



# Unity

Newsletter of the Cambridge Muslim College

A partner institution of The Open University

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## BA Programme Validated

WE ARE PROUD to announce that our Four-Year Programme, now to be known as our BA (Hons) in Islamic Studies, has been fully validated by The Open University. Our programme graduates will thus receive a BA Honours degree validated by a major UK higher education provider.

The Open University is an ideal partner institution for CMC. Not only is it passionately committed to broadening access to higher education, it maintains a consistently high standard of research and teaching

excellence, and has twice appeared in first place in student satisfaction surveys of UK universities. CMC is proud to be offering its graduates a degree which carries considerable national and international prestige, and which will significantly enhance their employability.

A key prerequisite for admission to the BA programme is a good command of Classical Arabic. For most of our students we have arranged a course with the Qasid Institute in Amman, Jordan. Students who pass a stringent language examination set by Qasid may be exempted from the requirement to study in Jordan and may be offered a direct entry place on the programme.

The course covers classical texts of *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, logic, history, Arabic, and doctrine. Key modules from CMC's Diploma programme are also integrated within the BA curriculum, meaning that students receive a good training in the history of Western thought, theology, religious dialogue, the encounter of faith and science, and the history and special features of British Islam. A minimum of one *juz'* a year is our *ḥifẓ* requirement.

The degree is unlike traditional Islamic Studies courses taught at UK universities given its focus on core religious subjects. However a full exposure to contemporary critical scholarly methods is ensured, making our approach up-to-date as well as authentic.

Learning resources include our own in-house Arabic library and an intranet library of the primary sources relevant to each course module.

CMC's ambition is that this will become one of the most comprehensive and academically rigorous Islamic Studies programmes available, equipping students with real erudition in the disciplines cultivated in traditional seminaries, while allowing them to understand and apply contemporary methodologies and to see the Islamic sciences in their historical perspective.

Following a demanding selection and interview process we are delighted to have been able to recruit thirteen undergraduates of both genders to form a strong first cohort of students.

# New Lecturers Appointed

THE YEAR 2017 (1438/9) represents a watershed in CMC's history, as teaching for the BA degree gets fully underway. The number of students on our campus has doubled, with a wider range of backgrounds and life experiences enriching student life and our conversations at the dinner table.

The number of our teaching officers has also experienced a quantum leap. We have announced several key appointments.



**Dr Abdal Hakim Murad** is our Aziz Foundation Professor of Islamic Studies, with teaching responsibilities shared between CMC and London's Ebrahim College. Murad's most recent research has appeared in *Louvain Studies* (2017) and *The Cambridge Companion to the Problem of Evil* (2017).



**Sohail Hanif**, *Lecturer in Islamic Studies*

Sohail works on Islamic legal theory, with a focus on the Central Asian Ḥanafī tradition. He received a Master's degree in Oriental Studies from the University of Oxford. His recently-submitted DPhil thesis studies the interplay of rationality and tradition in a major work of legal commentary. Sohail spent an extensive period in Jordan where he studied traditional Islamic disciplines with local scholars. He worked as the head Arabic instructor at Qasid Arabic institute in Amman, and also as instructor in Islamic studies at Qibla online academy. He has taught undergraduate classes in Modern Islam and Qur'anic exegesis at the University of Oxford. He has also served as Head of Research and Development at the National Zakat Foundation.



**Najah Nadi**, *Aziz Foundation Lecturer in Islamic Studies*

Najah is an Azhari scholar from Egypt currently concluding her DPhil at the University of Oxford's Oriental Institute. She is working on the legal and theological hermeneutics of Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī (d. 792/1390). Najah specialises in classical Islamic law (*fiqh*), jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), and classical theology (*kalām*), and has also worked on aspects of the contemporary application of these fields (for instance in *fatwās* and *fatwā* councils, and the area of professional ethics). She attended al-Azhar's formal schools, graduating with a BA in Islamic studies, as well as al-Azhar Mosque's classical reading circles, receiving traditional *ijāza* licenses in several Islamic sciences. She also received an MA in Religious and Theological Studies from Boston University as a Fulbright grantee. She has also been a junior fellow of the Holberg Seminar on Islamic history at Princeton. Throughout this academic and traditional training, Najah has had the opportunity to work for and contribute to several research projects and religious institutions. Najah's lectureship is generously sponsored by the Aziz Foundation.



**Yasser Qureshy**, *Lecturer in Islamic Studies*

Yasser has studied in traditional seminaries in Syria and Turkey, mastering the long-established curriculum of Islamic sciences cultivated in those regions. During his stay he graduated first in the Arabic and Islamic Studies programme of the Abū Nūr Academy in Damascus. He also studied privately with several well-known scholars.

