

MUSLIM-JEWISH DIALOGUE IN A 21ST CENTURY WORLD

Papers from a workshop on the comparative study of Jews and Muslims held at Royal Holloway, University of London, Egham, Surrey, on 22-23 April 2006, and funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

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History Department,
Royal Holloway, University of London
Egham, 2007.**

ISBN: 9781905846122

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Muslim-Jewish Dialogue in a 21st Century World

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Introduction

Muslim-Jewish Dialogue: Moving Forward

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To many observers of the world today it would seem that the great divisions among people - and the dominating sources of conflict – are located in the religious sphere. Jewish, Muslim and (neo-) Christian societies appear to be characterised by interactions that reflect more than a little distrust and lack of accommodation between faiths and cultures. Religious radicalism (defined as an extremist, and zealous religious outlook, which contains a deep discontent with the present, and expresses a vision of some ideal state of affairs and conviction as to the need for a basic change in the society) threatens to silence public discourse and increase divisions. Secular culture has found attacks from certain strands of militant, fundamentalist religion threatening or offensive, and has effectively and robustly resisted them.

In such a climate of mutual recriminations, relations between Muslims and Jews have become increasingly strained, pushing tensions between these communities to new levels. All around the world, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, in wider society as well as among Muslims and Jews themselves, is poisoning relationships and any chance of mutual tolerance. Indeed, in the recent past Jews and Muslims have become strangers to each other even when they occupy the same space. Take Jerusalem at the turn of the twenty-first century: Jews and Arabs use separate blood banks, telephone directories, hotels, cinemas, schools, and buses. Likewise, social services and most government establishments are separate. At Hadassah Medical Centre, the hospital's director general is reported to have assured the public that Jewish hearts would not be transplanted within Arab bodies, nor the reverse! One might argue that Jerusalem is not the same as the rest of Israel. However it cannot be denied that even in a reasonably 'well-integrated' city like Haifa there is a high degree of residential segregation and significant socio-economic differences rooted in the specific social trajectories of the different communities.

Among Jewish and Muslim diasporic communities too, relations have deteriorated, particularly since the events of 9/11. The on-going Israeli-Palestinian conflict has further clouded these relations: as commentators have noted, "the promotion of anti-Semitism by the Arab media and by Islamist organisations worldwide is having a significant effect on the attitudes of Muslim communities around the world towards the Jews." In Britain, for instance, extremist Islamic groups are reported to have been behind anti-Semitic attacks on synagogues and Jewish graves: "there is reliable evidence from the police to prove that an increasing number of incidents are committed by sympathisers of the Palestinians and Islamists." (Prominent Jews targeted by Muslims and the far Right, Rajeev Syal, 15/02/2004). Jews, on the other hand, are often portrayed as viewing Muslims as misogynistic, intolerant fanatics involved in violent global terrorism, who have to be subdued and 'civilised' at all cost. For instance Jewish intellectuals such as Bernard Lewis and journalists such as Melanie Phillips are known to espouse stereotypical and hostile views of Islam and Arabs. A poll conducted last year by an Israeli research institute found widespread mistrust of the Arab population in Israel. 41% were in favour of segregation, 63% believed Arabs to be a "security and demographic threat" to Israel, more than two thirds would not want to live in the same building as an Arab, 36% believed "Arab culture to be inferior to Israeli culture" and 18% felt hatred when they heard Arabic spoken (The Guardian, 24 March 2006). Differences of perceptions and fixed positions reduce the possibility of any chance of mutually harmonious living.

Today it seems as though all possible roads to mutually respectful relations have reached their various dead ends. For many observers, this represents an extremely dangerous and damaging state of affairs, something that urgently requires the formulation of effective strategies with the aim of bringing about better understanding between these communities. A "culture of dialogue", in other words, needs to be created to promote peace and prevent conflict. In this endeavour, the importance of reflecting on Jewish-Muslim history in the post-9/11 world cannot be overstated. Such reflection can surely teach us many useful lessons. If interactions between Jews and Muslims are explored

historically, and if the extent to which these communities have influenced each other in the past is considered, then it may be possible to identify resources - theological, cultural and political - that can be used to stem the rising tides of mutual antipathy and bridge the resulting divides.

Few religions arguably have as much in common in terms of structure, jurisprudence and practice as Islam and Judaism. They not only have the same origins, but the formulation of the ethical teachings of Islam resembles in many ways the Judaic teachings of the Hebrew Bible.

The Torah and the Qur'an share much religious narrative as well as injunctions. Sharia and Halachah are strikingly similar. The same genealogical and scriptural authorities underpin both faiths. Muhammad, on his migration to Yathrib (or Medina), had high hopes of living co-operatively with its Jewish clans. Initially he adapted his new religion to bring it closer to Judaism as he understood it. He prescribed a fast for Muslims on the Jewish Day of Atonement and commanded Muslims to pray three times a day like Jews, instead of twice as hitherto. Muslims were to greet each other in the Jewish manner (Salam/Shalom), cover their heads in prayer, and perform similar ablutions. They could marry Jewish women and observe some of the Jews' dietary laws. Above all, Muslims were instructed to pray facing Jerusalem like Jews and Christians already did. Muhammad joined Medinan and Meccan tribes together in a new *ummah* (community) of which Jews were equal members who enjoyed full cultural and legal autonomy. Jews were not required to pay any extra taxes, nor was there any clause demanding their subjection. They were bound by the same duties as other parties to the contract. Respect for Jews can be seen to have expanded as the Muslim realm grew in size and strength. In 638, the caliph Umar, for instance, authorised the return of Jews to Jerusalem, interceded on their behalf against those Christians who were strongly opposed to Jewish resettlement, and personally supervised the cleansing of the Temple of the Mount when the first Jewish families returned to the Old City. In the Qur'an, Jews and Christians are not advised to renounce but to heed their own scriptures.

Sadly, however, as is the case today, political and religious differences soon led to Muhammad's rejection as a leader of the community, and as a prophet of revelation, by most of the Medinan Jews. Muhammad, understandably angered by rejection of his message and the perceived treachery and political conspiracy of the Jews against him, decreed punitive measures against them. The Jewish clans of Bani Qaynuqa were expelled from Medina; the Jews of Khaybar were besieged, and the adult males of Bani Qurayza were put to death. However, even then, at the height of violent confrontation, Muhammad maintained that not all Jews had fallen into error and that in essence all religions were the same. While the Qur'an, like the New Testament, inevitably includes some material which denigrates the Jewish people, it does accept both Moses and Jesus as messengers of God, and that their revelations were divinely inspired. The Qur'an's core message is that Islam is not a new religion but the reaffirmation of God's original covenant made with man through Abraham. Jews, through Jacob, are Abraham's people. Muhammad too, it is believed, through Ishmael, descended from Abraham, and Jews recognized that his message resonated that of Moses. Arguably, the pluralistic vision is at the heart of Islam - that God has guaranteed the existence of more than one religion for as long as the world lasts (Qur'an, 22:67). Indeed, many Muslims would argue that religious diversity is divinely ordained and that Muslims are bound to respect other spiritual paths ("We Believe in the revelation which has come down to us and in that which has come down to you; our God and your God is one and the same (Qur'an, 29:46)), that not only Muslims but every good and God-abiding person can go to heaven (Qur'an, 2:62 and 6:52) Muslims are expected to be not only tolerant but respectful of other religions ("There shall be no compulsion in matters of faith" (Qur'an, 2:256); "We should not ridicule the beliefs of others" (Qur'an, 6:108).

Within Jewish theology, too, one can find both exclusivism and a range of attempts to accommodate Islam. For Judah Halevi (1075-1141) and Moses Maimonides (1135/8-1204), while Islam was in error, it could be accommodated as part of the divine design to bring nations gradually to God. The Jewish neo-Platonist Netanel ibn Fayyumi (d. c.1164), leader of the Jews of Yemen, went further. Using the culture-boundedness of revelation as part of his argument, he accepted the possibility of the plurality of authentic

revelations and, hence, the authenticity of the prophecy of Muhammad as revealed in the Qur'an. Later, Jewish theologians such as Moses Mendelsshon (eighteenth century), by adopting the Covenant of Noah and drawing on the universalist element in Judaism which preceded its rabbinical formulation, sought to create an inclusive and ecumenical "theological space" within which people of other faiths could be accommodated, declaring that "the righteous of all nations have a share in the world to come".

Thus, when one approaches Muslim-Jewish relations from the perspective of their long history of interaction, and seeks to draw constructive lessons from it, what emerges above all is its extreme complexity, and context becomes highly relevant in making sense of it. Muslim-Jewish history is, of course, studded with not only periods of peaceful coexistence but also conflict. There are negative examples as well as positive ones – relatively stable coexistence as well as periodic persecution of Jews by Muslims and of Muslims by Jews since 1948, as well as exploitation of Muslims by Jews under the protection of Christian regimes.

We should not overlook the fact that there were many occasions following the inception of Islam when Jews and Muslims succeeded in living side-by-side, and, despite differences and sometimes hostilities, nourished a complex culture of tolerance. Yet, in order to find ways for mutually-respectful living, while one can choose to emphasize the positive, it is also important to acknowledge and deal with the dark side as well.

For instance, until relatively recently, historians tended to paint a rosy picture of Jewish-Muslim symbiosis in medieval Spain – highlighting the presence of a cultural synthesis between Jews and Muslims which created literature, art and architecture of high quality as well as significant advances in philosophical thinking. From the eighth to the eleventh centuries in Spain, Jews were often courtiers and viziers, trusted advisers and military generals for local Islamic rulers. Arabic became their mother tongue. Andalusian Jews assimilated into the Islamo-Arabic culture at the same time as remaining a devout and practicing religious community. However, in the twelfth century, when the fanatical Almohades conquered Spain, Jews there were offered the alternative of conversion or expulsion. They suffered humiliation and massacres. Then, in the fifteenth century, after

the expulsion of Jews from Christian Spain, Islamic Turkey offered refuge and a place of honour for those who left. But refugees were also subjected to violence, extortion and degradation. While Maimonides chose to move to Muslim Egypt and became a high ranking advisor to Saladin, in his *Epistle to Yemen* he insisted that “no nation has ever done more harm to Israel [than that of Ishmael]. None has matched it in debasing and humiliating us”. So, it seems that harmony existed on the basis of Jewish acquiescence in their subordinate citizen status as a religious minority and under Muslim power and patronage. Interactions between Jews and Muslims, in these circumstances, were generally governed by Islamic law, which treated Jews and Christians as protected minorities (*dhimmi*s) in return for payment of the *jiziyah* (poll tax), socially inferior to Muslims, but tolerated as long as they knew their place and engaged in no public confrontation with the ‘true’ faith.

The conquest of large parts of Muslim Spain by Christian armies created the unusual situation in which both Jews and Muslims found themselves in lands where Islamic law did not reign supreme – Christians were the arbiters. Muslims found themselves competing with Jews for authority over their own communities. Jews now without any loyalty to the Islamic polities and perhaps because of their dependence on Christian rulers were seen as trustworthy. This combined with their bilingual and other skills qualified them to be appointed to positions of power as tax collectors and magistrates. In the performance of their duties they were perceived by Muslims to cause them ‘to suffer the most cruel vexations’, ‘humiliation’ and ‘punishment’. Jews were able to compete with Muslims much more openly than was possible under Muslim rule. On the other hand, Christian overlords were able to manipulate Jews and Muslims against each other in pursuit of their interests and ideological hegemony, in the process damaging Muslim-Jewish relations. Thus, the political context here is relevant in offering an understanding of why current Jewish-Muslim relations have reached such a nadir. Put simply, whenever Muslims and Jews have found themselves in competition under the hegemony of other communities, suspicion has arisen and relations have declined. In the modern era, the Jews have been perceived as agents of colonial powers, and Zionism and its political embodiment, Israel, denounced as an imperialist conspiracy.

Since the mid-twentieth century, Jews and Muslims have turned their backs on one another. At the heart of this Muslim-Jewish animosity lies the question of Palestine, and the competing claims of Arabs and Jews to Jerusalem. The establishment of Israel, an independent Jewish state, was a traumatic event for some Muslims as it was seen as a form of Western domination in a different guise. One response to the 1948 Arab–Israeli war was an outbreak of anti-Jewish persecution and expulsions in different parts of the Islamic world. Another consequence was the adoption by Islamic propagandists of traditional Christian anti-semitic stereotypes. The medieval Christian Blood Libel, the conspiratorial Protocols of the Elders of Zion, the Holocaust denial, have recently become, at least to some extent, part of the Islamic lexicon. Witness the fiercely anti-semitic articles that have appeared in recent years in some of the local Arabic presses. In Britain, the radical Islamist organisation, the Hizbut Tahrir, insisted that no normal interaction was possible with Jews [‘There can be no peaceful relations with the Jews: this is prohibited by the Sharia’...the only legitimate encounter permissible between Jews and Muslims is on the jihad battlefield’]. Al Muhajiroun likewise adopted a militant posture towards Jews, reflected in its provocative posters distributed on university campuses catching the attention of the Union of Jewish Students and Board of Deputies of British Jews. Al Muhajiroun also spoke of a ‘bloodthirsty Western conspiracy’ behind the creation of Israel, whose establishment was alleged to be part of the wider Judeo-Christian strategy for seeking revenge on Muslims for punishments inflicted by the Prophet on the Jewish forefathers in Medina (HuT leaflet, 27 Sept. 1991). It denounced negotiations and peace with Israel as ‘a heinous crime...against Muslims, God and humanity as a whole. More recent polls suggest that Muslims regard the British Jewish community and its links with Israel with suspicion. It is seen as displaying no sympathy for the plight of the Palestinians and exercising much influence over British foreign policy.

To be sure Islamism has its counterpart among Jews too, many of whom have absorbed the prejudices and stereotypes of Muslims, as monolithically intolerant, authoritarian, violent and opposed to modern values, prevalent in wider society. Anti-Muslim

extremism is not absent from Jewish communities. In Israel, Rabbi Meir Kahane's ideology, suffused with hatred and revenge, has espoused an equally essentialist and separatist political agenda. For his movement, Kach, Israel's creation was part of God's plan for Jews to live without any foreign intrusion. Hence, all Arabs who had 'usurped' Palestine had to be made to leave. The militant Jewish leadership of Meir Kahane and Gush Emunim regarded Jews as a community besieged by Muslims and often took the form of anti-Arab Zionist chauvinism. "We can achieve peace only ... by removing all the Arabs from Israel" [Meir Kahane, They Must Go]. This ideology inspired a Kahanist, Baruch Goldstein, to murder twenty-nine Muslims at prayer in the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron on the Festival of Purim on 24 February 1994. Since 2000 and the wave of 'suicide bombings', anti-Arab and anti-Muslim feeling in the Jewish population has been exacerbated hugely and several Jewish politicians have made blatantly racist statements that have not prevented them from holding seats in the Knesset or even office in government.

It is clear from the above that Jewish-Muslim relations are extremely sensitive. The question is what can be done to start the process of healing to bring these two people together in a spirit of respect and friendship? One beginning that could be made might be to develop a framework in which misunderstandings are removed about each other and common values and interests are recognized. This course of action, however, can only be made possible if and when people and communities learn about each other, by reading their common histories and by talking about their present conditions.

In this endeavour, the dialogue approach becomes particularly pertinent. Effective communication is recognised to enhance comprehension of each other's insights, and results in the identification of common ground on which to move closer towards each other. To be sure, dialogue does not always lead to productive outcomes. Research suggests that dialogic encounters between groups in a situation of structural inequality and domination may solidify essentialist discourses of culture and identity and reinforce self and other essentializing strategies (Monologic Results of Dialogue: Jewish-Palestinian Encounter Groups as Sites of Essentialization). In Jerusalem mutual exposure

has even deepened animosities (Living Together Separately: Arabs and Jews in Contemporary Jerusalem). So, the character of and the conditions for such dialogues, the quality of their content, becomes relevant in the achievement of positive outcomes. For a dialogue to be productive, there needs to be agreement about “travelling together” on the basis of the ‘mutual recognition that we are in different “places” without anyone of those places being specially privileged’ (Norman Solomon, Towards a Jewish Theology of Trilateral Dialogue). The starting point of such a dialogue could simply be the disclosure to ourselves and to each other what these places are. And then if the dialogue is to be creative:

1. There will be openness to the diversity within each tradition
2. There will be discussion of relationships, including frank acknowledgement of past hurts, with the aim of fostering mutual trust.
3. There will be recognition of common problems arising from the confrontation with modernity. This will include not only the theological issues about God, revelation, redemption, and the like, but also social and political issues. When the problems are seen as shared, we can explore them together, drawing critically on the resources of all our traditions.
4. There will be recognition of the contributions made by different groups, and establishment of shared norms for coexisting and cooperating.

As Jews and Muslims find themselves not only fearful and threatening towards each other, fostering positive dialogue, understanding and reconciliation between both communities represents an increasingly urgent imperative. Many Muslims, of course, would argue that, for them, reconciliation is required by their faith. The pillars of Islam assume and express a close relationship between Islam and Judaism, between Muslims and Jews. The Qur’an, for instance, encourages dialogue with other faiths: “Do not argue with the followers of earlier revelations otherwise than in the most kindly manner” (A History of God, p.178). By encouraging people to cross religio-cultural bridges, a more peaceful engagement becomes realisable. The premise from which we must start in order to make such inter-faith dialogue productive, however, is that no one religion

monopolises the truth. Such an approach demands empathy with the perspectives and truth claims of others. It requires that, in this case, Muslims and Jews be prepared to abandon their absolutist claims and become more ecumenical in their religious outlooks. Jews and Muslims, rather than feeling uncomfortable, threatened and reluctant to participate in a dialogue, must embark on a journey of self-discovery and a discovery of “the other” through dialogue.

The essays in this collection are a modest attempt to contribute to this process of knowing about each other. Taken en masse, they address some of the challenging issues that Jewish and Muslim people face, especially those communities living along side each other as minorities in different countries, which are in need of urgent resolution. The answers are often tentative and partial, which befits the complex nature of the questions and the preliminary nature of the attempt to answer them.

The collection arose out of a workshop on the comparative study of Jews and Muslims held at Royal Holloway, University of London, on 22-23 April 2006. The gathering was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, and organised by Professor Humayun Ansari and Professor David Cesarani, with the assistance of Ms June Jackson. It formed part of a larger AHRC funded project on the study of Jewish-Muslim relations and grew out of the common interests of members of a university department with an unusual concentration of expertise on Jewish history and the history of Muslims. Both Professor Ansari and Professor Cesarani have also been actively engaged in the formation of public policy with respect to Jews and Muslims in the UK and this engagement, too, played its part in the initiation of the project. It combined scholarly aspirations with the sense that there was a pressing need to address questions regarding the place of, and the relations between, Jews and Muslims in civil society in the UK, throughout Europe, and in North America.

The papers presented here begin, appropriately and necessarily, with essential Islamic texts. Roger Abdul Wahab Boase sets out to explain the sources for religious pluralism that can be found in the Qur’an. But before he can do that he has to clear away some

basic misconceptions about Islam. He addresses the Muslim *religion*, not the political creed sometimes labelled Islamism and often confused with theology. Having cleared the way to examine the original texts he finds five bases for adherents of Islam and Judaism to meet on ground delineated by the Qur'an. Inherent to Islam is the conviction that it inherited the monotheism pioneered by the Hebrew patriarchs and the scriptural overlap between the two faiths. There are common or similar beliefs and practices. There is the story of Medina that, for a while, offered a model of a plural society. Indeed, Boase argues that the 'Constitution of Media' posits a form of religious pluralism and he is able to find strong textual endorsement of interfaith dialogue.

Farid Panjwani moves from an examination of pluralism in societies that were essentially religious to scrutiny of secular, modern states. He notes that there is a growing tension between the universalist and non-religious tenets of the state and the religious loyalties of faith-based communities. This tension is increasingly expressed in the public sphere. He maintains that unless faiths recognise their own internal plurality, there is little chance that they will be able to function in conditions in which acceptance of difference is *de rigueur*. He sees this as the challenge facing Islam today. If Muslims wish to enter the political arena and to press their interests, they will have to do so by means of reasoned argument and not simply by insisting that their tenets of belief must be recognised unconditionally by non-Muslims.

The papers now shift from theology to history, representing the step from essential beliefs to the contingent conditions in which faith becomes practice. Anne Kershner describes the origins and development of the Jewish and Muslim communities in the East End of London. This area is almost the perfect laboratory for examining how the members of the two faith groups have adapted over time to the contexts in which their adherents have found themselves. But Kershner, too, has to begin by clearing away misconceptions. She points out that Jews and Muslims are not monolithic groups and that even within this small district there is variety, not to mention the differences between this and other centres of settlement where Jews and Muslims are located.

On the surface the Jews, historically, and the Muslims of the East End today appear to be much alike. The Jews migrated into the area in significant numbers in the 18th century, escaping economic immiseration and intermittent religious persecution in Eastern Europe. The Sylhettis, from East Pakistan/ Bangladesh, arrived from the 1950s onwards, although there were settlers in east London much earlier. Both communities assembled around places of worship, often humble and improvised. Both set up welfare institutions to help deal with the effects of poverty that were a symptom of the marginal, seasonal trades into which they moved on arrival. Both faced opposition to their immigration, ranging from violent racism to political agitation for their complete exclusion. Yet there are also salient points of divergence. Jews entered a monocultural society and came under immense pressure to assimilate and to demonstrate their loyalty to the state. In this they largely succeeded, which is why they are held up as a model for Muslims to emulate. But, thanks to the timing of their arrival, Muslims from Pakistan/ Bangladesh came to enjoy much greater freedom to preserve their ethnic and faith characteristics under the benign auspices of official multi-culturalism. The British state, like many other governments, has since reversed away from multi-culturalism but the genie cannot be shoved back in the bottle. This has created a situation for which the Jewish experience actually offers little guidance.

Moving from London to Manchester, Mohammed Siddique Seddon examines another singular location in which immigrant communities of Jews and Muslims in 19th century Manchester flourished side by side, enjoying quite lengthy periods of cooperation. Both Muslims and Jews experienced racism and discrimination, however the two were highly differentiated and experience contrasting trajectories. Seddon vividly describes the great diversity within the two groups. With the Muslim communities there were poor lascars, the more apparently assimilated Levantine Ottomans and the Moroccan traders who sought employment with British companies. Within the Jewish communities, there were initially Ashkenazim migrants and Sephardim Jews, these latter amongst the first original Jewish settlers allowed by in to England after their expulsion from Spain.

Seddon charts the development of Muslims and Jews, from early individuals and small groups through to established communities with their own places of worship, which in turn gave rise to reticence from the indigenous population. He also shows how they were historically articulated into global politics, often with problematic outcomes. Despite the cooperation of the early days of settlement and the common experiences of racism, prejudice and xenophobia, Seddon points to international politics as leading to fractures between the two groups.

We stay in Manchester for Pnina Werbner's penetrating examination of the function of memory for the two communities. Werbner starts with the controversy over the decision of the Muslim Council of Britain on successive years not to attend the annual Holocaust Memorial Day commemorative events in the UK. She shows how important memory of the Nazi genocide against the Jews is to the Jewish communities in Britain, an importance that is recognised by the government and much of the population as a whole. However, while the commemoration of the mass murder of Europe's Jews may have a universalistic resonance, to Jews it is an affirmation of their Diasporic status and it links them profoundly to the Jews of Israel. The Pakistani community in Manchester also has a memorial day: Quaid-i-Azam day, which takes the birth of Jinnah as an occasion to reflect on the founding of Pakistan and the trauma that accompanied it. In other words, both Jews and Muslims recall past catastrophes that bind them to another polity and, at the same time, symbolise their marginal status where they reside. Memory serves as a keystone for a Diaspora identity and underpins a sense of apartness that is important for the continuity of community.

The centrality to Jewish identity of the events known as the Holocaust makes any questioning of their veracity enormously provocative to Jews. Yet, Werbner argues, Jews in Israel and their supporters abroad have also *manipulated* the Holocaust to legitimate the policies of the Israeli government and to downgrade the suffering of the Palestinians. It is this that has made denial of the Holocaust so attractive to anti-Zionists and states hostile to Israel. Iran exemplifies this trend. In his paper Rahmin Jahanbegloo lays bare the state-sponsored Holocaust Denial practiced by the authorities in Teheran. The validity

and gravity of this charge is underlined by the fact that the very same Teheran authorities arrested him and held him without charge for several months in 2006 because he persisted in expressing these views.

The collection has now made the transition from theology, via history, to conflict and conciliation between Jews and Muslims in the world today. The last two papers examine the extent of the conflict and the possibilities of conciliation. Karen Leonard charts the growth of the now embattled Muslim communities in the USA from the first self-taught African-American converts to the waves of immigration of Muslims from South Asia and then the Middle East. By the 1970s there was a growing convergence between the communities, but it was rudely halted by the events of 9/11 and their aftermath. African-American Muslims now sought to distance themselves from Muslims of Arab origin. The US administration aggravated internal divisions by patronising groups, notably Sufis and Ismailis, who had until then been marginalised by the dominant Sunni and Shia sects. The specific radicalisation of young Muslims was compounded by the effect of the ‘war on terror’, US policy in the Middle East, and arguments over Israel. Leonard’s study of campus development at the University of California, Irvine, gives a graphic, empirical insight into what has unfolded since September 2001.

Yet it would be unfortunate and wrong to end on a note of conflict. It is welcome, then, that the collection can conclude with a paper by Brie Loskata and Reuven Firestone that surveys the challenges and the possibilities of *positive* dialogue between Jews and Muslims. Loskata and Firestone show that exchanges of this kind have been underway for decades, usually sparked by a Middle East crisis. Numerous initiatives have flowered, such as the Children of Abraham project, that have provided participants and observers with valuable experience of best practice. Courageous individuals such as Akbar Ahmed and Judah Pearl have provided inspirational examples of dialogue. On the basis of their extensive evaluation of various techniques, Loskata and Firestone then detail the pitfalls as well as the successful methods for bringing Jews and Muslims into conversation and sustaining the sort of contact that alone can ameliorate friction between these Diasporas

and, perhaps, contribute to resolving the stubborn aggravation that perpetually threatens to poison their relations.

The Qur'anic Model of Religious Pluralism: its relevance for Muslim-Jewish relations today

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The aim of this paper is to promote better understanding between Muslims and the adherents of other religious traditions, in particular Jews, by discussing some ecumenical aspects of Islam that have not been well explained, or even understood, by many Muslims. It is thus addressed as much to Muslims as to Jews. I begin by distinguishing between true religion, which promotes peace, and militant religious exclusivism, which tends to be violent and divisive. I mention the growth of Islamophobia, which has many parallels with anti-Semitism. I give a brief account of the Jewish character of Medinan society and the scriptural inheritance shared by Jews and Muslims, concentrating on the story of Abraham; I mention some of the theological beliefs and ritual practises shared by Jews and Muslims; I suggest that the "Constitution of Medina" presupposes a concept of social and religious pluralism; I then explain the Qur'anic model of religious pluralism and the inter-faith principles that can be deduced from the Qur'an.

Introduction: The "Problem" of Religion

In recent years religion has re-emerged, and has been increasingly recognized, as an important determining factor in international relations and as a central abiding feature of a person's identity, arguably more important than ethnicity, nationality, or ideology. Unfortunately, this recognition has not been accompanied by much improvement in understanding between the adherents of different religions, particularly between Jews and Muslims, despite the fact that they have so much in common.

