

ASSOCIATION OF MUSLIM SOCIAL SCIENTISTS (UK)

NEWSLETTER

ISSUE NO.3 • 2000

Muslims of Europe Conference

THIS CONFERENCE WAS JOINTLY organised by the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (UK) and the Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland at Regents College, London on 9-10 September 2000. Spectacularly received was the Closing Plenary Address given by Dr. Jeremy Henzell-Thomas, Director of Curriculum Development, the Book Foundation. Reproduced below are extracts taken from his presentation.

Acknowledging Text and Context: The Science and Art of Balance

It seems to me that it is the Science and Art of Balance which has been one of the most powerful themes to emerge from this conference. The polarities which need to be balanced have been conceived of in different yet intersecting ways - as text and context, religion and society, as vertical and horizontal dimensions, as revealed and acquired knowledge, as unity and diversity. In Islamic calligraphy, the two polarities are the two axes of writing, the *alif* and the *ba*, from which all other letters are derived. *Alif* is the upright, vertical, masculine dimension of transcendent unity and incomparable majesty, "utterly remote in His limitless glory", and the horizontal line of *ba*

is the receptive, feminine dimension of God's immanence in His Creation and in those beautiful and merciful names or manifestations of the One in the Many which express his nearness to His creatures, "closer to you than your jugular vein". Writing is inconceivable without the two axes, and beautiful writing unattainable without equilibrium between the axes.

Three dimensions have emerged at this conference as essential for establishing a Muslim identity, and which need to be adapted accordingly in the European context.

Firstly, the development of Faith, Practice and Spirituality, with the ultimate aim of *ihsan*, the dimension of trying to be with God in every circumstance through the mediation of that inward vision within the Heart; "Of all His servants, only such as are endowed with [innate] knowledge stand [truly] in awe of God" (Qur'an 35:28). This knowledge is of course spiritual knowledge, born of the realisation that observable phenomena do not constitute the whole of reality, inasmuch as there is a realm



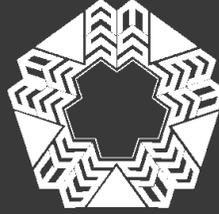
Conference Participants at Regents College, London

beyond the reach of man's perception. These are the transcendental values of the theological perspective which must be paramount and under which sociological values must be subsumed.

Secondly, the Understanding of Text and Context that striving to know more, which is incumbent on all believing men and women, not only from the written sources but also from the "displayed book", the evidence of Creation and Created Beings and the society in which we live. This is the comprehensive knowledge referred to by Dr. Anas al Shaikh-Ali in his opening address, the complementary knowledge of Revelation and Creation.

Social Responsibility: *Challenges for The Future*

WHAT DO WE MEAN when we talk about 'social responsibility' and towards whom? In a world dominated by hegemonic social, political and economic influences, and the power of an increasingly technological global age, discussions around the notion of 'social responsibility' need to start with questions of definition. Clearly, these questions are not exhaustive or restricted to Muslim communities, but raise another important theoretical issue, and that is to consider whether such questions are even necessary. The wide range of papers and the response to this years Conference theme, would indicate that such a debate is now inevitable as it is essential, and that these questions can be addressed within both secular and spiritual contexts and discourses. In Islam, one of the primary aims (*al-Maqasid*) of the Shari'ah is the maintenance of justice and the creation of a fair, enlightened and dynamic society. The early Muslims understood this well and set out to build a civilisation where justice was not to be compromised, the search for knowledge and enlightenment was the elevated pursuit of life, and community development and welfare was the ultimate consideration in *ijtihad* and law-making. However with the lethargy that came to prevail in the Muslim world this state of affairs decayed. The purpose of this Conference is to revisit and reclaim that understanding of our relationship with God, with our environment and with fellow human beings, to con-



THIS IS THE AMSS
(UK) LOGO

The five sides forming the
pentagon represent the five
organisations which jointly
founded the AMSS UK.