On his return to the UK he took an MA in Medieval Arabic Thought, and he is currently reading for his PhD in Islamic philosophical theology at the University of Cambridge with Dr Tim Winter.

His teaching experience was gained during an inaugural fellowship at ISAR, Istanbul, and a stint as Faculty Lecturer in Islamic Theology at the University of Istanbul. He has supervised undergraduates for the Faculties of Philosophy and Divinity at the University of Cambridge.

As well as teaching and supervising CMC students these scholars will be pursuing their research interests, strengthening CMC's profile as a major international hub for academic excellence in Islamic Studies.



### Shaykh Ibrahim Mogra

We have also appointed our first part-time Chaplain to head our Student Welfare Team. This is Shaykh Ibrahim who graduated from Darul Ulum Bury and al-Azhar before working in imam positions in Leicester. He has served as Assistant Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Britain. In 2016 he received the Hubert Walter Award for Reconciliation and Interfaith Cooperation.



### New Operations Director

Cambridge Muslim College is delighted to welcome **Graham McCulloch** OBE as its new Operations Director.

Graham comes to us from a 25-year career with the British Council, working in six countries in the Middle East and North Africa, first as Manager of the English language teaching centres, then as Country Director. His last post was Global Head of Teaching based at the British Council's headquarters in London. In his early career Graham qualified as a teacher of English with a teaching diploma and MA, and taught both in the UK and overseas for International House, Bell Education Trust, and Eurocentres. Graham is also the current Chairman of the British Moroccan Society.



### New Office Staff

In September 2017 we welcomed our newest team member, **Henrietta Egerton**, to support our office administration and to assist with fundraising and public outreach for the College, a role likely to increase in importance as CMC's global profile grows.



## Spain Programme Resumes

From July 11-17 our annual Al-Ghazālī Retreat was held with our sister institution Azzagra Foundation at Alqueria de Rosales, Granada. Lectures were given on al-Ghazālī's *Book of Intention* by **Abdal Hakim Murad**, while **Dr Samer Dajani** gave lectures on Love and Certainty. Students came from around the world, particularly England, South Africa, France, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Australia and the Netherlands.



## Mufti Taqi's Endorsement

“My positive impressions during my visit to the ‘Cambridge Muslim College’ were reinforced when I had an opportunity of going through a portion of its pertinent and very relevant curriculum.

“It is encouraging to learn that the College is trying to equip its learners with necessary academic and historical background to be effective and valuable Muslims of the diverse British society. The need of the hour is the middle path of integration within society; which lies between the extremes of isolation and assimilation. Similarly, effective integration is only possible by preserving the unique Muslim identity. It is indeed plausible to note that the College is undertaking endeavours in the direction of effective integration of its learners within the British society. It is hoped that with continuous guidance of the Ulama, the College will be able to play an important role of explaining Islam in these trying times.

“I pray that Allah ta’ala approves of the noble endeavors of the College and may He continue to guide it on the straight path.”

MUFTI MUHAMMAD TAQI USMANI 2017

## 2017 Donor Retreat

THIS YEAR'S DONOR RETREAT, entitled ‘Contemplating the Divine’, was held from 31 March to 2 April at Selwyn College. Speakers included **Najah Nadi, Roger Mosey, Juan Acevedo, Asim Islam, Micah Anderson** and **Sohail Hanif. Abdal Hakim Murad's** lecture ‘Medical Benefits of the Sunna’ was livestreamed and was watched by over five hundred viewers on Facebook Live. The final day included practical workshops: calligraphy with **Soraya Syed**, geometry with **Adam Williamson** and **Mukhtar Sanders**, and woodwork with **Abdelkarim Mats Cederberg**.

### TIMA ON SITE

FOLLOWING THE CLOSURE of its office and showroom opposite the Fitzwilliam Museum, the Islamic Manuscripts Association (TIMA) has moved to offices on the CMC campus. We are delighted to have such scholarly and distinguished tenants! We look forward to closer cooperation with TIMA and to benefiting from their unrivalled knowledge of Islamic manuscripts, their codicology and conservation programmes, and their worldwide network of partner institutions and projects.

TIMA's partner institution the Thesaurus Islamicus Foundation has very kindly donated to us five complete sets of its critically-edited hadith compilations, including its edition of the *Musnad* of Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal. Other gifts to our library include the Thesaurus's exquisite edition of the Thirtieth Thirty of the Holy Qur'an, with Pickthall's English translation in the margins printed in a beautiful Celtic font.

## Student sponsorships

WE ARE DELIGHTED to announce that our ongoing partnership with leading aid agency Islamic Relief has now led to the first Islamic Relief studentship, covering the fees and expenses of a Diploma student. The student is also offered a summer internship at Islamic Relief.