The word *religion* is itself a loaded and contested word, so much so that some sociologists, in the interests of secular impartiality, would prefer to avoid using it altogether. Religion, from the Latin *religare*, could be defined as that which binds each one of us to God, or the Absolute, or whatever name we use for that Higher Reality, through rituals such as prayer and fasting, whether or not they are prescribed by a sacred revelation, and to our fellow creatures, human and non-human, as members of God's creation. Similarly, "the Arabic word for intellect *al-'aql* is related to the word "to bind", for it is that which binds man to his Origin".¹ As the Qur'an explains, the rope that links us to God also links us to one

another: “*And hold fast, all together, unto the bond with God, and do not draw apart from one another*” (3: 103).²

Of course, this is not the understanding of religion that most people have in mind when they speak of religion as a dangerous and divisive force in international affairs, or, to use Salman Rushdie’s phrase, as “a poison in the blood”.³ They are really talking about religious exclusivism or “fundamentalism”, which makes religion an ideology and a badge of exclusive identity. It is this perversion of religion, fuelled by fear, hatred, and insecurity, sometimes further warped by racism or sharpened by a desire to avenge a wrong, which has led to war crimes and acts of terrorism. It is this travesty of religion that has damaged the reputation of Islam. This is not the place to discuss the folly of intervening militarily in Afghanistan and Iraq, or torturing and humiliating suspects, and denying them the basic right to a fair trial. Suffice it to say that political events around the world—in Israel/Palestine, Chechnya, Kashmir, Gujerat, Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq—have undoubtedly contributed to religious extremism and to a growing sense of alienation among Muslims.

This sense of alienation has been further aggravated by old negative stereotypes of Islam that have resurfaced and gained currency in the media. Indeed a neo-orientalist Islamophobia pervades the works of many writers who comment on Islam and international relations, and some of them, for example Bernard Lewis, Samuel Huntington and Daniel Pipes, have had an enormous and undeserved influence on US policy-makers. Islam is being portrayed once again, as it was in colonial times, as an inherently violent and fanatical religion that encourages or condones terrorism, as a monolithic, backward and inferior religion that subjugates women and denies them their equal rights, and thus as a religion incompatible with modern Western and democratic values, or even as the implacable enemy of Western civilisation. If you think I am exaggerating, take a look at the Amazon.com website and read the blurb of books, such as *The Sword of the Prophet* by Serge Trifkovic (“Get the details and documentation for hundreds of ‘politically incorrect’ facts about Islam—such as The Koran sanctions pillage, looting, ransom, and the rape of captive women as an incentive

to join in jihad or ‘holy war’ ...”), or *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam* by Robert Spencer, who is also the director of Jihad Watch and editor of a huge anthology of articles entitled *The Myth of Islamic Tolerance* (“REVEALED, at long last: the whole ‘politically incorrect’ truth about Islam’s violent teachings, bloody history, backward culture, and morally depraved founder”). Books such as these do not merely disseminate a totally inaccurate account of Islam and Islamic history, but they do so in language that is outrageously abusive, language that today would never be tolerated if applied to any religion other than Islam.

The Arab Mind, first published in 1973, by the Israeli-American cultural anthropologist, Raphael Patai, a book that, according to one professor at a US military college, is “probably the single most popular and widely read book on the Arabs in the US military,”⁴ and which is viewed in a favourable light by the US neo-conservative establishment, is a classic example of orientalist scholarship as understood by the late Edward Said because it focuses on the “otherness” of Arab culture and lays the foundations for the subordination and exploitation of Muslim countries. Although students at Georgetown University were once asked to analyse this book as “an example of bad, biased social science”, the 1983 revised edition of the book has a glowing preface by Norvell B. De Atkine, Director of Middle East Studies at the JFK Special Warfare Center and School at Fort Bragg. The chapter on Arabs and sex, which explains that Arabs are sexually repressed and particularly vulnerable to sexual humiliation, was much cited by “pro-war Washington conservatives in the months before the March 2003 invasion of Iraq”,⁵ and it clearly influenced the methods of torture and psychological warfare used by the US special forces in places such as Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo Bay.

Islamophobic books have indeed become a growth industry. To illustrate my point, take a look at the Wikipedia, which is a vast freely accessible encyclopaedia on the world-wide-web. There you will find at the time of writing (21 October 2006) 54 pages in the category of “Books critical of Islam”, whereas you will only find 21 pages of “Books critical of Christianity”, and 5 pages of “Books critical of Zionism”. On the other hand, if one looks at the article on

“Religious pluralism” in the Wikipedia, one will find only nine lines devoted to Islam.

There are five different aspects of Islam which are relevant to Muslim-Jewish relations today and which have not been well explained, or even properly understood, by Muslims themselves:

1. The historical and scriptural inheritance shared by Jews and Muslims.
2. The theological beliefs and ritual practises shared by Jews and Muslims.
3. The “Constitution of Medina” as a model of a plural society.
4. The Qur’anic ecumenical model of religious pluralism.
5. Qur’anic inter-faith principles.

The historical and scriptural inheritance

Historically, Islam has had close contact with other religious traditions from the very beginning, especially with the *ahl al-kitab*, or people of Scripture, namely Jews and Christians. One cannot read the Qur’an without a good knowledge of the Torah, or the first five books of the Hebrew Bible. Indeed Jews and Muslims had, and still, have a very special relationship. The Arabs of Medina, or Yathrib, were well disposed to receive the Prophet’s message because the town had long been inhabited by Jews who were descended from true Israelites and judaized Arabs. One of the Prophet’s early biographers Ibn Hishâm makes this point:

Allah had set them on the road to Islam, for there were Jews with them in their country—people who had scriptures, and were endowed with knowledge, while they themselves were polytheists and idolaters.⁶

Moreover, it was a time of messianic expectation: prophecies were circulating among the Jews of Yathrib that a new prophet would shortly appear.⁷ According to the Arab historian al-Samhûdî, more than twenty Jewish tribes were settled in Medina.⁸ The most important of these tribes were the Banû al-Nadîr, the Banû Qurayzah and the Banû Qaynuqâ’. The Banû al-Nadîr and the Banû Qurayzah claimed to be descended from Jewish priests, *al-Kâhînûn*, *Kâhin* being the Arabic rendering of the Hebrew *Kohen*.

So the Prophet thought that when he emigrated from Mecca to Medina he could count on the wholehearted support of these local monotheists to form a

united front against the paganism of the Quraysh and of the Arabs in general. Leaving aside personal tragedies, such as the death of the Prophet's wife Khadijah and that of his young son Ibrâhîm, Muhammad's rejection by the Jews was perhaps, as Karen Armstrong says, "the greatest disappointment in his life" because "it called his whole religious position into question".⁹ We know that even before migrating to Medina, the Prophet instructed his followers to pray in the direction of Jerusalem. Since Muslims believe that the prototype of the Ka'bah was built by Abraham and therefore predates the Temple of Solomon, the change of *qiblah*, or direction of prayer, from Jerusalem to Mecca, introduced sixteen or seventeen months after the *hijrah*, did not imply a break with the Abrahamic tradition.¹⁰ Indeed, there is an oral tradition among the Bedouin that the Ka'bah was a sanctuary and place of pilgrimage to which Jews used to travel long before the building of the Temple of Solomon.¹¹

Abraham is the key ecumenical figure in the Qur'an, mentioned more frequently than any other, because he is regarded as the common tribal ancestor of the Jews and Arabs and spiritual ancestor of the three faiths. In about the year 1919 BCE, when he was ninety-nine years of age, the Lord made a covenant with him and told him that he would be the father of many nations. According to the Book of Genesis (15: 5), his descendants would be as numerous as the stars. For this reason, his name was changed from Abram, "father of exaltation", to Abraham, "father of a multitude". When one considers that today the total population of Jews, Christians and Muslims exceeds 3.48 billion, which is well over half the population of this planet, one could say that this prophecy is hardly an exaggeration.¹² When Abraham heard this prophecy, he had only one son Ishmael, who was then thirteen years old. Ishmael fathered "twelve princes according to their tribes" (Gen. 25: 16). From these princes the Northern Arabs are reportedly descended, known by Arab genealogists as the Musta'ribah (Arabianized), or Aramite tribes. Ishmael married a daughter of a Jorhamite prince named Mudad and she gave him an illustrious son named Kedar (Ar. *Qaydar*), who settled in the wilderness of Paran (Arabia) (Gen. 25: 13-15; I Chron. 1: 29-31). He was an ancestor of Adnan (or *Qays*), from whom the

Quraysh, the tribe to which the Prophet Muhammad belonged, claim descent. Therefore, when God addressed Moses and foretold: “I will raise up for them a prophet from among their brethren, like you [Moses], and I will put my words into his mouth; he shall convey all my commands to them” (Deut. 18: 18), Muslims take this to refer to the Prophet Muhammad, a descendant of Ishmael, and to the way the Qur’an was revealed. After the death of Sarah, Abraham married Keturah and had six more sons from whom, it is said, the South Arabian tribes of Sheba and Dedan are descended.

Since Isaac, the second son of Abraham and ancestor of the House of Judah, was born fourteen years after the birth of Ishmael, one could argue that the Promised Land and the prophecy attached to it do not refer exclusively to the Children of Israel. However Jews believe that Isaac and Ishmael are heirs to separate inheritances: Isaac is heir to the covenant made with Abraham (see Genesis 17 & 21), while Ishmael is heir to a separate Divine promise (see Genesis 16, 17 and 21). His name means “God shall hear”: the angel or messenger of God addresses the pregnant Hagar and tells her that when she bears her child she should name him “*Yishma’el*, because the Lord hath heard thy affliction” (Gen 16: 11). “The Eternal One is the God of Ishmael as well as the God of Isaac, and so, Ishmael, too, receives a Divine promise.”¹³

Abraham was a *hanîf*, or natural monotheist, who rejected the idolatry of his people. In the Islamic, as in the Jewish, tradition he is the “servant” and the “friend” of God (*Khalilullah*): “And God took Abraham for a friend” (4: 124). Since the term *Jew* derives from the tribe of Judah, who was Abraham’s great grandson, Abraham cannot be called a Jew, nor can he be called an Israelite, since this would mean that he was a descendant of his own grandson Jacob, named Israel (“one who strives with God”). His religious beliefs were not founded on the Torah because he lived three centuries before Moses, the “law-giver”. For this reason, it is written in the Qur’an:

Abraham was neither a “Jew” nor a “Christian”, but was one who turned away from all that is false (*hanîf*), having surrendered himself to God; and was not of the idolaters (*al-mushrikûn*). (3: 67)

Abraham emigrated from Mesopotamia to settle in Canaan, where he remained an immigrant, “a stranger and sojourner” (Genesis, 23: 4). Despite God’s promise of land, the only property that he himself acquired is said to have been a burial place at Hebron, which is still a place of pilgrimage for Jews, Christians and Muslims. Like the early Muslims in Medina, he was a *muhâjir*, a migrant, which is the spiritual state of all men in the journey of life.

In Genesis (chapter 22), it is recounted how Abraham demonstrated his fidelity to God by agreeing to sacrifice his son Isaac. Yet in this chapter Isaac is described as Abraham’s “only son”, or *y’chid’cha* (22: 2); in the Hebrew text the word used is *yachid* and not *echad*, to stress absolute singularity. After the sacrificial offering (in which God provides a ram to replace the boy), the same word is repeated when the angel of the Lord says: “Now I know that you fear God since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me” (Gen. 22: 12). Abraham’s sacrifice is remembered by Muslims every year on the festival of *’Îd al-adhâ*. Since Abraham’s eldest son was Ishmael, not Isaac, Muslims believe that the name Isaac has here been substituted for that of Ishmael. They see it as an example of the type of textual corruption to which God alludes in the Qur’an, in words addressed to the Children of Israel: “And do not overlay truth with falsehood, and do not knowingly suppress the truth” (2: 42).

Some Jews and Christians would say that Ishmael was “the only son” because he was “the only remaining son” after the banishment of Hagar and her son.¹⁴ Others would say that Ishmael was not a legitimate son because he was the son of Hagar, a slave-girl and a concubine. For St Paul, who was apparently the first apostle to exempt Christian proselytes from circumcision and from adherence to the Mosaic Law, and whose decision to adapt the teachings of Jesus for the benefit of non-Jews was to change the course of history, Hagar, the bondmaid, represents the covenant given at Mount Sinai and corresponds to the physical Jerusalem and the bondage of those under the old law, while Sarah represents the new covenant and corresponds to the heavenly Jerusalem which offers freedom to all who accept it (Galatians 4: 21-31). Yet, according to one passage in the Book of Genesis, Sarah gave Hagar the Egyptian to her husband “to be his wife” (Gen.

16: 3) because she thought that she would remain infertile. Also, when Abraham died, Ishmael never lost his status as a son, for it is written: “And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron” (Gen. 25: 9). Furthermore, Abraham’s special regard for Ishmael and God’s prophetic words about the twelve princes and the great nation that would stem from him surely run counter to this line of argument.

This is a good example of the way Muslims lay claim to be the inheritors of the Jewish and Christian scriptures, yet interpret them in a different way. For Jews, Christians and Muslims to engage in any meaningful dialogue, it is necessary that they study each other’s sacred texts and seek to understand them through the eyes of the other. This means that an understanding of the differences, or sticking points, is no less important than an understanding of the communalities.

Theological beliefs and ritual practices

In many ways Islam is much closer to Judaism than to Christianity. The paradoxical doctrinal accretions that have become central to Christianity—the Incarnation, the Trinity, the Atonement, and Original Sin—are equally alien to both Jews and Muslims. The one unforgivable sin in Judaism and Islam is polytheism or idolatry. Like Jews, Muslims insist on the concept of *tawhid*, or God’s unity. In their formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity and the Incarnation, Christians are accused of engaging in *shirk*, which means associating other beings with God, which, in the opinion of Muslims, comes close to polytheism. However, Muslims have the highest respect for Jesus, son of Mary, and do not deny that he was a messiah.

Any Jew who studies Islam will find that much will be familiar. The role of the *shari’ah* law in Islam is very similar to that of *halakhah* in Judaism. The Prophet Muhammad had taught his followers to greet one another in the Jewish manner with the words “Peace be with you”. He had instituted the fast of ‘*ashûrâ*’ (the tenth), probably influenced by *yôm kippûr*, the Day of Atonement, on the tenth day of the month of Tishri. His followers covered their heads in prayer and performed similar ablutions. He had issued dietary restrictions acceptable to Jews,

which would have satisfied what rabbis demanded of strangers admitted to live among them: the prohibition against the eating of pork, or blood, or any animal that had been strangled, sacrificed to idols, or had met a natural death. He had strongly recommended the practice of circumcision. Until the Banû al-Nadîr were banished in 3 AH, the Prophet had a Jewish secretary, ‘Abdullah ibn Salâm, and five years later he married a Jewish girl, Safiyyah, whose first husband and father, both leaders of the Banû Nadîr, had been implacable enemies of the Prophet. She remained devoted to the Prophet and when he was sick and dying, stepped forward and said: “O Prophet of God, I surely wish that what you suffer from might be in me rather than in you.”

The “Constitution of Medina” as a model of religious pluralism

In the *Sahîfat al-Madinah*, sometimes called the Constitution of Medina, the Prophet Muhammad legislated for a multi-religious society, based on equality, tolerance, and justice, many centuries before such an idea existed in Europe. Under the terms of this document each religious and ethnic group enjoyed complete cultural and legal autonomy. The Jews were not required to pay any tax, nor was there a clause demanding their subjection. They were bound by the same duties as the other parties to the contract; and together they formed a single community, or *ummah*, a word that today is generally used only with reference to the Muslim community. Belief in One God was regarded as a sufficient basis for cooperation:

To the Jew who follows us belongs help and equality. He shall not be wronged nor his enemies aided. The Jews must bear their expenses and the Muslims their expenses. Each must help the other against anyone who attacks the people of this document. They must seek mutual advice and consultation, and loyalty is a protection against treachery.¹⁵

This tradition of tolerance was continued by the Caliph ‘Umar, who, when he entered Jerusalem in 638 CE, obtained permission to pray in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, but decided instead to pray outside for fear that his action would be taken as a precedent to convert the church into a mosque. Not only did he guarantee security and freedom of worship to the Christian inhabitants but he also showed equal respect to the Jews. He personally supervised the cleansing of the

Temple Mount when the first Jewish families returned to the Old City, and interceded on their behalf against the Christians who were strongly opposed to the Jewish resettlement:

So every Muslim was in town or valley, and there came with them a group of Jews. Then he [‘Umar] ordered them to sweep the holy place [the temple site] and to cleanse it. ‘Umar himself oversaw them at all times, and each time something was uncovered, he would ask the Jewish elders about the Rock, which was the Foundation Stone [he. *even shetiyya*, the stone in the temple on which the ark of the Covenant stood]. Finally, one of their scholars indicated the precise boundaries of the place, as a result of which it was uncovered. He commanded that walls be built around the holy site and that a dome be constructed over the Foundation Stone.¹⁶

The Qur’anic model of religious pluralism

One can find in the Qur’an and in the Sunnah, or example of the Prophet Muhammad, a model of religious pluralism. The theological basis of religious pluralism is best formulated in the Qur’an, which is much easier for a non-Arab to check as a source than the numerous sayings or *hadith* of the Prophet.

1. There is, within each of us, primordial religion, or religious instinct

Every human being possesses an innate disposition to worship God and to discriminate between right and wrong (Qur’an, 30: 30). Those who heed that instinct are being true to their nature; those who deny it are “*the iniquitous, who break their bond with God after it has been established*” (2: 26-7)—they conceal or cover up the truth within themselves and are ungrateful for God’s gifts, both the idea of concealment and ingratitude being inherent in the word for unbelievers, *al-kâfirûn*.¹⁷

2. There is one God, but He is worshipped under many different names

Muslims are instructed to say:

We believe in the revelation which has come down to us and in that which has come down to you; our God and your God is one and the same, and it is to Him we [all] submit. (29: 46).

3. Every person who does good, whatever his or her religion, will be rewarded in the hereafter

It is unreasonable to claim that paradise is reserved for the practitioners of any single religion:

And they claim, “None shall ever enter paradise unless he be a Jew”—or, “a Christian.” Such are their wishful beliefs! Say: “Produce some evidence for what you are claiming, if what you say is true!” (2: 111)

In two identical passages in the Qur’an, it is repeated that belief in God, belief in the Day of Judgement, and righteous action are the only three elements deemed essential for those who would earn God’s favour (2: 62, 5: 69).

4. The Qur’an guarantees freedom of worship

“There is no compulsion in religion” (2: 256), and “So let believe whoever wills, and let disbelieve whoever wills” (18: 29). This disproves the fallacy that Islam imposes on the non-Muslim the choice between conversion and the sword.

5. Religious diversity is divinely ordained

To each [community] among you have We appointed a law and a way of life. And if God had so willed, He could have made you one community: but [He willed it otherwise] in order to test you by means of what He has bestowed upon you. So compete with one another in doing good works. To God you all must return. Then He will make you truly understand all about that which you used to differ. (5: 48)

This verse from *Surat al-Ma’idah* is, as Murad Hofmann says, “a virtual manifesto of religious pluralism” and “a structural guarantee for the survival of more than one religion”.¹⁸ Multiplicity of every kind—religious, cultural, or ethnic—is part of God’s magnificent design:

And among His wonders is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the diversity of your tongues and colours: for in this, behold, there are messages indeed for those endowed with knowledge. (30: 22)

6. Revelation is a universal phenomenon

Islam accepts the legitimacy of all earlier revelations, teaching veneration for all prophets since the time of Adam. The Qur’an repeatedly stresses that all peoples on earth have had their prophets and messengers. In other words, prophetic guidance is not limited to any one community, period, or civilisation. So Muslims—if they are true to their faith—do not claim a monopoly of spiritual truth, or a monopoly of revelation:

And indeed, within every community have We raised up an apostle [with this message]: “Worship God and shun the powers of evil” (16: 36).

Nothing is said to you that was not said by Us to apostles before you. (41: 43)

Say: “We believe in God, and in that which has been bestowed from on high upon us, and that which has been bestowed upon Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and their descendants, and that which has been vouchsafed by their Lord to Moses and Jesus and all the prophets: we make no distinction between any of them. And to Him do we surrender ourselves.” (3: 84).

The Prophet Muhammad—and, by extension, all Muslims—was instructed by God to make the following speech to Jews and Christians:

I believe in whatever revelation God has bestowed from on high; and I am bidden to bring about equity in your mutual views. God is our Lord as well as your Lord. To us shall be accounted our deeds, and to you, your deeds. Let there be no contention between us and you: God will bring us together—for with Him is all journeys’ end. (40: 15)

7. Every human being is entrusted with the duty to protect the natural environment

The bond that links us to God gives us a special relationship with the rest of God’s creation, which is that of a custodian, vicegerent, or *khalîfah*. It is this role that links together all people of faith. By failing to care for the natural world, human beings are betraying the covenant made by the children of Adam to acknowledge their Lord (7: 172). Those who have no respect for nature and who assume that they alone have sovereign power are guilty of arrogance and ingratitude. It has been said that “God Himself is the ultimate environment” (Nasr 1993: 131) because the created world is a book of signs (*ayât*) which point to the Creator, or a mirror reflecting God’s Attributes. “I was a hidden treasure and I loved to be known,” says God in a well-known *hadîth*, “and so I created the world.” The right relationship between man and his natural environment has to be based on the recognition that we do not really own anything: “*No! I swear by this land, and thou art a lodger in this land ...* (Qur’an, 90: 1). Similarly, in the Old Testament, God warns Moses that the Israelites cannot claim rights of ownership to the Promised Land since all of us are merely tenants, temporary lodgers in the land that we must share as best we can: “*The land shall not be sold forever: for*

the land is Mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with Me” (Leviticus 25: 23). Moses, as reported in the Qur’an, passed on this command to his people: “*Indeed all the earth belongs to God: He bequeaths it to such of His servants as He pleases*” (7: 128). In a metaphysical sense, one could say that, since God is the real Owner, we merely enjoy the usufruct of things.

Beginnings of Interfaith Dialogue

Muslims have engaged in dialogue with Jews and Christians since the time of the Prophet Muhammad. During his lifetime learned discussions took place between rabbis and Muslims. We also know that when a delegation of Christians from Najrân in South Yemen visited the Prophet in Medina, a religious debate took place and the Christians were permitted to perform their prayers in the mosque. Muhammad’s role as a political arbitrator skilled in the art of diplomacy is well known. It was in this capacity that he was invited to settle a feud between two tribes, the Aws and the Khazrâj, thus enabling his followers to escape persecution in Mecca by migrating to Medina. But his role as a spiritual arbitrator is often overlooked.

In a verse of the Qur’an, in *Sûrat al-Mâ’idah*, revealed in the tenth year of the Hijrah, several years after the two main Jewish tribes had been evicted from Medina for treason, some Jews who came to Muhammad as an arbitrator are advised to study their own Scripture:

But how is it that they [the Jews] ask Thee for judgment—seeing that they have the Torah, containing God’s injunctions—and thereafter turn away [from thy judgment]? Such as these are not believers. (5: 43).

Verily, it is We who bestowed from on high the Torah, wherein there is judgment and light. On its strength did the prophets, who have surrendered themselves to God, deliver judgment to those who followed the Jewish faith; and so did the men of God and the rabbis, inasmuch as some of God’s writ had been entrusted to their care and they bore witness to the truth. Therefore, [O children of Israel,] hold not men in awe, but stand in awe of Me; and do not barter away my messages for a trifling gain: for they who do not judge in accordance with what God has bestowed from on high are, indeed, deniers of the truth (al-Kâfirûn)! (5: 44)

In this same *surah*, the Jews and Christians are told that if they would only observe the Torah and the Gospel, “*they would indeed share all the blessings of heaven and earth*” (5: 66).

In the early Middle Ages, at the caliphal courts of Damascus, Baghdad and Cordoba, inter-religious debate between Jews, Christians, and Muslims was a public pastime, which gave birth to the study of comparative religion a thousand years before such a thing existed in Europe. Since then social and political conditions in Europe and the Middle East have not been favourable to interfaith discussions. It is true that Jewish-Christian disputations took place at Barcelona in 1263 and Tortosa in 1413-14, but without mutual respect there could be no genuine attempt at mutual understanding and Muslims were not asked to participate.

Jewish-Christian dialogue has made great progress since the end of World War II. Christian-Muslim dialogue has developed slowly in the last forty years, mainly promoted by Christians. For example, a Commission for Islam was founded at the Vatican in 1974 and the journal *Islamochristiana* began in 1975. It was in that same year that the first Muslim-Jewish-Christian Conference took place in Bellagio, Italy. Jewish-Muslim dialogue, however, is still in its infancy, the chief obstacle being what we may euphemistically call “the Palestinian question” and the dispute about whether Jews or Muslims are the rightful guardians of Jerusalem. Emotions over this issue run high because for Muslims Jerusalem is the third holiest city after Mecca and Medina—for it was from the site of the Temple of Solomon that the Prophet made his Heavenly Ascent (the *mi’râj*)—while for Jews it is the only holy city. In the United Kingdom two organisations, the Maimonides Foundation and Alif-Aleph, both Jewish initiatives, have done much to promote better relations between Jews and Muslims. But although we have in the UK a Council for Christians and Jews, we still do not have a Council for Jews, Christians and Muslims.

Qur'anic interfaith principles

The following six principles of interfaith dialogue may be extracted from the Qur'an:

The first principle is that, when we address those who do not share our beliefs, we should speak with courtesy, tact, and self-restraint, and refrain from discussing our beliefs with those who are unwilling to listen:

And do not argue with the followers of earlier revelation otherwise than in a most kindly manner. (29: 46; cf. 17: 53, 16: 125-8)

And bear with patience what they say, and part from them with a fair leave-taking. (15: 88)

The second principle is that we should not ridicule the beliefs of others:

But do not revile those whom they invoke instead of God, lest they revile God out of spite, and in ignorance: for We have made the deeds of every people seem fair to them. In time, they must return to their Lord, and then He will make them understand what they have done. (6: 108)¹⁹

People are naturally attached to those beliefs implanted in them from childhood. Therefore we should not injure their feelings, and provoke antagonism, by mocking the objects of their veneration. Besides, no mortal has it in his power to cause another person to believe unless God graces that person with His guidance. All we can do is set an example in our own conduct.

The third principle, a corollary to the above, is that we should not associate with those who ridicule our faith:

Do not take for your friends such as mock at your faith and make a jest of it [...] but fear God, if you are believers: for, when you call to prayer, they mock at it and make a jest of it—simply because they are people who do not use their reason. (5: 57-8)²⁰

Those who enjoy the company of such people are hypocrites (*munâfiqûn*) “who would deceive God, whereas they deceive none but themselves” (2: 9; cf. 4: 142).

The fourth principle is that we should invite people to use their reason, appealing to the intellect (*al-'aql*) to judge the truth of God's words, because there is no contradiction between faith and reason:

O People of Scripture, why do you argue about Abraham, seeing that the Torah and the Gospels were not revealed till long after him? Will you not, then, use your reason? (3: 65)

The fifth principle is that we should avoid engaging in idle speculation about the nature of God, or the truth of God's revelations:

Only those who disbelieve dispute the truth of God's messages (ayât). But let it not deceive thee that they seem to be able to do as they please on earth. (40: 4; cf. 22:8)

Accursed be the conjecturers who are dazed in perplexity. (51: 10-11)

Since the Qur'an is regarded as a revealed Book, Muslims are not free to accept the truth of some verses and reject the truth of others, as the Jews of Medina wished to do (2: 85). Nor should those without knowledge venture to interpret the Qur'an in their own arbitrary way. The Holy Prophet has said: "To dispute about the Qur'an is infidelity".²¹ He is also reported to have said: "Preach what you know [of the Qur'an], and entrust what you do not know to one who knows it" (*Mishkat*, I, p. 274).

Since God cannot be comprehended by human reason, it is wrong to attempt to define His nature:

Utterly remote, in His glory, is the Lord of the heavens and the earth—the Lord in almightiness enthroned—from all that they may attribute to Him by way of definition. (43: 82; cf. 6: 103)

Muslims are therefore advised to shun the company of those who enter into false discourses about the nature of God and His revelations "until they embark on another topic" (6: 68).

