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“Crossing Boundaries: Mobilizing Faith, Diversity and Dialogue”

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ABSTRACT

“Reflections on Inter- and Intra-faith Dialogue and
the Promotion of World Peace in Light of Muslim Heritage”

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The benefits of interfaith dialogue include improved understanding of the “*Other*,” opportunities to forge coalitions on mutual concerns, opportunities for peacemaking, and most importantly, the potential for a deeper understanding of our own faith tradition. The challenges posed by interfaith dialogue are the threat of alienation through frustrated attempts at proselytization, the dilution of the contending faith systems into an emasculated common denominator, and the perception of threats to the participants’ religious identities. Islamic texts and tradition provide the framework for a meaningful interfaith dialogue that can achieve goals and manage problems. They suggest the framework not of a value-compromised creolized religion, but a rational meta-religion that does not seek to compete with the constituent religions in dialogue, but rather, to serve as a forum in which the benefits are maximized and the threats neutralized. This paper reviews the specific advice offered in the Qur’an on how to engage in interfaith dialogue, whether with people of the book, *kufâr* or anything in between, surveys the approach taken by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and considers how changes in circumstances and places may affect their application today. It also considers instances from Muslim history selected for instruction and utility, reviews recent cases of inter- and intra-faith dialogue to which the Minaret of Freedom has been a party for anecdotal evidence bearing on the subject, and concludes with some guidelines for maximizing the productivity of such encounters.