

ASSOCIATION OF MUSLIM SOCIAL SCIENTISTS (UK)

NEWSLETTER

ISSUE NO.4 • 2001

LEADER

Islam & The Shadow of Post-Modernism

ONE WAY IN WHICH ISLAM IS characterised is in opposition to post-modernism. It is suggested that post-modernism, with its promiscuous play of words and meaning and its fancy invitations that proclaim that 'anything goes', stands in stark contrast to the puritan certainties of Islam. Too often such a division depends on a rather clichéd understanding of both Islam and post-modernism. What I want to try out here is a different way of thinking about the relationship between the two.

Post-modernism is a very slippery concept. It is used by the fashionable as a badge of pride, by the doggedly down-to-earth as a term of abuse, and by the thoughtful only in quotation marks. In general, there seems to be a consensus that what it means is a 'suspicion towards meta-narratives'. In other words, post-modernism encourages us to be sceptical of the claims made by various humans to have discovered the royal road to wisdom. Another way of seeing post-modernism is to see it as the 'de-centring of the West'. That is, post-modernism is a (belated) recognition that claims made by modernity

are in many ways, less like reflections of universal truths and more like narcissistic fantasies. Post-modernism reveals the limits of modernity's intellectual, moral and cultural mastery.¹ It puts into question the idea that the 'West is best'.

In general, people, who are apologists for the West, favour the first definition, since it seems to obscure the second. It is difficult, however, to imagine how one could be suspicious of meta-narratives without a de-centring of the West, since the most powerful narrative of the last 200 years has been the one that told the tale of the West's destiny. With this in mind then, I would suggest that it is more useful for Muslims to understand post-modernism as the de-centring of the West, since one consequence of such a de-centring is the possibility of making Islam relevant and not a mere ethnographic exhibit or fast-fading superstition, but, rather, a vibrant set of ideas and practices, histories and future possibilities.

Throughout, the Muslim world, one of the major effects of presuming that 'West is best' has been the displacement of Islam from the centre of public life.

AMSS (UK)
3rd Annual Conference

Unity & Diversity: Islam, Muslims and the Challenge of Pluralism

21-22 OCTOBER 2001

Hosted by THE DIPLOMATIC
ACADEMY OF LONDON
UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER

Call for Papers

This conference sets out to critically analyze and explore Islam's relationship to the concepts of unity, diversity and pluralism. In doing so, it seeks to make a positive and constructive contribution to the challenges faced by modern Muslim communities. Papers are invited from all social and human science disciplines. Contributors are urged to submit abstracts of around 300 words.

TOPICS AND THEMES

- Theological & Historical Perspectives
- Psycho-Spiritual Perspectives
- Political Philosophical Perspectives
- Socio-Legal Perspectives
- Economic Perspectives
- Educational Perspectives
- Inter-Faith & Inter-Community Relations
- Cultural & Artistic Expressions
- Gender Issues
- Human Dignity, Human Rights & Social Responsibility

Deadline for abstracts extended to:

1st June 2001

Final papers to be submitted by:

Islam and the Shadow of Post-Modernism

It was thought that to be successful one had to abandon or marginalise one's faith in Allah. The recent heightening of Muslim sensibilities is a testimony to the way in which Islam can no longer be held back by a belief in the inherent superiority of West. There are those who would say: 'yes, yes it's all very well to talk about the effect of post-modernism on the relationship between Islam and the West, but what if post-modernism attacks the very foundations of Islam? What happens if the 'suspicion of meta-narratives' turns into cynicism towards the Qur'an'?

Perhaps, the loss of the Khilafah has made too many of us Muslims fearful. Perhaps, the sight of so much Muslim blood being shed in so many different places makes us worry about the future of Islam itself. There are, however, three responses one could make to calm these fears:

1. Muslims have faced many attempts to eliminate them and their faith, however, if the Hulagu Khans of this world could not destroy Islam, it is unlikely that the post-modernism of the Jacques Derridas can. It is important to remember that it is only a hundred years ago there were only five nominally independent Muslim countries in the world (the Uthmani Khilafah, Afghanistan, Persia, Morocco and the Saudi territories centred around Nejd). Over 80% of Muslims were living under European control. Despite all the problems that have afflicted the Ummah in recent years, it is well to remember, if Islam could not be destroyed then, how could it be destroyed now?

