Islam in Higher Education

Conference Highlights Issue of Teaching Islam in Higher Education Long Before Government Orders a Report on the Subject

Established orientalist notions of what constitutes Islamic scholarship have largely remained unchallenged. The emergence of neo-orientalism and phenomenological approaches are two ways in which exciting ideas are being adapted, and in some cases, challenged. Abdul-Rehman Malik

Organised by AMSS (UK), the Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations (Birmingham University) and the Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Philosophical and Religious Studies, 29-30 January 2005, at the University of Birmingham.

Since 11 September 2001 there has been a remarkable growth in the study of Islam in Higher Education. Whereas a decade earlier, many universities were eager to close down or at best amalgamate Islamic Studies programmes into larger departments, there is now an urgency on the part of academic administrators on many campuses to begin teaching about and encourage research on Islam. Not only is there demand from students, but there is an understanding that Islam as a religion and social force

Significantly, this jointly organised Conference by AMSS and its partners was held more than a year before the government and MP Bill Rammell’s, Minister of Education, call for a review of the teaching of university Islamic courses. The government has commissioned a report on this issue to ensure that religious oriented courses are not restricted to narrow interpretations. Although the conference sought to highlight and examine the complexities of the teaching of Islam and other related issues, invitations to the civil service, government departments and key personnel to attend the conference met with no response. Subsequent tragic events triggered interest in the area! It is only hoped that the inquiry does not start from zero but builds upon the outcome of this Conference.

The Conference was attended by lecturers, academics, and experts on the subject from leading UK, US and European universities and departments.

Cont’d on page 2
will continue to have an impact on global and domestic realities for the foreseeable future. However, there has been little discussion about how to approach the study of Islam given the current political climate.

Established orientalist notions of what constitutes Islamic scholarship have largely remain unchallenged. The emergence of neo-orientalism and phenomenological approaches are two ways in which exiting ideas are being adapted, and in some cases, challenged. The Islam in Higher Education conference, organised by the Association of Muslim Social Scientists UK (AMSS) in conjunction with the Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations (CSIC) at the University of Birmingham and the Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Philosophical and Religious Studies, was held on 29th – 30th January 2005. This conference brought together a diverse cross section of individuals and organisations concerned with the challenges facing Islam in higher education. It encouraged participants to engage in critical analysis and dialogue on a broad range of issues including: the status of the study of Islam in higher education; employability and recruitment; academic standards & pedagogy; the depiction of Islam and Muslims in higher education; and comparative international approaches to Islam in higher education.

In opening the conference, CSIC’s Dr. Bustami Khir, Senior Lecturer in Islamic Studies, spoke of the importance of the conference and the critical role that the discussions could play in shaping the future of the study of Islam and Muslims in the United Kingdom.

In welcoming participants, Professor Michael Clarke, Vice Principal of the University of Birmingham spoke of the city as a historical space of interaction between religion and modernity in an industrialising world. Birmingham University itself was the site of a major debate on the usefulness of the study of theology and religion. Islamic studies began as early as the 1930s with the first undergraduate course offered in 1990. Islamic studies in particular, and the study of religion and theology in general, form an essential part of the intellectual tapestry of Birmingham University. Prof. Clarke added that with over 140 000 Muslims residing in the city, Birmingham was set to become the first majority non-white city in the United Kingdom and that the city itself could not be understood without reference to its faith communities.

University of Birmingham’s Prof. Shearer West of the School of Historical Studies which houses CSIC spoke about the interdisciplinary interest in Islam and how the coming together of the theology and religious studies within the School of Historical Studies allowed for an exploration of global religious cultures borrowing on anthropology, sociology and theology.

Dr. Gary Bunt Subject Co-ordinator, Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Philosophical Studies and Lecturer in Islamic Studies, University of Wales, Lampeter stressed that the conference was a culmination of a series of efforts including a workshop sponsored by the Higher Education Academy. He noted that the Higher Education Academy was particularly interested in looking at recruitment and employability issues facing Islamic studies graduates. They are producing an Islam faith guide for institutions. He added that the work here would feed into an existing website (www.islaminhighereducation.net) and a 2007 conference on religious studies tentatively titled Beyond Beliefs.

Dr. Anas Al Shaikh-Ali, Chair of the AMSS and lead organiser of the conference, welcomed participants and looked forward to the beginning of a fruitful, multidisciplinary dialogue on Islam and higher education. He looked on the conference as the first of its kind in the broader field of religious studies and underscored that it would lead to a series of workshops and seminars exploring some of the issues that the conference could only begin to address. The period since 11 September has been underscored by increased conflict, but also increased dialogue; awareness and engagement with the other is critical to dispelling ignorance. Those who advocate potential civilizational conflict and interpret Islam as a green threat engender global instability. However, he also noted that the Islamic camp must take its fair share of responsibility, namely the rise in a cynical interpretation of religion. It is time, Dr. Al Shaikh-Ali said, to separate faith from its practitioners.

When history is misinterpreted and research methodology manipulated by some segments of academe, the challenge to promote understanding between Islamic and Western civilisations grows. He linked this self-fulfilling dark prophecy to education and high-level academic studies.

The conference was arguing against the isolationist mindset and was based on a conviction that higher education had an impact on the wider policy discourse. One particular area of concern that Dr. Al Shaikh-Ali noted was issues of translation. A sophisticated approach was needed to promote standards and excellence in translation as poor translation of Islamic language texts was central to problems of poor scholarship.

He hoped that the Islam and Higher Education conference would be a catalyst for the serious study of the way in which Islam is taught and would open up interaction between scholars, across disciplines, who were involved in the field.

Abdul-Rehman Malik
Abdul-Rehman Malik has a Masters from the LSE, is Contributing Editor of Q-News magazine, Freelance Consultant to various media organisations, and member of the AMSS Executive Committee.
Fiqh Today: Muslims as Minorities

The practice of fiqh has always been characterised by dynamism and flexibility. Instead of being an ossified body of legal rulings the discipline of fiqh engages the lives of Muslims providing a means for sacred expression that is at once personal and communal. Understanding the underlying values of the sacred law and how it is derived enables Muslim communities to continuously make Islam relevant to their unique contexts and particular environments. The growing Muslim presence in Europe and North America and the rising discourse on the nature of citizenship and identity makes the question of relevance significant. Will Muslims in the West, given the challenges of discrimination and systemic disadvantage, be able to find an expression of Islam that is both connected to their rich heritage, yet addresses the exigencies of their contemporary circumstances in a meaningful and applicable way? The attempt by modern Islamic scholarship to formulate a fiqh for minority Muslim communities is at the heart of this current discourse about Islam in Europe. Drawing on the classical heritage and corpus, the minority fiqh project is at once an intellectual and spiritual challenge. It was in this spirit that the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS UK) in conjunction with the International Institute of Islamic Thought, The Muslim College and Q-News Media convened “Fiqh Today: Muslims as Minorities” its 5th annual conference at the University of Westminster in London from 21st – 22nd February, 2004.

Dr. Anas Al Shaikh-Ali, Chair of the AMSS (UK) Executive Committee set out the vision of the conference in his opening remarks suggesting that a genuine fiqh for minority Muslims required a collective engagement between social scientists and shariah scholars “in the wider public arena” moving the debate and discussion out of closed doors. He challenged participants – who came from Europe, North America, the Middle East and Southeast Asia – to work towards the development of a “comprehensive methodology of minority fiqh” drawing on the past, but not being afraid to be innovative.