The National Zakat Foundation are kindly paying the tuition fees of six of our zakat-eligible Diploma and BA students.

The Turath Scholarship Fund are also providing 50% scholarships for two Diploma students each year.



## Imams in the Vatican

EVERY YEAR OUR Diploma students spend five days in Rome, visiting historical sites and learning about Catholicism from some of its leading thinkers. This year the BBC World Service came along! The result was a fascinating 27-minute radio documentary which followed the CMC students as they engaged with theologians at the Gregorian University, observed Mass at a Franciscan monastery, debated with the British Ambassador, and watched a general audience with the Pope.

## A Malay feast

FOLLOWING LAST YEAR'S Chinese New Year Muslim Dinner with key Chinese business people of Malaysia, we returned for a more ambitious event in 2017. A week of fundraising and academic activities in Kuala Lumpur culminated in a hugely-successful Benefit Banquet at Kuala Lumpur's iconic Golf Club on March 23. The event included a sale of work by leading Malaysian artists such as **Tajrin Faruqi**, **Haznan bin Roslan**, and Indonesian artist **Rashid Vega**.

Tickets for our event sold out almost immediately, and altogether around thirty thousand pounds was raised for the College, thus establishing the base for a new network for our activities in South-East Asia.

Guests included **Dr Umar Abd Allah** and poet **Baraka Blue** as well as a range of local business people, religious leaders and politicians. Our heartfelt thanks to local charity Embara for organising and hosting the event.

## NEW TEMPLETON FELLOWS

FOR THE 2016-7 YEAR we were honoured to host the two successful applicants for our very competitive Science and Religion fellowships, which are fully funded by the Templeton Foundation. The fellowships are offered to scientists wishing to explore the relationship between their discipline and the Islamic theological heritage. The programme incorporates a three-week bespoke programme at ISAR University in Istanbul, where our fellows gain an in-depth exposure to contemporary Islamic metaphysics and debates over modern scientific challenges. They spend the remainder of the year at CMC, publishing in peer-reviewed journals and organising an international conference under the College's auspices.



**Dr Asim Islam**, whose PhD from Royal Holloway is in number set theory, is also a Cambridge graduate. He has published in major academic journals including the *Journal of the London Mathematical Society*, and has worked on quantum field theory at the Department of Theoretical Physics at Imperial College London. He spent his year at CMC working on the role of the observer in fundamental physical theories with reference to Bell's inequalities and quantum mechanics. During the year he collaborated with a number of senior theoretical physicists at the University of Cambridge.



**Professor John Mayberry** is a Consultant Physician and Professor of Gastroenterology at the University of Leicester. During his year at CMC he worked on hospital chaplaincy and the role of supplicatory and intercessory prayer in patient care. He gave a very well-received paper entitled 'Are Christian and Muslim Prayers for Health and Healing Effective?' as one of the Faculty of Divinity's Senior Seminars.



**Dr Yaqub Chaudhary** received his PhD in Plastic Electronics from Imperial College London, where he has also carried out postdoctoral research. He has served as Technology Editor for *Global Village*, project coordinator for the Joseph Interfaith Foundation, and Chair of the Political Philosophy Society. His work at CMC explores Islamic concepts of mind and cognition in relation to contemporary developments in machine intelligence and learning in Artificial Intelligence entities. Yaqub holds his fellowship in the 2017-8 academic year.



## New Visiting Scholar

**Shaykh Yahya Rhodus** completed his Bachelor of Arts in Near Eastern Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. He finished his master's in Islamic Studies at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley in 2012, during which period he served as a full-time instructor at Zaytuna College. He travels regularly teaching, lecturing, and conducting weekend seminars and also offers online instruction through SeekersHub Global. Yahya is currently studying for a PhD at the University of Cambridge.

## ZAINAB KABBA'S REPORT

THE EXTERNAL PROGRAMMES Department's function is to support the educational objectives of the College's work and build relationships with the local public, as well as national and international partners. This is accomplished through the development of a variety of programmes that contribute to personal development, thought and faith leadership, as well as literacy related to Islam and Muslim practices.

We attend to the needs of diverse fields and communities and therefore aim to offer programmes and services that are of high quality and relevant to each audience base. Our programmes are developed in collaboration with our academic faculty and leading experts.

In 2017, we have offered a variety of programmes aligned with our 2017-2019 content strategy, focusing on health and well-being, the arts, history, and law. In January, we welcomed **Professor Jonathan Brown** from Georgetown University to deliver a public lecture on Sira and Hadith.

Our five-day programme on Islamic Perspectives to Psychology and Psychotherapy, led by **Dr Rasjid Skinner** ran again this year in April, with 19 participants ranging from clinicians, practitioners, community workers, and graduate students from the UK, Germany, Abu Dhabi, and Egypt. Participants received supplementary

lectures on An Islamic Approach to Defence Mechanisms and Systemic Family Therapy, from **Shanawaz Haque** and **Dr Rabia Malik**, respectively.