2. To assume that post-modernism would have the same effect in the Muslim world as it is supposed to have had in the European world is unfounded. Not only is there a difference in terms of the unequal distribution of global

power of different historical habits, but also in terms of deep foundations. Just take two examples: The New Testament and the Qur'an are both central sacred texts in the traditions that they have founded, however, despite this similarity they are very different.

The New Testament can be seen as a kind of biography of Isa's ministry, the Qur'an, while containing some biographical details of the Prophet, cannot be read as his biography. So reading the Qur'an or reading the New Testament is not the same kind of exercise and requires different skills and different critical strategies. Or take another example, in Islam, the distance between the human and the Divine is unbridgeable, it is not collapsed as it is in Christianity where the Divine is made flesh in the body of Christ (raising an interesting theological conundrum about the gendering of Divinity). Or take the transmission of the divine message in the New Testament which is mediated through four human authors (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) while the Qur'an is a product of the Divine speaking directly without human authorship. Apart from these theological-philosophical differences between Islam and Christianity, one can also find differences that are historically and socially founded. For example, modern Western societies make great (but often problematic) claims for the necessity of secularism as a means of securing civic peace. Given the experience of hundred year wars of religion (1534-1648) in which conflict between the Protestants and Catholics ripped through most West European societies, one can understand why Westerners should think that the only way to get along is to treat religion as private affair - something one does on the quiet. In Muslim societies you will not find similar systemic and sustained violent confrontations between Shias and Sunnis and/or other sects (that is not to say that

there are no sectarian conflicts in Muslim history - but only that their intensity and duration were altogether of a different order than the conflict between the forces of the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation). There are, of course, many other examples of different histories and different traditions, and all of these examples point to ways in which one could not assume automatically that what happens in the West, will happen in Islam with similar effects.

3. One cannot legislate against cynicism; if Muslims become cynical and opportunistic towards their faith, it will not be because of post-modernism. Cynicism is a product of political dis-empowerment; it arises when one cannot imagine a future that is better for all, so one tries to work only for oneself. It is this retreat from public participation to private concerns which is what breeds cynicism. Social problems are de-politicised and presented as ethnical challenges. The search for 'a good society' is sacrificed for the cultivation of 'good Muslims' who can do without society. This ethnical replacement of politics leads to the emergence of Muslim monks who find the Ummah irredeemably corrupt. This monasticism is strange considering that Muslims tend to proclaim that 'Islam is a total way of life' - but the life that is envisioned by these monks seems hollow - full of rituals, empty of ideals and often cut-off from reality. A total way of life that does not have room for public participation and contestation, and that does not recognise the rich tapestry of its own past, is neither total nor even a way of life. Rather than railing against post-modernism, it maybe more useful to invest our energies in reclaiming Muslim history. It is knowledge of the past that allows you to build hopes for the future, and the only antidote to cynicism is the idea of a hopeful future. In recent years Usama bin Laden has joined America's ever-

reinforcing use of super-villains, his influence is seen behind every opposition to American policy in the Muslim world. The personification and demonisation of Usama bin Laden is one way in which the political and imperial objectives of American foreign policy are neglected and forgotten. Bin Laden's 'terrorism' is the means by which American actions become innocent and humanitarian. Similarly, post-modernism is used by some Muslims as a way of avoiding politics, like Usama bin Laden, post-modernity is difficult to get hold of, it is largely unknown, but seems to have an influence which is out of proportion to the number of its adherents. Many of the problems that are presented as post-modern threats to Islam, are, in fact, a defence of an interpretation of Islam that reduces it to being a mere theology, devoid of any sense of history. Having said all this, it is important to remember that we should not be precious about post-modernism. I am not praising post-modernism or defending post-modernism for the sake of post-modernism; post-modernism should be seen as a set of tools that may be useful in helping to clear the ground and creating a space. It is up to Muslims, to use that opening to articulate Islam with the hopes of a better future. ¹

¹ A fuller treatment of this relationship can be found in Bobby Sayyid's *A Fundamental Fear: Eurocentrism and the Emergence of Islamism*. London: Zed Press, 1997.

