimmīs* (pp. 59-74) expands on the usual pedestrian approach, encompassing a wide spectrum of historical instances revealing how pragmatic and accommodating Muslim experience really was. Not only the qur'anic Jews, Christians and Sabeans, but also Buddhists and Hindus came to be treated in an equitably upright manner under many Muslim rulers and polities. Shah-Kazemi does not hesitate to controvert distorted interpretations by polemic writers such as Bat Ye'or. Yet he also gives us a nuanced conditional understanding of the limited utility which this category actually provided: "The institution of the *dhimma* is thus predicated on the universal principle of tolerance [...]. [T]he institution of dhimma/jizya is more a historically conditioned contingency than an unconditional theological necessity. It met the requirements of a particular historical context, which was governed by the exigencies of imperial politics [...]" (p. 73).

Part Two, "The Spirit of Tolerance," is hard to characterise in simple terms, owing to its penetrating depth of conception and presentation. Here the author concisely offers fruits of his intimacy with qur'ānic and exemplary Islamic teachings, allowing the reader to taste the impressive nobility of the Islamic ethico-spiritual legacy. In the final chapter entitled "The Prophetic Paradigm: Compassionate Forbearance" (pp. 111-30), Reza Shah-Kazemi reiterates the crucial lesson of matching our knowledge with our pursuit of virtue. This is the foundation of practical ethics arising from conscience, with compassion deemed among the very highest virtues and bridging humans with the All-Merciful God of Islam (*al-Raḥmān*). For those peoples who serve the All-Loving and All-Merciful, the author provides a timely reminder of the supreme importance of observing compassion and loving-kindness in their dealings with their fellows. "From the point of view of the sacred vision of Islam, then, tolerance is not just a noble human ethic, it is also the outward expression of an uplifting spiritual ideal: a reflecting of, and a participation in, the compassionate wisdom of God" (p. 134).