The sixth principle is that the followers of different religious traditions should compete with one another in piety:

Compete with one another in doing good works, for to God you will all return, and He will inform you about that wherein you differ. (5: 48)

The Qur'an stresses the priority of good deeds over doctrines. Countless people, in the history of mankind, have fought, died and endured torture for the sake of dogmas that have arisen as a result of the way sacred scriptures, and the words of God's messengers, have been interpreted.

Conclusion

The Qur'anic model of religious pluralism and the inter-faith principles that I have just enumerated are as valid today as they were in seventh-century Arabia. The concept of religious pluralism, in particular the notion that no single religion can claim a monopoly of the truth, has gained wide currency during the last two decades as people have become increasingly aware of the need to break down barriers of mutual prejudice by engaging in interfaith and intercultural dialogue. Now, however, as a result of recent political events, this concept—and the interpretation of religion and culture that it presupposes—is increasingly under assault. The language of dialogue is being eroded by the self-fulfilling prophecy of a “clash of civilisations” and the nightmare of “total war”.²² This makes it all the more important for religious scholars to engage in what Muslims call *ijtihad*, which is the task of exerting oneself to the task of reinterpreting scripture by means of analogy and independent reasoning. In addition to the greater *jihad*, which is the struggle to overcome the whims of the ego, what is needed now, more than ever, is an ecumenical *jihad*

Jews, Christians and Muslims should cite those passages from scripture that foster peace and harmony. They should remember God's words in the Book of Leviticus (19: 34): “The stranger who lives with you shall be treated like the native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were once strangers in the land of Egypt.” They should learn by heart the words of Peter, the disciple of Jesus: “I now see how true it is that God has no favourites, but that in every nation anyone who is Godfearing and does what is right is acceptable to Him” (Acts 34-5). As Martin Luther King said: “Our loyalties must become ecumenical [...] Every nation must now develop an overriding loyalty to mankind as a whole in order to preserve the best in their individual societies.”²³ And, as the Malaysian scholar Chandra Muzaffar says, to be true to mankind “the centres of power in the West” have to show that they are committed to a multi-civilisational world based upon justice, equality and respect for diversity.²⁴ They must learn to respect what Jonathan Sacks calls “the dignity of difference”.²⁵

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- ¹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred* (Albany: SUNY 1989), 12.
- ² Here and elsewhere Qur'anic passages are taken from, or based on, Muhammad Asad's translation.
- ³ Concerning the massacre of Muslims in Gujerat *The Guardian*, 9 March 2002.
- ⁴ Brian Whitaker, "Its best use is as a doorstep", *The Guardian*, 24 May 2004.
- ⁵ Seymour Hersh, *Chain of Command: The Road from 9/11 to Abu Ghraib* (HarperCollins 2004).
- ⁶ Cited by Maxime Rodinson, *Mohammed* (London: Pelican 1973), 143.
- ⁷ *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ibn Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah*, trans. A. Guillaume (Karachi: Oxford University Press 1967), 93-94.
- ⁸ Barakat Ahmad, *Muhammad and the Jews: A Re-Examination*. (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House 1979), 29.
- ⁹ *A History of God* (London: Mandarin Paperback 1994), 180.
- ¹⁰ This is said to be the first command of God abrogated in the Qur'an.
- ¹¹ See Martin Lings, *Mecca: From before Genesis until Now* (Cambridge: Archetype 2004).
- ¹² But with a global population of only about 13 million, Jews are far outnumbered by Christians and Muslims, and, as Rabbi Tony Bayfield pointed out to me in an email message, this has implications for the relationship, the availability of Jews for dialogue and different emotional responses to the balance of power in the relationship.
- ¹³ Rabbi Elizabeth Tikvah Sarah, *The Jewish Chronicle*, 10 November 2006.
- ¹⁴ Rabbi Elizabeth Tikvah Sarah made this point to me by in a personal email message.
- ¹⁵ F. E. Peters, *Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, 3 vols (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1990), I, 217.
- ¹⁶ Norman Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands: A History and Source Book* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America 1979), 154-55.
- ¹⁷ Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri, *Journey of the Universe as Expounded in the Qur'ân* (London: Kegan Paul International 1985), 16.
- ¹⁸ "Religious Pluralism and Islam in a Polarised World", in Roger Boase (ed.), *Islam and Global Dialogue: Religious Pluralism and the Pursuit of Peace* (Aldershot: Ashgate 2005), 239.

¹⁹ Cf. “No men shall deride [other] men: it may well be that those [whom they deride] are better than themselves; and no women [shall deride other] women [...] And neither shall you defame one another, nor insult one another” (49: 11).

²⁰ Cf. “He has enjoined upon you in this divine writ that whenever you hear people deny the truth of God’s messages and mock at them, you shall not sit with them until they engage in some other talk—or else you will become like them” (4: 140).

²¹ *Mishkat-ul-Masabih. An English Translation with Arabic Text of Selection of Ahadis from the Highly Voluminous Works of Bokhari, Muslim, and Other Traditionalists of Repute*, ed. and trans. Al-Haj Maulana Fazlul Karim, 4 vols, Lahore: n.d. [1979], I, p. 275.

²² Richard Perle writes: “If we just let our vision of the world go forth, and we embrace it entirely, and we don’t try to piece together clever diplomacy, but just wage a total war ... our children will sing great songs about us years from now” (*Green Left Weekly*, 12 December 2001, cited in John Pilger, *The NewRulers of the World* (London: Verso, 2002), pp. 9-10).

²³ *Where Do We Go from Here? Chaos or Community* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1967), p. 190.

²⁴ “Living in a Multi-Civilisational World: The Politics of Civilisation”, Islam21 2002-2003 <<http://www.islam21.net/pages/keyissues/key3-23.htm>>.

²⁵ See his book *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations* (London: Continuum, 2002).

**Because my religion says so:
Democratic theory and Internal Diversity in Religions¹**

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There is an increasing debate about the status of arguments based on religious beliefs in democratic deliberations. The paper outlines this tension between obligations towards religion and the state. The main concern here is with the fact that religious communities are increasingly seeking participation in public space. The paper raises the often neglected issue of the relationship between such demands and the internal diversity of religious communities. Through the case study of Islam, it argues that unless religious communities devise ways of engaging with their internal diversity they will be inconsistent in their stance: seeking representation externally and suppressing it internally.

Section I

In his commentary on Sophocles' *Antigone*, Hegel calls political demands and religious convictions as 'two highest moral powers'.² In wide ranging contexts, these two moral powers have often pulled their devotees in opposing directions. In *Antigone* this tension is portrayed through the protagonist's stand against Creon, the King of Thebes, who had forbidden the burial of Polynices, her brother, as he had died fighting against Thebes. Antigone defies the ban in the name of 'the great unwritten, unshakable traditions', sanctioned by the gods. Despite most modern readers' sympathies being with Antigone, the play in fact, leaves the issue of the divine law versus human politics open: the blind priest Tiresias while condemning Creon for his wrong act – of condemning Antigone to death - does not say that her defiance of the city laws was right.

In the ninth century CE Baghdad, the 'Abbasid Caliph al-Ma'mun (d.833) favouring the Mu'tazilli school of theology initiated *mihnah*, often translated as inquisition, which required government officials, such as the judges, to publicly declare that the Qur'an was created in time – a doctrine whose political implication was that it gave greater leeway to the caliph in the exercise of his political authority. Many Muslim scholars understandably opposed it, arguing that the Qur'an was an uncreated and eternal word of God. The political implication of this stance was that the caliph's will was subordinate to the Qur'anic injunctions. The clash reached its climate when Ahmed ibn Hanbal (780-855) refused to bow to the political demand of the caliph, despite being subjected to torture and imprisonment. His religious convictions won the day when some years later the state policies were reversed under the reign of another caliph and Ibn-Hanbal was hailed as the champion of religion.³

This conflict between the two moral powers continues today. Fast forward to 1983, the *Mozert v. Hawkins* case involved a complaint by 'born again' Christian families against the local school board in Hawkins County, Tennessee. "The families charged a primary school reading program with denigrating their religious views" by exposing

“children to a variety of points of view” claiming that this “very exposure to diversity interfered with the exercise of the families’ religious beliefs”.⁴ In 2001, several young British Muslim men went to a war in Afghanistan on behalf of the Taliban with whom Britain was at war at that time.⁵ For these young men, loyalty to fellow Muslims overrode that to their fellow countrymen. In 2004, thousands of French Muslims demonstrated against the ban on the display of religious symbols, including *Hijab*, in public schools.⁶ For them, the ban was putting a bar on their freedom as well as on their ability to fulfil their religious obligation.

All the above examples, coming from very diverse contexts and surely having their own specificities and distinctions, do share a commonality; in all of them agents – literary character, religious scholars, parents and young men and women - found their religious convictions at odds with their political obligations demanded by their respective contexts. This tension thus appears to be a wide spread cutting across time and space.

Ibn-Kaldun, the fourteenth century North African historian, discussed the appeal of the religious obligation vis-à-vis political demands. He wrote that the survival of human groups requires the surrender of individual will to a set of social norms. He identified two kinds of social norms: those having a basis in reason and those having a supernatural basis, religion:

If these norms are ordained by the intelligent personalities and minds of the dynasty, the result will be a political [institution] with a rational basis.

If they are ordained by God through a lawgiver who established them as [religious] laws, the result will be a political [institution] with a religious basis.⁷

For Ibn Khaldun, political institutions with a religious basis were superior to those having a rational basis, because the latter,

consider only worldly interests. On the other hand, the intention the lawgiver has concerning mankind is their welfare in the other world, therefore it is necessary, as required by the religious law, to cause the mass to act in accordance with the religious laws in all their affairs touching both this world and the other world.⁸

In all the cases noted above, from *Antigone* to *Hijab*, the opposition to political order was motivated by a desire to respond to the call of the eternity, to the command of the divine, over the requirement of the temporal.

Yet, as we will see below, to act on this desire is full of challenges. There are variants claimants to what is the command of God. The internal divisions in religious communities are often based on varying interpretations of the sacred texts. Over and over again we see that the rivalries generated by differences in interpretations, when allowed a role in politics, lead to violence and coercion; there is a long history of religious persecution as an embarrassing part of major religions, particularly the three main monotheistic faiths. The Wars of Religion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries between Catholics and Protestants in Europe, particularly France, were perhaps the greatest example of this.

Section II

From the ashes of these Wars of Religion, however, emerged a new way of conceiving the relationship between religious and political authorities. The proliferation of sects and particularly the fatigue of the long, bloody and inconclusive wars made tolerance of different religions a necessary virtue. Between sixteenth and the nineteenth century Europe saw several movements that had a secularising influence which saw religious institutions ceasing to play central political role in society. By the nineteenth century there were ‘secularists’ who espoused a doctrine of secularism: the belief that religious institutions and values should play no role in the temporal affairs of the nation-state.⁹ Spencer’s comment that ‘now that moral injunctions are losing authority given by their sacred origin, the secularisation of morals is becoming imperative’¹⁰ captures the mood of the time.

Thus, by this time, decoupling of social order from faith traditions was seen as a necessary element of any lasting peace. This separation notion, along with the centrality of individual conscience in matters of religion, became a hallmark for a new, liberal model for the relationship between the state and religion. As a consequence, political life and the state were secularised in a particular way. Political association that would previously have been linked to a divine founding of society was now linked to a political process in social and profane time operating in public sphere.¹¹ Religious associations and obligations were to remain outside of it and be a part of private sphere. Characterising the period between late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Hobsbawm write that ‘Traditional religion was receding with unprecedented rapidity, both as an intellectual force and among the masses’.¹² For the most of the twentieth century this trend continued giving rise to the secularisation theory which maintained that growth of secularism and consequent privatisation of religion as a necessary outcome as societies became modern and as science and technology spread.

The degree and scope of the separation of religious and political authorities, and the varied across nations and different time periods. In the case of the UK, for example, the separation was defacto but there remained an established Church with the Monarch as its head. The constitution of the US, on the other hand, forbade any involvement of the state in religious matters. In France, the idea of secular stance acquired a somewhat anti-religious meaning. With these variations, the overall framework that became dominant in many parts of what we call the West was secular in its outlook. For a period of time there was thus achieved a truce between religious beliefs and political arena, at-least in the liberal democracies of the West.¹³

Through the colonial process the secular liberal outlook was transmitted to many

other parts of the world; it inspired many. Nehru and Jinnah, for instance, fighting on the opposite poles of the Indian freedom movement, were both inspired by such an outlook.

In the post-colonial contexts, many non-European countries embarked on the process of modernization – with varying ideological underpinnings. In this process the question of the role of religion in society became important. This paper will be restricted to the countries with majority Muslim populations, where we can note a number of different trajectories with regard to the issues of secularization, private-public spaces and the role of religion.

In various forms, most countries with Muslim majorities sought modernisation/secularisation which implied minimising the role of religion in governance; the names of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk (1881-1938) in Turkey, Sukarno (1902-1970) & Suharto (1921-) in Indonesia, Habib Bourguiba (1903-2000) in Tunisia, Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918–1970) in Egypt, Hafiz Asad (1930- 2000) in Syria, are some examples of leaders who adopted such a policy. Turkey, under Ataturk, experimented with radical secularisation of state, Pakistan, very early in its history adopted Islam as the state religion. But, even in the case of Pakistan, there were periods when attempts were made to make the state secular. Thus, under Ayub Khan the name of the country was changed from Islamic Republic of Pakistan to Pakistan only. It is no surprise that writing in 1958, Daniel Lerner claimed:

Underlying the ideologies there pervades in the Middle East a sense that old ways must go because they no longer satisfy the new wants...Where Europeanization once penetrated only the upper levels of Middle East society, affecting mainly leisure-class fashions, modernization today diffuses among a wider population and touches public institutions as well as private aspirations with its disquieting positivist spirit.¹⁴

Section III

As noted above, in most countries, a rigid divide between public and private was never the actual state of affairs in absolute terms. In some countries, like Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, there were deliberate attempts to give religion a central place in public space. Still, the distinction was real and had undeniable impact on public policy. However, since the 1970s, the question of the role of religion in society has regained importance with many questioning the received theoretical separation between private and public spheres and many defending it.

According to Jonathan Sacks:

In recent years, religion has taken us unaware. The rise of the Moral Majority in America in the 1970s, the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979,

the growth of religious parties in Israel, the power of Catholicism in Poland, the strength of reaction to Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*: all of these were unexpected developments that ran wholly contrary to the thesis that modernity and secularisation went hand in hand...Instead and against all predictions religion has surfaced in the public domain.¹⁵

However, the idea that religion took people unaware has been questioned by some writers who see the struggle between religious and secular forces as an ongoing part of the European as well as Muslim societies. For Keddie, for instance, 'Even in European countries at the zenith of expansive secularization, religious groups did not accept the situation without a struggle.'¹⁶ Still, he also acknowledges that 'until roughly 1967, secularists, nationalists, and socialists played a growing political role in the Muslim world, coming to power in several countries and carrying our secularizing programs...'¹⁷

Thus, the idea of the resurgence of religion can be defended, at least in a weak form which grants that religion was never completely privatised in any society. Rosenblum's claim that 'The last several decades have seen key aspects of voluntarism and separationism challenged everywhere' and that 'the most significant development of recent decades is the emergence of a set of challenges to democratic government in the name of faith...its defining character is a push for a "religiously integrated existence"'.¹⁸ can be broadly accepted. While some forty years ago, any mention of legislation based on religious belief would have been a secular blasphemy; today the matter is a respectable topic for discussion. The notion of a linear development from religious to secular via modernisation became at-least contentious, if not out-dated.

Several factors contributed to this shift. A survey of relevant works shows that the demographic shift in European nations, the failure of development policies – underpinned as they were by the modernisation thesis - the philosophical challenge to liberal notions of self and autonomy, the post-modern critique of the Enlightenment, assessment of the public-private divide from gender perspective, the internal contradiction in the idea of secularism and the breakdown of the communist inspired political regimes – all of these factors contributed to the above noted shift in political practice.¹⁹

This revival of religion in public space has not always been welcomed. On their part its opponents have fought to keep religion out of political arenas. Fearing for secular citizenship they rightly recall the horrors of Inquisition to stress the democratic practice over religious identity and argue for assessing the intra-religious life on the criteria of public principle of justice.²⁰ Thus, to many the assumptions of secular citizenship seem to be in tension with the presumptions of religious worldviews. 'Obligations of citizenship and the demands of faith', to use the title of a recent book on this subject, can be at odds.

Earlier we noted the cases of tension between religious worldview and political demands in pre-modern contexts. Is there any resonance between those tensions and the tensions between modern secular notion of citizenship and religious perspectives? Though the modern understanding of citizenship is post-French Revolution, I propose that the reason for the tension is essentially not dissimilar to that which generated the tensions in the pre-modern period and which we noted above through the examples of Antigone and Ibn Hanbal and to which we can add Yudhishthira²¹ as well. Martin Luther King's words in the context of his opposition to racial segregation would have appealed to all of them:

You live both in time and eternity. Your highest loyalty is to God, and not to the mores or the folkways, the state or the nation, or any man-made institution. If any earthly institution or custom conflicts with God's Will, it is your Christian duty to oppose it. You must never allow the transitory, evanescent demands of man-made institutions to take precedence over the eternal demands of the mighty God.²²

The modern concept of citizenship had formalised the domain of politics as this worldly, secular. It left space for religious beliefs but in a subordinated private sphere. In a way this required religious outlook itself to be reoriented completely. Traditional religions have all concerned themselves with the entire span of human life, at-least in theory, as noted in the quote from Ibn Khaldun.

It is interesting to note that as far as Muslims and the British state are concerned these tensions go back at-least to the middle of the nineteenth century. In the 1870s we find an exchange between W. W. Hunter and Sayed Ahmed Khan. Hunter wrote an article whose very title captures his perspective: 'The Indian Musalmans: are they bound in conscience to rebel against the Queen?' In reply Sayed Ahmed Khan wrote a book titled 'Sayed Ahmad on Dr. Hunter's Our Indian Musalmans, are they bound in conscience to rebel against the Queen?' in which he sought to rebut Hunter's arguments.

Section IV

Some of the best minds of today are grappling with the question of the place of religion in society and particularly in public sphere. By way of illustration I will briefly outline one such attempt that has generated immense interest: John Rawls' notion of *Political Liberalism*.

Rawls dealt with the question of religion and politics in several works, most importantly in his *Political liberalism*²³ as well as in a later article²⁴. His concern was this: "Is it possible for citizens of faith to be wholehearted members of a democratic society who endorse society's intrinsic political ideals and values and do not simply acquiesce in the balance of political and social forces?"²⁵ Political Liberalism is a response to this question.

In any plural society, several reasonable comprehensive doctrines with their respective notions of justice and truth co-exist. Political liberalism is based on the assumption that for polity to be possible in such a pluralistic society, “People who disagree about the highest ideals and their conception of the whole truth, might nevertheless agree that public aims such as peace, prosperity, and equal liberty are very important”.²⁶ It admits in the civil society discussions based on religious motivations and even arguments based on scriptures for or against policies and laws. However, when these arguments are submitted to public political culture for legislative process they must be in the form that fulfils the criteria of public reason.

Kymlicka explains public reason:

Liberal citizens must give reasons for their political demands, not just state preferences or make threat. Moreover these reasons must be ‘public’ reasons, in the sense that they are capable of being understood and accepted by people of different faiths and cultures. Hence, it is not enough to invoke scripture or tradition. Liberal citizens must justify their political demands in terms that fellow citizens can understand and accept as consistent with their status as free and equal citizens.²⁷

According to Rawls, “This requirement still allows us to introduce into political discussion at any time our comprehensive doctrine, religious or nonreligious, provided that, in due course, we give properly public reasons to support the principle and policies our comprehensive doctrine is said to support”.²⁸

Over the years, the theory has acquired many admirers and critiques. The proponents argue that the basic transformation required in public reasonableness model is something that is practiced in daily lives by religious and non-religious people. Even a religious believer who seeks to explain her or his convictions to someone from another religion or from no religious background has to put his points in a language that will be comprehensible to the listener; without public reason no preaching is possible.

For its opponents, political liberalism fails to live up to its self-image of being a freestanding political conception. It is seen as reverting to the assumptions of comprehensive liberalism. Further, it is contended that Rawls’ definitions of important terms such as reasonable (used as adjective for many terms) and comprehensive doctrines are too expansive.²⁹

Thus there are many proponents as well as opponents of political liberalism. My point here is not to arbitrate between these or to argue for any other theory. For my purpose it is sufficient to note that political theorists are grappling with this question. The

concern in the rest of the paper is to tease out a particular implication of the above noted growing demand of religious voice to participate in democratic deliberations.

Section V

From the perspective of a religious community, particularly minority religious communities in the West, the above noted shifts can be seen as a very positive development. In these minority contexts, this shift supported the religious communities' claim of autonomy over their internal affairs or as bulwark against what is seen as hostile secular worldview and so on. Success of demand for the state funding of separate Muslim faith schools is perhaps the biggest example of the impact of Muslim voice on public policy. It resulted after nearly three decades of political engagement which coincided with the above-noted shift in the fate of religious communities in secular societies. As Ansari notes, 'Muslims became increasingly vocal in raising their demands in early 1980s, and it is where they have succeeded best in having many of their needs recognised in the face of controversy and opposition from broad sections of British society'.³⁰

The changing political climate in a multi-cultural society like Britain is encouraging a greater Muslim voice in public discourse. At the same time, I propose, it is creating an extremely important imperative for religious communities which cannot be neglected if they want to avoid the double standard of seeking recognition of diversity within the larger national polity while suppressing its own internal diversity. I will focus on Muslims in the West and particularly in Britain but the issues raised have a wider significance and may apply to other religious communities as well.

That there is a difference of opinions and interpretations on almost all major issues in Muslim contexts is true both historically and in contemporary times. "Modern scholarship indicates that early Muslims lived, especially during the first three centuries of their history, in an intellectually dynamic milieu characterized by a multiplicity of communities, schools of thought, and stances on major religio-political issues of the time".³¹

Immediately after the death of the Prophet, there emerged divergent views regarding authority in the post-Prophetic period. There were those who endorsed the caliphate chosen by Muslims, and those who believed in a divinely appointed authority. Over time, this basic distinction came to be associated with the Sunis and the Shi'a, respectively. There was yet another early community, the *Khawarij* who sought to transcend the political divide by making God as their only judge. Their position raised a long lasting debate about the very question of who was a true believer.

Both the Shi'as and the Sunnis are internally differentiated groups. These differences are along legal, theological and political lines and led to a range of positions on almost all the issues of significance to Muslims. These included the nature of God; meaning of Prophethood; freewill and determination; status of the Qur'an; human access to truth/salvation; ways of organising society; conceptions of knowledge; legitimate ruler; relation among religious communities and so on.

In fact, there was a very healthy tradition of intellectual debate and discussion and many of the doctrinal positions that are now accepted as Islamic were the outcomes of these debates. *Munazara* was the technical name for disputations in theology, law,

sciences and other fields. The practice was so common that a whole genre of works, called *Adab a-jadal* or *Adab al-bath*, was dedicated to working out a theory of disputation.³²

On the question of access to truth, for instance, we can observe a spectrum of positions: those claiming revelation as the only source of truth, those arguing for a limited exercise of reason within a revelatory framework, those considering reason to be an independent source of truth, those accepting mystical experience as the highest enlightenment and so on.³³ The names of people such as Ibn Hanbal, al-'Ashari, Ibn-Rushd and Attar can be associated with these various positions. Each of these positions was highly varied internally and attempts were also made to integrate some of them. Thus, the *Ishraqi* (Illuminationism) school sought to reconcile Neo-Platonist and mystical trends¹. Surely, the Qur'an remained a central reference point in all these positions but it was not seen as a 'conversation-stopper' but as a springboard for thought and exploration.

Having discussed the internal diversity among Muslims, let us consider some examples of how this is neglected in contemporary discussions on issues such as education, economics and law that have public policy ramifications.

In a recent paper, 'An Islamic concept of education', Halstead notes that with regard to the question of knowledge,

'Until the time of Ghazali (1058-1111), the debate was fairly evenly balanced between the philosophers and rationalists on the one hand (who believed, among other things, that rationality was separate from religion and indeed could be used to provide objective, independent support for religion) and the more orthodox theologians (commonly known as al-'Asharriya, who believed that rationality is valid only within the boundaries defined by religion) on the other'.³⁴

Interestingly, when further down in the same paper he presents what to him is an 'Islamic' concept of education, he neglects the rationalist position and draws only upon the orthodox position which became dominant after Ghazali. This leads him to claim that 'In Islam, therefore, there is no question of individual being encouraged through education to work out for themselves their own religious faith or to subject it to detached rational investigation at fundamental level'.³⁵ Consequently, for him there emerges an unbridgeable chasm between 'Islamic' and modern liberal notions of education. As can be seen, if he had not neglected the internal diversity within the history of Muslims with regard to the position of reason, he perhaps would have reached different conclusions. Halstead is not alone. Almost all the literature proclaiming an Islamic education is guilty of marginalising the contested nature of key concepts in Muslim history.

Another example of internal diversity being marginalised is in the field called Islamic economics. The dominant literature is categorical that in Islam interest is forbidden and the whole edifice of Islamic banking is built on this premise. However, a fuller survey of the debates on economics in Muslim contexts reveals that there are several difficulties in equating the Qur'anic notion of *Riba* to the notion of interest in modern economic context. In the 1960s, for example, there was a big debate on precisely this

issue and some major scholars of Muslim history – including Fazl ur-Rahman of Chicago – did not believe that we can equate Riba and interest. They saw usury to be a better translation and thus argued that what the Qur'anic prohibits is exploitative economic practices.³⁶

Similarly, today the *Shari'ah*, often translated as divine law, represents to many Muslims and non-Muslims, a finished legal system ordained through revelation. In fact, the Shari'ah is an on-going project in Muslim history to bring various aspects of life closer to the requirements of religion. But what these aspects and requirements are has been a source of an on going debates and discussions resulting in not one but a number of schools of law. The recently held conference of Muslim scholars in Amman accepted eight legal schools as equally valid today.³⁷ In the past there were others schools as well. Abou El-Fadl notes that,

A student commencing the study of the Islamic legal heritage is immediately struck by the complexity of doctrines, diversity of opinions and enormous amounts of disputations over a wide range of issues. Early on, the student learns that other than the main jurisprudential schools...there are many extinct schools...[and] even in one school...there can be several strands. Furthermore, the student is taught that a major contributing factor to the diversity of Islamic legal schools is the acceptance and reverence given to the idea of *ikhtilaf* (disagreement and diversity).³⁸

When certain views of Muslims are presented as Islamic, implicitly they are equated with the idea of the Will of God. Many people believe that we can access the divine will without any mediation of human agency. 'Islam is a comprehensive way of life. It is vision and civilisation and a great blessing which flowered from the revealed knowledge delivered by the Almighty Allah'³⁹; 'Muslims belong to an ideal Divine system perfected by Allah as a way of fulfilling his grace and blessings unto mankind'.⁴⁰ This belief in the possibility of accessing an unmediated – un-interpreted-will of God leads to a quest for the 'real' meaning of the Qur'an. This quest, though grounded in noble sentiments, is, however, based on a premise that is highly questionable. The belief that we can find the Will of God without any human interpretation is based on a suspect assumption that texts have meanings contained in them and that all a reader has to do is to find them.⁴¹ Knowledge of the history of Muslims shows that the Qur'anic text has always been interpreted and different theological, legal, ethical, political and doctrinal positions have emerged rooted in these interpretations. It seems that the will of God is accessible to us humans only through human striving (*Ijtihad*). Further, the idea that sacred texts require human interpretative exercise is by no means a modern or western idea – as some may claim to dismiss it – but already found in Islamic history.