Dr. S. Sayyid

Dr. Sayyid is a Political theorist and lecturer at the Dept. of Sociology, University of Salford. He is also a member of the AMSS Ex. Committee.

WEBSITES

www.quran.cwc.net
An index of names and subjects that are common between the People of the Book.

www.arabicnumerals.cwc.net
Origins of the Arabic numerals.

AMSS (USA) Call For Papers

30TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE AMSS (USA) • CO-SPONSORED BY THE MUSLIMS IN THE AMERICAN PUBLIC SQUARE PROJECT (MAPS)

26-28 October 2001
University of Michigan, USA

'Religion and Public Life in the Global Epoch'

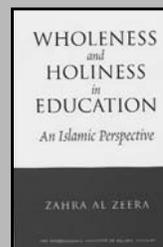
How are Muslims negotiating globalism and public life in the new millennium? What challenges and opportunities face Muslims in the public square as Muslims gain more visibility in Western societies? These are among the questions that will be addressed during the 2001 AMSS Annual Conference.

Primary emphasis will be on the following subthemes:

- Civil Society, the State & Institution Building
- Political Movements & Society
- Women & Public Space
- Educational Reform: Balancing Values & Skills
- Media and Creative Arts: Climbing out from Hedonistic & One-Dimensional Presentations
- Islam in the American Public Sphere
- Changing Relationships between State & Non-State Actors
- Islamic Philosophy & Intellectual Traditions
- Human Rights & Cross-Cultural Variations
- Religious Pluralism & Interfaith Dialogue
- Economic Liberalization: Promise of Growth or Hegemonic Disguise
- Secularism, Desecularism & Religious Consciousness

For information contact:
Coordinator, AMSS, PO Box 669
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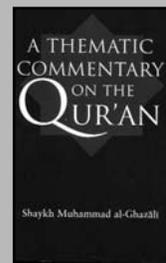


WHOLENESS & HOLINESS IN EDUCATION

An Islamic Perspective
by ZAHRA AL ZEERA

Critically examining the Western, Csecular approach to formal education the author contests the value of an education system focusing solely on the intellectual and physical aspects of human development. One interesting factor examined within the broader framework of the study is the area of female spirituality, an element, which the author argues, is vastly under-represented in prevalent Islamic literature.

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This commentary is a significant contribution to the reading of the Qur'an. Shaykh al-Ghazali's contribution is somewhat unique (and contemporary) in the sense that it focuses on the organic unity of each surah highlighting the logic or inherent reasoning that courses through the surah and unifies its various components and images.

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AMR Monthly Forum

THE QUAKER INTERNATIONAL
CENTRE, CENTRAL LONDON

The Association of Muslim
Researchers is a voluntary organisa-
tion networking professionals.

16 JUNE

Dr Anas Al-Shaikh Ali
'Islamophobia in Popular Culture'

21 JULY

Ahmed Versi
'Problems and Prospects for Muslim
Media'

For further information contact:

AMR Tel: 020 8699 1887
forum@amrnet.co.uk

There will be a small charge of £3.00
for attendance.

Refreshments will be provided. ☞

IIIT France Islamophobia Seminar

The newly established IIIT Paris
office organised the first of its series
of seminars in 2001 on 12 May. The
theme of the seminar was 'Islamopho-
bia'. Speakers included Dr. Zaki
Badawi who spoke on the idea
behind the Runnymede report on
Islamophobia and the successes
achieved since its publication; Dr.
Anas S. al Shaikh-Ali, who spoke on
Islamophobia in popular culture
and its impact on popular percep-
tions of Islam and Muslims; Dr. M.
Mestiri, Director of IIIT Paris, who
spoke on Westophobia and Dr. M.
Ghamghi who spoke on the media
and Islam in France.

The event was attended by more
than 70 scholars and postgraduates
who expressed the need for similar
work to be done in France.

The First World Congress of Middle East Studies (WOCMES)

8-13 September 2002

Centre for Research on the Arab
World (CERAW)

University of Mainz, Germany

The conference will be held as a
joint congress of the European
Association for Middle Eastern
Studies (EURAMES), the
Association Francaise pur l'Etude
du Monde Arabe et Musulman
(AFEMAM), the British Society for
Middle East Studies (BRISMES), the
German Middle East Studies
Association (DAVO) and die Societa
por gli Studi sul Medio Oriente
(SeSaMO). AMSS UK, AMSS
Germany and AMSS US will be partic-
ipating.