Prof. Ali Mazrui Receives First AMSS (UK) Award

On Wednesday 14 June 2000 Prof. Ali Mazrui, a leading african academic and intellectual, made history by becoming the first African to launch a book and address a distinguished audience at the Moses Room, House of Lords. The Chairman of the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (UK), Dr. Anas al Shaikh-Ali, marked the occasion by presenting Prof. Mazrui with the AMSS's first and newly established award for important academic achievement.

New Advisory Board Members

The AMSS (UK) is pleased to announce the following new members to its Advisory Board:

PROFESSOR YASIR SULEIMAN
DR. YAHYA MICHOT
M. A. KHAN CHEEMA

Free Online Search Resources

Qur'an Search Resource

<http://db.Islam.org:81/Quran/ssearch.htm>

This site displays the Arabic verse(s), two translations (by Yusuf Ali and M. Picktall), as well as the option to listen to a recitation of the verse(s) or the entire Sura.

Hadith Search Resource

<http://db.Islam.org:81/hadith/ssearch.htm>

Uses *Sahih al-Bukhari*. Gives bibliographic information for Hadiths: e.g. vol.e 3, book 34, no. 335

Institut Supérieur D'Études Civilisationnelles

The Institut Supérieur D'Études Civilisationnelles, in cooperation with the IIIT London Office, organised a one-day conference on *Muslim Education in France*, the first of its kind to tackle this sensitive issue. The Conference was attended by over 100 academics, teachers, researchers, students as well as other educationalists

Centre for Training & Development in South Africa

The CTD was developed in the early nineties and endeavours to give postgraduates and professionals the opportunity to study Islam and western thought.

For further information contact:

CTD, South Africa

Tel: 00-2711 832 1721

Fax: 00-2711 834 2801

ctd@lia.co.za

Islamic Diplomacy

Interview with Dr. Riad Nourallah of the University of Westminster, London

In your presentation at last year's 1st Annual AMSS Conference entitled "Islamic Diplomacy: The Need for a New Paradigm", you stated that Islamic Diplomacy is one of the modules that you teach at the Diplomatic Academy of London (DAL). Could you explain what it is?

The module was introduced some three years ago, and has since generated interest among DAL students as well as amongst diplomats and academics from a multiplicity of cultures. The module was designed to serve the needs of diplomats, both Muslims and non-Muslims, by offering an in-depth (and largely unprecedented) account of diplomatic traditions and practices in Islam across the ages, while emphasising modern realities and requirements. At a time when issues such as the role of religion and/or ethics in international relations and the rise of religious nationalism were making headlines and inviting considerable media and political attention, we felt that there was a need to address such concerns in a serious and objective (yet stimulating) fashion. One major aim was to equip the course participants with a variety of perspectives and a set of tools, idioms, and insights to help them analyse and cope with Islamic themes and reaffirming the pre-eminence of dialogue and peaceful co-existence among nations, would go, we felt, some way towards filling a gap in diplomatic practice. The interest and participation already shown in this module is an incentive for us to continue working to fill that gap.

What other subjects do you personally teach at the Academy? Aside from the "Diplomacy in Islam" module I am also involved in teaching a module on "Research Methodology" as well as in supervising a good number of graduate students.

Could you give us a brief account of the Diplomatic Academy of London at the University of Westminster?

I can merely quote the well known facts, namely that DAL is universally regarded as the longest established British institution which pioneered integrated diplomatic training programmes in London. It has been attracting members of the London Diplomatic Corps, including heads of missions, who are accredited to the Court of St James's as well as diplomats from various Ministers for Foreign Affairs and officials from overseas government departments including the new democracies of central and eastern Europe and the former republics of the Soviet Union. We also receive and train diplomats from several Arab countries. For the current academic year we have students from other countries.

What degrees does the Academy offer, and how is the Course taught and what does it comprise?