In the very first century of Muslim history, the question of authority became extremely important. The question was raised in its most intense form by the Khawarij, a group that broke off from the supporters of the fourth Muslim Caliph 'Ali (d.661) when he accepted arbitration in his battle with a rival claimant to Caliphate, Mu'awiyah (d.680). The Khawarij claimed that all sovereignty belongs to God and that 'Ali had betrayed God by accepting human arbitration. Historians have noted 'Ali's responses to these claims which are of relevance to the point being made here. In one report, 'Ali laid a large copy of the Qur'an in front of a group of people and asked the Qur'an to speak to them, i.e. give God's judgement. 'The people gathered around 'Ali exclaimed, "What! 'Ali, do you mock us? It is but paper and ink, and it is we (human beings) who speak on its behalf.' At this point, 'Ali stated, "the Qur'an is written in straight lines between two covers. It does not speak by itself. [In order for the Qur'an to speak] it needs interpreters, and the interpreters are human beings'.⁴²

Perhaps one example from the Muslim context will be useful here to demonstrate the inescapability of interpretation. There is a verse in the Quran which reads: 'O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those of you who are in authority. If you differ in anything amongst yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger, if you believe in Allah and the Last Day' (4:59). Clearly there is an instruction here and thus a will of God that from a believer's point of view, must be followed. To do so we must know what different words refer to. Leaving aside all other difficulties, I will focus on just one: the referent for the phrase, 'and those of you who are in authority' ('*uli 'l-amr minkum*'). What is the referent here? There is no simple answer to it. In fact, it is intimately linked to the biggest division among Muslims, that between the Sunnis and the Shi'as.

The Qur'anic reference to (4:59) 'those who hold authority among you' has been interpreted variedly in Muslim history: the Sunnis generally take it to refer to worldly leaders while the Shi'as understand it to refer to divinely appointed Imams. The Shi'a believe that the Prophet, in line with the above noted Qur'anic injunction, appointed Ali, his cousin and son-in-law, to be the leader of Muslims after his death. The Sunnis, on the other hand, claim that the Prophet did not appoint a successor and that it was up to the community to choose a leader for itself who is seen as the referent of the Qur'anic term.

Both interpretations have huge exegetical traditions behind them so it is not simply an issue of getting it right grammatically or even contextually. There is no neutral way in which one can approach it and thus the desire to find the 'real' meaning that will be the will of God is suspect. In some instances, such as verse 103 of chapter *Al-Imran*, even the most literalist commentators of the Qur'an had to acknowledge the need for interpretation and thus of human agency.⁴³

The text of the Qur'an always interacts with human beings to yield meanings. It is because meaning is the result of interaction between text and the reader we find a diversity of meanings associated with the Qur'anic texts. The reader brings to the text his or her whole personality and through it the socio-cultural milieu of which s/he is a part. As the milieu changes, personalities change, so does the interaction between text and the reader and the resulting meaning.

Section VI

Semantically, the recognition of internal diversity of Muslim past and present entails a move away from an emphasis on Islamic to Muslim. But it is not just a semantic shift. In fact it is a shift away from reification and towards the recognition of human agency in the making of religious thought and practice.

It is not that one needs to abandon the use of the term Islamic. It is the way this term is used predominantly today that is problematic. As we saw in the case of education, often what is called Islamic is in fact a view of some scholars or of a particular school or of a specific period in Muslim history. Through the transformative force of the term Islamic, a Muslim's view is thus given normative force and sacredness.

If the Muslim views are recognised as Muslim (and therefore human) attempts to make sense of the message of the Qur'an in various historical conditions, the idea of Islamic can then be seen as the ideal – a system of values that can serve as touchstone to evaluate various concrete historical situations. Ghazali's understanding would thus be seen as a significant attempt to grapple with the question of knowledge by on the hand taking account of the Islamic ideals and on the other of his time and place. But then the same would also be said about Al-Farabi, Al-Kirmani, Ibn Rushd and others, all of whom either did or would have disagreed with Ghazali. This would mean that in grappling with their contemporary challenges, Muslims will have access to a much broader range of historical experiences than is the case when diversity is steamrolled.

The argument can be pushed further. It is not only that a wider gamut of ideas will be available for exploration but also that since all of these will be seen as human attempts they will not be seen as the final word beyond criticism. The present can then stand on the shoulders of the past rather than in its shadow.

The question of internal diversity within a religious tradition and its effect on multi-cultural society and its political processes has not received due attention. Often the religious tradition is presented as a singular body. Issues that are contested among the members of the community are presented as if there is unity on them. The questions of *hijab*, *riba*, polygamy, democratic practice, individual freedom, knowledge – all of these are presented un-problematically, as if there is one Islamic position on them which can be used to develop political theory for contemporary societies.

This diversity of meanings may be less of a problem if religion is not involved in influencing the running of a polity, for people can live with their different understandings in private spheres without imposing their interpretations on others. But if state laws are to be affected in any ways by the demands of religious communities, then the question whose interpretation will count as the will of God becomes crucial. Demand for a democratic representation in a wider polity, creates an obligation for democratic practice within the internally diverse religious communities.

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- ¹ The paper was initially given as a presentation at a workshop on 'Comparative Study of Jews and Muslims in Britain, Europe and America' organised by the Royal Holloway, University of London on June 22 and 23, 2006.
- ² Robert Fagles, *Sophocles: The Three Theban plays* (New York: Penguin Books, 1984).
- ³ Ira. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
- ⁴ Stephne Macedo, 'Liberal Civic Education and Religious Fundamentalism: The Case of God v. John Rawls?' *Ethics*, Vol. 105 (1995), 468-96.
- ⁵ Michael Smith and Amit Roy, 'Britons who join Taliban to face trial', *Telegraph* (2001).
- ⁶ Elaine Ganley, 'Muslim women protest scarf ban', *Washington Times* (2004).
- ⁷ Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 154.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, p.155.
- ⁹ Nikkie Keddie, 'Secularism and its discontents', *Daedalus*, Vol. Summer (2003), 14-30.
- ¹⁰ Herbert Spencer, *First Principles* (London: 1862).
- ¹¹ Owen. Chadwick, *The Secularisation of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).
- ¹² Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire 1875-1914* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 265.
- ¹³ Writing after the 'resurgence of religion' in the late twentieth century, some writers have claimed that not only was secularisation theory inaccurate in its prediction of secularisation's future it was also incorrect in its understanding of its past. Berger, for instance, writes that 'the assumption that we live in a secularised world is false; the world today, with some exceptions...is as furiously religious as it ever was, and in some places more than ever. This means that a whole body of literature written by historians and social scientists over the course of 1950s and 1960s, loosely labelled as "secularisation theory" was essentially mistaken'. Peter Berger, 'Secularism in retreat' in John Esposito and Azzam Tamimi, eds., *Islam and Secularism in the Middle East* (London: Hurst & Company, 2002).
- ¹⁴ Daniel Lerner, *The passing of traditional society: modernizing the Middle East* (Glencoe, ILL: Free Press, 1958).
- ¹⁵ Jonhathon Sacks, *The Persistence of Faith: Religion, Morality and Society in a Secular Age* (New York: Weidenfield & Nicolson, 1991).
- ¹⁶ Nikkie Keddie, 'Secularism and its discontents', 20.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.
- ¹⁸ N. Rosenblum, ed., *Obligations of Citizenship and Demands of Faith: Religious Accommodation in Pluralist Democracies* Princeton University Press, 2000).
- ¹⁹ See John Keane, 'The Limits of Secularism', in John Esposito and Azzam Tamimi, eds., *Islam and Secularism in the Middle East* (London: Hurst & Company, 2002); W. Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Sacks, *The Persistence...*; Jeffrey Stout, *Democracy and Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Azzam Tamimi, 'The renaissance of Islam', *Daedalus*, Vol. Summer (2003), 51-61.
- ²⁰ Patrick Riordan, 'Permission to Speak: Religious Argument in Public Reason', *Heythrop Journal*, Vol. XLV (2004), 178-96.
- ²¹ The Indian sacred story *Mahabharata* narrates a grand war between the clans of Pandvas and Kurus. Unable to demoralise the Kuru commander Drona in the strict military warfare, the Pandvas come up with a strategy to deflate him by telling him falsely that his son Ashvatthama is dead. They give credence to the words by killing an elephant also called Ashvatthama and then spread the word that 'Ashvatthama was dead'. Drona, though broken by the news thought of confirming it by asking Yudhishtira, the leader of the Pandavas, known for his moral uprightness and honesty. Yudhishtira, though not in favour of this ploy had gone with it under pressure from his generals. When Drona asked him if Ashvatthama was dead, he said 'yes' muttering 'the elephant' under his breath to appease his conscience. According to one translation,

“But a lie it remained and the moment it left his lips, the wheels of his chariot which had never touched the earth, sank to the ground.”

²² Quoted in Riordan, ‘Permission to Speak...’

²³ J. Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

²⁴ John Rawls, ‘The Idea of public Reason Revisted’, *University of Chicago Law Review*, Vol. 64 (1997).

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Stephne Macedo, ‘Liberal Civic Education...?’

²⁷ Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy...*

²⁸ Rawls, ‘The Idea of...’

²⁹ Leif Wenar, ‘Political Liberalism: An Internal Critique’, *Ethics*, Vol. 106 (1995), 32-62; Charles Larmore, ‘The Moral Basis of Political Liberalism’, *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 96 (1999), 599-625.

³⁰ Humayun Ansari, *The ‘infidel’ within : Muslims in Britain since 1800* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2004).

³¹ F. Daftary, ‘Communities of Interpretations’, in A. Nanji, ed., *The Muslim Almanac* (Detroit: Gales, 1996).

³² E. Wagner, ‘Munazara’, *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1993).

³³ Majid. Fakhry, *Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Mysticism* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1997).

³⁴ Mark Halstead, ‘An Islamic concept of education’, *Comprative Education*, Vol. 40 (2004), 517-29, 518.

³⁵ Ibid., 524.

³⁶ F. Rahman, ‘Tahqiq-i-Riba’, *Fikro-o Nazar*, (1963); I Pal, ‘Pakistan and the question of Riba’, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 30 (1994); S. Siddiqui, ‘Understanding and Eliminating Riba: Can Islamic Financial Instruments be meaningfully implemented?’ *Journal of Management and Social Sciences*, Vol. 1 (2005), 187-203.

³⁷ International Islamic Conference. *Amman Declaration* 2005 [cited September 25, 2006.

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http://www.kingabdullah.jo/news/details.php?kn_serial=3409&menu_id=26&lang_hm_ka1=1.

³⁸ Khalid Abou El-Fadl, *Speaking in God's Name: Islamic Law, Authority and Women* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006), 9-10.

³⁹ H Ali, “‘Mind your language’: An Islamic perspective”, *Muslim Education Quarterly*, Vol. 12 (2000), 49-54.

⁴⁰ M. Ould Bah, *Islamic Education between tradition & modernity* (Morocco: ISESCO, 1998).

⁴¹ John Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality* (London: Allen Lane, 1995).

⁴² Abou El-Fadl, *Speaking in God's Name...*24.

⁴³ The verse reads, “And hold fast the rope of Allah and do not scatter.” We find the metaphor of the rope being understood as religion, God’s bond, the Qur’an and the Imam, among other things.

**Synagogues and Mosques - Fried Fish and Curries
The experience of Jews and Muslims in Spitalfields, London**

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The central focus of the paper will be a comparison of the experience of settlement, acclimatisation and integration of Eastern European Jews and Bangladeshis in the Spitalfields district of London in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It will seek to identify the role played by religion in those processes, particularly within the contexts of communal cohesion, welfare provision and social control. The paper will then proceed to explore the way in which the two immigrant groups have negotiated their cultural identity - by means of fusion and separation, acceptance and rejection. It will also seek to locate points at which the two groups (in some cases the children and grandchildren of the first generation immigrants) have interfaced socially and in commerce. Finally, the paper will evaluate the importance of location in the Muslim/Jewish integration process by evaluating the role played Spitalfields, a first point of immigrant settlement and home to religious dissidence since the seventeenth century.

This chapter explores the settlement and integration process of Jews, in the late nineteenth century, and Muslims, in the late twentieth century, in Spitalfields; an area of some 200 acres (81 hectares) on the eastern boundary of the City of London. The district's proximity to the docks and the centres of government, commerce and monarchy, have made it a traditional first point of migrant settlement for more than 300 years. Though early arrivals, for example the Huguenots, benefited from the area's traditional role as a place of refuge for political and religious dissidents, outsiders living there have been no strangers to marginalisation, xenophobia, anti-alienism and racism.¹ It is as a result of these factors that Spitalfields provides an ideal laboratory for those researching the experiences of immigrants 'living on the edge'.

The people and the issues involved in this study are far more complex than the simplistic tagging of this chapter suggests. The umbrella nouns 'synagogue' and 'mosque', whilst regarded by the uninformed as singular, in fact cover a spectrum of forms of religious practice. For the Jewish community in Britain these currently range from ultra-orthodox, Hassidic and orthodox through to Reform, Liberal and Masorti.² Though all Muslims observe the essential beliefs of Islam, there are a number of Islamic denominations, the largest group being Sunni which is currently

estimated to represent 85 percent of the world's followers of Islam, there is also the recently founded faction known as Wahabi which has strong support in the Middle East. Shi'a (or Shiite) Muslims comprise the second largest grouping, whilst a number of early arrivals to Britain from Bangladesh follow a syncretic form of worship which incorporates a spiritual element, known as Sufism, with Sunni. As well as the differences that exist in liturgy and ritual, the nouns 'Jew' and 'Muslim' can also be accommodated under geographically rooted headings; for Jews most efficiently into Ashkenazi and Sephardi,³ for the adherents of Islam into regions of origin which are predominantly South Asia, Middle East and Africa.⁴ Under this form of contextualisation it becomes clear as to why there are linguistic, phenotypical and cultural differences interacting under the more general headings.

The use of culinary allusions in the title of this chapter are intended to underline the fact that connections between clusters and culture, made when the immigrant communities were in their nascent stages, do not necessarily hold true in the 21st century. At the end of the 19th century, the association between the Jewish community of Spitalfields and the 'noxious' odour of fried fish, resulted in questions tinged with anti-alienism being asked at the Trade Union Congress Conference of 1892 - the height of the immigrant influx.⁵ For some, the association of fried fish,⁶ the Jewish community and the East End still holds true, though the Jewish community has long moved out and dispersed. Nor can the sale of curry automatically be taken to signify the proximity of a South Asian community. In some instances, Bangladeshi families travel up to 100 miles a day to run 'Indian' restaurants in the heartland of middle England.⁷ The origin of the word curry is unclear, some suggest it lies in the Tamil 'kari' meaning spiced sauce, another school of thought believe it dates back to the days of Richard I and the introduction of spiced cooking to England. And whilst over 75 percent of all 'Indian' Restaurants in Britain are owned by Bengalis – and thus Muslims – it is the indigene that has created the demand and supplies the market for curry restaurants and takeaways.

The foregoing has not been used as an introduction to this chapter just to inform, rather it is intended to emphasise the way in which immigrants have been simplistically and, at times ignorantly, identified and located by the receiving society. These simplified recognitions have tended to overlook the diverse nature of the

integration process that both groups have experienced and the positives and negatives that that have marked out the landscape of Spitalfields.

The 'Jewish' East End

Unlike the Bangladeshis who would follow them in the 20th century, the Jewish immigrants who settled in Spitalfields from the late 17th century onwards, were people for whom the transportation of their cultural and religious baggage in the diaspora was as much a part of their history as was the persecution and segregation that, consciously or subconsciously, influenced the structure of their communal and religious organisations at the point of settlement. A brief exploration of the history of the Jews in Spitalfields illustrates the ways in which Jewish immigrants to London in the 18th and 19th centuries dealt with both their Jewishness and the host society's reception of it.

It can be said that a Jewish community exists when it has acquired a place of worship and a site to bury its dead. By the start of the 18th century these prerequisites had been acquired by both Sephardi and Ashkenazi incomers. The roots of the Spitalfield's Jewish community, and its diversity, had been sown. As a people used to segregation and ghettoisation the nascent Jewish community of London was mindful of the fragility of its presence.⁸ This awareness is recognisable in the laws – *Ascamot* - drawn up by the Elders of the Sephardi synagogue shortly after the Readmission, in order to facilitate the governing of their young, but expanding, community. The laws included prohibitions on the establishment of another synagogue within six miles, on attempts at conversion, on public debate and on the publication of works in Hebrew or Ladino (the Hebraic/Spanish tongue).⁹ The subtext here is clear, a concern to ensure that the host society was made aware that the new immigrants were determined to maintain a low profile and not present a threat in any form.

Whilst the Sephardi community rejected all requests to open a branch synagogue until well into the middle of the 19th century,¹⁰ by the second half of the 18th century the Ashkenazim, now far greater in number than their Sephardi counterparts, were establishing new, though often small, prayer houses in, and on the boundaries of, Spitalfields. Arguably, 100 hundred years on from the Readmission, and in spite of the furore over the Jew Bill of 1753,¹¹ Jews in London felt sufficiently secure no

longer to be concerned about the growing number of synagogues in the capital. By the 1880s, at the height of the influx of immigrants from Russia, Poland and Romania, there was a profusion of synagogues which varied in size and composition of congregation, in, and on the borders of, the East End of London,.

On the boundaries of the City and Spitalfields stood the three cathedral synagogues of the Ashkenazi community, the Great, the Hambro and the New. These served the more established members of the community, and, by the middle of the 19th century had adopted certain 'Anglican' practices including sermons in English and ministers in dog collars. The main Sephardi Synagogue, located in, and known, as Bevis Marks, was built in 1701. It is still, at the time of writing,¹² used for services. The socio-economic nature of the cathedral synagogues of London's Jewish community discouraged the affiliation of impoverished Jews from Holland and central and eastern Europe who, upon arrival, set about establishing places of worship more suited to the needs of the 'working classes'. The small houses of worship, known as *chevra* (or sometimes *chevrot*) varied in size and general condition. They tended to be established by immigrants employed in the same trade or from the same *shtetl*.¹³ As the number of eastern European immigrants grew, so did the number of *chevra*.¹⁴ Whilst some were located in what previously had been small chapels or churches built by the Huguenots, others were added onto the backs of existing buildings, or in existing or converted workshops. These were not places of luxury and comfort, but rather ones of poverty, often dingy and unhealthy safety hazards which a contemporary commentator considered, 'not such as to command respect'.¹⁵

For the male immigrant in Spitalfields, both settled and more recently arrived, his *chevra* was far more than just a place of worship – it was almost a second home, a club and some-time friendly society which might provide benefits during sickness, unemployment and old age. It was a male meeting place where current political, social and economic issues could be (heatedly) debated, before, after and often during, the service. Women were always segregated, hidden from view either by a curtain or in the gallery above. For many male immigrants, the *chevra* became the centre of their transposed lives, facilitating self-identification and rooting. Beatrice Potter described the phenomenon as, 'Self-creating, self-supporting and self-

governing communities'.¹⁶ They were indeed bridges from one life to another, even at times serving as employment exchanges.

Not only were the elders of London's established Jewish community concerned to control the spread of synagogues and the religious activities of their members, they were also determined that poor Jews – and that meant predominantly those living in, or on the edges of, Spitalfields – should not put any strain on the public purse; in a pre-welfare state era this meant the Poor Law Board. By the middle of the nineteenth century, charitable provision available for the indigent Jews of London covered 'the needy, the hungry, the mad, the orphaned, the blind and the sick, not to mention the rituals of life from birth to burial'.¹⁷ The concept of charity – *tzedekah* - is an essential part of the Jewish religion, a compassionate recognition of need. The raft of charitable organisations that were active in Spitalfields ensured that the indigent members of the community were protected from 'cradle to grave'. The main objectives of the multiplicity of Jewish charitable societies can be listed as follows: provision for the deserving poor who could not help themselves; the inculcation of the self-help ethos into the immigrant mind-frame and, the ironing out of the ghetto bends. By the beginning of the 20th century the landscape of Spitalfields reflected the diversity of Jewish charitable provisions within its 200 acres. There was a Jewish Soup Kitchen, a Jewish Board of Guardians, 12 societies that provided food and fuel handouts, four that distributed free meals, a Bread, Meat and Coal Society and ladies' guilds attached to the larger synagogues which provided clothes for the needy. In all there were 40 Jewish philanthropic institutions and almost 100 Jewish charities operating in London.¹⁸ In order to satisfy the third of the three elements of self-help, there was the Jews' Free School in Bell Lane which, in 1896, recorded a student body of 3,573,¹⁹ all of whom were forbidden to speak the immigrant dialect, Yiddish.

It is an undoubted fact that in all senses the landscape of Spitalfields was changed by the alien Jewish presence. The area around Brick Lane, once known as Petty France when the Huguenots were in residence, became known as Little Jerusalem; a neighbourhood vibrant with the sound of Yiddish echoing through its streets and the aroma of fried fish, chicken soup and freshly baked bagels and *chola*,²⁰ filling the air. The evolution of the Jewish East End can be traced through the pages of *Kelly's Post Office London Directory* which, in 1881 listed just three or four Jewish retail food

outlets in Middlesex (perhaps better known as Petticoat Lane) and Wentworth Streets – the shopping 'mall' of Spitalfields. Ten years later there were eight kosher butcher shops, five Jewish grocery stores, two pickle makers, two bakers, one egg merchant and Polly Nathan selling fried fish.²¹ There was also a plethora of clothing workshops located in the attics, cellars and backrooms of streets such as Hanbury and Princes (now Princelet). For those who were literate there were Yiddish newspapers and for those who sought entertainment there was the Yiddish theatre. The latter providing a bridge between the culture of eastern and western Europe with its performances of classics, such as *The Merchant of Venice*, in Yiddish.

Although in 1896 there were at least 32 synagogues - both large and small - listed as being located in, or on the boundary of, Spitalfields,²² there appears to have been little adverse reaction to their presence or to the behaviour – in a religious context - of their congregants. Negative responses to the growing, and highly visible, concentration of eastern European Jews in and around Spitalfields arose from far less spiritual matters. In the eyes, and minds, of the receiving society, it was the impact of the immigrants on housing conditions and the job market which was believed responsible for the hardships being experienced in the closing decades of the 19th century. It has to be borne in mind that, from the mid 1870s right through to the end of the first decade of the 20th century (with a brief respite between 1888 and 1892), the British economy was in a state of either recession or stagnation. The worst period being that between 1882 and 1886.²³ Workers in the seasonal, casual and sweated industries, including the clothing trade - one in which immigrants in the Spitalfields area traditionally found employment - were amongst the worst affected. And whilst the depressed economy exacerbated the job market, the mid-nineteenth century explosion of road, railway and canal building - all of which fractured the East End – together with the construction of the docks and wharf side warehouses, created a severe housing shortage. Yet though slum buildings might have been pulled down, none were replaced to rehouse the dishoused. The consequence was extreme overcrowding. Therefore it is not surprising that, by the second half of the 1880s, the 'aliens'²⁴ were being held culpable for the combined evils of unhealthy working conditions, sweating, wage undercutting and overcrowded and unsanitary housing. The pauper alien (Jew) was made scapegoat for all the iniquities suffered by the local, indigenous, population. The real, and imagined, effects of the eastern European presence created

a surge of anti-alienism, which found its voice in the local and national newspapers, in the writings of antisemites and at the constituency meetings of local members of parliament.

The local press held nothing back in its published criticism of the impact of the immigrants on employment figures. The *Eastern Argus* lay the blame squarely at the feet of the, '...number of men and women [who] land on our wave-beaten shores in a destitute condition and offer to do work at any price.'²⁵ The unashamed antisemite, Arnold White supported this view when he declared that 'the Polish Jew drives the British workman out of the Labour Market'.²⁶ Captain Colomb, the Member of Parliament for Bow and Bromley, was quoted in the *East End News* as saying that he objected, 'to England with its overcrowded population being made a human ash pit for the refuse population of the world';²⁷ a point of view that was supported by the neighbouring MP for Stepney, Major William Evans-Gordon - founder of the proto-fascist British Brothers League – in a speech at a local constituency meeting when he said that,

There is hardly an Englishman in this room who does not live under the constant danger of being driven from his home, pushed into the streets, not by the natural increase of our own population but by the off-scum of Europe.²⁸

The outcome of the drive against aliens was the passage of the Aliens Act in 1905, the first peace time legislation to control the entry of immigrants to Britain.²⁹

At the dawning of the twentieth century, the outsiders - the aliens, the foreign Jews - were stigmatised for their threat to the domestic.³⁰ In what was at that time, regarded as predominantly a Christian society, religious difference was not an issue, nor until the Bolshevik Revolution was there a perception that alien Jews were a threat to national security.³¹ The Jew in Britain, British born and foreign, was both accepted and rejected. At the same time as alien born Jews were being castigated for their unsanitary ways, British born Jews held Cabinet posts, socialised with royalty and loaned money to the British government. This is not to say that antisemitism did not operate at the higher levels of society.³² There were those, intellectuals amongst them, who believed – as written in the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*³³ - that Jews were plotting to control the world. There was a paradox in the place, the acceptance, and

the process of integration, of Jews in Britain. This was exemplified by early advocates of immigration control who were torn between the view that aliens endangered the character of the nation because they *did not* intermarry (and therefore did not assimilate) and because they *did* intermarry and thus diluted the national strain.

Within this scenario the Jewish establishment saw its role as both covertly and overtly seeking to ensure that the alien immigrants and their children 'assimilated' as rapidly as possible in order to conform with, what we today call, 'Britishness'. Both strategy and outcome need bearing in mind when evaluating experiences of the next major immigrant group to settle in Spitalfields, Muslim Bengalis from Bangladesh.

Banglatown

The presence of Bengalis in East London was not a phenomenon of the 20th century, the connection can be traced back to the end of the 18th century, when the East India Company, reluctantly, provided a shelter in the Kingsland Road, for Indian seamen – lascars – to use between their travels. A century later a lodging house was established in the West India Dock Road for Muslim sailing men, many of whom had suffered harsh treatment at the hands of their employers and efforts at proselytisation by Christian missionaries'.³⁴ In her book, *Across Seven Seas and Thirteen Waters*, Caroline Adams provides a detailed account of the experiences of the lascars who made their way from Sylhet – the district in Bangladesh, from which 95 percent of the Bengali population of Spitalfields originate – to Britain, via Calcutta, on British merchant ships in the 19th and 20th centuries.³⁵ Those early arrivals established a fragile network of transcontinental knowledge that would evolve into an established chain of migration.

Although the large scale entry of Bengalis to East London began a decade or more after the end of the Second World War, there were some early settlers during the interwar period who found work, and sometimes lodgings, in Jewish tailoring workshops in Spitalfields.³⁶ Relations between the two ethnic minorities 'living on the edge' were those of tolerance and support; Jewish employers and their families empathising with others who, like themselves, were subjected to fascist threats and violence.³⁷ The ethnic and religious interaction continued after the war. In the absence of halal purveyors, Muslims bought meat and poultry from kosher butchers, whilst Jewish furriers, whose sons had eschewed workshop life for the professions,

employed, or sold their businesses to, Pakistani entrepreneurs who saw an economic future in the burgeoning fashion for leather garments. Another point of ethnic interface was to be found in the transformation of former *chevra* and synagogues into mosques.

In complete contrast with their eastern European predecessors, the Bangladeshi³⁸ migrants who arrived in Spitalfields at the end of the 1950s and early 1960s came as sojourners not as settlers. They had a 'specific target';³⁹ they journeyed to Britain in order to make enough money to return to their home country after a short while as 'rich men of high status'. In nearly every case the myth of return became, in the words of one local Imam, 'a dream maintained'⁴⁰ by temporary migrants who were gradually transforming into permanent immigrants. The young men that set out for Britain in the 1950s and 1960s would have been given a copy of the Quran, a prayer mat and other religious texts. Research has shown that those early arrivals, though furnished with material religious needs, were not all that observant on arrival. Adams and Kathy Gardner both provide evidence of the lax religious behaviour of the Bengali immigrants in Spitalfields. Elderly interviewees revealed how in their youth they had visited pubs, gambled, gone with white women and, at times, ignored the requirements of halal. As one explained to Adams, 'In those days people didn't observe religious things properly.'⁴¹ In spite of the paucity of their number, in 1910 the Muslim community of East London (predominantly seamen) took the decision to build a house of prayer. However, it was not until 1940 that the East London Mosque was opened in three converted houses in Commercial Road⁴² – approximately a quarter of a mile from Spitalfields. That first London mosque provided a focal point for communal meetings, discourse and, of course, debates surrounding politics in the *desh* (the Bengali/Sylheti word for home). In 1985, with support funding of £1.1m from King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, the rebuild Mosque, which can accommodate up to 3,000 male worshippers and which offers 'separate facilities for female worshippers'⁴³ was reopened in the Whitechapel Road. In an architectural sense the inter-religious connection continues, the mosque in Whitechapel Road and the synagogue around the corner in Fieldgate Street sharing a party wall.