A wide range of topics will be dis-
cussed including:

Gender studies, Cinema and Media,
Reporting on the Middle East,
Academic Freedom in the ME,
Improving Research in the Arab
world, Urban Development, and
Tradition, Mass Culture and Social
Change in the Middle East etc.

Those interested in participating
must inform the WOCMES
Secretariat before June 1 2001.
Deadline for Abstracts: Dec. 15 2001

Congress Fees

Congress fees will be kept as low as
possible with an substantial reduc-
tion for students.

WOCMES Secretariat
Prof. Guenter Meyer & J. Thielmann
CERA World
University of Mainz

Institute of Geography
55099 Mainz,
Germany
Tel: 49 6131 3922846
Fax: 49 6131 3924736
wocmes@geo.uni-mainz.de
www.wocmes.de ☞

The Qur'an: Text, Interpretation and Translation

11-12 October 2001
SOAS, London

This conference seeks to provide a
forum for investigating the basic
question: how is the Qur'anic text to
be read, translated and interpreted?
These are some suggested areas:

- Current approaches to the teach-
ing of the Qur'an and its study
- Linguistic approaches to the
Qur'an
- Frameworks for the study of
recitation
- Issues in Qur'an translation
- Comparative approaches to Qur'an
translation studies
- The Qur'an in popular culture, the
mass media and literature
- Quranic exegesis

Contributions on relevant topics
other than those listed are also wel-
comed. The deadline for submission
of abstracts is 15 June 2001.

For further information contact:

Prof. M. Abdel Haleem
Centre of Islamic Studies
SOAS, University of London
Thonhaugh Street
Russell Square
London
WC1H 0XG
Fax: 020 7898 4379
cis@soas.ac.uk ☞

Muslim Education

Interview with Dr. Jeremy Henzell-Thomas, Director of the Curriculum Project for the Book Foundation

Could you tell us something about the Project you are coordinating?

The Curriculum Project aims to equip Muslims with the knowledge and inner substance to sustain their spiritual integrity in the contemporary world, as well as the ability to make a positive contribution to world civilisation that is consistent with Islamic values.

So is this a Project concerned with balance?

Yes - balance, and also beauty, because the two are very much interlinked in my understanding of Islam. The theme of balance was precisely the underlying theme I detected in the Muslims of Europe Conference. In a sense, that conference was already anticipating the challenge of pluralism which is the major theme of the next AMSS conference on Unity and Diversity to be held in October this year, and which will also figure as an important strand in the AMSS Education conference next year. This is balance in the sense of a dynamic interchange with what is positive in Western Civilisation, guided by an overarching Islamic perspective, not as a mediocre compromise. We must aim to strive for excellence in every domain of human endeavour.

Could you give us a flavour of one of the programs being developed in the Curriculum Project and how it aims to achieve this balance?

Yes. One of our planned programs is the Book of Contemporary Issues. I have often been struck by the limitations of most mainstream school textbooks dealing with con-

ventional and uninspiring treatments of topical issues without any reference to a spiritual perspective which would enable students to understand the issues at a deeper level. This is to be expected in the absence of the 'vertical dimension' which we are seeking to restore to the curriculum. On the other hand, the values taught in many traditional Islamic Studies courses often fail to reach beyond a drily didactic dimension because of an undeveloped pedagogy which fails to engage and motivate. This can only be rectified by relating spiritual and ethical abstractions to the concrete context of the contemporary world and the lived experience and personal interests of the students, by bringing the material to life in a variety of ways. This includes the use of proven methods, including those validated by the latest research. What our resource will try to do is to promote a critical understanding of pressing contemporary issues from a truly Islamic perspective which is balanced, merciful, and hopeful. At the same time, the program must guide students to the development of sound judgement, discrimination and discernment through the application of objective aesthetic, ethical and spiritual criteria, the appreciation of lawful pleasures, and an understanding of limits in accordance with Islamic principles and based on an understanding of the true potential of the human being as *khalifa*.

Who could benefit from the CP?