In May, we held a programme entitled 'Competing Moral Visions', exploring questions related to gender from the perspective of two intellectual traditions: Western liberalism and Islamic tradition. Through a combination of preparatory readings, interactive lectures and hands-on workshops, 40 participants aimed to construct a theologically grounded and historically informed understanding of the Islamic tradition to contextualize gender-related issues.

Our summer closed in August with a weekend poetry workshop for new and experienced writers of poetry led by **Paul Abdul Wadud Sutherland**. The two-day programme explored outer and inner dimensions of poetry, with writing sessions on nature, set in Grantchester Meadows, Cambridge and 'thingness' – showing an object to inspire precise description based on observation. The intimate group of 12 listened to evening lectures on 'Poetry, Spirituality and Modernity' by **Professor Ron Geaves** and 'Creative Madness' by **Paul Abdul Wadud Sutherland**. Participants also had the opportunity to listen and respond to poetry read by **Yasmine Ahmed-Lea** and **Uzma Ali**, two UK poets, and enjoy an informal discussion on Openness and Closure in Islamic poetry by **Shaykh Abdal Hakim Murad**.



### Dr Zainab Kabba

Zainab is our External Programmes Officer. She completed her DPhil in September 2017 at the Department of Education at the University of Oxford. Previously she worked as Assistant Director in the Department of Global Education at Sesame Workshop, the non-profit organization behind the television programme *Sesame Street*, where she managed the development of educational content and research for TV programming and classroom resources for community outreach initiatives for the Workshop's co-productions in the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa. She also has degrees from Stony Brook University

New York and Columbia University.

At CMC, Zainab devises content strategy around which our external programmes are developed. She is also working on developing online courses to extend the reach of CMC's programme offerings.

## SEFER HASANOV VISITS

One of Bulgaria's leading Muslim scholars, **Shaykh Dr Sefer Hasanov**, stayed at CMC for a week earlier this year. He currently serves as Deputy Dean of the Muslim College in Sofia, and has published extensively on Islamic law and Qur'anic interpretation. He has kindly donated his edition of the *Lawāmi' al-Burhān* of Abu'l-Faḍā'il al-Mu'īnī (d.537AH) to the CMC library.

## Bayḍāwī *Tafsīr* launches

**Shaykh Gibril Haddad** introduced the first volume of his projected ten-volume translation of Imām al-Bayḍāwī's commentary on the Qur'an through a public lecture at CMC.

## Alumnus litanies

One of our Diploma alumni **Ghulam Moyhuddin** has published his first book: *Qur'anic Litanies*. Copies are available from imam\_gm@yahoo.co.uk.

# First Science and Religion Conference

On September 8 we convened a research conference on 'What is Consciousness and Why Observers Matter in Quantum Theory'. The speakers included:

**Dr Jeremy Butterfield** (Senior Research Fellow in Philosophy of Physics, University of Cambridge), 'Quantum Theory and the Mind: an Introduction'.

**Professor Tim Palmer** (Professor of Physics, University of Oxford), 'Fractal State-Space Geometry and Stochastic Computation: Elements of a Realistic Theory of Quantum Physics, Human Creativity and Consciousness'.

**Dr Adam Barrett** (Research Fellow in Complexity Science, University of Sussex), 'Can Integrated Information Theory be Integrated with Fundamental Physics?'

**Dr Anam Anzak** (University College, London), 'Neuronal Oscillations: The Secret Language of Consciousness'.

**Dr Susanne Gieser** (Author, *Innermost Kernel: Depth Psychology and Quantum Physics*), 'Wolfgang Paoli's View on the Relationship between Consciousness, Knowledge and Reality'.

**Dr Paul Knott** (Research Fellow, School of Mathematical Sciences, University of Nottingham), 'Generic Emergence of Objectivity in Quantum Systems'.

**Professor Kobi Kremnitzer** (Professor of Mathematics, University of Oxford), 'Integrated Information-Induced Quantum Collapse'.

**Dr Ausaf Farooqi** (Senior Neuroscientist, Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit, Medical Research Council, Cambridge), 'Are there Brain Regions Dedicated to Generating Conscious Percepts?'

**Professor Basil Altaie** (Professor of Physics, Yarmuk University, Jordan), 'On the Question of Quantum Measurements'.

**Dr Asim Islam** (Research Fellow, Cambridge Muslim College), 'The Link between Quantum Field Theory, Brain Dynamics and Conscious Perception'.