As the reality of return became a dream and family reunifications began, religion reappeared on the agenda of those who had once been carefree sojourners. They

sought a suitably sized mosque, close to the heart of the community, in which the religious fusion of Sunni and Sufi, as practised in the *desh*, could be continued. They found what they were looking for in the building which stood on the corner of Fournier Street and Brick Lane. Originally built as a French Church by the Huguenots in 1743, it had become a synagogue in 1899. Following the traditional pattern of secondary migration, by the early 1970s the Jewish population of Spitalfields had moved on and the building, as a place of worship for the local Jewish community, was redundant. In 1974 the local Bengali community, with additional financial support from the Bangladeshi Government and High Commission in London, purchased the empty building from the *Mazhike Hadath*. Significantly, whilst there had been no overt opposition to the transition from place of worship for Christians to one for Jews, the same was not true of the next transfer.

Conservationists' voices were raised in horror at the prospect of the gutting of the interior of the building. What had been constructed by one immigrant community (the Huguenots) and two hundred years later taken over by another (the Jews) was subsequently defined as 'a vital expression of an indigenous urban culture and landscape'.⁴⁴ In defence the Bangladeshi community explained that by altering the building's interior they would be able to accommodate the maximum number and thus avoid congestion on the streets, a condition which frequently inflamed racist emotions. Whether this was the argument that forced the issue is unclear but the outcome was that in 1976 the *Jamme Mashjid*, or London Great Mosque, was formally opened. As had the eastern European immigrants preferred their *chevra* to the cathedral like synagogues of the more affluent, and established, Jewish community, so now the elders of the Bangladeshi community, the first generation immigrant settlers of the post war era, give their allegiance to the *Jamme Masjid* in Spitalfields. Unlike the East London Mosque, the *Jamme Masjid*, regarded by the younger members of the Bengali community as the 'elders' mosque, accommodates only males. Wives and daughters either pray at home or cross the Whitechapel Road. For whilst the elders continue to fuse secular nationalism with religion, the younger generation – male and female – consider their religious requirements better provided for by the East London Mosque which is, as they see it, in the true sense of Islam, less concerned with national boundaries than with global religious unity.

Irrespective of the depth of their religiosity, immigrant Jews and Muslims in Spitalfields, as peoples on the margin, discovered a source of strength in their religion. In each case their house of worship offered far more than just a place to pray. Of equal value was the role of the mosque and the synagogue as a communal centre. Yet whereas in the case of the eastern European Jews, and the Huguenots before them, the prayer house was also a source of charity and material support, for the Muslim immigrants it was different. For whilst *Zahat* (charity) is one of the five pillars of Islam, for Bengalis in Spitalfields those deemed necessitous of charitable aid were kinsfolk in the *desh*. Thus all monies raised for charity are traditionally sent back to Bangladesh, as opposed to distribution in the diaspora. Frequently this is done through the *thana*, United Kingdom organisations based on sub-regions in Bangladesh. It is estimated that currently there are some thirty *thana* in East London which, in addition to co-ordinating the collection of money to be redistributed in Sylhet, enable politicians from Bangladesh to promote *desh* politics and raise funds for the *desh* in Britain.⁴⁵ However when the young, single male Bengali sojourners arrived in Britain in the late 1950s and early 1960s, there were no *thana* or the existence or expectation of a charitable network operated by a wealthy, more established elite, to house, feed and employ them. Those early arrivals expected to fend for themselves and support each other, those in employment subsidising those who were not.⁴⁶ There was a Bangladesh Welfare Association (prior to 1971 the Pakistan Welfare Association), established in 1952, but its role was simply to help East Pakistani workers with 'letter writing, form filling, accommodation etc.'⁴⁷ As the daughter of an early immigrant described it, 'People helped and supported each other, money was lent and borrowed informally based on trust and personal relationships ... no interest applied.'^{48 49}

Just as the presence of the Jewish immigrant community was reflected in the late 19th century landscape of Spitalfields, so, by the end of the 20th century, was that of the Bangladeshi community. By 1961 the first Asian retail outlets were recorded in the Kelly's Street Director. There was the *Bombay Restaurant* at no. 118 Brick Lane, the *Muslim Hallal* butcher at no. 166 and *Mehmet Ali* the greengrocer at no. 181.⁵⁰ The existence of these three marked the beginnings of Muslim domesticity in the district. Ten years later a definite presence was identifiable, one which contained all the basic elements of community and denoted the transition from a group of sojourners to a

commune of settlers. Muslim owned and run butchers, cafes, grocers and leather factories, plus the all important travel agents needed to organise return visits, family reunifications and, for some, the sending of remittances back home to the village, could all be found along Brick Lane. By the 1990s there was just one Jewish owned business left. In 1997 the Bangladeshi population of Spitalfields felt sufficiently at ease with itself and its place within broader society to overtly announce its spatial dominance. In that year, as a result of the entrepreneurial ambitions of a group of local Bangladeshi entrepreneurs, the central section of Brick Lane was transformed into a mono-cultural enclave called Banglatown. Not all the local community welcomed such an overt pronouncement of national identity. An activist from the East London Mosque stated, 'They [the supporters of Banglatown] promote nationalism and it stops the Muslims to think Islamically ... Muslims start to identify with Bengali rather than Muslim'. [stet]⁵¹ Whilst a Muslim was concerned that attempts to strengthen ties with Bangladesh was at odds with the concept of the *umma* – the global community of Islam – a commentator in the *Daily Telegraph* found the explicit pronouncement of ethnicity 'offensive', and one which was an 'overt denial of integration'.⁵²

Irrespective of the dissenting sentiments expressed over the creation of Banglatown, that such an expression of spatial and cultural confidence could be made in what had been an area of violent racist activity, is demonstrative of how the levels of racism, at their height in the 1970s and 1980s, had reduced. It was the evolution of a Bangladeshi community and its visible concentration in and around Spitalfields that had rung alarm bells within the native community. Permanent settlement not only meant the proximity of an alien culture, but in addition, increased pressure on housing, education and medical support. In simple terms, further financial strain on a borough which was one of the poorest in the capital, if not the country. Unlike in the past, it was not the issue of jobs that was most incendiary. Bengali men found employment in the local 'Indian' restaurants, or in the sweatshops where leather garments were produced in conditions no 'Englishman' would accept. The two areas of tension were housing and racial nationalism.

In an ideal world the provision of housing within the borough of Tower Hamlets would have been an unbiased process. However, it is not an ideal world. As late as 1980 housing in the borough was inadequate. Fifty acres of Spitalfields were derelict

and much of what was standing was uninhabitable. A large proportion of available social housing was of the poorest quality - high rise, damp, with poor heating and mould on the walls. Within this setting long time local residents had two major concerns, that the new immigrants not be given any form of preferential treatment and that they not invade 'native' territory. For Bengali families, larger than their native equivalents,⁵³ there were two housing options, public or private. If the latter, it was provided by Pakistani or Bangladeshi landlords who charged their co-religionists exorbitant rent for poor quality accommodation.⁵⁴ If the former, what was offered was very often to the east of the borough – away from the main nexus of the community – and always of the poorest quality. Invariably it necessitated crossing the 'white barrier', where non-whites were subjected to physical and verbal abuse. A small minority stuck it out, most returned to Spitalfields and private housing. The outcome was the growth of self-created Bengali ghettos. This latter an irony for when, in 1978, it was suggested by the then Director of Housing for the Greater London Council that a 'few blocks of flats in or near Spitalfields' be set aside specifically for the occupation of people from Bangladesh, there had been uproar at what was perceived as a racist attempt to create a ghetto.⁵⁵ In spite of the domestic hardships suffered by the Bangladeshi community, native East Enders saw things in a different light. At a meeting held to discuss racist issues in the district, one local declared that, 'you should put all these people [the Bengalis] in Fairfoot Road – and I'll drop a petrol bomb on them.'⁵⁶ Petrol bombing of Bengali homes was not just an idle threat, it was one of the strategies adopted by those on the all white estates who wanted to ensure they remained so.

Though the eastern European Jews had been subjected to verbal racism and, very occasionally, physical attack, during the 1970s and 1980s violence was almost a weekly occurrence for the immigrant inhabitants of Spitalfields. 'Paki' bashing as it became known – racist attacks by whites on immigrants from Pakistan and Bangladesh – began at the very end of the 1960s and remained a phenomenon for several decades. During the 1970s Brick Lane, the heartland of the Bengali community, became the focal point for members of the National Front and their supporters. Between March and May 1976 tension was at its height; thirty cases of assaults on young Asian youths were recorded with five Bengalis dying in racial violence during that year. Street violence was accompanied by attacks on families in

their homes. Stones were thrown through windows, excrement and petrol bombs posted through letter boxes. In the common parts of the estates young Asian men were stabbed, beaten and kicked to the ground. Female members of the Bangladeshi community were frequent targets. Missiles were thrown at them and young girls kicked in the streets. Women and young children were terrified to go out and became prisoners in their own homes. Throughout the 1980s the saga of violence continued, bolstered by organisations such as the National Front, British Movement, Column 88 and Combat 18. When Bangladeshis were rehoused beyond the boundaries of Spitalfields the violence moved with them.

It was not until the 1990s that the violence, and fear, subsided. The creation of Banglatown, bringing with it an influx of visitors, acted as a deterrent against the old style racist rampages up and down the spine of the immigrant district. However, this does not mean that all is now peaceful and that fear has been eradicated. Murder and mayhem circa the 21st century is still part of Spitalfields life either the result of internecine Bangladeshi gang warfare or, even more sinisterly, the terrorist bomb.

Conclusion

The chronicle of Jews and Muslims in Spitalfields, and by extension East London, has been a combination of tolerance and intolerance, integration and marginalisation, social deprivation and economic mobility, upon a metropolitan landscape. The nature of the spatial location of their chosen first place of settlement – proximity to the docks and to the centres of government, monarchy and finance - created a unique set of circumstances; ones which recommend an evaluation of the similarities and differences in the experience of the two groups under the microscope. It is an evaluation which should not be an end in itself but which should provide lessons for the future in the 'management of migration' and in the way which the indigenous population identifies and relates to difference.

It may not immediately appear so, but there is more to compare than to contrast. Both groups arrived with little but hope and ambition, both found themselves forced to cluster in poor and overcrowded conditions which, in spite of these, brought down upon the newcomers the ire of a receiving society that accused them of, 'taking the homes of Englishmen'. For whilst at the end of the 19th century the eastern European

Jews were accused of pushing Englishmen out of their homes and into the street, one hundred years on Bengalis were being accused of 'getting all the best flats with all the showers'.⁵⁷ Both groups, irrespective of individual levels of religiosity, found a source of support and communal nexus within their houses of prayer, often occupying the same space on a different time line. In spite of the foreign nature of Judaism and Islam (and in spite of the history of anti-Jewishness that is carried in the baggage of every Jew in the diaspora) in the first decades of settlement it was the alien nature of the immigrants, rather than their religious identity, which provided the focal point for hostility. It was the threat posed by the pauper alien (Jew) that encouraged the foundation of the British Brothers League and the introduction of the 1905 Aliens Act, and it was the 'Pakis' – as Bengalis in Spitalfields were pejoratively called long after the state of Bangladesh was established – that were the targets of anti-alienists and racists. Overt antisemitism as a form of racism directed at, as Oswald Mosley described them, 'the big Jews and the little Jews',⁵⁸ was much more a feature of the post World War One years. The Jew was portrayed internationally as insurrectionist only after the Bolshevik revolution, whilst Islamophobia and the increasing paranoid belief that all Muslims, or even those who appear phenotypically Muslim, are terrorists, is very much a phenomenon of post 9/11. In the eyes and minds of many, informed and uninformed, irrespective of innocence or guilt, poverty or wealth, all are tarred with the same brush as the one.

It takes between two and three generations, up to ninety years, for the assimilation or integration process to take place. This has to be born in mind when evaluating the success or failure of a minority group.⁵⁹ At this point it is pertinent to introduce a point of semantics. Within the context of the eastern European experience it is possible to use the term 'assimilation'⁶⁰ to describe the process that most of the descendants of the early immigrants have undergone. The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* defines assimilation as 'absorption and incorporation', of becoming 'like'. If religion is omitted from the process, this is true of most. For the first generation Bangladeshi immigrants and their descendants the more suitable term to use would be 'integration', a process which, if it takes place, 'harmoniously combines different elements'. Arguably, in the 21st century, whilst Muslims might integrate with main stream society in Britain, they are unlikely to assimilate. However, even if this is taken into account, the '90 year rule' means that whilst we can draw informed

conclusions about the economic progression and assimilation of the eastern European Jewish immigrants in Spitalfields, it is somewhat premature to do so definitively in the case of the Bengali Muslims. For example, a decade on, conclusions that were drawn after the publication of the 1991 Census must be reconsidered in the light of more recent achievement and movement.

Neither Jews from the Pale of Settlement nor Bengalis from Sylhet had experienced an industrial infra-structure such as they found when they arrived in London's East End. Yet both came armed with ambition and a preparedness to work long and hard in order to acquire a level of economic stability. Neither group found it easy, and of the first generation arrivals only the 'ruthless few' made it out of the ghetto. Subject to exploitation by co-religionists, the vagaries of casual and seasonal employment and economic recession, allied to the constant need to send remittance money or ticket money home,⁶¹ the pioneers found it hard to accumulate savings or the trappings of upward economic mobility. Though there have been first cohort success stories in both groups,⁶² it is to the second and third generations that we must look for entrepreneurial and academic achievement and the early stages of assimilation or integration. Currently an increasing number of Bengali young people are following the pattern established by the offspring of the eastern European immigrants. They are eschewing the curry restaurants and leather workshops of their fathers and honing their entrepreneurial skills or acquiring graduate qualifications and entering the professions.⁶³ Allied to economic progression is spatial mobility and the movement out of Spitalfields to the north, east and west of London. This again a characteristic of the second and third generation rather than of the initial incomers. The latter often contented simply to have brought their families, most particularly their children, to the boundary of the 'promised land'.

Geographically, economically and in the early processes of domestic settlement, Jews and Muslims in Spitalfields shared much common ground. However, it is when issues of identity, belonging and religion are explored that differences emerge. The eastern European Jews that settled in Britain came to stay.⁶⁴ Albeit they called their *shtetls*⁶⁵ home, but it was a homeland in which they were not allowed to own land, had few rights and suffered increasing restrictions of movement, settlement and economic activity. It was *der heim* in the heart but not in reality. Settlement in Britain provided

an opportunity to belong, in every sense of the word and if the transition was difficult for early arrivals, some of whom were illiterate in both English and Yiddish, for the subsequent generations there was no question. English was their first and only language - even if Yiddish was spoken at home - a prayer for the Royal Family was said in synagogues on the Sabbath and all holy days, and if there was a reluctance shown by some immigrants at fighting alongside the Tsar's soldiers in the First World War,⁶⁶ none was shown in the second. As the son of an immigrant explained to me, 'I wanted nothing more than to be an Englishman'.⁶⁷ For him, as for the others, there was no conflict between religious and national identity – they were 'Englishmen of the Mosaic persuasion'.⁶⁸

Ninety-five percent of the Bengali Muslims in Spitalfields originate from Sylhet, a region of Bangladesh where land ownership was not only possible but also one of the measures of success and status. In strict contrast with their Jewish predecessors they originated from a country in which their religion was in the majority. Eighty-five percent of the population is Muslim. By the time Bengali immigration was under way, Britain was metamorphosing into a multi-cultural, multi-faith society. New immigrants did not see why it should be necessary to maintain a low ethnic or religious profile or to eschew their cultural heritage. Pride was taken in the pronouncement of being British Bengali, or British Muslim Bengali. Bangladeshi immigrants and their children exemplify the essence of transnationalism, the elders now often living two lives, straddling two continents, maintaining homes, wives, children and, in some instances, businesses in both.⁶⁹ They were sojourners, the 1960s arrivals having left a country in the midst of civil war with West Pakistan in order to acquire its own national identity and language. In the bloody civil war that gave birth to Bangladesh, Muslim fought Muslim - for some the secular enmity remains to this day. The horrific events of 9/11 and the irrational, Islamophobia that followed 'changed everything'.⁷⁰ Whilst the elders of the Bangladeshi community in Spitalfields continued to live their secularly based transnational lives, the younger generation were restructuring their identity and reconfiguring the compass signs of their belonging. Nationalism was for the older generation, as one young student told me, 'I'm Muslim now'.⁷¹ He, as other of his peers, had become disillusioned with Britain. Marginalisation in the job market, excessive police stop and search and media scaremongering all contributing to the alienation.

If an horrific act of terrorism pulled people apart after 9/11, another on the edge of Spitalfields on the 7th July 2005, for a brief period at least, brought all the different constituents together. Irrespective of place of birth, colour, culture or creed, Londoners acknowledged their metropolitan identity. The 'London spirit' saw everyone pulling together and it was said that the spirit of the blitz had been rekindled. And indeed, whilst many anticipated a violent backlash against the Muslim population, in the weeks that followed little was evident in the local or national press – usually leaders in the accusatory field.⁷² However, just as the spirit of unity and colour blindness had sprung into place, so it subsided and the racial and religious tensions returned, now aggravated by those that have sprung up between the long-established Bangladeshi community of Spitalfields and the more recently arrived colony of Polish migrants.⁷³

By the end of the 1940s the Jewish community of Spitalfields had dispersed to all parts of London, the Blitz and upward economic mobility being the catalysts. For more than half a century they had been the majority residents of the district. Though on the surface little remains, scrape the top layer of patina away and, just as the painted-over eastern European names on the buildings will re-emerge, so will the memories of the Jewish ghetto. The Bangladeshi community is now the ethnic majority in residence, their visible and audible presence still much in evidence. Slowly they are moving away. It is to be hoped that will no longer live on a metaphorical edge but rather become British citizens of the Islamic persuasion, and as such, part of a diverse, inter-ethnically vibrant and tolerant Britain.

¹ For details of the experiences of Huguenots, Jews and Bangladeshis in Spitalfields see Anne J Kershen, *Strangers, Aliens and Asians: Huguenots, Jews and Bangladeshis in Spitalfields 1660-2000*, London, Routledge, 2005.

² For an account of the way in which the Jewish Community of Britain has religiously divided since the Second World War, see T. Endelman, *The Jews of Britain 1656-2000*, Los Angeles and London, University of California Press, 2002, pp. 249-56

³ Ashkenazi Jews are those whose ancestors, after the destruction of the Second Temple, made their way to central and eastern Europe. Sephardi Jews are descended from those who made their way to the Iberian Peninsula, the Levant and North Africa, whilst Sephardi Jews have a distinct cultural and geographic background they also have their own synagogues.

⁴ This refers to roots and thus does not include those followers of Islam who, more recently, have become established in the west.

⁵ See Kershen, *op.cit.*, p. 203.

⁶ It is generally believed that Portuguese Marranos - Jews who had been forced to hide their ethnicity due to persecution - introduced fried fish to this country when they arrived as refugees in the sixteenth century and the first Jewish cookbook, published here in 1846, included a recipe for it. An eastern European immigrant opened a fried fish shop in the East End in 1860 and for some it is always 'Jewish Fried Fish' that they are consuming, however ubiquitous its current availability. For further discussion on the origins of the word curry see: <http://www.menumagazine.co.uk/book/curryhistory.html>

⁷ An example can be found in Shropshire where, in a small village 14 miles west of Shrewsbury the Indian Restaurant, which is open daily from 5.30 pm – 11.30 pm., is run by a Bengali family that travels to and from Birmingham every day.

⁸ It remains a fact that no formal statement of readmission was every signed by Oliver Cromwell or his ministers after the Readmission of 1656.

⁹ For a more detailed account of *Ascamot*, and the organisation of the early Sephardi community see, Anne J Kershen and Jonathan A Romain, *Tradition and Change: History of Reform Judaism in Britain 1840-1995*, Ilford, Vallentine Mitchell, 1995, pp. 4-5.

¹⁰ The West London Synagogue of British Jews was founded in 1840 by a breakaway group from Bevis Marks, the Sephardi synagogue and a smaller number of Ashkenazi Jews, see Kershen and Romain, op.cit.

¹¹ The bill to ease the naturalisation of foreign Jews became law in May 1753. Unexpectedly there was an immediate outbreak of anti-Jewishness and within six months the government was forced to repeal the Bill.

¹² Autumn 2006

¹³ Small town or village.

¹⁴ A *chevra* or *chevrot* is described both as a club and as a small synagogue, the title of club probably emanating from its role as both community centre and place of worship,

¹⁵ Quoted in Kershen, *Strangers...* p. 86.

¹⁶ C. Booth, *Life and Labour*, Vol. 1, London, Macmillan, 1889, p. 172.

¹⁷ E. Black, *The Social Politics of Anglo-Jewry 1880-1920*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1988, p. 71.

¹⁸ For a more in depth survey of the Jewish charities operating in London during the 18th and 19th centuries, see Kershen, *Strangers*, op.cit., pp. 114-20.

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 63

²⁰ The traditional plaited bread baked on the eve of the Sabbath.

²¹ Kershen, *Strangers*, op.cit., p. 91.

²² *The Jewish Year Book 1896: A Centenary Facsimile of the First Jewish Year Book*, London, Vallentine Mitchell, 1996, pp. 34-9.

²³ It was in 1882 that the noun 'unemployed', as describing someone unable to get work, first appeared in the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

²⁴ The most common term used to describe the eastern European immigrants at this time was not Jew, but alien. Those who were antagonistic to their presence were anti-alien, their behaviour anti-alienist.

²⁵ *Eastern Argus*, 6th August, 1887.

²⁶ A White (ed.), *The Destitute Alien in Great Britain*, London, Sonnenschein and Co., 1892, p. 20.

²⁷ *East End News*, 21st February 1888.

²⁸ Quoted in Kershen, *Strangers*, op.cit., p. 205.

²⁹ The act was directed solely at pauper aliens and laid down that only those who were healthy, able to support themselves and their families, could enter the country and predetermined ports.

³⁰ As well as taking the jobs and homes of Englishmen, the pauper immigrants were considered a menace due to their importation of diseases such as glaucoma, their involvement with the white slave trade and, as mentioned in the text, the 'odious' nature of their food.

³¹ The Siege of Sydney Street which occurred in 1911, did give rise to concerns over the threat from socialist revolutionaries from Russia, some of whom were, or associated with, eastern European Jews, but it did not give rise to the anti-alien/antisemitic sentiments that followed in the years after 1917.

³² The best in-depth study still remains C. Holmes, *Antisemitism in British Society 1876-1939*, Edward Arnold, 1979.

³³ *The Protocols* is a text published in the Russian Empire in the early 20th century that purports to describe a plan to achieve world domination by Jews and was recirculated in the 1920s. Some antisemites still quote and support the text.

³⁴ For further details see S. Lahiri, 'Patterns of Resistance: Indian Seamen in Imperial Britain', in Anne J. Kershen, *Language, Labour and Migration*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2000, pp. 155-78.

³⁵ See, C. Adams, *Across Seven Seas and Thirteen Rivers*, London, Thap, 1987

³⁶ Kershen, *Strangers*, op.cit., p. 177.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ The area today known as Bangladesh was, as a predominantly Muslim region, apportioned with (west) Pakistan at the time of the partition of 1947. Therefore, at the time of their arrival in Britain these men who have been identified as East Pakistanis. The nation-state of Bangladesh was created in 1971 after a bloody civil war with Pakistan.

³⁹ V. Robinson, 'Indians', in C. Peach (ed.), *Ethnicity in the 1991 Census*, Vol. 2. London, HMSO, 1996, p. 96.

⁴⁰ Imam Shafique Rahhmad of the East London Mosque in conversation with the author, 25th June 2002.

⁴¹ C. Adams, *ibid.*, p 160. See also Kathy Gardner, *Global Migrants, Local Lives*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 1998.

⁴² <http://www.eastlondon-mosque.org.uk/html/history/htm> (accessed 30 June 2002).

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ see Kershen, *Strangers*, op.cit., p. 96.

⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 127.

⁴⁶ Information provided by Mafijr Rafique in conversation with the author, 10th July 2002.

⁴⁷ Adams, op.cit., p.55.

⁴⁸ Author's interview with Nazneen Uddin about her father's early experiences in East London, 21st March 2001.

⁴⁹ According to *Sharia* (Islamic) law, it is not permissible for interest to be earned on loaned or invested money.

⁵⁰ Kershen, *Strangers*, op.cit., p. 68.

⁵¹ Ibid. p. 70.

⁵² *Daily Telegraph*, 10 January 1997.

⁵³ Bengali families tend to be extended, multi-generational. In most cases there would be four or more children, parents and grandparents needing accommodation in one unit. It should be noted however, that there are signs that this, essentially, eastern tradition is beginning to change, as young marrieds seek to live as a couple rather than in the paternal home.

⁵⁴ This was very much reflective of the experience of eastern European Jewish immigrants in the district one hundred years before.

⁵⁵ K. Leech, *Brick Lane 1978*, Birmingham, AFFOR, 1980, p. 16.

⁵⁶ Quoted in C. Forman, *Spitalfields A Battle for Land*, London, Hilary Shipman, 1989, p. 188.

⁵⁷ These were the reasons given by electors in the district of Poplar for supporting the first elected member of the British National Party on to Tower Hamlets Council in May 1993.

⁵⁸ An expression he used in an interview for the BBC 1 programme, *Yesterday's Witness: The Battle of Cable Street* first shown 4th January 1970.

⁵⁹ The myth that 'all Jews were/are rich' is still believed by some in spite of the many histories written about the poverty experienced in the East End and the multiplicity of well-used charitable organisations. In contrast following the publication of the 1991 Census it was suggested that the Bangladeshis were following the Irish model.(see C. Peach, *Ethnicity in the 1991 Census*, Vol. 2, London, HMSO, 1996, pp. 15-16.) As the movement out of Spitalfields into the suburbs and the entry of young Bengalis into university and the professions gets underway it is clear that there is a need for a re-evaluation.

⁶⁰ The term assimilation to describe the process of absorption into main stream society of eastern European Jewry was one commonly used by historiographers in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s.

⁶¹ Virtually all Bengalis sent money back to their village in order to buy land upon which to build an impressive home – land ownership being a source of status - in addition they were indebted to their family or village for travel costs which had to be paid off. After contributing to Bangladeshi charities, every Muslim's requirement, there was rarely money left over. The main reason for eastern European immigrants to send money home was to pay for tickets for siblings, wives, fiancées, and very occasionally parents, to travel to London. Land ownership for Jews in the Pale of Settlement was not an option.

⁶² See Kershen, *Strangers*, op.cit., pp. 172-84.

⁶³ Members of both groups have faced discrimination when entering the professions. What many first generation British born Jews experienced in the 1930s, their Bengali peers have encountered some 60 decades on.

⁶⁴ Albeit some 50,000 returned as they could not endure the hardship they found on streets they had dreamed would be paved with gold.

⁶⁵ Small town with a majority Jewish population.

⁶⁶ It was Cossack soldiers who had been in the forefront of the pogroms and who enforced the controls imposed on the Jews of the Russian Empire, thus a reluctance to fight alongside them is understandable.