DR. JEREMY HENZELL-THOMAS is a curriculum development specialist and Director of the Curriculum Project for the Book Foundation. He has taught at all levels of Education including as a lecturer in Psycholinguistics at the University of Edinburgh. Since 1996 when he embraced Islam, he has collaborated with Dr. Ahmad Moustafa in the field of Islamic Art, and founded the charity, Bosnia Music Aid. He is an Executive Committee member of the AMSS (UK) and Chair of FAIR, the Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism.

dents from age 14 upwards in Muslim schools and in mainstream education, but it will also serve the needs of continuing adult education, either through community learning or home study. In due course, we hope to adapt the materials for use in the Middle School from age 11. There are planned multimedia applications. Ultimately, we hope the Project will play a part in creating a renewed Islamic rationale for the development of our full humanness within a new and vibrant relationship between the Islamic world and the West.

Where can people obtain more information on the BF's programs?

A flyer will shortly be available, setting out our vision and programs being developed. A website is also planned. I intend to give a paper on the Project at the AMSS Education conference next year, and I hope that other key people involved in

Social Responsibility: Challenges for the Future

2ND ANNUAL AMSS (UK) CONFERENCE

The 2nd Annual AMSS-UK Conference, "Social Responsibility: Challenges for the Future," took place on 21-22 October 2000 at the University of Westminster in London. Scholars from the UK, Ireland, Malaysia, the United States, Western Europe, and Turkey presented forty-two papers and over a hundred audience members were in attendance during the two-day event. The conference featured scholars such as Malik Badri, Kamal Hassan, Murad Hofmann, Abdel-Wahab El-Affendi in addition to emerging intellectuals such as Mashood A. Baderin and Fauzia Ahmad.

Yusuf El-Khoei from the Khoei Foundation provided the opening remarks. Paper sessions were organized around various subthemes directly related to social responsibility and the future.

Presenters reflected upon social welfare, the state, social policy and community development, law, health and social care, grassroots action, globalization and the media, education, and methodologies and gender. Professor Kamal Hassan, Rector of the International Islamic University in Malaysia, delivered the keynote address. Dr. Hassan's lecture established the importance of scholars and academics in promoting social responsibility by conversing on the role of universities and social responsibility in this age of globalization. At present, universities are reacting to globalization by adopting a "corporatization of curriculum" and a "market driving" approach to education to benefit the wealth of the nation. He argued

that this "business paradigm" of education removes morality and responsibility from the educational experience and that Muslim intellectuals, in particular, could encourage a socially responsible agenda by promoting a moral and civilized vision of Islam in their scholarship and academic environments. In order to do this he thought Muslim scholars must embrace a "renewed engagement with the public sphere".

The first plenary session followed the keynote and was chaired by Dr. Anas S. Al Shaikh-Ali from the International Institute of Islamic Thought – London. Discussants included Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, a noted columnist for *The Independent* and Dr. Malik Badri, Professor at the International Islamic University -Malaysia.

Mrs. Alibhai-Brown reflected upon the role of popular culture and social responsibility and the benefits and risks of Muslims who are public figures. Malik Badri, compared the concept of secular social responsibility and Islamic altruism. Professor Badri commented on the dangers of adopting Modernity's standards of human experience and the oversight of Western psychology, which assumes humans are selfish by nature at the expense of spirituality. Spiritual elements of human expression cannot be ignored and must be used as standards in practicing social responsibility.

The second plenary session, chaired by Dr. Jeremy Henzell-Thomas, Director of Curriculum Development for the Book Foundation, concluded the confer-

ence on Sunday. Discussants included Dr. Al Shaikh-Ali with Dr. Bobby Sayyid providing the closing remarks. Dr. Al Shaikh-Ali reflected upon "Muslim Discourse in the West: Challenges for the Future", where he emphasized the need for Muslims to develop an ummatic identity and go beyond the ethnic and racial boundaries that cause so much tension among Muslims in the UK. His call for cooperation and tolerance is a vital part of "social and religious responsibility" of all Muslims. AMSS-UK, in its attempts to be inclusive and open to all Muslims, has provided a new example of cooperation for Muslims in the UK. Several strong papers were presented throughout the weekend. Dr. Mohamed Mestiri from the International Institute of Islamic Thought-France gave a thought provoking paper, "Modern Political Responsibility: The State, Civil Society, and Challenges of Globalisation". He discussed how the "state" doesn't necessarily become the agent of social responsibility under the new global regime of "economicracy." More often than not, the state is subsumed under geopolitical and economic pressures of globalization where social responsibility is increasingly dependant on individuals and agents in civil society. In both state practice and contemporary Islamic political thought, these new realities demand new responses to political authority and the state. Gulfshan K. Alavi from the United States presented a cogent paper on "The Global Media System: Issues, Concerns and Opportunities." Mrs. Alavi, who is a journalist with the United Nations, provided textual evidence of US influence in the global media machine. She pointed out that even Muslims countries are dependant on Western resources of media information which demonizes Muslims.