It was appropriate then that the keynote address to the conference was presented by Reis-ul-Ulema, the Grand Mufti of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Dr. Mustafa Ceric. Having been a towering figure of strength for the Bosnian people during the Balkan war, Dr. Ceric is uniquely placed to understand what it means to be a European Muslim and position the experience of Western Muslims within the larger framework of belonging to a universal ummah. While Dr. Ceric maintained that he did not believe in a minority fiqh per se, he readily accepted the position of Muslims as a political minority often better able to fulfill their religious obligations than Muslims elsewhere. He convincingly posited a vision of Muslims in Europe that recognized their unique historic position and contribution to Europe and saw Europe as a place of interaction rather than confrontation. He discussed the interdependence of cultures and the need for balance and tolerance. By present diagnoses of the intellectual pathologies of Muslim and European societies, he concluded his discussion by challenging Muslims in the periphery to see themselves as driving the civilisational wheel of Islam.

Cont’d on page 4
Individual scholars contributing work which is argued and debated is closer to the spirit of fiqh which sees the process of deriving laws as predicated upon debate, acceptance and synthesis.

He called on Europe to institutionalise Islam, and Muslims in Europe to come together within a universal worldview.

During the event the AMSS (UK) awarded its 2003 Lifetime Achievement Award posthumously to the late Edward Said, in recognition of his outstanding scholarship and intellectual engagement. The award was presented by Dr. Al-Shaikh-Ali on behalf of the Executive Committee to Michel Abdul Messih, QC and eminent lawyer and Palestinian activist who was a close friend of Edward Said. Dr. Zaki Badawi spoke of Professor Said’s important contributions highlighting both Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World and especially Orientalism as works that changed the landscape of academia and prevailing colonial discourses on Islam, Muslims and the Middle East. The 2003 Building Bridges Award was presented by the AMSS Chair to Karen Armstrong for her contribution in promoting inter-faith dialogue and understanding. Fareena Alam, Managing Editor of Q-News Magazine, went on to highlight Ms Armstrong’s important work and her objective portrayal of Islam in books and articles as well as TV and radio programmes, especially after 11th September. In accepting the award Ms Armstrong called on participants to challenge intolerance by launching a compassionate offensive to fight misunderstanding in a creative way. Her presence and comments were warmly received by participants.

The conference opened with presentations from Dr. Louay Safi, Visiting Professor at George Washington University, Washington DC and President of AMSS (USA), and Dr. Mohamed Mestiri, a graduate of the Sorbonne and Professor of Usul and Contemporary Islamic Thought at the Institut des Sciences Islamiques, Paris. Dr. Safi’s paper entitled “The Creative Mission of Muslim Minorities in the West: Synthesizing the Ethos of Islam and Modernity” explored the ideas that minority fiqh can play a creative role in helping Muslims deal with the differing ethos of the West, by applying the shariah in the present social milieu. Applying the maqasid of the shariah develops a normative order capable of enhancing human life and advancing the human condition. Legislation was not an instrument of the state, but a function of civil society that maintained its independence from state intervention guaranteeing the absolute legal rights of multiple confessional groups in contrast to present hyper secularisation which forces the minority to adopt the position of the dominant. He affirmed the mediating power of culture and rejected the moral universalism of secularism. Dr. Mestiri drew on the experience of Muslims in France to present “From the Fiqh of Minorities to the Fiqh of Citizenship”. Classical fiqh saw minorities as fully associated members of a citizenship charter. Within the democracies majorities and minorities were flexible concepts. We must move he argued from an immigrant understanding of our place in the West to embracing citizenship. Minority fiqh needs to be seen in light of these new civic realities and that promoting Islam in existing plural space connects the spiritual teaching to its essential universalism and humanism. In response to a question of accepted secularism, Dr. Mestiri accepted the social organising principle of it and saw richness in the secular space that was impacted by globalisation. Dr. Safi added that the roots of modernity, according to G.W. Hegel, were in the oriental revolution (Islam) which was the foundation of modernity and thus the resulting politics must be based on moral principles.

Dr. Zaki Badawi followed with a spirited discussion on “General Principle of Fiqh”, qawaid al-fiqh-hiya, which he termed the maxims guiding the law, a separate discipline which was a science in need of revival. He criticised collective, or committee, ijtihad because the collective becomes concerned with its own authority and proclaims its correctness over others. Individual scholars contributing work which is argued and debated is closer to the spirit of fiqh which sees the process of deriving laws as predicated upon debate, acceptance and synthesis. Muslim minority communities can become the site for these dynamic scholarly interactions. The adaptation of secular modes of organisation which allow for pluralism and debate is needed because more important than the fiqh rulings themselves are the moral maxims which govern them. Although Dr. Taha Jabir al-Alwani, President of the Graduate School of Islamic and Social Sciences and current President of the Fiqh Council of
North America could not attend in person he sent a videotaped presentation of his paper “Minority Fiqh: Between Macro and Micro Fiqh” in which he called for the new realities of minority Muslim communities not to be compared with the past. Hence the necessity of developing a minority fiqh that governs Muslim minorities, protects their identity, and allows da'wah, one that highlights the possibilities offered by the shariah to enhance the quality of life and human values.

Addressing the “Islamic Juristic Views on the Political and Legal Status of Muslims in non-Muslim Countries”, Birmingham University’s Dr. Bustami Khir explored the notion of wilayat al-ulama found in the Hanafi, Shafi’i and Maliki schools of Sunni law as a way of providing leadership, legal and spiritual guidance to Muslim minority communities. In a historical context, this principle was used to negotiate varying degrees of Islamic governance and institutionalisation within non-Muslim contexts that would simply not be possible today. However, the vivid picture of Muslim minority communities given by historians like al-Mas’udi does provide inspiration that could be actualised through arbitration councils or negotiated, eventually, with political authorities in Europe and elsewhere. Dr. Tahir Mahdi of the Université de Valenciennes, turned his attention like other scholars, to “Minorities and Maqasid al-Shari’ah”. Muslims should not be afraid to use ijtihad to enact new fatwa to meet our present circumstances. Furthermore, we must cease to see ourselves as a disadvantaged group or allow ourselves to be minoritised and instead must accept that we are European citizens of Muslim faith. Classical Islamic jurisprudence is a source of inspiration, not always of application. This means we need to avoid fanaticism. Revisiting the exclusionary processes at work within both law and community, pertaining namely to women, was a critical first step to recapturing legal creativity.

While the first day provided a theoretical perspective, day two of the proceedings drew on the realities of Muslim minority experience to demonstrate the challenges and opportunities of minority fiqh. Dr. Soumaya Pernilla Ouis, member of the Swedish Islamic Academy in her paper entitled “Marriage Strategies Among Young Muslims in Europe” conducting extensive fieldwork to demonstrate the problematic nature of gender relations fiqh as applied within a European context. Young Muslims have increasingly complex conceptions of marriage that require new strategies which focus on individual choice placing less emphasis on having children and extended families. The marriage of Muslim women to non-Muslim men and the practice of gender segregation ought to be among the first issues to be addressed by the principles of minority fiqh. Political theorist Dr. Ahmad Al-Katib addressed the “Problem of Sexual Relations among Muslim Youth” by examining the marriage options available in the fiqh literature and assessing their relative advantages. Participants debated the merits of the approaches presented, their serious negative social and psychological consequences, and called for alternatives to be grounded deeply in the spirit of Islam and the law.