⁶⁷ Author in conversation with Harry Rothenberg (born in 1902 in Cracow and brought to Britain by his immigrant parents in 1903), 12th June 1992.

⁶⁸ It is significant that in these instances the identity selected was that of 'Englishman', as opposed to being British. By contrast many young Bengalis whilst prepared to accept that as an accident of birth they might be British, there is a refusal to accept an English identity, even if born in the East End of London.

⁶⁹ Information given to the author by a young Muslim student whose father is one of the rare examples of first generation immigrant Bengali entrepreneur; owning property and businesses in both the United Kingdom and Bangladesh. However, he admits that as a 'transnational' he is unsure as to where he belongs or what his identity really is.

⁷⁰ Words of a Muslim student in conversation with the author, 12th June 2003.

⁷¹ As above.

⁷² The author did a trawl through the local East London Press and certain of the national newspapers for the months of July and August. Surprisingly perhaps there was only one letter in the East London press which was anti-Muslim and none in the national press.

⁷³ Information from Michael Keating, Head of Research and Scrutiny at the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

Muslim and Jewish Communities in Nineteenth Century Manchester

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Contemporary relations between the Muslim and Jewish communities in Britain have been largely shaped and marred by international politics as a result of the creation of the state of Israel in the aftermath of the Second World War. However, historically the two distinct communities have enjoyed long periods of cultural proximity and cross-fertilisation, particularly in their migration and settlement experiences in Britain. From as early as the late-eighteenth century Maghribi and Levantine Muslim and Jewish traders migrated into the 'Cottonopolis' of industrial Manchester and their shared middle-eastern traditions and cultures ensured that both communities enjoyed a lengthy reciprocal relationship of inter-religious tolerance and collective community development. This paper explores some of the issues, experiences and historical details relating to Muslim and Jewish communities in 19th century Manchester.

Introduction

It could be argued that the Muslim and Jewish communities of nineteenth century Manchester have had an important influence on the contemporary geography and politics of the Middle East and the resultant increasing tensions between both religiously monotheistic peoples. This modern reality is in part as a result of diasporic Levantine Arabs in Manchester, as former Christian and Muslim Ottoman subjects forming a political organization that became a precursor to the developed nationalist movement that opposed Turkish Caliphate-rule in the Arab world. Equally, on their part the city's Jewish community provided the political Zionist movement with its first president of the modern state of Israel formed in 1948 in the person of Dr Chaim Weizmann, former lecturer in chemistry at Manchester University. Yet, despite their detrimental contributions to the volatile politics of the contemporary Middle East, historically, the two distinct communities have enjoyed long periods of cultural proximity and cooperation in their migration and settlement experiences in Manchester. Although early individual Muslim Lascars¹ and Jewish Hawkers to the city were not communities *per se* and their solitary appearances were usually temporary, these wandering vagrants and their miserable destitution provided lasting negative archetypes by which later Muslim and Jewish settlers would be stereotyped. And, whilst nineteenth- and early twentieth century Jewish settlers far exceeded Muslims, what is remarkable is that the Jewish experiences of intra-communal divisions, cultural assimilation, rigid orthodoxy, distinctive traditionalism, religious reform and the desire for greater social acceptability all became later experiences

of the post-war Muslim community of the present. In order to understand these particular developments it is appropriate to draw some important ethnic, cultural and religious distinctions that existed within both nineteenth century communities. Nascent Muslim settlers to Manchester were largely divided between the greater presence of diasporic Ottoman subjects and emigrant Sultanate Moroccans. The Ottoman Muslims mostly emanated from Lebanon, Syria and Egypt and they joined the already settled community of Moroccans from the city of Fez in the former independent Alawi Sultanate. Similarly, the early Manchester Jews were divided ethnically into the Ashkenazim of German, French, Polish and Russian origin and the Sephardim stemming originally from Spain, Portugal and the Middle East.² Further, the emergence of a Reform Congregation by the middle of the nineteenth century developed as a result of theological schism rather than ethnic or cultural difference effectively created a third Jewish entity in the city. The early migration and settlement histories of both communities are remarkably similar in their experiences of racism and discrimination and internal problems, both political and theological. Yet, the emergence of these two very distinct and religiously diverse communities impacted on both the city's economic development and prosperity and shaped its future multicultural and cosmopolitan populace. But, perhaps the most pertinent feature of their early development is that both communities enjoyed a lengthy period of cross-cultural fertilization and a reciprocal relationship of inter-religious tolerance and collective community development.

Lascars and 'Coolies'

Manchester's development as the centre for the textile industry of Lancashire, particularly the mass production of cotton, was aided by both its damp climate and traditional skills in wool production. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries cotton production made Manchester the free-trade capital of the world, attracting increasing numbers of foreign merchants and entrepreneurs from around the globe and in particular the Orient.³ Manchester cotton traders were also adept in the purchase and import of large quantities of raw material from both the Levant and America.⁴ In 1838, the Anglo-Turkish Commercial Treaty was signed at Balta-Liman, near Istanbul. As a result, the Ottoman Caliph was soon importing more 'piece goods' from Manchester than the rest of Europe put together. But cotton exports to the Levant were often hindered by inadequate transport facilities.⁵ In addition to the entrepreneurial migrant travellers and wealthy foreign merchants, the production boom drew in great numbers of rural peasants from northwest England and Ireland. Among the many migrant sojourners were poor and wandering Lascars, or

‘Oriental sailors’, who were seeking sustenance in the burgeoning industrial cities beyond their temporary docklands settlements. Humayun Ansari says, ‘among these lascars were Yemenis and Somalis who from as early as the 1850s were recruited on steamers as firemen and stokers.’⁶ And, although Joseph Salter’s early reference to a few destitute Lascars in Manchester does not suggest a community, it is interesting to note that even as a small band of individuals the Lascars somehow gravitated together in their adversity appearing to him as a visible entity. Salter records an ‘Asiatic lodging house’ that he stumbled across as he surveyed the ‘human sewers of Manchester and Salford’ during his missionary work amongst the Lascar communities of Britain.⁷ Of the twenty Lascars he found in Manchester, six were lodging in Salford with Jan Abdoolah, a Muslim possibly of Turkish or Indian origin.⁸ According to Salter, Abdoolah’s lodgers, all of who were also Muslims, were composed of ‘a Javanese and five natives of India’.⁹ The philanthropist missionary further mentions a famed Lascar known locally as ‘Monkey Abraham’ describing him as a tall and skinny man who wore a strange multi-coloured coat with silver-ringed earrings and a large silver ring around his neck. Salter claims Abraham’s name was, ‘not chosen but earned, and anyone who saw the ape-like attitude he assumed, with his ridiculous ornaments, would never doubt how well he merited the appellation’.¹⁰ It would appear that becoming an exotic spectacle and ‘cashing-in’ on his otherness was a desperate, but meagrely profitable, means of existence for the starving Lascar.

According to Salter’s record the arrival of large numbers of Lascars was becoming a common occurrence in the nineteenth century and by the 1890s,

an average of 500 Asiatics come to the docks every week, and more than 10,000 Asiatics and Africans – including East Indians, Chinese, Japanese, Persians, Malays and Africans of various races – visit London in the course of a year.¹¹

His account gives us some idea of the huge numbers of Lascars visiting Britain’s ports in the period, suggesting that their presence in the docklands was both formidable and highly visible. In 1893, *The Crescent*, published an article highlighting the plight of what it termed ‘Muhammadan sailors’ titled, ‘Lascars Adrift’ which detailed the destitution, racism and discrimination faced by Oriental Muslim sailors in Britain.¹² The article refers to placards calling on ship owners and their agents to boycott Indian sailors and it claimed that sailors’ mission homes would not take ‘foreigners’ unless they could pay.¹³ According to the periodical it appears that only the Turkish Consul in Britain had tried to address the sailors’ problems despite him having ‘no concern with the Indian subjects of the British

Most Christian Queen.’ The publication urged the British government to respond to the problem asking, ‘could not an Anglo-Indian Consul be established at each of the British ports visited by steamships plying between Hindustan and Great Britain?’¹⁴ The following issue carried a small item reporting a disturbance between Muslim Lascars and locals at the town of Barrow,

Sunday last, the Lascar sailors belonging to the steamer *Clan Macdonald* were holding a Muhammadan festival at Barrow, and were parading the streets with tom-toms, &c., [sic] and, on the way back to the docks, by some means a man’s hat was knocked off, and a fight ensued between the coolies and the white men, fists and sticks being freely used. And many on both sides were badly handled and bruised.¹⁵

Whilst the plight of the nineteenth century Oriental Lascars to Manchester witnessed many of them becoming the victims of poverty, depravation and racism other communities of Muslims to the city appear to have fared much better.

Levantine Ottomans

Fred Halliday says that the emergence of the ‘Levantines’ (Ottoman subjects) in Manchester is somewhat unclear, but as early as 1798 there were four Arab trading houses established in the city. This is in contrast to the four hundred or so in existence by 1890 when the Oriental traders even had the luxury of an Ottoman Consul, a Turkish merchant and an inhabitant of the city since the 1850s.¹⁶ Louis Hayes identifies the Turk as Abdullah Ydilbi and says that he had been in Manchester so long that he had, ‘much of the European and even a little of the Englishman in his ways and ideas’.¹⁷ The Consul’s apparent assimilation into British society was even more pronounced in his British-born sons who were often seen riding on horseback ‘in the nature of Victorian gentlemen’ through the busy thoroughfares of Manchester.¹⁸ Abdullah Ydilbi began his fortune originally street-vending Chelsea buns but then soon moved into cotton import and export between the Levant and Manchester.¹⁹ Hayes recalls Ydilbi’s increasing tax problems with the Turkish *tijaraat*, or, ‘customs and excise’ and remembers witnessing his financial ruin whilst visiting the then Turkish capital, Istanbul. Hayes recounts that Ydilbi, ‘haunted the courts like a restless spirit longing and hoping for the verdict in his favour, which was never to be given’.²⁰ Albert Hourani has suggested that the settlement of the Ottoman-Arab merchants in Manchester was as a reciprocal development of British and European traders in the Middle East, particularly the Levant.²¹ He states that a number of local Ottoman subjects who acted as clerks, translators and agents for European companies in the region were

eventually able to establish their own trading offices in cities like Manchester and Marseilles. He also confirms that by 1860 Muslim merchants from Damascus and Fez had settled in Manchester with a few becoming protégés of foreign Arab and Ottoman consulates.²² Possibly the earliest settlers of the Levantine Arabs to Manchester were the Christian Cababe brothers, Peter and Paul. Hayes claims that they had a complete monopoly over the trade with Aleppo, ‘until the [Levantine] Jews, at first by two’s and threes and then in shoals’, settled in the city.²³ Whilst both brothers were distinctly noted for their ‘Eastern temper’, Paul seems to have been a Victorian ‘dandy’ who was always meticulously dressed in ‘large frilly shirts of the finest texture’ invariably coupled with a white matching waist coat. Hayes wryly notes that his striking features and immaculate apparel meant, ‘he was not averse to a little notice or admiration and more especially on the part of the ladies.’²⁴ Albert Hourani’s father, Fadlo, came to Manchester in 1881 to work in his cousin’s cotton export business.²⁵ He soon became a very successful trader in his own right and was later prominent in Manchester’s civic life, becoming a member of the Liberal Party and an active Arab nationalist. He eventually became the Honorary Consul of Lebanon for Manchester and the North of England in 1946.²⁶ Fadlo was both resourceful and pragmatic and after the unsuccessful attempt to enter his Manchester-born children into a renowned local preparatory school because it would not take ‘foreigners’, he instead established an alternative school in which Albert was educated until the age of fourteen.²⁷ As Protestant-Arab Christians the Houranis were not inhibited by either a distinctly different religious identity or orthodox scriptural prohibitions in the same way that their Jewish or Muslim Levantine counterparts were.

Albert Hourani described the small but thriving Ottoman-Arab community as a ‘*Millet*’, or ‘nation’, because they were somewhat insular and rarely mixed with the wider English society beyond their business dealings, existing in a what they perceived as a volatile environment in which the indigenous hosts could ‘turn nasty at any moment’.²⁸ Yet, despite their apparent encapsulation within their community, with its cultural preserving institutions, religious places of worship and an Arabic language school, it appears that many Arabs did experience a certain degree of English acculturation. Albert’s brother Cecil described the unusual fusion of Arab and English cultures, stating,

Nothing epitomized this dichotomy more than the diet on which we were raised...Saturday we ate the food of the Lebanese villages – *kibbe* and the traditional dish of Saturday, *mujaddora*,²⁹ or Esau’s Pottage: on Sunday’s there was an English roast, followed by an apple pie or milk pudding.³⁰

None the less, despite the religious and cultural proximity of the Arab Christians to their indigenous English co-religionists, as economic migrants who came to England to escape the trade restrictions and religious persecution they faced by the ruling Ottomans,³¹ their Arab identity remained extremely important to them. In addition to limitations in trade and heavy taxes levied by the Caliphate Turks, the increasing anti-Christian sentiments in the Syrian provinces surfaced as violent pogroms, in particular the 1860 Damascus massacre.³² The Levantine Arabs defined themselves traditionally as 'Suri', a term referring to the geographical and historical inhabitants of modern-day Syria and Lebanon - a single region until 1943 when the two areas became separate nation-states.³³ The history explains Fadlo Hourani's Arab nationalism and anti-Ottoman political activism. During the First World War a number of the Manchester-born Arabs joined the British army, many of them employed as translators involved in the so-called 'Arab revolt' against the Ottoman Empire.³⁴ The Manchester Syrian Association was established at the outbreak of the First World War stemmed from the Manchester Syrian Relief Committee, a charity which aimed to provide assistance to Arabs 'back home' who were affected by the war. The Association became an important vehicle for funding, propagating and promoting Arab nationalist ideas opposing Turkish rule in the Middle East.³⁵ But it appears that the Levantines' loyalties were divided between the love of their homeland and their dislike of the increasingly oppressive Ottoman rule and Halliday notes,

As long as the Ottoman Empire remained in control of their country, the Christian merchants were favourable to the idea of another colonial power, namely Britain, taking over the area.³⁶

Ironically, whilst opposing Ottoman imperialism in the Levant through British intervention, Fadlo later actively supported Palestinians and their struggle against the colonial imposition of a British mandate in Palestine (1936-39). To this end he met with a small visiting delegation of striking Palestinian workers when they visited Manchester and London in 1936. There is little doubt that Fadlo's political involvements had some influence on Albert Hourani's own ideas and writings and his biographer, Abdul Aziz Sudairi has commented that, 'for a scholar who came from a Christian Arab family, the issue of minorities in the new world of nation-states was close to home.'³⁷

Although Halliday asserts that only a few of the Levantine-Arab settlers were Muslims compared to the larger numbers of Christians and Jews, he makes no mention of the two Manchester mosques established by the Syrian Muslim community.³⁸ The first, a former detached Victorian house, now the site of the purpose-built Central Mosque in Victoria

Park, was established in the late 1940s by a group of seventy Levantine Muslim businessmen and students from a number of countries including, Pakistan, Iraq, Egypt and India.³⁹ From the mid-1950s until the early 1960s, Abdullah Qassas, a cotton merchant from a religious Damascan family was the acting Imam. However, changing migration patterns in the 1960s meant that the ethnographic composition of the congregation became predominantly South Asian, with Pakistani-Kashmiri migrants emerging as the largest subgroup.⁴⁰ As a result, in 1962 the Arabs purchased a disused Methodist Church on Burton Road, West Didsbury. Abdullah Qassas continued as the Imam in the newly established mosque until a Syrian Shaykh from *Halab* (Aleppo), Muhammad Saeed al-Badinjky, became the full-time Imam in 1973.⁴¹ Over the years the congregation of the Burton Road Mosque has evolved from its original Syrian-Lebanese merchant class to a large contingent of political refugees mainly of Iraqi, Palestinian and North African origin. And, whilst the mosque still serves the whole of the Arab Muslim community the present Imam is a Libyan. Like the Victoria Park mosque before it, the changing ethnography of the congregation of the Burton Road mosque reflects the contemporary settlement and migration patterns of the Muslim community in Manchester.

Moroccans of Fez

Lancashire cotton appears to have been exported to Morocco through an Arab trader who had settled in Manchester as early as 1830.⁴² The Arab traders of Fez had very practical reasons for migrating to Manchester largely based on the restricted trade in the cloth by the Sultan in Morocco. Kenneth Brown states that in the mid-nineteenth century cotton exports were formally banned on religious grounds and a fifty per cent duty was then imposed on the import of all manufactured goods.⁴³ However, in 1856 an Anglo-Moroccan commercial treaty lifted trade restrictions in cotton and within ten years British finished-cotton exports to Morocco accounted for over fifty per cent of its imports with the raw material shipped the other way to the textile mills of Lancashire.⁴⁴ As a direct result, by the middle of the century over a dozen Moroccan families had settled in Manchester with their numbers eventually increasing to around thirty families. Certainly by the 1860s their visible presence was noted in the business quarter of the city and recorded in some detail by Louis Hayes.⁴⁵ In his monograph he claims that many of the Moroccan traders sought employment with British companies in an effort to avoid being ordered home by the Sultan.⁴⁶ They established offices in Market Street and were well-known to their compatriots back in Fez. The merchants' offices were mentioned in the *Manchester City News* which noted the traditional Arab dress worn by the community, referring to their

jalbaabs, turbans and red fezzes.⁴⁷ The article also reports rather disparagingly that the children of the ‘Arab colony’ had the ‘privilege’ of the right to claim British nationality ‘whether they were born here or in Morocco’. It also claims with a great degree of intrigue that the Muslim traders seemed to be in the habit of marrying ‘black slaves’, apparently purchased before coming to England because they did not wish to bring their ‘real’ wives. Mohammed Ennaji has documented the common practice of wealthy Moroccan males, in particular the bourgeoisie of Fez, taking black African women as concubines. He states that, ‘by taking concubines, a husband could elude all the rules giving rights to free wives.’⁴⁸ He says further that a man’s sexual initiation was often with a concubine, normally provided to an adult son by his wealthy father and that when such concubines gave birth to their master’s children they either gained their freedom or became legitimate wives.

The accomplished Moroccan author, Abdul Majid Bin Jilloun (1919-1981), although born in Casablanca came to Manchester with his family only months after his birth a short time after the First World War. His posthumously published childhood memoirs, *Fi at-Tafoulah* (1993), provide a fascinating narrative of life in Manchester for the early Moroccan Muslim community.⁴⁹ Bin Jilloun’s father is the ‘Bengelun’ referred to in Hayes’ monograph as, ‘one of the first Moors to establish himself in business on his own’.⁵⁰ As a result of his entrepreneurial skills, Bin Jilloun’s father became the *de facto* community leader, often acting as a *muwasat* (middleman) between local companies and the Moroccan traders.⁵¹ His home at 47 Parkfield Street, Rusholme, was used by the Moroccans for congregational prayers and Bin Jilloun remembers,

we received visitors all the time. These were not English but Moroccans who appeared strange in their traditional clothing and their way of talking.⁵²

The fact that the Moroccans ‘appeared strange’ to the young Bin Jilloun, coupled with his inability to fully comprehend their Arabic language, suggests that he experienced a certain degree of assimilation into British culture. He also recalls what he describes as the ‘frightening presence of strong African housemaids’, which provides some credence to the claim that the merchants did indeed bring African slaves to the city but not perhaps in place of their Moroccan wives.⁵³ The Arab traders were extremely hard working but frequently socialised and often took holidays to Blackpool by train as Bin Jilloun’s family regularly did. He also remembers the Moroccans would visit the nearby parks together as family groups appearing as an exotic spectacle to local residents who knew the community as ‘the people in the red hats’ because of their fezzes.⁵⁴ Despite his on-going assimilation,

being noticeably different both ethnically and religiously seems to have affected Bin Jilloun and during his formative years at school he was often bullied and occasionally beaten by local children. His mother inadvertently added to his sense of otherness when she insisted that he be excluded from religious worship because of his Muslim faith. In addition, his father's Islamic teachings at home and the frequent visits to relatives in Morocco further reinforced his cultural and religious identities.⁵⁵ Bin Jilloun's holiday adventures in Moroccan were often related to his fellow pupils and his teacher would ask him to recount his summer visits to the whole class.⁵⁶ However, their Muslim faith did not prevent the Bin Jilloun's from celebrating Christmas and receiving gifts from 'shaykh ul-milad' (literally, 'old man of the Birthday'), a rather novel way of describing Father Christmas.⁵⁷

Although often exoticized because of its cultural distinctiveness, the Moroccan Muslim community was noted for its religious piety and ritual observances. A contemporary Manchester newspaper report praised the Moroccans for their honesty, noting that they were never once reported to have been the subject of any court proceedings. Lamenting their departure it recalled,

Apart from the considerable material loss to the city, Manchester has lost a body of good citizens who, while retaining their oriental customs and attributes, built up for themselves a reputation second to none for honest dealing and clean living.⁵⁸

When the competition from Japanese produced cloth made it impossible to export Lancashire textiles to Morocco, the community slowly repatriated and by 1936, after the independence of the country, many returnees then relinquished their British citizenship preferring Moroccan nationality.⁵⁹ As he grew older Bin Jilloun witnessed the economic decline and population decrease of the Moroccan community recording the sorrowful return of the Arab traders. He mentions a number by name; Abu Ayyad, Qurtubi, Bin Wahood, and Sayid Brada, saying that 'they all went back to Morocco with no intention of returning to Manchester' adding further, 'I never thought that we would also to have to return one day'.⁶⁰

Ashkenazim Migrants

Up until the mid-eighteenth century there were no Muslim or Jewish names listed in the trade directories for Manchester. However, in 1788 Hamilton Levi was entered as a 'flower merchant' in Long Millgate. By 1794, there were some fifteen Jewish families recorded as

residing in the Shudehill, Withy Grove and Long Millgate areas of the city.⁶¹ From this nascent community it is recorded that two brothers, Lemon and Jacob Nathan, rented a large room on one of the upper floors of a house in Ainsworth Court, Long Millgate, for use as a synagogue for which they paid an annual rent of £10. The congregation later moved to a small upper chamber in Garden Street, Withy Grove and it is there that Nathan Meyer Rothschild was a regular worshipper.⁶² By the 1820s a large number of Jews from Germany migrated to Manchester after the Napoleonic wars and by 1825 the first purpose-built synagogue was established on Halliwell Street. Up until this point the congregation was almost exclusively comprised of Ashkenazim Jews and it was not until 1874 that the Arab and Oriental, Sephardim Jews established their Moorish-style synagogue on Cheetham Hill Road - a building that still exists today as the Manchester Jewish Museum. Although the appearance of a number of newspaper allegations made against the Levantine Jews and their business dealings were driven primarily by rising anti-Semitic sentiments, Bill Williams has argued that early Jewish migrants to Manchester had been closely connected to criminal professions such as theft, fraud and receiving, through the precarious trade of hawking, a particular trade that lent itself to the handling of stolen property albeit usually unwittingly.⁶³ However, the emerging middle-class Jews of more respectable professions worked hard to redress the widely held negative perceptions of Jews as they became more assimilated within Manchester's business community and social elite. In response to such misdemeanours the aspiring professional Jews of Manchester struck-off the offenders from synagogue membership in an effort to safeguard the public image of the community as a whole. The struggle for acceptance was a conscious effort to move the community away from its somewhat less reputable past and Williams notes,

...added to the fear of the new internal corrosive effect [via assimilation] was the belief, however inaccurate, that any signs of social denigration, any association of the community with low standards of public morality would be followed, almost inevitably, by an outburst of anti-Jewish feeling.⁶⁴

Whilst Jewish sensitivities may have been heightened by the process of social acceptability, there is little doubt that anti-Semitism remained a constant undercurrent in the outsider perceptions of Jews in nineteenth century Manchester. Even the *Manchester Guardian*, despite its middle-class enlightened civility, was not immune to occasional bouts of blatant 'Jew bashing'. An article published in October 1829 made light of the irony of a destitute Jewish peddler arrested in Barnsley for stealing ham.⁶⁵ Other contemporary newspapers, publications and even occasional court proceedings regularly mocked and parodied the way migrant European Jews spoke English with a pronounced

Yiddish accent. Further, Jews were constantly compared to Irish Catholics, who were already identified as ‘subversive’ and ‘anarchic’, particularly regarding questions relating to their loyalty and belonging. In the pervading climate of religious and racial prejudice, the peculiar Christian Israelites, followers of Johanna Southcott and the later self-proclaimed prophet, John Wroe, complained that their Old Testament observances (and appearance) meant that they were frequently mistaken for Jews and as such subjected to much abuse and discrimination. Settled in nearby Ashton-under-Lyne, the cult believed quite fanatically that the town was the ‘New Jerusalem’ and they began to construct four stone gates at the entrances of the town’s highways. Further, Wroe’s openly polygamous practices and his controversial preference for marrying young virgins caused much consternation and anger amongst the locals. Interestingly, one of the Christian Israelites’ elders, Robert ‘Rachid’ Stanley, a local dignitary who was formerly twice-Mayor of Stalybridge and a wealthy Manchester-based tea merchant converted to Islam in the 1890s.⁶⁶

The rise of a burgeoning well-to-do settled Jewish community was accelerated by rapid economic development that witnessed an increasing number of Jewish-owned commercial outlets throughout the city. But this upwardly social mobility was underlined by a great sensitivity to centuries of persecution in Europe. As if in an effort to publicly assert their belongingness, the Jewish community began improving the immediate areas in which their businesses were located, creating safe public footpaths and limiting the numbers of street hawkers and peddlers. Paradoxically, Williams claims that Jewish settlers who were reliant on unregulated street peddling and hawking were driven off the main thoroughfares by organised trade societies established by their co-religionists and were, as a result, forced into begging or petty crime. One entry into the 1834 records of a Jewish congregational fund for the destitute reveals that a charity donation was actually used to bribe one such undesirable to leave the city.⁶⁷ As Jews began to adapt to the business environment in Manchester they moved from professional trades such as shoemaking, bespoke tailoring, and watch making into the realms of mass-production and wholesaling, particularly in the hosiery and garment trade. In the 1836 *Trade Directory*, the transition of small tailors into wholesalers and manufacturers can be traced through the many Jewish names listed and their respective businesses. Further, many Jewish immigrants brought their particular manufacturing skills to the city forming cooperatives and partnerships in the process that displayed a ‘clear understanding that a mass urban market required radical adaptation of manufacturing and business techniques.’⁶⁸ Such partnerships brought together three major

Jewish enterprises in clothing, jewellery and cotton into what Williams has described as a 'communal triumvirate' and a 'mercantile plutocracy' which not only facilitated business solidarity and economic success, but also intermarriage. Like the orthodox Muslim settlers to the city in the same period from Morocco who were noted for their religious fidelity, many Jews although extremely successful entrepreneurs, maintained strict religious observance like the Hyam family, a father and son partnership that faithfully closed its premises at sunset every Friday. Economic prosperity appears to have encouraged a growing Jewish self-confidence that not only aspired to cultural sophistication and social acceptance, but also heightened religious awareness and conformity, in addition to mobilising political ambitions particularly aimed at Jewish emancipation. And, as assimilation appeared to become the apparent norm at the same time orthodox religious elements were engaged in proselytising amongst 'lapsed' Jews within the community.⁶⁹