Fauzia Ahmad, Researcher at the Department of Sociology at the University of Bristol, discussed the

challenges facing muslim women in academia in her paper, "Methodological Dilemmas, Tensions and Contradictions in Theorising South Asian Muslim Women." Ms. Ahmad pointed out that many academic environments are hostile to the very presence of the intellectual Muslim woman.

A. Mashood delivered an engaging paper on human rights and Islamic Law. Mr. Baderin's paper, "Establishing Common Grounds between Islamic Law and International Human Rights as a Means to an Ethnical Universal Humanism" was an exhaustive review of the discourse of human rights in Islamic and Western law. Baderin disputed the myth that human rights are a creation of the West and painstakingly reviewed Qu'ranic and Shari'ah concepts of "rights" and "duties" to others.

The conference also featured panels related to community issues, health and social care and education and social responsibility. Dr. Sophie Gilliat-Ray, Cardiff Fellow in the Department and Theological Studies at Cardiff University, presented an excellent paper on the historical and present condition of Muslim Chaplaincy in the UK in her paper, "British Muslim Involvement in Chaplaincy."

The conference also conducted a book launch on Sunday, which provided scholars with the opportunity to discuss and promote their new books. ☪

Deonna Kelli

Deonna Kelli is an American Muslim currently working for the IIIT USA. She was also a former member of the Executive Committee of AMSS USA.

After the conference the AGM of the AMSS (UK) was held to elect four members. The elected, appointed and co-opted members to the new Executive Committee now are:

Dr. A. S. al Shaikh-Ali, Dr. Jeremy Henzell-Thomas, Fauzia Ahmad, Shiraz Khan, Dr. Zaki Badawi, Yousif Al-Khoei, Dr. Riad Nourallah, Dr. Rabia Malik, Dr. Bobby Sayyid and Shaheda Vawda.

Question Time at the House of Lords

5th April 2001

On the 5th April, members of the Muslim community had the opportunity to raise and discuss a number of issues with members of the main stream media.

Chaired by the Rt Hon Baroness Uddin in the grand surroundings of the Moses Room of the House of Lords, questions were put by the audience to Michael Binyon (*The Times*), Brian Whitaker (*The Guardian*), Alex Renton (*The Evening Standard*), Afif Safieh (Palestinian General Delegation), Fuad Nahdi (*Q-News*) and Faisal Bodi (*Ummah News*). Among other things, the panel discussed the inaccurate and sensationalised reporting of issues pertaining to Islam, the use of derogatory and careless language in this context, the non-inclusion of Muslim journalists into the main stream media and the coverage of the Palestinian situation.

Although there were a number of disagreements between the members of the panel, some positive points of agreement were reached

with the audience. It was accepted that Muslims were under-represented in the media, that negative images of Islam were regularly portrayed and that some reporters irresponsibly linked the word 'Fundamentalism' with terrorism, using them interchangeably. The speakers indicated a desire within the industry to improve. They urged more Muslims to join the profession and to phone or write in where inaccurate statements are made, but to avoid making en-masse emotional complaints without reading the original article. Well reasoned and objective complaints which focus on factual errors are far more effective in achieving their aim.