Charles Le Gai Eaton, noted author, broadcaster and the sage voice of British Islam spoke about minority fiqh in the context of shifting and contested identities. He called for action in developing a relevant framework for Islamic expression that is consistent with the ethos of Islamic civilisation and the protective framework of fiqh. We can no longer afford to be quarrelsome and must be dialogic. Flexibility prevents rebellion and the best examples are grounded in the praxis of faith and a normative, lived reality of Islam, day to day. During the discussion, Mr. Eaton noted that expression must be a reflection of context without rejection of a system that sustained, preserved and developed the sacred law over the history of Islam. He warned of the dangers of relativism and that the secularists have woken up to the values of Islam and see them as a threat.

Asmat Ali, PhD Candidate at Birkbeck College, University of London studying Qur’anic ethics and legal theory delivered a paper on “Pluralism: Islamic and Non-Islamic Laws – A Problem of Definitions” which explored the term “Islamic law” seeking to redefine it within the broader message of pluralism in the Qur’an seeing it as an extension of the same universal theology not superseding other previously revealed laws. The Qur’an message primarily addresses legal theory and not positive law which is time-space bound. Dilwar Hussein, Research Fellow at the Islamic Foundation in Leicester, examined the process normalisation of Islam in Europe and distinguishing it from the secularisation of Muslims. The writing of a European Muslim narrative entails asking serious questions about what factors are impacting our condition. The impact of globalisation and the question of how distinct one geographic frame is from another, needs to be answered if the minority fiqh project is to remain legitimate. The use of critical social theory to deconstruct these dilemmas helps us to build a narrative based on a true theoretical and pragmatic understanding of the intellectual conditions of European Muslims.

In the final session, the attention of participants turned to examine how models of Islamic law can be made directly relevant to Muslim minority communities. Ahmad Thomson is a member of Gray’s Inn and Barrister who is Deputy-Chairman of the Association of Muslim Lawyers. He drew on his extensive background in dealing with Islamic law within the court system to present “Incorporating Muslim Personal Law into UK
Muslim personal law is one of the surviving and most vibrant aspects of the shariah

Domestic Law”. Muslim personal law is one of the surviving and most vibrant aspects of the shariah. Given that Muslim minorities are increasingly seeking recourse to family and civil dispute resolution that is grounded in this trusted discipline, the potential for the inclusion of Islamic personal law into English common law is considered. Mr. Thomson sees the growth of such a system as organic and based on precedent utilising the legally binding mechanisms of arbitration. These already existent legal avenues could eventually create a system of adjudicators (qadhis) who would be properly qualified and trusted by those who availed of their service freely.

Similarly, Dr. Ihsan Yilmaz, presented concerns with the growth of “Micro-Mujtahids and the Fiqh al-Aqalliyyat” and the subsequent fragmentation of Muslim legal discourse as individuals undertake takhayyur or choosing/combining between schools of thought and rulings. Understanding that laws, their derivation and interpretation, belong in the civic realm, in turn means that the potential legal chaos must too be managed in that realm. Dr. Yilmaz sees faith based movements and their leaders lending legitimacy to praxis through ijtihad committees mainstreaming new legal conceptions, thereby making ijtihad viable.

In his closing remarks Dr. Anas Al-Shaikh-Ali thanked the speakers and participants, and went on to stress that the objective of the AMSS (UK) is to combine theory with practical application. He mentioned that as a practical outcome of the 4th Annual Conference on Muslim Education in Europe, the AMSS has produced a position paper entitled “Muslims on Education”. The paper discusses a wide variety of issues in the field of education in the UK, in the hope that it may initiate a basis for dialogue between the Department for Education and Skills (UK) with representatives from the Muslim Community. (See FAIR’s Activities on p.8 of this newsletter for details).

He also added that following discussions held during the 5th Annual Conference, the AMSS EC will, at its next meeting, look into the possibility of commissioning research papers from social scientists. These will focus not only on current issues facing the Muslim community in Europe, but also other possible issues and challenges that may arise in the future. It is hoped that such studies will then be put to fiqh councils as well as individual fiqhas for their urgent consideration.

Given the dizzying scope of the conference, the AMSS (UK) must be congratulated for creating an academic environment for the exchange of ideas, networking and hopefully laying the groundwork for a future synthesis of minority fiqh for minority Muslim communities in the West. Fiqh is after all a process, not a goal. By maintaining a lively and relevant approach to jurisprudence, the European Muslim discourse can impact on the centre as well, leading the way in innovative approaches to sacred law that seek to build on its capacity to be relevant in post-modernity.  

Abdul-Rehman Malik
Friends and dignatories gathered to pay tribute to an outstanding man

Sheikh Dr. M.A. Zaki Badawi O.B.E., K.B.E., Principal of the Muslim College, founder of the Imams and Mosques Council (UK), Chair and founding member of the Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism (FAIR), founding member of the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS UK), and arguably one of the nation’s greatest and most celebrated spokesman for the cause of British Islam died in London on 24 January 2006 at the venerable age of 83.

Despite his advancing years, the humble scholar with the humble heart worked tirelessly to the very end, collapsing whilst giving a talk in London, characteristically engaged until the moment of his death in a gentle but unfailing campaign for the cause of Islam and the Muslim community.

A charismatic figure with an almost fatherly, watchful eye over the nurture and development of Britain’s Islamic community his passing leaves a void, which, will be immensely difficult to fill. It is a tremendous loss to the Muslim community and a testament to the legacy of a self-effacing man, to whom ambition was a stranger, and flattery an embarrassment. Dr. Badawi’s was a powerful, empathic, intelligent, and warm personality. Always polite, cheerful, engaging, and respectful his sharp wit and delightful sense of humour were a joy and inspiration to all who had the good fortune to meet and know him, both on a professional, personal, and social level.

A visionary who understood the needs of the Muslim community decades before it had come of age, Dr. Badawi worked relentlessly to turn this vision into reality. Unthwarted by obstacles, undaunted by seats of power, fearless of the media, he easily commanded the respect and attention of royalty, heads of state, politicians, journalists, the establishment, as well as, and perhaps most challenging of all, the general public and diverse cultures making up the British Muslim community. Indeed, it is far from exaggeration to affirm that he has played a major role in putting both British Islam and British Muslim identity on the map, giving it a respect and history, which will long be remembered. His was a voice and his were ideas constantly in demand and his passing away marks the end of an era.

Dr. Badawi’s was also an illustrious and distinguished life – a graduate of Al-Azhar University feted with numerous awards, distinctions and achievements, his high-minded and honourable nature forbade him from indulging in the accolades of men. To him these were but mere laurels of this world when the Hereafter was the only reward he sought.

Nevertheless awards serve a function, they recognize the legacy of men and allow us to express our esteem and appreciation for the achievements of others, and, in accordance with this precept, the AMSS UK paid tribute to Dr. Badawi’s brilliant model of hard work, dedication, and service by honouring him with their 2002 Lifetime Achievement Award.

The Award was presented at a dinner to mark the occasion of his eightieth birthday at the Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre on 15 January 2003 and jointly organized by the AMSS, FAIR, Q-News and Al-Khoei Foundation. Attended by over a hundred and fifty representatives of not only British Muslim organisations but people from every sector of the community and establishment, from politicians to leaders of other faith communities, the diversity amongst the crowd was itself testimony to not only the varied work that Dr. Badawi has been involved in, but how much he is respected for his
FAIR’S ACTIVITIES
Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism

FAIR LATEST

The past year has witnessed FAIR successfully involved in a number of important projects ranging from media monitoring and lobbying on behalf of various discrimination cases as well as advisory support to the AMSS and British Council’s recently launched landmark publication, British Muslims Media Guide. Unfortunately the year also witnessed the loss of one of FAIR’s most senior founders and Chair, the late Dr. Zaki Badawi. At a meeting of FAIR Trustees in March 2006 Dr. Anas S. al Shaikh-Ali was unanimously elected as the new Chair for FAIR, with Dr. Mohammed Siddique Seddon and Lady Maryam Badawi subsequently accepting to become members of the Board of Trustees. Dr. Ali reiterated Dr. Badawi’s vision and stressed the importance of realising and implementing the goals set in motion. Since then FAIR has seen representation and attendance at a number of conferences and events on both a UK and European level. Among the Conferences attended in 2006 are: Conference for European Imams and Religious Advisors, Vienna, April 06; Challenging Stereotypes in Europe and the Islamic World, Wilton Park, London, May 06; Conference on Racism, Xenophobia and the Media, Vienna, May 06; Roundtable Meeting on Representation of Muslims in Public Discourse, Warsaw, May 06. FAIR’s future strategy will also focus on the importance of education in developing critical awareness of the issues of Islamophobia and racism with a view to developing the ethos of a multicultural society based on equality, respect and trust for all citizens.