The Academy runs a wide range of post-experience courses and training programmes leading to the award of an MA Degree in Diplomatic Studies and MPhil/PhD by further research. The Diplomatic course itself is a blend of academic studies and

DR. RIAD NOURALLAH is Senior Lecturer, Deputy Director and Module Leader ('Diplomacy in Islam' and 'Research Methodology') at the Diplomatic Academy of London, University of Westminster. He has written on literary, cultural and diplomatic themes and contributed to such publications as *Arabian Studies*, *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, and the *International Journal of Arabic Studies*. His recent works include *The Fire of the Northern Rose* (Dar al-'Ilm) and *The Messenger* (University Press of Maryland).

professional training. The Schools of Law, Languages, Communication, Social and Policy Sciences, Economic and Business studies and the London Management Centre contribute to the academic disciplines, while the professional aspects are covered by career diplomats, journalists, lawyers, politicians, and senior officials from various government departments. The two core modules are Diplomacy: Practice, Procedures and Dynamics and Management and Information Technology. Two optional modules can be chosen from a range of modules. Examples of these are Foreign Policy Analysis; Information and Media Studies; International Law and Diplomacy; Strategic Studies; International Trade and Finance; European Union Studies, etc. Students are also expected to complete a dissertation.

American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences (AJISS)

The contents of the present AJISS issue (vol.17, no.1, spring 2000) include:

Behavioral Science Foundations of Organization Development (Syed Abdul Hamid al-Junaid & Syed Aziz Anwar); *The Development of Civil Society in Indonesia and the Role of Voluntary Organizations* (M. Habib Chirzin); *Capitalism's Impending Dangers for Global Humane Development* (Mahmoud Dhaouadi).

For copies please contact:
AJISS, P.O. Box 669,
Herndon, VA 22070, USA
Tel: 001-703 471 1133
Fax: 001-703 471 3922

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Acknowledging Text and Context: The Science and Art of Balance

And thirdly, the need to act, interact, collaborate, consult, engage in discourse and participate, to go beyond an identity of exclusivity, withdrawal, isolation, and what Maleiha Malik called radical detachment and disenchantment, confined and blinkered by rigid and fixed principles, to be with our fellow human beings, both Muslims and non-Muslims, for as the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) said, "The best one among you is the best one towards people." That entails the development of awareness, the acquisition of sociological, anthropological and psychological understanding and emotional intelligence which acknowledge the complexity of people, and which give us the ability to relate to them with sensitivity and subtlety.

I submit that the challenge of living in Europe cannot be addressed constructively by a prohibitive mentality with regard to access to Western culture in general and, as Tariq said, in the ignorance of European "histories", which make it impossible for Muslims educated in this way to understand their environment and to feel at ease with it.

This conference has done much to show us how a balance between these apparent opposites can be achieved, how we can and must act as bridges not only between diverse peoples and cultures but also within our own communities through consultation, mutual respect and understanding. But there is no doubt in my mind that such a process of external harmonisation is ultimately dependent on the attainment of internal balance within ourselves. "Verily, never will Allah change the condition of people until they themselves change what is in their souls" (Qur'an 13:11). ☪

NOTICE!

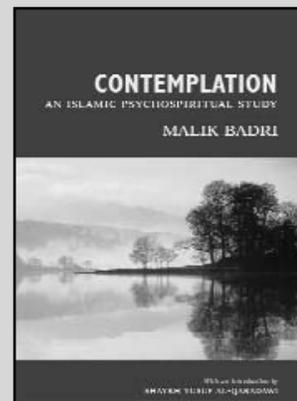
Muslim Education in the UK

*Achievements, Problems, Plans
& Practical Solutions*

This conference has now been cancelled. Another conference on the theme of:

Muslim Education in Europe

will be organised by the AMSS in co-operation with European organisations in 2001.



CONTEMPLATION An Islamic Psychospiritual Study by MALIK BADRI

Delving into the true meaning and experience of Islamic spirituality, based on a person's awareness and recognition of his existence and place in Creation, Malik Badri reveals the limitations and contradictions of the current prevailing schools of psychology that deny the existence of the soul and perceive humans as mere machines acting on external stimuli.

This is a book for anyone who is interested in the Islamic approach towards the urgency felt by modern societies for the rediscovery of the long-forgotten and neglected spiritual aspect of their lives.

MALIK BADRI is Professor of Psychology at the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), Malaysia.

152pp £6.95 paper £19.95 cloth

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P.O. Box 126, Richmond,
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