The conference, for which all 104 tickets sold out weeks in advance, was convened by Dr Asim Islam. We are grateful to the Templeton Foundation for its generous support for this event, which aimed to promote a better dialogue between theology and science in this critical area of enquiry.



## Arabic Library open

As well as our extensive English-language holdings of books accommodated in two rooms in Unity House, we now offer students and researchers a range of Arabic and Persian classics housed in a separate building on our campus. Many of these volumes have been donated by the former imam of the Bath Street Mosque in Oxford, **Shaykh Ahmad Bullock**, who achieved renown among British Orientalists as a specialist book dealer during the 1960s and 1970s. Other titles are from the collection of *al-marhūm* **Yahya Cooper**, formerly Persian lecturer at Cambridge's Faculty of Oriental Studies.

Currently our strongest holdings are in Hadith Studies and in Arabic literature. We are actively soliciting donations of further Islam-related titles in Oriental languages, particularly texts of Ḥanafī and Shāfi'ī *fiqh*.

## CONVERT CARE CONTINUES

CMC hosts regular Saturday morning meetings for the Cambridge Crescent, an informal group of local people new to Islam. Also, from 1-6 April UK Convert Care held their Convert Care and Mentorship Programme at CMC. The gathering brought together counsellors, activists and convert group convenors from around the country.

## New books by trustees

**Professor Muhammad Abdel Haleem** OBE has just published his *Exploring the Qur'an* with IB Tauris. **Dr Ali Almihtar** has published *al-Adāla fi'l-uqūd* (*Fairness in Contracts*) with Dar al-Kitab al-Lubnani. **Professor Lejla Demiri** has co-published a critical edition of al-Ṭūfī's *Hallāl al-uqad fi bayān aḥkām al-mu'taqad*, published by Klaus Schwartz Verlag.



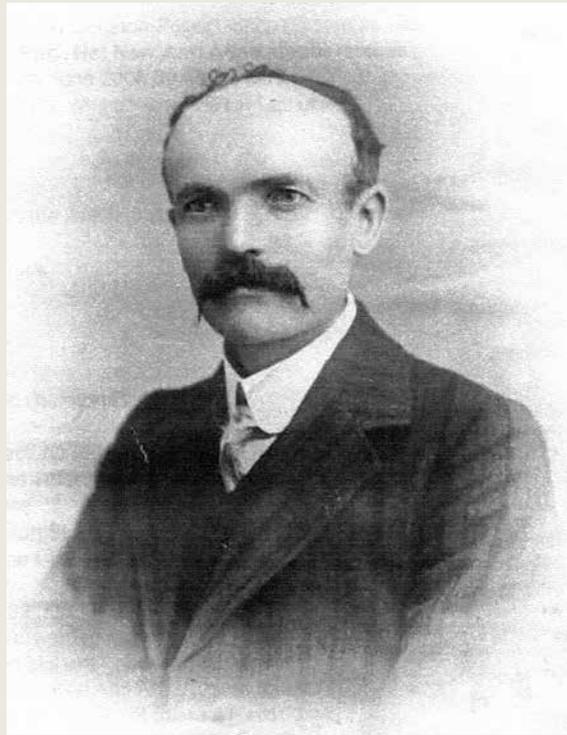
## CMC IN RUSSIA

FOLLOWING A VISIT to CMC by the Deputy Mufti of the Russian Federation, HE Shaykh Damir Mukhetdinov, we received an invitation to visit significant Islamic and academic institutions in Russia as guests of the Muftiat.

Our delegation included Dr Abdal Hakim Murad, Dr Dawud Bone, and Shaykh Ather Hussain. The visit began at St Petersburg with a reception at the Petersburg Mufti's office. Murad later gave a lecture at the Petersburg Academy of Sciences chaired by Professor Alexander Knysh and attended by Professor Nikolai Diakov, Chair of the Department of Middle Eastern History. Visits followed to an Ingush mosque community and to the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts at the Russian Academy of Sciences, where we viewed some of the world's most renowned Islamic manuscripts. Moving to Moscow, we were given a presentation by academics at the Institute of Oriental Studies led by Deputy Director Professor Alikber Alikberov, after which our team spoke to students at the Moscow Islamic University, which prepares imams for work throughout the Federation.

It was particularly inspiring to attend Friday Prayers at the newly-enlarged Moscow Cathedral Mosque. The Russian capital is home to an estimated two million Muslims, and it is interesting to reflect that forty percent of Muslims in Europe live in Russia, a country where Islam is believed to have had a presence long before the establishment of Christianity.

We are extremely grateful to the Muftiat for its very generous hospitality. CMC plans to work with the Muftiat to develop joint programmes suitable for Muslims living in the European environment, and is looking forward to receiving a large delegation of Russian imams later this year.