ISLAMOPHOBIA TRAINING AND RESOURCE PACK

As part of its focus on education, FAIR is currently working on producing an Islamophobia Training & Resource Pack for use in UK primary and secondary schools and is currently in discussion with a European organisation to publish these packs. This Islamophobia resource pack would be the first of its kind and FAIR has already received requests from schools and colleges across the UK for copies of the pack upon completion. FAIR aims to hold training seminars across the UK for teachers and educational staff on how best to utilise the resource packs. This resource pack aims at being an invaluable resource for teaching the subjects of Religious Education and/or Citizenship. The purpose of this pack is to raise awareness of and challenge Islamophobia at all levels. We hope thereby to also promote a more balanced picture of Islam and Muslims in Britain and a deeper appreciation of the challenges Muslims face in British society. We hope this will in turn enable users of this pack to identify and challenge Islamophobia wherever they see it in the future. A similar and successful project is the 1001 Inventions Teacher’s Pack produced by Dr. Salim al-Hassani; a unique UK based educational teaching pack to support teachers in the classroom environment. It includes science activities for 11-16 year olds as part of the Science National Curriculum and maps relevant Islamic discoveries and principles of the national curriculum for secondary schools.

MUSLIMS ON EDUCATION POSITION PAPER

The Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS UK) in association with The Forum Against Islamophobia & Racism (FAIR), FED2000 (For Education & Development) and The Muslim College London UK, launched their position paper entitled “Muslims on Education” at the House of Lords on 9th June 2004. The hosts for this launch were the Rt. Hon. Baroness Uddin of Bethnal Green and the late Dr. Sheikh Zaki Badawi KBE OBE. The Minister of State for Schools David Miliband MP was also in attendance and took questions following addresses by the Rt. Hon. Baroness Uddin, Dr. Sheikh Zaki Badawi, Dr. Anas al-Shaikh Ali, Mohammed Siddique Seddon, and Dr. Nasim Butt. The paper was developed to initiate discussion between the Department for Education and Skills (DFES) and representatives from the Muslim Community, to help facilitate the formulation, development and implementation of an inclusive educational strategy for the UK.

A copy of the position paper can be downloaded from the FAIR website.

For information or if you have something to report/contribute contact:
FAIR, P.O.Box 784, Richmond, Surrey TW9 2LS
Tel: 020 894 00100
fair@fairuk.org www.fairuk.org
British Muslims: Media Guide describes Britain’s Muslim communities, their history, present and future.

Published by the British Council, and Association of Muslim Social Scientists (UK)
Buy the Book or Download the book: www.counterpoint-online.org/index.html
isbn 0-86355-569-1 PRICE: £5.00

British Muslims: Media Guide by Ehsan Masood is a brand new publication launched on 22 May 2006. The book describes Britain’s Muslim communities, their history, their present and future.

British Muslims: Media Guide describes Britain’s Muslim communities, their history, present and future.
Encouraged from the beginning by the late Dr. Zaki Badawi, the British Council, the Association of Muslim Social Scientists and partners have published it to strengthen international understanding of the diverse nature of Britain today. It is written in the belief that a detailed and many-sided understanding of communities within British society gives us all a fuller, more subtle, and more accurate picture of Britain, its faiths and cultures. Intended as a reference source for journalists, British Muslims: Media Guide will also prove an invaluable resource to anyone who writes about, speaks about, or interacts with Muslims, both in Britain and abroad.

EHSAN MASOOD IS A WRITER AND JOURNALIST

LORD KINNOCK — Chair, British Council
Extract from the Introduction

“A joint enterprise of the British Council and a number of Muslim organisations, the book is written in the belief that much hostility and negativity is founded in, and fostered by, misunderstanding. It is neither paranoid nor rose-tinted. It does not presume that agreement in all things is possible; but it does work on the basis that disagreement – as long as it is shaped by sound knowledge rather than prejudice – can be useful, constructive, civilised and civilising for the whole of our society. Those in Britain and around the world who write about this country and its people sometimes need reminding that ‘we’ include almost two million Muslims. This is the basis of a new sense of ourselves – even perhaps a much-debated new sense of ‘Britishness’ – and it is important to ensure that it includes all of us. As the cartoons arguments and consequent tragedies have unfolded in recent weeks, we have seen how brittle the inclusiveness of European societies can be, and how superficial the understanding of the rights and responsibilities of freedom. But we have also been reminded that those of us who are Muslims hold as many different opinions as do those of us who are not. In sending this book out into the world, therefore, I reflect that we are a nation that has been long changed and much influenced by migration, and often for the better. At our best, we offer the world a model of a free and open society in which we believe passionately, a society in which rights are defended and promoted, but in which restraint is also prized.”

MARTIN ROSE — Director, Counterpoint, Brit.Council
DR. ANAS S. AL SHAIKH-ALI – Chair, AMSS (UK)
Extract from the Preface

“This book addresses those who write, and speak, about British Muslims, whether in our own country or abroad. The editorial process has thrown up many issues, some predictable, some surprising, some tricky – but all of them constructive. We ourselves feel that we understand better than at the beginning of the project how our partners think, what they hope for and what they fear. Mutual knowledge and friendship has paid dividends in a book that neither of us could have published, in this form, without the other. ...The fears, insecurities and misunderstandings of recent years can be addressed by a new and more generous understanding of what we mean when we use the word ‘us’...”
immense efforts. The evening ended with telling words of gratitude from Dr. Badawi himself, who reminded the audience that this should not just be a celebration of his life, but of the progress and achievements of the British Muslim community. In his inspiring speech, Dr. Badawi spoke of how he had helped to nurture a confident British Muslim identity over the decades and how far the community had come from the days when he first conveyed this message. It came as no surprise then that his closing remarks were met with a standing ovation when he ended the evening by declaring that, “The British Muslim community has arrived!”

Fusing the best of Islamic knowledge with the best of western thought and armed with a resultant uncanny understanding of the peculiar needs and requirements of the Muslim community attempting to straddle with practicality the two realities of their lives, Dr. Badawi arguably became best known for his role as Principal of The Muslim College, a place and achievement which he cherished greatly and a base to which he fondly returned after his many speaking engagements throughout the world.

Founded in 1987 as a religious academic institution specialising in the study of Islam, its culture and history, it was an idea born on his arrival at the Islamic Cultural Centre in 1978, where after holding a conference for all Imams in Britain to acquaint himself with their work and explore ways of cooperation he set to work and found that few of them spoke English; a village imam being imported into Britain is a disastrous thing, particularly for the youth, he opined. Ever the realist his solution was to establish the Muslim College, which began functioning in 1990. With great foresight he set about training Imams in public speaking, to give sermons which are relevant and entertaining, as well as training them in counseling and other skills. Also introduced to students were what have come today to be indispensible skills required of Muslims: journalism, mass media, teacher-training etc.