The relatively sudden success of settler Jewish merchants in the clothing industry in Manchester did not go unnoticed and was not without its dissenters from both local competitors and disaffected workers. Growing industrial unrest quickly followed rapid economic prosperity as disgruntled local tailors were forced into accepting lower wages and compromised working conditions. In the process, the discontented began to display unsavoury aspects of anti-Semitism resulting in attacks on Jewish premises and proprietors. In a wider context, the urban working-class troubles reflected the settlement problems of rural mass-migration from northern England and Ireland into the newly established industrial metropolis. However, the subsequent formation of a workers' union to address the particular problems relating to employees' rights in the hosiery trade was met with hostility by the wider business community and the local press who branded the union leaders as 'unreasonable and tyrannical'.⁷⁰ Ironically, the union eventually formed a cooperative in competition to the partnerships set up by the Jewish traders as the industrial strife polarised the opinions of the mobilised working-class and the middle-class *petite bourgeoisie*, which largely supported the Jewish traders' innovative capitalism and tough union-breaking measures. The protagonists behind the working-class struggle were usually (if not often incorrectly) identified as 'the Irish' who were portrayed as disloyal anarchists from a problematic community prone to excessive alcoholism and antagonistic trade unionism. In stark contrast, the *nouveau riche* Jewish merchants were viewed quite positively, even initiating debates regarding their emancipation and in the process allowing some British-born Jews to stake their claims to equality and political freedom. But, whilst an increasingly liberal British middle-class was drawn to ideas of 'universal tolerance', it

was still not quite ready to extend its enlightened principles fully to the developing British Jewish community. However, on 26 July 1858, Baron Lionel de Rothschild finally took up his seat in the House of Lords despite repeated opposition led by the Church bishops.⁷¹

The Reform Congregation

Chief Rabbi Sacks has perhaps described the Jewish settler-experience in Britain most accurately when he wrote that the history of Diaspora Jewry is about, 'how a series of groups of Jews in particular times and places constituted themselves as a community built around the synagogue.'⁷² It is estimated that by 1865 the Jewish population of Manchester had reached around 5,000 and by 1859 the Manchester Hebrew Association (founded in 1838) established the first Jewish school in Derby Street with over 300 children on its register.⁷³ Settler Jews provided the city's university and academe with a number of accomplished scholars and intellectuals including; Tobias Theodores, Professor of Modern and Oriental Languages, Arthur Schuster, Professor of Physics, Julius Dreschfeld, Professor of Pathology, Samuel Alexander, once described as 'one of the world's greatest creative philosophers' and Chaim Weizmann, lecturer in Chemistry and later the first President of Israel. But Weizmann was less than complimentary about his adopted country when he noted on his arrival to Manchester in 1905, that,

materialist, commercial England has succeeded in burning out everything exalted in our Jews, so that the creation of a Jewish intelligentsia here has become an impossible task.⁷⁴

Other notables to settle in the city included; Emanuel Freud, the half-brother of Sigmund, who established himself as a cloth merchant; Philip Goldschmidt the first foreign-born Mayor of Manchester, who with other German-Jewish settlers founded the Mechanics Institute in 1885 and Friedrich Engels, who worked in his father's cotton spinning business, Ermen & Engels, perhaps providing first-hand experience of Victorian working-class social conditions which enabled Karl Marx to produce, *Das Kapital*. The majority of the Ashkenazim migrants were German Jews including one of the most successful, Soloman Levi Behrens, who established the merchant bankers, S. L. Behrens & Company. Behren was noted for his philanthropy which included supporting the Halle orchestra and endowing the university with property and financial donations.⁷⁵ Behren's sons became influential members of the Reform Congregation but later generations experienced a bifurcation in their religious affiliations with Jacob Behren's offspring eventually converting to Christianity,⁷⁶ a phenomenon about which Chief Rabbi, Jonathan Sacks

comments, 'Individual Jews in Britain had their differences. They protested, they left, they disaffiliated and in extreme cases they converted or married out of the faith or both.'⁷⁷

In 1858 the Great synagogue was opened on York Street, now Cheetham Hill Road, and officiated by Rabbi Dr. David Meyer Isaacs. He loyally remained there for over forty years and in the process became one of the ablest Jewish preachers of his day.⁷⁸ However, at the same time as the Great Synagogue was establishing Jewish orthodoxy in a very visible way in the city, another equally impressive Jewish building, the Reform Synagogue, was being consecrated at nearby Park Place. The Reform Rabbi was the Hungarian-born Dr. Solomon Schiller-Szincssy, a man who had previously fought in the 1848 revolution. The Reformist Congregation in Manchester evolved along the same lines as the original divisions and fractures that developed within the Old Congregation in London.⁷⁹ However, matters may have been accelerated in Manchester by the pivotal role played by Rabbi Schiller-Szincssy who before the creation of the new congregation was increasingly seeking to extend his Rabbinate beyond the confines of both the local congregation and jurisdiction of the Chief Rabbi, Dr. Nathan Marcus Alder of the Orthodox Congregation in London. Matters came to a head when Dr. Schiller-Szincssy refused to conduct a marriage within the congregation until he had received a 'special fee' from the bridegroom. As a result, the local congregation sought licence from the Chief Rabbi for the synagogue Reader to instead conduct the marriage, thereby by-passing Schiller-Szincssy's involvement and at the same time undermining his Rabbinate authority.⁸⁰ In reality, what was merely a minor incident was used by the Select Committee of the congregation as a reason to dispense with the Rabbi. And so, the relatively non-event became the arena in which the power struggle between the traditional authority of the Rabbi and that of the Congregational Committee was played out. Williams says of the developing struggles between the two communities that, 'Local autonomy was now regarded in orthodox circles in Manchester, not as a legitimate expression of local pride but as the foundations upon which Reform might be built.'⁸¹ Further, whilst the majority of the conservative members of the Select Committee were urging the Chief Rabbi's intervention as a means of reaffirming their dominant orthodoxy, at the same time the incident provided Reformists with a cause through which to champion the authority of the Local Rabbinate against the Chief Rabbi and, consequently, Jewish Orthodoxy.

Although Rabbi Schiller-Szincssy was not initially directly associated with the Reformers, it appears that he became increasingly convinced by their argument that in order to protect

his provincial jurisdiction it was obvious that he must move away from the Old Congregation. In the beginning the break-away Reformers, who were of modest means and influence, were largely inspired by the New Congregation movement established at Hull in 1856. But, as the controversy surrounding Dr. Schiller-Szincssy and the Chief Rabbi grew, eventually resulting in Schiller-Szincssy suspension by the Select Committee for solemnising a marriage in accordance with full Jewish rites at Hull (without the sanction of the Chief Rabbi or notification of the Manchester congregation), the Reformers rallied to his personal cause. To his credit the Chief Rabbi pleaded for unity, as did many founding elders of the community, but it seems the Reformers seized their moment and their insistence that changes in the liturgical devotions, such as amendments to the Prayer Book and the inclusion of English sermons, meant an inevitable parting of the waves.⁸² Their unorthodox demands persisted despite the best efforts of the Chief Rabbi who worked relentlessly trying to heal the rift, even to the point of extending the acceptable boundaries of orthodoxy in order to meet the requests of the Reformers. But, enough was enough and Dr. Alder finally held firm to his principled beliefs that the integrity of Judaism needed a uniformity based on the foundations of both fidelity to traditional liturgy and an effective, well-developed means of central control. Equally, the Reformists developed a convincing counter-position based on the logical argument that, if the vitality and relevance of Judaism was to be maintained then its adaptability to new socio-cultural conditions should not be hindered by uncompromising traditionalism or an over-bureaucratic central authority. Whilst it is true that the Reformist Congregation allowed for a critical reappraisal of both the development of Judaism and the position of Rabbinical authority, there were also aesthetic considerations that mirrored a significant cultural shift in the Jewish migration experience towards a more defined expression of what Chief Rabbi Sacks and others have described as 'Anglo-Jewry'.

The new Reform synagogue also reflected changing settlement patterns of the Jewish community in the city and the growing practical need for a geographically accessible synagogue. But for its critics, Reform Judaism represented little beyond the need for acceptance of the Jews by the gentiles. However, the emphasized historical reality that the Reform movement coincided with the struggle for Jewish emancipation and political freedom, can often deny the overriding religious influences of the strong German-Jewish theological developments. The repercussions of the political and theological divisions within the Manchester community forced members to choose between Orthodoxy and Reform, causing a significant number of families to split between the two congregations.

This division continued even in death as the Orthodox Congregation exerted its control over the Jewish cemetery by denying the Reformists the right to burial within the graveyard.⁸³ Dr. Solomon Schiller-Szincssy, who had tried to skilfully navigate his way through the community rifts and divisions, was eventually relieved of his religious duties over the Reform Congregation and he retired to the tranquillity of the Cheshire countryside before finally pursuing an academic career at Cambridge University in 1863.⁸⁴ Perhaps the final outcome of the Reform movement was a limited victory for local Rabbinical authority and, to a lesser degree, a tailoring of Orthodoxy within the later established United Synagogue as a recognised *minhag Anglia*.⁸⁵

Sephardim Settlers

Amongst the first original Jewish settlers allowed back in to England after their medieval expulsion were Sephardim refugees or, *marranos*, who were later expelled from Spain in 1492. They made their way here after readmission by Oliver Cromwell in the 1650s via a number of varied places including, North Africa, Europe and South America.⁸⁶ Two of the earliest recorded Sephardim settlers in Manchester were Samuel Hadida of Gibraltar and Abraham Nissim Levy of Constantinople who both arrived in 1843 to establish a joint warehouse together in Moseley Street.⁸⁷ Halliday states that the majority of Arabic speaking Sephardim Jews who settled in Manchester were of Syrian origin, mainly from Aleppo. They initially lived in the north of the city amongst the Ashkenazim Jews and were not prone to assimilation largely due to their acute feelings of difference.⁸⁸ However, beyond the cultural distinctiveness that divided Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jew, the Arabic speaking Jews also tended to differentiate themselves further between 'Halabi', 'Maghribi' and 'Baghdadi'. That is, those of Jews of Aleppo, North African and Baghdad origin. Further, after the migration of large numbers of eastern European Ashkenazim Jews at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries the sense of difference between the two distinct ethnic groups of Jewish communities was further augmented. The Arab Jews referred to the newly settling Ashkenazim as *ishlaktiya*, an Arabised form of the Yiddish terms, *schlach*, meaning a 'messy', or 'disorderly', person, and *schlecht*, meaning 'terrible'. These rather derogatory terms reflected a developed 'Sephardim snobbery' which also discouraged intermarriage between the two communities and denied hospitality to the Ashkenazim Jews wishing to attend the Sephardim synagogue.⁸⁹

During the major stock market crash of 1891 a number of Levantine Jewish traders suffered a series of devastating bankruptcies. But, a popular charge against the Oriental traders was that their failed speculative investments in the then extremely volatile stock

exchange had used monies that instead should have been paid to Manchester merchants and suppliers for goods taken on credit. Unfortunately, the majority of the charges of fraud were levied directly at the Levantine Jews and the many unsubstantiated claims fed directly into the increasing rise in open anti-Semitism. In the developed demonising typologies and definitions applied to Oriental Jewish traders, a deliberate misuse of two similar terms; *levantar* and *Levant* was employed. The first term, *levanter*, originated from a sixteenth-century Spanish maritime expression and meant an ‘absconder’ or someone who had ‘jumped ship’ and the latter, *Levant*, was a pejorative term for the Levantine. However, both words were used synonymously to imply someone (in this case the Oriental Jewish traders) suspected of financial misconduct.⁹⁰ The *Manchester City News* at the beginning of 1892 ran an article highlighting what it claimed was a fraudulent Levantine trading ‘ring’, describing them as,

...a peculiar nondescript race mostly descended from Jews expelled from Spain or Italy some two or three centuries ago. They now swarm over the various islands of the Mediterranean Sea, North Africa, Syria and Egypt, and in the course of time have got the bulk of trading in their hands. They are a prolific race, and the business is generally managed by brothers on this side and brothers or cousins on the other. The consequence is that, when failures do occur, the assets are all on the other side - Cairo, Syria, or elsewhere - and in the very same hands so far as the debtors are considered.⁹¹

The article was followed by similar reports and accompanying readers’ letters which scrutinised every trading impropriety involving a Jewish trader, whatever the circumstances. A weekly magazine, *Spy*, published in the same period was distinctly and relentlessly anti-Semitic to the extent of losing a number of libel cases as a result of its baseless and emotive xenophobia.⁹²

By the middle of the nineteenth century, as the Manchester Ashkenazim Jewish community deliberated over the inevitable establishment of a new congregation in the south of the city, the Sephardim community was also beginning to experience a process of fissure. And whilst the debates over whether a new congregation for the Ashkenazim was for practical reasons or more to do with a growing Reform movement within the Old Congregation, it was the cultural distinctiveness of the Arab Jews that eventually led to the creation of a second Sephardim synagogue. The Arab-speaking Sephardim Jewish community in Manchester, not only included Ottoman and Baghdadi Jews, but also a small number of North Africans from Tripoli, Tunis and Fez. In the same way that the later

creation of the state of Israel in 1948 displaced thousands of indigenous Palestinians, rising Arab nationalism forced out many ancient Sephardim Jewish communities from around the Middle East.⁹³ Many of these communities had been established throughout Arabia for more than a millennia and they were generally referred to as ‘Babilim’ by the other Spanish and Portuguese-origin Sephardim Jews.⁹⁴ Williams claims that,

No group was more stubbornly independent as the [Jewish] merchants of Aleppo, who looked for leadership to Ezra Sharim and found a social centre in a coffee house attached to the warehouse of Moses Bianco in Bootle Street.⁹⁵

The fact that the Sephardim Jews had a number of separate prayer rooms, including one at the home of Sharim, indicates that even before the establishment of the Sephardim synagogue, consecrated in 1874, the community was defined more by its internal ethnic and cultural differences than by its unifying opposition to the increasing majority of European Ashkenazim. However, once the Sephardim community convinced the dissenting Aleppans that a separate congregation was more appropriate, a delegation was sent to London to seek guidance from the already well-established Sephardim congregation. After agreeing to abide by the religious instructions of the *Haham* in London, the Manchester Sephardim set about building a Moorish-style synagogue for the new congregation which at the time was the first of its kind outside the capital.⁹⁶ But as cultural divides and theological schisms developed within the community, the Spanish and Portuguese-origin Sephardim began to see the Arab Jews as heretics, or *karaites*, and expelled them from their synagogue.

The ‘Babilim’ Jews in turn established a separate ‘Arab’ synagogue in the south of the city. This north to south migration across Manchester placed the Arab Jews within the locale of their settler-Muslim counterparts from the Levant and Morocco. Halliday confirms Hourani’s earlier assertion that the Jewish Arabs who settled in Manchester, did not assimilate into British society as easily as their Christian counterparts and they defined themselves as distinctly different from the Eastern European Ashkenazim Jews. Although united by religion, the two Jewish communities were divided by language (Arabic and Yiddish) and culture (Occidental and Oriental). The locally named ‘Arab’ synagogue at Old Landsdowne Road, Didsbury, established in 1874 still exists today under its official name, the Sha’are Sedek Synagogue.⁹⁷ The *Slaters Directory* (1886), lists an ‘Aboud Moise’, a shipping merchant located at 114 Landsdowne Road, West Didsbury, who was presumably a resettled Levantine Jew from north of the city.⁹⁸ The Arab Jews of Aleppo kept close ties with Arab Christians and Muslims with all three communities living in close

proximity within the leafy south Manchester suburbs of Didsbury, Withington and West Didsbury. The 'Arab' synagogue is located just around the corner from the later established Burton Road mosque. Cultural links between the communities were further strengthened by the creation of an Arabic school, which taught both the Arabic language and religious instruction for all three faiths. Rabbi Mendoza was an occasional teacher of Arabic in the school and a standard Arabic textbook was co-authored by Haim Nahmad, a Manchester-born Jew also of Aleppan origin.⁹⁹ However, despite the early cooperation of the two religious communities in the preservation of their distinct Muslim and Jewish Arab identities, whilst the Syrian and Lebanese-origin Muslims have continued to maintain many facets of their religious and cultural identities, the experience of the Levantine Jews has been one of assimilation or absorption. The community has all but evaporated as members slowly integrated into the larger developing Anglo-Jewish community or dispersed into wider British society. There is little doubt that this conscious identity shift is in part due to the increased political tensions and divisions between both distinct Muslim and Jewish communities in recent years.

Conclusion

Nineteenth century Muslim and Jewish migrants to Manchester were largely drawn to the city for two reasons; oppression in their countries of origin and economic entrepreneurialism. In the nascent stages, settlement and community formation were not easy processes for both distinct and incredibly diverse communities and instances of intolerance; racism and religious discrimination by the indigenous population were commonly experienced. As larger and more permanent settlers from both communities became increasingly visible in the city, their settlement patterns, community formation and developed theological and ethnic differences began to strangely mirror each other. Further, as both communities developed economically and culturally, it appears that their religious distinctiveness was simply too 'other' for the indigenous host community to accept without a great deal of reticence. The rise in xenophobia and anti-Semitism increased racism and discrimination, often resulted in unscrupulous media campaigns aimed at either reinforcing misleading stereotypes or misplaced allegations of criminality or improprieties that blemished the otherwise untarnished reputations of both religious communities.¹⁰⁰ However, their strong religious and cultural traditions meant that negotiated integration and a certain degree of inter-community cooperation were paramount to the preservation of both their unique identities and traditions. In some cases, these shared elementary needs created strong cultural bonds and greater inter-religious tolerance, particularly exemplified in

the case of the Levantine-origin Manchester Muslims and Jews. Sadly however, the international political impositions of Arab nationalism and political Zionism eventually led to irreconcilable fractures within what had been an early and largely successful exercise in living multiculturalism and religious pluralism between both communities.

¹ For a detailed definition of the etymological origins of the word 'Lascar', see, Col. Yule, Henry, et al, *Hobson-Jobson; A Glossary of Colloquial Anglo-Indian Words and Phrases, and of Kindred Terms, Etymological, Historical, Geographical and Discursive*, 2000, pp.507-9.

² Frangopulo, N. J., 'Foreign Communities in Victorian Manchester', *Manchester Review*, Vol. 10, Spring-Summer 1965, pp. 189-206.

³ Halliday, Fred, 'The Millet of Manchester: Arab Merchants and Cotton Trade', *British Society of Middle Eastern Studies*, BRISMES, vol. 19, no.2, 1993, p.159.

⁴ Deane, Phyllis, *The First Industrial Revolution*, 1969, p.85.

⁵ Redford, A., *Manchester Merchants and Foreign Trade*, vol. 1, 1934, p.199

⁶ Ansari, Humayun, *'The Infidel Within': Muslims in Britain Since 1800*, 2004, p.37.

⁷ Salter, Joseph, *The Asiatic in England: Sketches of Sixteen Years' Work Among Orientals*, 1873, p.224

⁸ However, his name seems remarkably similar to a 'Jan Abdool' referred to in Salter's later monograph. Abdool was visited by the London Christian Mission whilst in prison in the capital for opium dealing. If Salter's account is to be believed opium smoking was an epidemic amongst the Lascars of Britain in the nineteenth century. See, Salter, Joseph, *The East in the West, or Work Amongst the Asiatics and Africans in London*, 1896, p.24.

⁹ Salter, op. cit., 1873, p.224.

¹⁰ Quoted in, "'Monkey Abraham" and other "Orientals" in Manchester and Salford, 1873', in, Leese, Peter, et al, *The British Migrant Experience, 1700-2000: An Anthology*, 2002, pp. 252-53. Abraham is also described further in *The East in the West*, where Salter states that he earned his title due to, 'the queer attitudes he could assume. His head was some distance in advance of his body; his elbows kept crookedly afar from each other, while his bony knees were bedizened with spangles, and he wore a necklace in four rows, of beads and strange sea-shells'. Salter, op. cit., 1896, p.59.

¹¹ Ibid, pp. 70-72.

¹² *The Crescent: A Weekly Record of Islam in England*, Vol. II No.27, July 22, 1893, pp. 212-213.

¹³ Ibid, p.213.

¹⁴ Ibid, p.213.

¹⁵ *The Crescent: A Weekly Record of Islam in England*, Vol. II No.28, July 29, 1893, pp. 224.

¹⁶ Ibid, p.161.

¹⁷ Hayes, Louis M., *Reminiscences of Manchester: And Some of its Local Surroundings from the Year 1840*, 1905, p.305.

¹⁸ Ibid, p.306.

¹⁹ Ibid, p.305.

²⁰ Ibid, p.306.

²¹ Hourani, Albert, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, 1991, p.276.

²² Ibid, p.276.

²³ Hayes, op. cit., 1905, p.306-307

²⁴ Ibid, p.307.

²⁵ Sudairi, Abdul Aziz A., *A Vision of the Middle East: An Intellectual Biography of Albert Hourani*, 1999, p.17.

²⁶ Ibid, p.16.

²⁷ Halliday, op. cit., 1993, p.169.

²⁸ Ibid, p.167.

²⁹ A dish of lentils and either rice or wheat.

³⁰ Sudairi, op. cit., 1999, p.18.

³¹ Halliday, op. cit., 1993, p.165.

³² Moaz, Moshe, 'Changing Relations between Jews, Muslims and Christians during the Nineteenth Century, with Special reference to Ottoman Syria and Palestine', in Levy, Avigdor, (ed.), *Jews, Turks, Ottomans: A Shared History, Fifteenth Through the Twentieth Century*, 2002, p.111

³³ For a detailed autobiographical account of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Arab Christian experiences of belonging, allegiance and identity see, Atiyah, Edward, *An Arab Tells His Story: A Study in Loyalties*, 1946.

³⁴ Halliday, op. cit., 1993, p.174.

- ³⁵ Ibid, p.174.
- ³⁶ Ibid, p.171.
- ³⁷ Sudairi, op. cit., 1999, p.24.
- ³⁸ Halliday, op. cit., 1992, p.166.
- ³⁹ Scantlebury, Elizabeth, 'Muslims in Manchester; the depiction of a religious community', *New Community*, vol.27, no. 3, 1995, p.428.
- ⁴⁰ See, Werbner, Pnina, 'Avoiding the Ghetto: Pakistani migrants and settlement shifts in Manchester', in, Drake, Michael, (ed.), *Time, Family and Community: perspectives on family and community history*, 1994.
- ⁴¹ A student of the internationally acclaimed Muslim scholar of *hadith*, Abul Hassan Ali Nadawi, and a graduate of the *Nadwatul Ulema* in Lucknow, India.
- ⁴² Halliday, op. cit., 1993, p.162.
- ⁴³ Brown, Kenneth L., *People of Sale: Tradition and change in a Moroccan city 1830-1930*, 1976, p.120.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid, p.121.
- ⁴⁵ See, *Old Manchester Moors*, in, Hayes, op. cit., 1905, pp.204-213.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid, p.209.
- ⁴⁷ *Manchester City News*, 2 October 1936, cited in, Halliday, op. cit., 1993, p.163.
- ⁴⁸ Ennaj, Mohammed, *Serving the Master: Slavery and Society in Nineteenth-Century Morocco*, 1998, pp.33-35.
- ⁴⁹ Bin Jilloun, Abdul Majid, *Fi At-Tafoulah*, 1993, p.8.
- ⁵⁰ Hayes, op. cit., 1905, p.207. There is a reference to 'Bengelun, T. & Brothers, Merchants' and another reference to 'Bengelun, Talib' of '2 South Street, Peter Street' in, *Slaters Directory, Manchester, Salford & Suburbs 1886*, 1886, p.31.
- ⁵¹ Halliday, op. cit., 1993, p.208.
- ⁵² Bin Jilloun, op. cit., 1993, p.30.
- ⁵³ Ibid, p.31.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid, p.34.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid, p.60.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid, pp.88-94.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid, p.67.
- ⁵⁸ This quote denotes their economic contribution to the city of Manchester in addition to confirming their adherence to their orthodox cultural and religious practices. Cited in, Halliday, op. cit., 1993, p.163.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid, p.164.
- ⁶⁰ Ibid, p.102.
- ⁶¹ Ibid, p.194.
- ⁶² Ibid, p.195.
- ⁶³ Williams cites numerous cases of migrant Jews sentenced for 'handling', 'confidence trickery', theft and fraud. See, Williams, Bill, *The making of Manchester Jewry 1740-1875*, 1976, pp.59-61.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid, p.57.
- ⁶⁵ Cited in Ibid, p.58.
- ⁶⁶ Longden, Earnest Brian, *Robert Stanley 1828-1911*, 2002, pp.3-4.
- ⁶⁷ Williams, op. cit., 1976, p.78.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid, p.68.
- ⁶⁹ Ibid, p.83.
- ⁷⁰ Ibid, p.72.
- ⁷¹ Roth, Cecil, *A History of the Jews*, 1989, p.333.
- ⁷² Ibid, p.22.
- ⁷³ Frangopulo, op. cit., 1965, p.196.
- ⁷⁴ Cited in, Sacks, Jonathan, *Community of Faith*, 1995, p.86.
- ⁷⁵ Frangopulo, op. cit., 1965, p.198.
- ⁷⁶ Ibid, p.199.
- ⁷⁷ Sacks, op. cit., 1995, pp.88-89.
- ⁷⁸ Frangopulo, op. cit., 1965, p.195.
- ⁷⁹ See, Braybrooke, Marcus, *How to Understand Judaism*, 1995, pp.74-75.
- ⁸⁰ Williams, op. cit., 1976, p.241.
- ⁸¹ Ibid, p.242.
- ⁸² Ibid, p.249.
- ⁸³ Ibid, p.263.
- ⁸⁴ Ibid, p.265.
- ⁸⁵ Sacks, op. cit., 1995, p.8.
- ⁸⁶ Ibid, p.23
- ⁸⁷ Ibid, p.83

⁸⁸ Halliday, op cit., 1992, p.167.

⁸⁹ Although Halliday records that one Ashkenazi of Hungarian origin was admitted to the synagogue because of his proven Sephardim genealogy. See, Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid, p.169.

⁹¹ Ibid, p.170.

⁹² Ibid, p.171.

⁹³ Lewis, Bernard, *The Multiple Identities of the Middle East*, 1999, pp.34-35.

⁹⁴ Ibid, p.167.

⁹⁵ Williams, op. cit., 1976, p.322.

⁹⁶ Ibid, p.323

⁹⁷ Halliday, op. cit., 1993, fn. 23, p.167.

⁹⁸ *Slaters Directory*, 1886, p.31.

⁹⁹ Halliday, op. cit., 1993, p.168.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, pp.169-172.

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Displaced Enemies, Displaced Memories: A comparison of politicised memories of the Holocaust and Partition of British India

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The paper focuses in the first instance on the refusal of the Muslim Council of Britain to attend the newly introduced Holocaust Day in the UK on the grounds that it should be renamed Genocide Day. In the second half of the paper I show that Quaid-i-Azam ceremonials in Manchester held by diasporic Pakistanis to commemorate the birth death of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, founder of the nation, highlight a key dimension of political mythologising: it is a feature which stems from a notion of time as cyclical. A prior mythic unity will be recaptured in a visionary, utopian future. Prior external and internal enemies (in their current manifestations) are apocalyptically destined to threaten the integrity of the nation once more. Ideologies based on political myths thus draw on both the future hopes and the future fears of people. Even when the enemy is different, fear of a new Holocaust repeating a prior one within a "cycle of death and suffering" is an important feature of a nation's political mythology. For Pakistanis, the Hindus and British oppressors have been displaced by Jews and Christian in a never-ending cycle of suffering and death. Thus too, in Israel the Arabs have displaced the Germans, themselves manifestations of earlier enemies, Romans, Babylonians, Assyrians or ancient Egyptians in the apocalyptic political mythology of Israeli society. For those who experience racism and exclusion in their daily lives, fears of expulsion and genocide loom much larger than for those who move easily through more tolerant, cosmopolitan circles. The more bound they are by their narrow group's particular symbols and images and its specific history, the more apocalyptic a group's vision of this future is likely to be.

Time and Narrative

Several questions have come to animate the renewed debate about narrative and collective memory. Building on Halbwachs (1992), most recent writers have stressed the political dimensions of memorialism and commemoration¹. The question of *why* people narrate themselves needs to be related to several other questions: What *forms* do these narratives assume, and what structure of *time* does the act of narration entail? What *disguised messages* do narratives hide? .