## Yahya Parkinson 1874-1918

*Summary of a paper given at the CMC conference on British Muslim History.*

BY ABDAL HAKIM MURAD

I PROPOSE TO summarise, in a rather simple way, the life-story of an individual viewed by some as one of the founding figures of the British Muslim community. Yahya Parkinson (1874-1918) is of relevance to our college not only because he wrote the poem which CMC has adopted as its college song, but also because he is figured as a representation of this country's ability to produce individuals whose passion for Islam existed in a mutually enriching relationship with their own rootedness in specifically British, or more local, cultures and concerns. At a time when xenophobes on the European right, and even some Muslims, doubt the possibility of such a symbiosis, proposing Islam and the West as mutually allergic categories, the example of Parkinson is not only of antiquarian, but of immediate political and social interest.

Parkinson was born on February 17, 1874 in the Ayrshire town of Kilwinning. He received only a basic education, but read voraciously on a wide variety of subjects. One of his obituaries, in the *Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald*, was by the man who appears to have acted as his mentor, Dr. A. Milroy, a local physician and dentist. Milroy began to teach Parkinson Greek, and writes: 'to my utter astonishment he mastered the grammar in a few weeks and within six months was able to read Homer fairly well, and even quote him in his conversations.' From Greek he moved on to Ancient Egyptian, and then Arabic. Milroy recalls his strong powers of memory: after hearing a page of Locke or Browning only twice, Parkin-

son could repeat it from memory. A further interest was botany, and he began to write essays on the flora of Ayrshire for the local press. When not at the mill, he would roam the surrounding countryside, as he wrote:

The green fields and valleys and woodlands where, in the days of my adolescence, I roamed and dreamt and meditated and drew knowledge from the forms and movements, the aspects and the whisperings of nature. Where I knew the rush of the Garnock, the murmur of the Lugton, the river, the streamlet, the knoll, the birds sang, the bees hummed, and where every flower was familiar.

Parkinson also read extensively in literature, developing, perhaps paradoxically, a combined love of the intensely local with the Oriental and picturesque. As a Muslim he was to write a long poem, 'Ronald and Ellen', which indicates his fondness for Scots history, and also, no doubt, for Sir Walter Scot. The poem ends with a scathing denunciation of the English atrocities.

Here one detects the strong patriotic impulse which is recurrent in British Muslim writing in this period: but as with Quilliam, who was an avowed Manx nationalist, Parkinson's loyalties were to the united kingdom only through a regional, and more visceral, sense of rootedness. Here he joins forces with fellow Ayrshire poet Robbie Burns, an inevitable influence, whose attitudes to the clergy, physical desire, and social inequality, are also frequently mirrored in his verse.



PARKINSON (RIGHT) IN RANGOON WITH THE EXILED MOGUL EMPEROR

Many of his poems, such as 'Ronald and Ellen', have a heroic theme, and the chivalric principle was one Victorian ideal which attracted him particularly to martial virtues of the Islamic type. This is particularly salient in his best-known publication, *Lays of Love and War*, which he dedicated to Milroy.

Parkinson seeks to bring together the two great themes of European chivalry, courtly love and martial valour, and locate their source, as some others were beginning to do, in the sophisticated culture of Muslim Andalusia. This is the theory that the troubadour spirit originated among the Moors: the word allegedly derived from the Arabic *tarb*, musical joy. In this spirit he chooses to believe the Florinda legend, according to which the Muslims invaded Spain to avenge the honour of a Moorish woman ravished by an evil Visigothic king. Like the Greeks avenging Helen, the Muslims come, and justice is meted out:

A shout of Allah and a rushing flood;  
A crash of steel and thickening pools of blood;  
They sink and die; the Muslim banners soar;  
The rape's avenged, the Gothic rule is o'er.

Such tales of derring-do and patriarchal *noblesse* might look like strictly Victorian period pieces, on a par with the medieval nostalgia of the Pre-Raphaelites. But Parkinson's apparently escapist odes are in a way political and deeply subversive, pointing their readers to a weakness in the European imperial discourse of his age. Victorian romanticism, gathering pace after Scott, through Disraeli's *Tancred* and a thousand lesser crusading yarns, coexisted with ambiguously changing attitudes to *eros*, and also with an establishment Christianity whose scriptures preached pacifism, but which in an imperial age had allowed itself to become a church militant in which Lambeth and Westminster seemed natural partners. Parkinson, with his clear head, and his outsider's iconoclasm,

rejected the Victorian hybrid culture of the Empire, and posed a clear, unanswered question: If Britain honours its martial traditions, and if it is now awakening to the value of *eros*, then Islam is surely its natural religion.