Dr. Badawi has also been an integral part of the Association of Muslim Social Scientists UK since its inception in 1996. A founding member of the Association as well as long time member of its Executive Committee he was a strong and guiding force behind its growth and development; his wisdom and input have been a deep loss to the organization.

Dr. Badawi’s consistently clear message and decades of unflagging hard work have borne fruit. Leaving behind him the legacy of a confident British Muslim identity he has also greatly furthered the cause of interfaith dialogue and understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims both in the UK and abroad.

May Allah have mercy on his soul and may He bless our Ummah with more men and scholars of his ability and calibre.

AMSS Membership

IF YOU WISH TO BECOME A MEMBER OF THE AMSS UK PLEASE CONTACT US OR DOWNLOAD THE APPLICATION FORM FROM OUR WEBSITE: WWW.AMSSUK.COM

Members will be given:
- discounts on registration fees for all AMSS (UK) conferences;
- a free subscription to our quarterly journal, AJISS; and
- a free subscription to Islamiyat al Marifah (journal for arabic speakers);
- full voting rights.

Regular Members £25.00
Students (and concessions) £12.50

Pluralism and Recognition Conference

IIT France and UNESCO Jointly Organise The Annual Cross Disciplinary & Interdisciplinary International Congress Conference for 2006

June 22-24, 2006
Unesco, Auditorium, France

In partnership with AMSS UK and a host of European institutes and organisations this important conference covered issues of tolerance, coexistence & recognition; plural identities mutation in a globalizing context; resolution of conflicts, consolidation of peace and dialogue perspectives; freedom of belief and responsibility; and pluralism facing the violence cultures.

For further information please contact:
iiitfrance@iiit.org
www.iiitfrance.net

NEMRO

Network for European Muslim Research Organisations

The AMSS (UK) and SETA (Turkey) have led an initiative to create a Network for European Muslim Research Organisations. The aim of the network is to coordinate between various research organisations to work together, support each other, and coordinate activities. The By-Laws are currently being drafted to be followed by a first meeting. Among other founding members are the Centre for Advanced Studies, Sarajevo, IIIT (UK), AMSS France, AMSS Germany and several others.
Could you give us a brief account of your view of knowledge?
I view knowledge as one and I believe it is time for multi-disciplinarity which means we must study more than one discipline deeply. I completed my PhD in Systems Engineering and then studied at Al-Azhar for an M.A in Maqasid al-Shariah. I have borrowed methods for thinking from Systems engineering and have applied them to Islamic Studies. I use the ideas of systems philosophy in the field of fiqh as Systems philosophy takes a holistic approach to the world and current usul studies need this. For example Systems philosophy has levels of ‘why?’ which we can use when looking at various rulings in the Law, also applying the theory of multidimensionality which involves looking at Islamic scripts in various dimensions. The concept of purposefulness in Systems philosophy aims at defining the structure of any given system which can also be applied in the field of fiqh.

What activities is the Centre involved in?
The Centre has been established recently but focuses on publishing books, organising lectures, seminars and conferences. Hopefully by next year we will start publishing a journal and presenting awards. We convene various types of courses aimed at different audiences. Recently at the University of Alexandria in Egypt we organised a course specifically for lawyers and judges. Last month we organised a course in Canada for students of Islamic studies and Imams.

What do you think scholars today need to do and do you sense change occurring?
Scholars need to study various disciplines. They need to understand the world they live in. Historically this was a norm, a scholar like Ibn Rushd was a doctor, philosopher and a faqih, al-Ghazali was a judge as well as a faqih. This enabled them to be broad minded in dealing with issues they encountered. I urge students to study at least on an introductory level various disciplines. This is starting to happen, people are organising introductory courses on sociology and other subjects. However we need to also begin indepth study of other philosophies, advanced studies of political sciences etc. The development of Islamic political science has halted at the 10th Century with the work of Al-Mawardi. We need to study and develop it bringing it to the current age, i.e. political science is traditionally based on the idea of Shura but we must now consider developments which have occurred in other areas and how they may effect this concept.

What changes do you hope to see in the field of fiqh?
In the long run I hope see to modernization in fiqh and Islamic thought in general via maqasid al-Shariah. We need to develop a new method of reading the Islamic scripts so that we are able to deal with new realities and change. We need to return to the principle Islamic sources and apply this new methodology.
Islamophobia: The Long Term and Effective Solution is in Education

SHIRAZ KHAN.

I believe that the only true education comes through the stimulation of the child’s powers by the demands of the social situations in which he finds himself. Through these demands he is stimulated to act as a member of a unity, to emerge from his original narrowness of action and feeling, and to conceive of himself from the standpoint of the welfare of the group to which he belongs.

John Dewey’s famous declaration concerning education. First published in The School Journal, Volume LIV, Number 3 (January 16, 1897), pages 77-80.

The rise of Islamophobia as a real, legitimised and oftentimes, unconscious response to a huge, worldwide focus on Islam and Muslims as spreaders of violence, is a disturbing trend gaining greater ground and momentum. With every newspaper it seems that goes to print and every news item that goes on air we are bombarded with a language, often using the backdrop and rhetoric of war in a battle of ideas that has been portraying a version of Islam and its peoples wholly at variance with reality. What results is a subconscious racism towards a loosely defined enemy who once barbaric is now sophisticated with nuclear capability and chemical know-how.

Of interest in the arena of public opinion is the path that legitimacy takes from perhaps onetime unacceptable points of view to within a fairly short space of time, widely divergent opinions. Investigation reveals how we think as a people, how we think as nations, how we define ourselves in relation to one another, and how we react with an almost herd mentality when the right sequence of buttons are pushed. In today’s world, the “other” when he becomes “the enemy” is in a very precarious position indeed, especially if he lives, works, and interacts with those whose beliefs are undergoing negative metamorphosis. With intellectual stamina and critical opinion at its lowest ebb, (and conversely the art of manipulation at its most exquisite) we have a situation whereby what we imagine to be deeply held, soundly reasoned opinions can easily be the outcome of media focus, sensationalism, and non-critical evaluation, nothing more than us repeating what is repeated to us, with the foolish notion that our opinions have been formed independently. Levels of Islamophobia are thus able to rise and without a sense of guilt, legitimised and prompted reactions, underscored by lip service journalism doing the thinking for us; such that there seems to be an almost perverse pleasure in revelling in the greatness of our noble values as opposed to the brutality of theirs.

Thinking critically does not happen naturally, given the barrage of misinformation out there, but takes homework, reading outside of the box, finding alternative sources, knowing that one should find alternative sources, going through opposing opinions before deciding yes, this is the correct version of things etc. Not only do people not have the time or the inclination, but they also seem to think that truth can be summed up in three word sentences, Osama did it, WMD, axis of evil…. This is strange logic and really underscores the fact that we do not live in an age of intelligent discrimination.

Thinking critically or being intellectually aware is a skill, it therefore needs to be learned, nurtured, developed, and strengthened through training, and practice. In short it needs to be part of the education system and something that the famous educator John Dewey believed in greatly and integrated into his own school curricula, and a point to which I will come back later.

Islamophobia is not a phase, and by no means will it run its course or peter out. It is real, out there and growing. In events designed to stem this growing anger in people, and in the plethora of conferences and seminars that are mushrooming in seemingly all Muslim and especially non-Muslim academic circles, there is an underlying sense of urgency: urgency, because the repercussions are grave, the propaganda relentless, the finger of accusation pointed firmly and with confidence, and the outcome global. The interesting and personally I think dangerous element of Islamophobia is the confidence with which this attitude is held and the false logic with which it is disseminated. Arch manipulators are forcing a hand of which they seem dimly oblivious.