It is expected that more sessions of this sort will be organised in the future. ☪

For further details please contact Iftakhar Khan at: iakhan@fairuk.org ia.khan@virgin.net

Forum Against Islamophobia & Racism

Promoting a Multi-Faith, Multi-Ethnic Britain

A new Muslim organisation will be launched on 22 May 2001. Set up as an independent charitable organisation the Forum Against Islamophobia & Racism (FAIR) has been established to:

- ☪ *promote* better awareness of Islam
- ☪ *monitor* and respond to cases of Islamophobia in the media and popular culture
- ☪ *support* and assist victims of religious and racial discrimination
- ☪ *formulate* advice for relevant agencies tackling Islamophobic & Muslim-alienating trends in society
- ☪ *encourage* good relations between people & communities of differ-

ent religious, racial and ethnic backgrounds

These aims are to be pursued through several projects and activities including: an Islam Awareness Project; a Media and Popular Culture Watch; a Muslim Equality Casework Project; an Institutional Discrimination Project; and Policy Research and Lobbying.

For further information or if you have something to report or can contribute please contact:

FAIR
16 Peninsular Court, 121 East Ferry Road, London E14 3LH
fair@fairuk.org Tel: 020 7538 4689

Muslim Education in Europe

CONFERENCE EASTER 2002

Call for Papers

This conference sets out to coordinate and exchange the expertise and experiences of European Muslims in monitoring, analysing and assessing the state of education as it impinges on Muslims. In doing so, it seeks to develop an educational rationale which is capable of meeting the needs of the Muslim presence in the West.

THEMES AND TOPICS

- The environment in Muslims Schools
- Muslim Children in non-Muslim Schools
- Spiritual and Moral Development in Schools
- Trends and issues in Curriculum Development
- Curriculum Issues
- Controversial Curriculum Issues
- Cross Curriculum Education
- Exemplars and Role Models in Teaching
- Equal Opportunities and Gender Issues
- Pastoral Care & Child Protection Issues
- Education and Employment
- Training Systems for Teachers and Inspectors
- Issues and Trends in School Management
- Stereotyping Islam in Textbooks

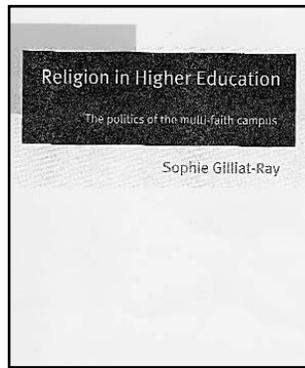
For further information contact:

The Steering Committee

AMSS (UK)
P.O. Box 126, Richmond, Surrey
TW9 2UD
amss@amssuk.com

Further information on the venue location and the Call for Papers will be issued soon.

NEW BOOK



RELIGION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

by SOPHIE GILLIAT-RAY

This study of religion in higher education highlights some important questions about processes of secularization, the meaning of the term 'secular' in public institutions, and how this relates to societies characterized by religious diversity. The author reveals a distinctive pattern of de-secularization taking place on many university campuses, largely reflecting the prominence of religious identity in the lives of many young Muslims, Jews, Sikhs and others. Religion in Higher Education is essential reading for all those responsible for the practical management of campus life, as well as those interested in the sociology of religion and, more broadly, in contemporary religion in Britain.

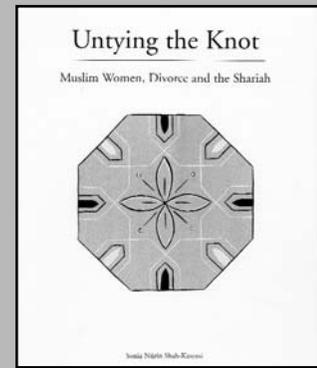
DR. SOPHIE GILLIAT -RAY is Cardiff Fellow in the Department of Religious and Theological Studies at Cardiff University. She is a member of the AMSS (UK) Advisory Board.

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NEW REPORT



UNTYING THE KNOT

Muslim Women, Divorce & the Shariah

by SONIA NURIN SHAH-KAZEMI

This report examines the needs of Muslim women in the UK who are trying to divorce their husbands. It focuses on the minority of Muslim women who encounter problems in the process of marriage breakdown because their husbands do not divorce them according to Islamic family law, known as the Shariah. All the women voluntarily applied to the MLSC (Muslim Law (Shariah) Council, UK) an independent organisation based in Ealing, West London, and chaired by Professor Zaki Badawi. The researcher, Sonia N. Shah-Kazemi, a barrister and senior lecturer at the University of Westminster, has been supported by the Nuffield Foundation.

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