Where Burns expressed his desires pragmatically, and his doubts about the church in the form of a staunch Masonry, Parkinson chose to follow a path less travelled by. As a social outsider beholden to no religious or social establishment, he was able to take the unusual step of coming to view Islam, Europe's historic Other and timeless sparring-partner, as the natural religion for an age in which nature was being simultaneously tamed and rediscovered. In its insistence on the rights of masculinity and femininity, and on the glories of the natural world, both botanical and astronomical, as proofs of God, the Koran seemed to expound a religion both rational and humane, in which human beings could find a natural place. For several years he had written sympathetically about Islam, and in fact, it is difficult to determine exactly when he converted. In an article published in 1914 he indicates that he first contacted Quilliam's community in Liverpool in 1901, that is to say, in his 27th year. Certainly from that time on he was a regular contributor to Quilliam's newspaper the *Crescent*, and to his journal, the *Islamic World*.

Parkinson's view of Islam was not simple. He had earlier joined the United Presbyterians, but soon found himself more attracted to what he saw as the rational simplicity of Islamic monotheism, to which he may have arrived by way of a form of Unitarianism; and, as we have seen, he admired the Muslim ability to sanctify *eros* and the warrior virtues.

Despite his romancing of the Middle Ages, human progress is an important theme in his writings. Under his *nom-de-plume* 'Ingomar' he regaled readers of the local press with details of the latest scientific theories. He has a genuine gift for promoting what Oxford

University nowadays calls 'the popular understanding of science'. In terms reminiscent of Teilhard de Chardin he hails what he seems to see as the incipient twentieth-century's rediscovery of humane values submerged by the early industrial age. But the true modern man stands apart from the masses, not only through his ability to reconnect with real humanity, through love and masculinity, but also through compassion and a desire for a more just social order. One of his best poems, 'Woodnotes Wild', laments the pollution of the Scottish glens by factory chimneys, 'sending forth the fumes of midnight', which seem responsible for the callow, unfeeling crowds which hurry to work or to empty pleasures.

Human happiness, salvation, is self-awareness; and self-awareness comes through a process of upward struggle. Hence Parkinson's fondness for Ghazali. In a short book entitled *Al-Ghazali: A Psychological Study of the Man*, Parkinson, who sees Ghazali as 'the greatest thinker of his day, the greatest of the Muslims', praises his subject for the inner traumas he recorded and overcame in his autobiography. 'The world riddle was before him', and he resolved it through intuition. As he writes: 'Intuition, the inner light, as the revealer of what Kant called things-in-themselves, was his final solution of the key to the world riddle'. Just as Kant destroyed the philosophical pretensions of Scholasticism, so Ghazali defeated Farabi and Avicenna. As Parkinson says: 'his revolt was an ethical one, his position philosophically was always ontological.'

Parkinson suffered from ill-health. A job on a newspaper in Rangoon came to an end as a result. Presumably he was excluded from active service during the Great War for the same reason. He joined a local Territorial unit in Kilwinning, and during rifle practice contracted the pneumonia from which, on 3rd December 1918 he died. Having no next of kin, his papers were soon dispersed, and his long epics on Ottoman and Crusading themes appear to have been lost forever, along, perhaps, with other prose works.

For Muslims a century later, Parkinson can be read as an example of the possible convergence of a tradition of British independence of mind, with the historic Muslim ability to generate forms of religious expression which speak to radically different cultures. Yet his vision is not a syncretism. As with Quilliam, Churchward, Williamson and the other Muslim pioneers of the Victorian age, he found that his own way of being indigenous, and engaging prophetically in indigenous concerns, was best expressed in the matrix of a mainstream Sunni faith, rather than a new sectarian departure. Hardly outliving the Great War, he did not experience the loss of faith in progress experienced by so many others, including Pickthall. Still, his vision of Islam as open to many modern concerns, including an affirmation of the body and of science, surely bears much that is of relevance to our situation. At a time when politicians and journalists are calling ever more insistently for the creation of a British Islam, it is certainly helpful to remember that such a thing has existed for at least a hundred years. \*



## British Muslim History conference

Our first conference on British Muslim history attracted over 120 attendees. Speakers included Professor Ron Geaves, Professor Nabil Matar, Professor Lubaba al-Azami, Dr Muhammad Seddon, Professor Humayun Ansari, Dr Peter Clark OBE and Yahya Birt. The conference was designed and convened by Dr Atif Imtiaz.

# Where Are They Now?

*Our Diploma graduates now number eighty-four! Below we summarise the career paths of a few of them.*



SAMIUR RAHMAN RECEIVES BAGRI PRIZE

**Maulana Ghulam Muhyuddin** is head imam of Ashton Central Mosque, Lancashire.

**Maulana Niaz Hannan** is Imam and Religious Director at the Islamic Center of South Jersey, USA and is Muslim Chaplain at Drexel University.