There have been a large number of research initiatives on the topic of Islamophobia which confirm much of what has been said and many of
these agree with the statement that any strategy to combat extremism must depend heavily on Educational, Media, Governmental and Public institutions that have an important role and responsibility to play in addressing the problem of Islamophobia and in creating an environment free from racism and religious intolerance.

Dr. Anas al Shaikh-Ali has conducted detailed research on this paper war, focusing on the rise and rise of popular fiction novels, gracing most airport terminals if anyone cares to look, whose plot lines fill contemporary society with constant negative images absorbed by billions. They are not called best sellers for nothing, and their rabid anti-Islamic plot lines/characters would put right wing propaganda to shame. Current Islamophobia, he writes, as a general visualization of the “other”, seeps into the uninformed conscious through “the weight and power of mass incultation via the media, newspapers and magazines, chat shows, Hollywood movies, computer games, contemporary popular fiction, young people fiction, historical fiction, romances, science fiction and even the reprinting of sixteenth century pornographic novels such as The Lustful Turk which has been reprinted again and again during the last few decades and even produced as a play.” His research includes an alarming collection of book covers whose themed images plunder the worst of racist chic (scantily clad Muslim woman spy holding gun) and right wing clichés (nuclear bombs in front of mosques) etc. As he very rightly points out, and something which the manipulators of emotions know very well indeed, the mind can and will absorb an idea or an image, with everything that it entails, in a fraction of a second. In a fraction of a second the word “Muslim” or “Islam” can conjure up an image, awareness and a whole body of ideas that a hundred thousand words could not convey, manoeuvring consumers like chess pieces to achieve desired outcomes. Unless of course the mind is aware of the great game, and has been taught to think critically and intelligently.

We should therefore appreciate the strength and magnitude of what is out there but the real question is what can we do?

One area of vital importance, and the subject of this paper is Education. In his presentation on “Islamophobia and Popular Discourse” (on behalf of FAIR and AMSS UK) at the Round Table Meeting on Representation of Muslims in Popular Discourse organised by OSCE, (the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe) and ODHIR (the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights) held in Warsaw on 9th May 2006, Dr. Anas al Shaikh-Ali stressed the importance of education as one of the most effective solutions on which we need to focus, if for no other reason than that it encompasses a long term strategy as opposed to the often short term nature of the many other recommendations on offer.

To effect lasting change on all levels we need to educate at all levels. Our children as they grow suffer from layer upon layer of negative opinions drifting and growing like undisturbed snow, moulding their very thoughts and behaviour. There is little being taught as counter balance. The education system produces the future teachers, policy makers, politicians, artists, writers and media experts, etc. Therefore, the values of humanitarianism, morality, citizenship, peaceful coexistence, revulsion of racism and discrimination, acceptance of the other should be married to actively taught skills of critical thinking, and awareness, forming part of our national curriculum. Thinking critically allows children to become intelligent, aware, thinking members of society, not mental doormats, whose opinions are swayed easily by the wheeling out of suited “experts” to back an opinion, which then by association with suit, tie, and Phd is assumed to be correct. Extremism results from ignorance and a very cavalier attitude to the great work of humanity, to reach out and live in harmony and trust. Not only must we aim to create sound individuals who can think critically and with awareness, we must also seek to go beyond to create within them a culture of respect. We must aim to create a culture of understanding and trust not of toleration. This is an important distinction. Tolerance is dangerous, it is like a thin crust, which separates reason from violence, and neither community will fully live at ease with one another in this status quo. Unless we understand how to stop the anger being deliberately provoked on both sides that thin crust will crack. It is largely through education that a change can be made.

Certain important developments have been made, small but important steps in the right direction. Various minority groups have begun to produce educational packs to be used within schools as an intelligent attempt to promote race equality in the early years. Pupils are given various religious, cultural and historical perspectives of the communities within which they live and taught to view them and differences in cultures as the norm of modern human societies.

The Muslims for their part have produced the 1001 Inventions Teacher's Pack a unique UK based educational teaching pack to support teachers and the classroom environment. It includes science activities for 11-16 year olds as part of the Science National Curriculum and maps relevant historical Islamic scientific and technological discoveries and principles of the national curriculum for secondary schools. In addition, the British Council in cooperation with mainstream Muslim organisations such as the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS UK) has recently launched a landmark publication,
British Islam: Media Guide, describing Britain’s Muslim community, its past, present and future, its culture, the issues it faces etc. intended as a reference source for journalists, those involved in the media, and anyone who communicates about Islam, teachers included, to create a more informed understanding of Islam and Muslims as they live, work, and interact in Britain. FAIR, the Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism, has contributed to a number of major conferences and events related to issues of Islamophobia, xenophobia, and racism and is currently beginning work on a major project to produce educational material in partnership with UK and European organisations to provide material for use in primary and secondary schools. As our future lies in the young, packs such as these allow our children to be educated in the value and importance of all cultures. They form an important first step in giving our children a solid foundation. However, this is not enough. Only through, informed, and long term training and education through the national curriculum can effective change in mentality and attitude be developed. Education is the fundamental motive force of reform. The beauty of this approach is that unlike other subjects, which incorporate facts which once learned are quickly forgotten disconnected from the real world, this is an area that is immediately put into context, material learned and immediately applied, as one interacts with Omar, or Yasmin in the playground, or watches imagery on television. In other words it becomes part of real world experiences and the start of a life long development. The 21st century pupil should therefore not only be literate in the traditional subjects for future economic success, but also literate in the values of multiculturalism, pluralism, and citizenship; in other words a thinking, successful member and contributor to society, and humanity in general.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Muslims of Europe Conference:
Challenges & Opportunities,
1-2 July 2006, Turkey

Muslims have lived in Europe for more than one thousand years. Until the last twenty years or so, their presence has largely been unnoticed and unquestioned. It is only as numbers have increased that their presence has posed challenges to perceptions of what it is to be European. The debate has taken dramatic form because of terrorist attacks in Istanbul, Madrid and London and because of the murder of Dutch film maker Theo Van Gogh and the riots in France. These events and the growing gulf of understanding between citizens are highlighting the urgent need to address these issues publicly: to address the problems Muslims are facing in becoming part of European society and to address the misperceptions that some in Europe have about the implications of welcoming a Muslim presence in Europe.

In addition the publication of cartoons demonising the Prophet Mohammed pbuh across Europe and the violent reactions this has provoked amongst Muslims living in Europe and the Middle East, has thrown into sharp relief issues surrounding tolerance and understanding. As the Observer newspaper in Britain said on 5 February 2006: “...two conversations were happening: one where journalists and politicians debated freedom of expression and one where Muslims talked about the rights and wrongs of depicting the Prophet. But the two conversations took place far apart from one another and the gap is too easily exploited by religious extremists and racists. For a broader dialogue to happen, we must state clearly and often that Muslims can also be Europeans. This is not a clash of civilisations. We have a common interest in being vigilant against Islamophobia and in standing up to the advocates of terror”.

The objectives of this conference were to highlight these issues, discuss common interests and start a broader dialogue. The focus for this conference was “Europe” because there is a common legacy of migration, minority status and culture that is distinct and because there is still a lack of a comprehensive, inclusive and open arena to bring together Muslim intellectuals and leaders from various ethnic and linguistic backgrounds and engage them in formal discussion to look at some of the most pertinent issues that face European society vis-à-vis the Muslim community.