**Maulana Muhammad Kazi** is a lecturer at Ebrahim College in London, where he teaches rhetoric and hadith.

**Maulana Mohammed Aqueel** works for HM Revenue and Customs.

**Maulana Habib Khan** has just been appointed as imam in Dunfermline, Scotland.

**Maulana Muhammad Muhiuddin** is completing his fourth year as head imam at Enfield Mosque.

**Maulana Qasim Afzal** works for the University of Edinburgh, but also runs a humanitarian project based at a mosque in his city.

**Maulana Abu Taher Miyah** teaches history and geography at an Islamic school in London.

**Muhammad Muneeb Murichamannil** is imam to a Malayalam-speaking congregation in London.

**Maulana Mansoor Mahmood** is imam of Al-Karam mosque in Forest Gate, London.

**Maulana Sarfraz Amjad** is imam at the Abu Huraiyra mosque in Leeds.

**Maulana Mohammed Hammad** is imam of Kirkcaldy in Scotland.

**Maulana Nasir Rashid** is completing his master's degree in philosophy of religion at Heythrop College.

**Maulana Haseeb Akhtar** is Muslim Chaplain at Haberdashers Aske's school in London.

**Maulana Sajjad Shah** is Muslim Chaplain at Leicester Royal Infirmary.

**Shaykh Talha Bozkurt** is Islamic Studies instructor and imam at Ilim College and teaches at Meadow Heights mosque in Melbourne, Australia.

**Maulana Shams Tameez** is imam at High Wycombe Mosque.

**Maulana Hassan Rabbani** is imam and head of outreach at Annandale Mosque in Edinburgh. He is on the executive board of the Muslim Council of Scotland and is a consultant to the Scottish Parliament.

**Maulana Muhammad Qamar** is imam and khatib at Solihull Mosque and is co-founder of the City of Knowledge Academy.

**Maulana Imran Ahmad** is imam of a mosque in Southampton.

**Maulana Saleem Seedat** has worked in college and NHS chaplaincy, and has been Mayor's Chaplain for Blackburn with Darwen, as well as lecturing at Jamiat al-Ilm wa'l-Huda in Blackburn.

**Maulana Vacas Ahmed** teaches RE and Citizenship at a secondary school in Rochdale.

**Maulana Imran Sulaman** teaches Qur'anic Studies in Leicester.

**Maulana Muhammad Samiur Rahman** is completing his MA in Traditional Arts at the Prince's School in London, and we congratulate him for having received this year's Bagri Prize from the Prince of Wales.

**Ezziddin Yonis** is reading PPE at the University of Oxford.

**Maulana Sayful Alam** is an imam, a secondary school teacher and a youth worker in Cambridge.

**Maulana Rizwan Hussein** serves as imam at the Southampton Mosque.

**Maulana Hamza Lambat** is studying Politics and International Relations at Leicester University.

*And the alimas, of course, have also excelled!*

**Madiha Ashraf** teaches at Manchester Islamic High School for Girls and has worked as Assistant Chaplain to the University of Birmingham.

**Qurra Tulayn** is studying for the MPhil in Modern South Asian Studies in the University of Cambridge with a grant from DCD Randeree Family Trust.

**Zakiyah Gangat** has completed her BSc in Psychology at Toronto University where she works with the Abu Bakr Siddique Mosque.

**Sohaira Siddiqui** is Assistant Professor of Theology at Georgetown University in Qatar.

**Sumayya Bostan** is an Arabic tutor at Zaytuna College and is taking classes at UC Berkeley.

**Mersiha Hadziabdic** has completed her MA in Berlin and now works with the Islamic collection at the Prussian State Museum.

**Misba Khan** is an Arabic and Qur'an teacher in Derby and is studying part-time for an MEd at Homerton College in Cambridge.

**Safiyya Dhorat** is completing her MA at SOAS and has been Student Mentor at Ebrahim College in London.

**Farkhanda Khatoon** teaches Islamic Studies at Karimia Institute in Nottingham.

**Nafisa Mistry** works for the Lady Aisha Academy, an independent Muslim girl's secondary school in Barking.

**Fozia Parveen** has just launched an Islamic Art Circle in York.

**Raheela Akhtar** has completed her MA at SOAS.

**Haleema Arif** is studying for an MA in Islamic Studies at SOAS.

**Rabia Khanom** teaches in a *maktab* and is training as a care worker for children with disabilities.

**Nosheela Ashiq** teaches at Ashton-under-Lyme Mosque.

**Sidra Ashraf** is a chaplain at Southampton Hospital and is head of the girl's section of Bashir Ahmad madrasa.

**Rukiye Karabacak** is studying for her PhD at the University of Ankara where she works as a teaching assistant.

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