Topics of the Conference included:
- Integration
- Combating Extremism
- Religion, Secularism and European society
- European/Western Muslim identity/ citizenship
- Institution building and political representation
- Leadership and authority in the community
- Islamophobia and media representation.

Further details:
http://www.muslimsofeurope.com
Course on Methodology 2005-2006

Jointly organised by AMSS (UK), International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), and The Muslim College

This course on Methodology was held at the Muslim College from November 2005 to February 2006.

The course focused on three topic areas: Issues in Methodology; Methodology in Dealing with the Qur’an; and Methodology in Dealing with the Sunnah; the objective being to alert scholars, students, researchers and thinker to a new and beneficial approach to the study of the fundamental sources of our faith. For too long now the Qur’an and the Sunnah, great sources of strength, purity, knowledge and inspiration have not been tapped. Skirting their peripheries or over-dwelling on one or two of their multifarious facets has done a dis-service to their immense potential. It was felt that now that Muslims are increasingly becoming aware of their intellectual crisis, revisiting these two sources would be essential. Hence the course aimed to recon-gise the need to develop a contemporary methodology for dealing with the Qur’an, the Sunnah, and human heritage.

Earlier generations derived their guidance from them and today there is a near universal call for new Ijtihad to meet contemporary chal-lenges, one of the ways to achieve this being through a new methodology to help study the Qur’an and Sunnah as the foundation for the building of human civilization.

It is obvious, therefore, that examining the issue of methodology is crucial, focusing attention on the ever changing nature of human society and the role Islam can play in steering towards moral and spiritual goals.

Names of Lecturers and Titles of the Lectures Presented

Sheikh M.A. Badawi
Methodology: An Historical Perspective and Contemporary Development

Dr. Mahdi Zahraa
Sensitive Nature of Islamic Shari’ah and the choice of Research Methods

Dr. Ruyaia Jabir
Towards a New Methodology of Dealing with the Qur’an

Dr. Faisal Hamid
History of Sunnah Methodology in South Asia

Dr. Gasser Auda
‘Maqasid al-Shariah: Methodology of Understanding & Application’

Dr. Bassam Saeh
Reading the Qur’an with new Eyes

Mushtaq Parker
On Islamic Finance

Sheikh Bin Bays
How to Deal with the “Other”

Dr. Anas al Shaikh-Ali
Methodology for an Effective Muslim Discourse in the West

DISCOVER THE MUSLIM HERITAGE IN OUR WORLD

1001 Inventions

Experience a thousand years of missing history; learn about a lost age of Muslim innovation and invention; discover the Muslim origins of many Western discoveries. A unique UK based educational project that reveals the rich heritage that the Muslim community share with other communities in the UK and Europe.

1001 Inventions is a non-religious and non-political project seeking to allow the positive aspects of progress in science and technology to act as a bridge in understanding the interde-pendence of communities throughout human history.

1001 Inventions consists of a UK-wide travelling exhibition, a colourful easy to read book, a dedicated website and a themed collection of educational posters complementing a secondary school teachers’ pack.

www.1001inventions.com
information@1001inventions.com

AMSS (UK) ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2007

The Politics of Islam

Date and Venue to be announced
This conference aims to consider the notion of Citizenship and Security as they relate to democracy and freedom and welcomes participants to the event, critical issues given the events in the US and UK. Global political upheavals have created an insatiable demand for studies, information and analysis of Islam and Muslims. However, mass media, politics, and popular culture are attempting to homogenise the great diversity of the Muslim experience, representing the Muslim community in monolithic terms. The conference calls upon researchers to avail themselves of the great opportunity to explore Islam and the Muslim presences in Europe and abroad.

Topics will centre on the following themes:

1) Citizenship: New Paradigms and Challenges
   - Challenges of plural citizenship.
   - Status of minorities in multicultural societies in a transnational world.
   - Transnational Muslim organisations
   - Political participation of Muslims in Europe and USA
   - Muslim women citizenship, empowerment, and discrimination.
   - From tolerance to recognition: The processes of integration within the integrity of collective identities.
   - Faith and secularism.
   - Muslim youth: Experiences, realities and challenges.
   - Islamic ethics across multiple cultures in a global environment.
   - European models of unity: cultural and political challenges.
   - Turkey’s cultural identity and EU membership.

2) Security, Violence and Peace
   - Security, Integration and Muslim minorities.
   - Alternatives to violence: Dissent in civil society.
   - Communities’ conflict and coexistence.
   - Security and Islamophobia.
   - Terrorism and extremism in Muslim societies.
   - Violence: transnational and national.
   - State violence and urban violence
   - Islamophobia in the Muslim World?
   - Intercultural and interfaith dialogue and the future of peace.
   - The Muslim world and the West: New paradigms of communication based on mutual respect and human peace.

3) Democracy, democratisation: Prospects for Civil Society
   - Unity without unification in future cross-cultural society.
   - Models for peace in fundamental texts of faiths and cultures.
   - Muslim scholars in the West: prospects for renewal and mediation.
   - Imagining a Europe with Turkey.
   - Revival and reform in a fragmented Muslim world
   - Europe and the Middle East: Historical and strategic issues.
   - The Nation-state and its Future.
   - The experience (s) of democracy in Muslim countries.
   - Democracy and democratisation: Imposition or persuasion?
AWARDS

AMSS (UK) 2003
Lifetime Achievement Award

In February 2004, at the 5th Annual AMSS (UK) conference, Fiqh Today, held at the University of Westminster, London, the AMSS 2003 Lifetime Achievement Award was awarded to Professor Edward Said in recognition of his outstanding scholarly contributions and intellectual engagement. The award was presented by Dr. Al-Shaikh-Ali on behalf of the Executive Committee to Michel Abdul Messih, QC and eminent lawyer and Palestinian activist who was a close friend of Edward Said.

AMSS (UK) 2004
Lifetime Achievement Award

The AMSS (UK) 2004 Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to Dr. Martin Lings on 2nd May 2005 in London at The Message of the Beloved conference organized by Mahabba Unlimited to mark the occasion of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and attended by over three thousand people. A great scholar, writer, and intellectual Martin Lings had worked tirelessly to bring to light the universal message of Islam and had shown the world that Islam was a timeless message of great beauty, spirituality, intelligence and mercy.

AMSS (UK) 2004
Building Bridges Award

In February 2004, at the 5th Annual AMSS (UK) conference, Fiqh Today: Muslims as Minorities, University of Westminster, the AMSS 2003 Building Bridges Award was presented to writer and historian Dr. Karen Armstrong in recognition of her contribution towards promoting inter-faith dialogue and understanding. In accepting the award Ms. Armstrong called on participants to challenge intolerance by launching a compassionate offensive to fight misunderstanding in a creative way.

AMSS (UK) 2005
Lifetime Achievement Award

The AMSS (UK) 2005 Lifetime Achievement Award is to be given to Professor Fuat Sezgin. As the ailing professor is too ill to attend, the Award will be presented to a representative at the 6th Annual AMSS (UK) Conference, Citizenship, Security and Democracy, 1-3 September 2006. Professor Sezgin is one of the major scholars of the history of science and technology in the Islamic world, and currently the Director of the Institute of Arabic-Islamic Sciences at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt, Germany. He is one of the world’s leading authorities on Islam’s Golden Age of Science, and Muslim Cartographers, and is also one of that period’s most prolific chroniclers. He has just published three new installments of his to date 13-volume history of Arabic-Islamic science.

AMSS (UK) 2005
Building Bridges Award

The AMSS 2005 Building Bridges Award is to be presented to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Rowan Williams, at an event to be announced at a later date. The Archbishop has graciously accepted the Award which is being given to him in recognition of his work for better understanding between Faiths, and, for a wider recognition of faiths in present day Western culture. His work will generate greater understanding and awareness between communities through inter-faith dialogue and intellectual discourse.

Zaki Badawi Annual Memorial Lecture

In honour of the life and work of Sheikh Dr. M.A. Zaki Badawi O.B.E., K.B.E., the AMSS UK has established a Zaki Badawi Annual Memorial Lecture to be inaugurated in 2007. The lectures are dedicated to his vision to promote understanding, social cohesion, and multiculturalism in society, as well to raise public understanding of these important issues and promote inter-faith dialogue. Speaker, venue and date of first lecture to be announced shortly.
THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE
OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT

NEW TITLES FOR 2006

EPISTEMOLOGICAL BIAS IN THE PHYSICAL & SOCIAL SCIENCES
ed. by A. M. Elmessiri
This collection of papers aims to discover some of the biases latent in our terminology, methodologies, research tools and conceptual principles and to proere alternative ones marked by a greater degree of independence and neutrality. The book emphasizes the danger of making the West the ultimate point of reference and then trying to continuously play "catch up" with it.

APPROACHING THE SUNNAH: CONTROVERSY & COMPREHENSION
by Yusuf al-Qaradawi
The Sunnah provides the stable moral framework enabling Muslims by formal rules and an inward sense to know right from wrong. This book addresses the danger of simplistically viewed, misused and widely misinterpreted hadith. Hadith need to be approached with wisdom and understanding. The author examines what makes a hadith sound or weak, and how certain hadith are being sensationalised without understanding their evolution and development.

ISLAMIC THOUGHT: AN APPROACH TO REFORM
by Taha J. al-Alwani
A passionate call to re-employ knowledge in relation to divine revelation to challenge the worldwide positivism that has gripped all curricula in universities, schools, and all areas of education, and severed the relationship between the Creator, and His universe, driving a wedge between knowledge and God.

ISLAMIC AWAKENING BETWEEN REJECTION & EXTREMISM
by Yusuf al-Qaradawi
Under the extraordinary pressures of the economic and political challenges of the modern world, it comes as no surprise that many of our young Muslims have reacted by advocating extremist and so-called fundamentalist movements. In this thoughtful and timely book the author examines the worldwide revival of interest in Islam and articulates the wisdom of understanding both the letter and the spirit of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. (New edition)

IBN ASHUR TREATISE ON MAQASID AL-SHARIAH
tr. by M. T. al-Mesawi
Ibn Ashur's famous and pioneering study of the Shariah's higher objectives and goals. To restore the intimate contact between Muslims and the Qur'an, scholars developed the study of the objectives of Islam. The Shariah is marked by a universal wisdom whereby every legal ruling has a function which it performs, an aim which it realises, an intention which it seeks to fulfill and all of this in order to realise benefit to human beings or to ward off harm or corruption.

VARIANT READINGS OF THE QUR'AN: A CRITICAL STUDY OF THEIR HISTORICAL & LINGUISTIC ORIGINS
by A. Ali al-Imam
A study of the authenticity of the Qur'an, examining the history and evolution of the seven qur'as in which the Qur'an has been revealed and the developments leading to the completion of the Uthmani mudafi, the origins of the qur'as, the signs of vocalization and dotting etc. and the surge in linguistics which the Revelation set into motion. (New edition)

IIIT DISTRIBUTORS
- THE ISLAMIC FOUNDATION, RAITBY LANE, MARKFIELD, LEICESTER, LE67 9SY, UK. TEL: 0800 783 3146; FAX: 01552 249 230; publicatioins@islamicfoundation.com.
- IIIT, MARKETING MANAGER, 500 GROVE STREET, HERNDON, VA 20170-4735, USA. TEL: 001 703 471 1733; FAX: 703 471 2922; sales@iiit.org / www.iiit.org
The International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) is a private, non-profit, academic and cultural institution, concerned with general issues of Islamic thought. The Institute was established in the United States in 1981 (1401 AH). It is independent of local politics, party orientations and ideological biases. The Institute is an intellectual forum working from an Islamic perspective to promote and support research projects, organize intellectual and cultural meetings and publish scholarly works. It has established a distinct intellectual trend in Islamic thought which relates to the vivid legacy of the Ummah (Muslim nation), and its continuous efforts of intellectual and methodological reform. This involves a large number of researchers and scholars from various parts of the world.

Islamic Studies in American Universities Project

A database on Islamic studies in American universities has been compiled. An analysis of over a hundred introductory courses on Islam (Islam 101) was completed; detailed interviews and group conversations on the state of Islamic studies in American universities were conducted, and case studies of fourteen Islamic studies programs in major American universities are being conducted during the current and final phase of the project.

Values in Education Conference (Spring 2007)

This project deals with the current crisis in American education. It explores both the faith-based and the secular approaches to teaching values in education and presents case studies on topics such as promoting race equality, gender issues, sexuality, civility and citizenship, national and religious identity and the environment. The IIIT is approaching a Catholic University to co-sponsor the conference and targeting the Spring of 2007 for possible dates.

Promoting Race Equality in the US Project

This project is intended to produce educational material on promoting race equality that could be used both in American schools up to grade 12 and in community settings or programs. A paper/presentation on the issue is also planned for the Values in Education conference scheduled for Spring 2007. Discussions are underway regarding the structure of the project, method of research and possible partners and participants.

Abrogation Theories & Their Impact on Islamic Thought

This project is a critical study of the different approaches to abrogation that aims at developing a more informed understanding of the application of abrogation (naskh) as it is used in exegetical works.

For further information on these projects or the work of the Institute please contact:

International Institute of Islamic Thought
500 Grove Street, Herndon
VA 20170, USA
Tel: 703-471-1133
Fax: 703-471-3922
E-mail: iiit@iiit.org
www.iiit.org
The 20th century may very well come to be considered the “age of hyper-specialization.” Through the increasing division of labor—both economic and intellectual—humans have certainly made enormous progress. We see the acceleration of specialization not only in industry, but in higher education as well. Does hyper-specialization, however, with its intensification of complexity and multiplication of information, also produce significant problems? Does it—and must it—lead to disintegration, a fracturing of knowledge, of culture, and of the soul? What impact has hyper-specialization had on education? And what are its implications for that which goes by the name of “science and religion dialogue”?

Today, universities are divided into a dizzying array of academic departments and research centres. There seem to be no guiding threads to tie together the various disciplines or even the classical divisions between the natural, social, and human sciences, let alone the discoveries of science and the insights of religion. University curricula tend to be little more than cafeteria menus of disparate courses, with no genuine attempt at a synthesis—intellectual or existential. Taking a disconnected set of courses is supposed to constitute an “education,” but it remains unfulfilling unless we can begin to say what it is we know now that we know so many disciplinarily distinct things. Thus, the challenge of the 21st century will be to integrate or synthesize the exponential growth in human knowledge into a meaningful whole. It’s not that specialization needs to be overcome; it’s that individuals, communities, and civilization in general will need to develop the complementary means by which to appropriate and take the measure of all particular expertise, to synthesize the theoretical and the practical, to find ways to integrate the scientific, the technological, the philosophical, the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious. Is that any longer possible? Can we regain an ability, a facility or adeptness, at taking the whole into our most profound concern?

Papers are invited that address the broad themes specified in the website, but the conference is open to critically rigorous, scientifically, theologically, and philosophically informed papers on any topics that touch on profound questions of a transdisciplinary nature.

IIIT USA have been invited and are contributing to the conference.

For further information please contact amssuk.