Narration and commemoration are performative acts (see Turner 1980; Connerton 1989). Through story telling people recover the past as a meaningful moral world to be desired and reached out to (White 1980). Diasporic Pakistanis' rhetorical re-enactments of the traumatic events leading to the founding of Pakistan may be interpreted, the present paper shows, as dramatic acts of reaching out to the past. But they are also, in an important sense, I shall argue, a reaching out to the present and the future. Indeed, the moral plots of political mythologies unite the past with the present and future. They define, in Ricoeur's terms, 'a common destiny' (Ricoeur 1980: 186).

Holocaust Day Memorials

In October 2005, the UN General Assembly adopted, almost unanimously, the resolution to name January 27 International Holocaust Remembrance Day. This was the day on which the Soviet troops entered Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest Nazi concentration camp where more than one million Jews were murdered during World War II. In his address to the assembly, the UN Secretary-General Kofi Anan told delegates that 'the UN was built largely on the ashes of the Holocaust'.

Four years earlier, the Prime Minister of Britain, Tony Blair, and his government had established Jewish Holocaust Memorial Day, memorialised in a public ceremonial at Westminster Abbey on January 27 each year. The Queen is patron of the charity that organises the event and the Home Office contributes £500,000 a year to it. The memorial ceremony is attended by the Royal Family, the Prime Minister and all the good and great of the nation - with one notable exception. Representatives of key Muslim community organisations have

boycotted the event and have asked that Holocaust Day be replaced with Genocide day to recognise the murders of members of their own faith in Palestine, Chechnya and Bosnia. One member of an advisory committee advising on extremism told reporters that the name Holocaust Day gave the impression that ‘western lives have more value than non-western lives’ and that ‘Muslims feel hurt and excluded’ (Helm 2005, in *The Telegraph* online). The Telegraph reports that ‘Ibrahim Hewitt, chairman of the charity Interpal which aims to provide relief and development aid to the poor and needy of Palestine, said: “There are 500 Palestinian towns and villages that have been wiped out over the years. That’s pretty genocidal to me”’ (ibid.).

Similarly, the Muslim Council of Britain boycotted the event in 2006 for the second year running on the grounds that it is not sufficiently inclusive. In response to this claim, Stephen Smith, chairman of the Holocaust Memorial Trust, said that ‘Holocaust Memorial Day has always been an inclusive event. That is why, from its very first year, survivors from Bosnia, Rwanda and the Holocaust have come together: Jews, Muslims and Christians, as well as non-Jewish victims of the Holocaust – gay and disabled people and Romani Communities’ (Johnson 2006, reported in *The Telegraph*, online). Michael Whine, a director of the British Board of Deputies, argued against the Muslim demand for a ‘Genocide day’ that ‘the whole point is to remember the darkest day of modern history’ (Helm 2005).

Once again it appears, as on other occasions, that the Muslim diaspora in Britain has set itself apart, beyond the moral community of its adopted nation, apparently denying its most fundamental values (on this tendency in the Pakistani diaspora, see P. Werbner 2002, Chapter 6). For the people of Britain in particular, the Holocaust, and especially the liberation of the

camps, are remembered as part of the wider struggle against Nazism and Fascism memorialised every year on Remembrance Day. Whatever its international significance, Holocaust Day thus also has deep emotive significance within the specific historical narratives of Britain and of other European nations. To reject that political mythology², as Muslims appear to be doing, is to misrecognise almost deliberately, or so it appears to fellow British citizens, the post-War civil religion of the nation, constructed around the heroism, suffering and sacrifices made by the people of Britain during World War II in their battle to liberate the free world from fascism and racism.

Ironically, perhaps, both Israel and Pakistan owe their very existence to the events of World War II. In the case of Pakistan, unlike Gandhi and the Congress Party who refused to back the war effort, or the Arab world's active support for the Axis Powers, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, founder of Pakistan, publicly supported and joined the British-led Allied fight against the Nazis.³ This support arguably earned Jinnah the indebtedness of the imperial power in the post-War negotiations for separate statehood for the Muslims of India. Similarly, the overwhelming support for the partition of Palestine and recognition of the state of Israel by the United Nations, in November 1947, undoubtedly stemmed from collective guilt in the face of revelations of the horrors suffered by the Jews in the Holocaust. Both Israel and Pakistan, then, emerged from World War II and, as Pakistanis themselves recognise, were for many decades the only two states in the world established on the basis of a religious identity in the post-War period (recently, Bosnia may count as another such a state).

Pakistanis and Jews also share another quality in common: in both nations a sizeable majority of nationalists live with a sense of perpetual victimhood, an apocalyptic vision of

disasters yet to come. In both countries, the political consciousness of nationalists on the Right of the political spectrum is shaped by an existential anxiety, a 'ghastly premonition' about the threat of imminent subjugation, domination, extinction, or annihilation. This sense of communal ontological insecurity arises from a perception of their history as marked by repeated cycles of death and suffering. As Avi Shlaim (1994) argues, 'Jewish history had traditionally been presented as an endless chain of trials and tribulations which reached its climax in the Nazi [H]olocaust. Likud leaders ha[ve] assiduously cultivated the image of a small and vulnerable Jewish state surrounded by a sea of Arab hostility.' Hence a pervasive fear, explicitly expressed by one commentator, is that,

[t]he Holocaust is an event that could recur, in some form or other, if we do not open our eyes and understand that the Nazi monster is still breathing, and attempting to continue what Hitler, may his memory be blotted out, did not have time to finish. I am speaking of the Arabs around us, who have been trying, even from before the establishment of the State of Israel, to eliminate any Jewish existence in Eretz Israel, regardless of our borders. The Arabs have been murdering us on a daily basis from the days of the pogroms in 1929 (when it could not be claimed that we were "occupiers"). (Matar 2004)

In the diaspora, both Pakistanis and Jews face the need to constantly reconnect themselves, on the one hand, to their symbolic homelands – Pakistan and Israel – and on the other hand, to the wider diasporas of their imaginations – Jewish and Muslim. This means that as diasporans their normative vision shifts imperceptively, almost by sleight of hand, from locatedness in place (Israel, Pakistan) to a wider locatedness in world history (of Islam, of

Judaism) and contemporary global events. In the case of the Jewish diaspora, as one writer puts it,

The world has many images of Israel. But Israel has only one image of itself: that of an expiring people, forever on the verge of ceasing to be.... He who studies Jewish history will readily discover that there was hardly a generation in the Diaspora period which did not consider itself the final link in Israel's chain. Each always saw before it the abyss ready to swallow it up.... Often it seems as if the overwhelming majority of our people go about driven by the panic of being the last." (Weiseltier 2002, citing Rawidowicz)

There is little doubt that the Holocaust has been used by successive Israeli governments to establish the moral high ground in negotiations with world leaders over the Middle East conflict. A succession of these leaders is whisked directly from Ben Gurion Airport to Yad Vashem, the Memorial Hill in Jerusalem that commemorates the atrocities of the Holocaust in a series of aesthetically moving memorials and museums. Among the dignitaries who have visited Yad Vashem over the past years are former US Presidents Bill Clinton, Jimmy Carter, Richard Nixon and George Bush; President Saadat of Egypt, former Presidents Nelson Mandela and Francois Mittrand, Pope John Paul II, the Dalai Lama and the current US President George W. Bush alongside US National Security Advisor Condolizza Rice, and Senators Hilary Clinton and Edward Kennedy.

Human rights violations against Palestinians in the occupied territories, including dispossession of lands and livelihoods, house demolitions, shellings and extra-judicial assassinations with their attendant 'collateral damage' of innocent citizens, including women and children, are symbolically trivialised by successive Israeli governments as minor

infringements rather than crimes against humanity. How can these minor acts of necessary self-defence, it is implied, be judged by the same yardstick as the unique monstrosity of the Holocaust? The loss of life of a few thousand Palestinians and Israelis, killed in the second intifada, are thus minimised, pitched against the atrocities of suicide bombers (unnatural and thus illegitimate in both Judaism and Christianity) and the existential threat to the very existence of Israel and the Jewish people supposedly posed by a billion hostile and murderous Muslims worldwide, a sea of barbarity threatening the extinction of the sole and only Jewish state in the world.

This narrative of the Jewish and Israeli Right is accompanied by an endless and almost obsessive preoccupation with the Holocaust, memorialised every year in Israel on 27 Nissan,⁴ and taught to high school children over a whole year. Regular and frequent trips to Auschwitz tap into young people's sentimental identification with the victims. They also engender the existential fear of future holocausts, and stress a certain interpretation of 'Never again'. Rather than the lesson of racism, Right wing Jews take never again to mean that never again will Jews stand defenceless and go like lambs to the slaughter. The only strategy is to fight one's enemies to the utter limit. Hence the memory of the Holocaust and the individual memories of Holocaust survivors come to be politicised and incorporated into a particular kind of political mythology of the nation and its civil religion.

Liberal Jewish critics on the left have condemned this use of the Holocaust to justify contemporary violations of human and citizenship rights. As Weiseltier argues in the New Republic,

If you think that the Passover massacre [in the town of Nathanya] was like Kristallnacht, then you must also think that there cannot be a political solution to the conflict, and that the Palestinians have no legitimate rights or legitimate claims upon any part of the land, and that there must never be a Palestinian state, and that force is all that will ever avail Israel. You might also think that Jordan is the Palestinian state and that the Palestinians should find their wretched way there. After all, a "peace process" with the Third Reich was impossible. (ibid.)

He goes on to critique what he calls 'the typological thinking of Jewish history':

All violence is not like all other violence. Every Jewish death is not like every other Jewish death. To believe otherwise is to revive the old typological thinking about Jewish history, according to which every enemy of the Jews is the same enemy, and there is only one war, and it is a war against extinction, and it is a timeless war. This typological thinking defined the historical outlook of the Jews for many centuries. It begins, of course, with the Amalekites, the nomadic tribe in the Sinai desert that attacked the Israelites on their journey out of Egypt. (ibid.)

In this typological thinking,

...Amalek became Haman (who actually was an Amalekite), who became the Romans, who became the Crusaders, who became Chmielnicki, who became Petlura, who became Hitler, who became Arafat. The mythifying habit is ubiquitous in the literature of the Jews. In some instances, it must not have seemed like mythifying at all. "A tale that began with Amalek," wrote the Yiddish poet Yitzhak Katznelson in the concluding lines of "The Song of the Murdered Jewish People" in 1944, not long before he died at

Auschwitz, "and ended with the crueler Germans...."

In Israel, and increasingly in the Diaspora, constant invocations of the Holocaust by Left and Right, hurling mutual accusations at one another, have cheapened its memory, resulting in what Arad (1997), citing Terdiman, calls a 'memory crisis'.

'Watching daily on television how the historic victims are being transformed into victimizers, many Israelis embarked on an inward journey.' Hence, she says, 'Under these circumstances even the Holocaust-anxiety rhetoric that the Gulf War provoked did not have much of an impact. Instead, many Israelis became intoxicated with the hope for peace.' (Arad 1997)

In more recent years, she continues,

....There is a sense that the nation's collective historical past and its ideological essence are somewhat evading memory, that the traditional patterns of remembrance cease to integrate with present-day consciousness. Indeed, a number of Israel's most time-honored assumptions are presently being challenged by a generation for whom neither the *Shoah* nor the birth of the state constitute living memories. Being privileged, this generation is also skeptical. It questions if Zionism is the only solution to the "Jewish problem"; if the victimized collective Jewish past is *the* dictum for Israel's future self-definition and self-understanding; and if this "essential" Jewish victimhood is a tenable qualifier that should earn discounts in assessing Israel's past and present conduct. (Arad 1997)

According to these critics, the need is to move away from an apocalyptic vision of a past/future in order to build a hopeful future, a desire to humanise and personalise *Shoah* memories, and

to universalise its lessons.

Quaid-i-Azam Commemorations in Manchester⁵

If the leadership of the Muslims of Britain, the majority of whom are South Asians, object to what they see as the lack of inclusivity of the Holocaust Day in Britain, this is because they too live with the sense that the cycle of death of suffering they experienced in the past is a pervasive ontology. For both Jews and Muslims, an important feature of their political mythology, then, relates to the construction of time these narratives implicitly contain. Hence, against the view that political myths are merely charters of present social divisions and current group interests,⁶ it may be argued that they are also visions of *future potential* dangers and threats. This embodiment of cyclical time contains the message that what *was* not only *is* but *will be* again. It was expressed in a public ceremonial held in Manchester to commemorate the birth/death of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, founder of Pakistan, known as Quaid-i-Azam, the Great Leader, on 25 December 1988. Quaid-i-Azam day ceremonials are moments for Pakistanis commemorate and try to make sense of the trauma of Partition⁷. Maulana Saheb, a key speaker in the Nationalist-Religious gathering I attended (and in which I was the only non-Pakistani outsider), began by stressing the significance of the past: 'those nations which do not keep in touch with their past are wiped out from the arms of civilisation. The development of the future depends upon following examples from the past.'

The ceremony invited those who had personally suffered during the tragic events following the Partition of British India to speak. In recalling these events, the central elements of Pakistani political mythology as a civil religion were evident from the start. Quaid-i-Azam

liberated the Muslims of India from slavery and subjugation. He fought against the conspiracies of the British and Hindus - external enemies - and the treachery of fellow-Muslims - internal enemies. His enemies not only bowed down before him, they also respected him for his intelligence and honesty. His strength was that of his faith and belief in his cause: to liberate his fellow Muslims so they could practise their own faith and belief freely. In his battle he was aided by God and the Holy Prophet. His achievement, the creation of an independent Muslim state, is of major global historical significance.

One of the speakers, a young "international lawyer", recounted the story of Partition and stressed - as many of the speakers did - the injustice and discrimination against Muslims in India which inspired the battle for a separate state:

"Violence erupted between the Hindus, the Sikhs and the Muslims, although Jinnah was a great believer in peace and non-violence, and his wish all the way through was that matters could be resolved peacefully".

In this national mythology violence is imposed by outside enemies. The nation, like its symbolic leader, is fundamentally peace-seeking. It must, however, defend itself and in doing so it has to make terrible sacrifices.

The sufferings of the Muslims at the time of Partition were linked by the ceremony's Chairman to Quaid-i-Azam's exceptional qualities as a leader. Thus he recalls an incident at the time of independence. Jinnah

"began to eat less as a sort of sacrifice. He used to say to his sister: 'Fatima, my nation is dying of starvation, how can I sit and eat at this lavish table?' One time during the Partition Quaid-i-Azam asked a reporter about news from Bengal. The reporter replied

'Muslims are being slaughtered'. Tears came into Quaid-i-Azam's eyes. He sighed and said: 'Yes, nations have to cross rivers of blood before they reach the banks of freedom'."

In his speech the *maulvi* (chief cleric) of Manchester's Central Mosque at the time described the sufferings of the Muslims of India, incorporating these sufferings, and thus the whole struggle for independence, into the central Judeo-Koranic myth:

"The cruelties that the Muslims of the Sub-continent endured were much worse than those endured by the Israelites. The Muslims were deprived of their share not only in politics but socially, economically and in all walks of life. All their lands and inheritances were confiscated. They were given to the Hindus and whatever we earned was given to the Hindus. Now look at the position of [Muslims left behind in India]. Demonstrations are held in Amritsar, Ahmadabad and Bombay, and Muslims are killed mercilessly. I would like to ask you: whenever a Hindu or a Sikh picks up a sword to kill a Muslim, does he stop to ask him whether he is a Shi'a, a Sunni or an ahl-e-Hadith, or does he just see that he is a Muslim, or hear the Kalimah, and then kill him? Oh Muslims, look at the Palestinians, they are being killed ruthlessly and here you are, sitting, passing resolutions."

The plight of the Muslims of India is thus linked for Pakistani religious nationalists with the plight of Muslims elsewhere in the world. Pakistan, an Islamic state, is part of a wider nation, the Islamic Umma, defined (as Pakistan itself is) by its religious observance. Once again, the Chairman raises this theme:

"Today we have some news from the Middle East which has deeply grieved us [he is referring here to the news that Israeli soldiers had entered the Al Aqsa Mosque during Friday prayers and dispersed the congregation at the Mosque with tear gas]. The blood-stained hands of the Jews which have murdered many Muslims in the past, and have attacked the Al-Aqsa mosque have again committed this deed. What can I say? Whatever I could say would not be enough. We are unlucky. What else can we do? We draft resolutions and pass them. Our rulers pay little attention, for them it is a case of in through one ear and out through the other. For many years the Jews have been playing with the lives and blood of the Palestinians but no Muslim country has raised its voice in protest. I would like my voice, through His Excellency the Ambassador [who was guest of honour at the ceremony], to reach our government. Our hearts cry. I wish that today we had great personalities such as Salahuddin Ayube, Musa-bin-Nasir or Mohammad Bin Qasim who, in response to the letter of one woman, travelled from Damascus and reached Hindustan at the age of sixteen. Nowadays who knows how many innocent women are raped? But what can I say? Our leaders seem to take no notice at all even if it is pointed out to them."

The Chairman here contrasts the present failings of the Islamic nation as a whole, and its various governments, and their inability to defend Muslims under attack, with Jinnah's heroic fight in defence of the Muslims of India. The vision here is one of a continuously beleaguered Islamic nation. Jews and Hindus are thus variations of a singular enemy. This is evident in the next part of the speech:

"[The Jewish deportation of Palestinians] reminds me of a similar method adopted by the Hindus. In 1964-5 they sent trains packed with Muslims across the Vagga border. The Government at that time protested strongly but was able to do nothing because it limited itself only to protests. Now let us satisfy our grieved hearts by passing a resolution: the last news was that the Israelis had attacked our most important, respected and sacred Al-Aqsa mosque...Today in this function we strongly protest against this atrocious act of the Israelis and we make a request to the United Nations to offer protection not only to our holy places but to the innocent Palestinians."

In the same vein the Maulvi responded to the Chairman, saying:

"Mr. Chairman you were saying that nobody listens to your plea. But who is there to hear anyway? Damascus may still be present but regretfully there is no Mohammad Bin Qasim. Madina Munawara [the town of Medina in Saudi Arabia] may be present but there is no Khalid Bin Waleed. Egypt and Cairo may still be present but there is no Noor-ud-Din Zangi who would be moved by the plea of a Muslim and who, for the sake of God, with the strength of faith would jump into the fire. Very few people like these are born into nations nowadays. Our non-cooperation [with each other] and mistrust [of one another] are the reasons for our punishment. So when our nation has been fully punished and when we repent, only then will God have mercy on us, and only then will God find a way for us. God will not forsake us because in this world beneath the sky if there is anyone who believes devotedly in God's oneness, it is the Muslims, and if there is anyone who follows the religion laid down by the Holy Prophet, Peace Be Upon Him, it is the Muslims. It is a fact that Muslims will remain on this earth; they will not die out

but will spread throughout the world. Judaism will die out. Christianity will die out. Hinduism will die out, and one day the name of Islam and only Islam *la illaha il-Allah Muhammad-ur-Rasool Allah* [the *Kalimah*: God is one and Muhammad is His Prophet] will be left. And when this day occurs - I may or may not be here to see it - it will be a day when the conscience of the Muslims will be fully awakened, and they will be able to differentiate between theirs and others, and will be able to unite, *Inshallah* [God willing]."

Once again we see here the stress on present failure as against future and past glories. The values of the past, epitomised in the exemplary lives of great leaders such as Quaid-i-Azam and the Prophet himself, are today replaced by a void, a punishment for communal sins. Once the community is purified of these sins, however, it will regain its lost glory. The Islamic nation will then achieve its deserved global hegemony.

Later in the function, Maulana Saheb, once again incorporated Quaid-i- Azam's achievements into the central Judeo-Koranic myth. He began by recounting the deeds of Moses chosen by God to liberate the Israelites from slavery. From this myth he moved on to describe the sufferings of the Prophet's followers in Mecca. Stressing the cyclical recurrence of suffering and liberation he said:

Now compare Quaid-i-Azam's character with that of the Prophet's. ...God had appointed him do the same work in the sub-continent as He had given the prophets in the Middle East, prophets such as David, Moses, Solomon, and finally the Holy Prophet, Peace be upon Him.

From here the Maulana went on to recount the freeing of the Prophet's slave Hazrat Zaid-Bin-Haris and Hazrat Bilal. He concludes:

"So when Quaid-i-Azam freed so many thousands of Muslims and gave them an independent country then just think what his position must be in the eyes of God and the Holy Prophet, Peace be Upon Him."

The fact that Jinnah was not an observant Muslim, while not denied by the Maulana, is dismissed as insignificant, an exterior reality hiding a much deeper truth:

"I studied Quaid-i-Azam's personality in the light of the Holy Qur'an, and the more I studied it in this light the more my respect for him grew. I never bothered to see if he had a beard or not [i.e. if he was a religious man or not], and it is my belief that he is better than a thousand of those bearded persons who sell the nation to fill their own pockets. And today I stand on this stage and say that I do not care to know if he prayed or not, and in which way he prayed, what his beliefs were, and I have never bothered to find out what his opinions were. I only know that if he did not have deep respect and esteem in the eyes of God and the Holy Prophet, Peace be Upon Him, then he would not have been born on this earth."

The civil religion constructed through these political myths is clearly consonant with speakers' ideological orientations. Above all, they stress the external threats to the Islamic nation, its fall from grace expressed in its internal disunity, and its ultimate future redemption and achievement of global hegemony. Their message is at once millenarian and deeply pessimistic. During Partition, according to one author,

Twelve million people crossed the border in both directions. Between August and November 1947 – a bare three months – as many as 673 refugee trains moved approximately 2,800,000 refugees within India and across the border ... a million people crossed the border on foot, traveling from West to East [and vice versa]. Everywhere along the route, whether people were on foot, in trains, cars, or lorries, attackers lay in wait. ... thousands of women ... were raped and abducted. (Butalia 1998: 76-77)

Altogether, ten million refugees moved between countries, and around one million people were killed or died (Butalia 1997: 92). Even before the final Partition plan was announced riots had left thousands dead and there had been widespread loot, arson and violence towards women. There had also been mass suicides for the sake of family honour (Butalia 1998: 72). Although the violence was caused by all sides, Muslim, Hindu and Sikh, each side remembered its own violation. Among Pakistani settlers in Manchester, many were East Punjabis by origin who had themselves or their families experienced the trauma of Partition. Hence the events of the terrible suffering of the Muslims of Pakistan and the Indian sub-continent, is incorporated for them into the broader mythology of Islam, which is itself a myth of the struggle of true believers against idolaters (in the sub-continent represented by the Hindus) and people of the Book (Jews and Christians) who deny the message of the Prophet and persecute his followers. In this battle exemplary persons, chosen by God, flawless and ritually pure, hierarchically placed above the community by their very nature, lead in their absolute and enduring faith. *Quaid-i-Azam* is one of those chosen few. The ideology draws on the central themes of sacrifice and martyrdom in Islam (see Ahmed 1986). In the words of a young speaker at the ceremonial:

"Alone he fought against the treacherous British and the Hindus. He kept his serious illness a secret from everyone so that the nation would not lose hope. He himself accepted martyrdom, and until the day he died he thought only of Pakistan".

Political Myths: Passions and Ceremonials

In his discussion of myths of nationalism in Sri Lanka, Kapferer distinguishes between three facets of political mythologising: *myth*, which like Ricoeur (1981) he regards, following Levi-Strauss, as a self-contained, coherently structured symbolic entity; *ontology*, which is a basic set of existential values uncovered through a structural analysis of such myths; and *ideology*, which is a set of more or less coherent prescriptive ideas for current action. Ideology, as a current appropriation, draws on the ontology implicit in national myths to mobilise support and to evoke passion and emotive identification. As such, ideology converts myth via ontology into social charter, a reflection of present, contemporary social divisions. It is thus possible for several different ideologies to be based on a single mythological corpus, with each ideology highlighting different ontological elements in the myths (Kapferer 1988).

Commemorations of the nation among diaspora Pakistanis in Manchester point to a further dimension of political mythologising highlighted in Sri Lanka's national politics, a feature which stems from the notion of time such myths imply. Time is cyclical. A prior mythic unity will be recaptured in a visionary, utopian future. Prior external and internal enemies (in their current manifestations) are apocalyptically destined to threaten the integrity of the nation once more. Ideologies based on political myth thus draw on both the future hopes and the future fears of people. This is especially true if the enemy threatening the nation has

not changed its identity - if it is still the Hindus, the British or the Jews for the Muslims of Pakistan, the Tamil for Sinhalese in Sri Lanka or the Africans for Afrikaners in Southern Africa (Moodie 1975). But even when the enemy is different, fear of a new holocaust repeating a prior one within a "cycle of death and suffering", as Moodie calls it, is an important feature of a nation's political mythology. Thus, in Zimbabwe, Ndebele and Kalanga were seen as surrogates of the prior white enemy by Mugabe's government (see R. Werbner 1991); in Israel the Arabs have displaced the Germans, themselves manifestations of earlier enemies, Romans, Babylonians, Assyrians or ancient Egyptians in the apocalyptic political mythology of Israeli society (see also Handelman 1990, Paine 1989).

In this respect political mythology and the ideologies it both generates and embodies do not simply reflect contemporary group material interests and divisions, but a far more complex set of social *experiences* and political philosophies. For those who experience racism and exclusion in their daily lives, fears of expulsion and genocide loom much larger than for those who move easily through more tolerant, cosmopolitan circles. The extent to which both diasporans and their hosts are able and willing in practice to bridge cultural divides between them, to move beyond the confines of their narrow groups, affects their imaginings of the future. The more bound they are by their narrow group's particular symbols and images and its specific history, the more apocalyptic their vision of this future is likely to be.

Recent political myths, like those about the founder of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, based on events taking place at a time for which published records, memoirs, biographies and other documentary evidence are widely available, are necessarily complex and replete with detail. This detail is drawn upon selectively, and thus reconstructed and simplified, in the

speeches narrated by Pakistani diasporans in their ceremonials of commemoration. Different ideological positions extract from these narratives different kinds of mythic emphasis. In some, the incorporation of recent national myths into the central religious Islamic and Qur'anic myth, which itself draws on Judaic and Christian myths, is more marked. In other Quaid-i-Azam day commemoration ceremonials I attended, there was much great stress on his vision of democracy and equality. Yet despite their differences, the speeches shared a fundamental ontology. One feature of this ontology is a cyclical notion of history, the idea that the past forms the precedent for a visionary future unity, a unity which for a brief moment did, and will again, transcend the current threatened or divided present. The other shared idea is that society in its utopian perfection is embodied and personified by exemplary persons, chosen individuals who are divinely endowed with transcendent status. Such individuals are perceived to exist outside ordinary time and their presence not only redeems and unites the society, but revitalises its faith and power through sacrifice. The millennium is the promise of their arrival.

The global *scale* of these arguments about the meaning of these events of past suffering means that they have come to be globally politicised at the present moment. So much so that such fables of past suffering are able to dictate national and even international political agendas, as in the case of International Holocaust Day, and to make endemic national and international conflicts appear to be almost insoluble. Memory is a force in the present, compelling people to act, or alternatively to forgive (R. Werbner 2002).

Narratives of past events, imagined or real, confer retrospective meaning upon these events, drawing on the historical trauma generated by the collective experience of death and suffering. Memories of the past mythologised in the present are reflexive; they reach out to

past experiences through a heightened consciousness of the present. A corollary of this is that interpretations of the past depend on narrators' present positioning. Different narrators create generically different tales of past experiences.

Finally, there is an important point that needs to be kept in mind, which relates to narrative time itself. For diasporic Pakistanis in Britain, the act of dramatic narration of the nation marks a rupture as well as a continuity, since it inscribes a shift in space as well as in time. From there to here. The danger for them is that spatial disjuncture will stamp the present as a moment beyond the past. To avoid this, they must integrate the experience of diaspora into the national narrative. In telling the past, speakers must relocate themselves within the dispersed postcolonial nation and thus revitalise their relationship to an idealised homeland.

Quaid-i-Azam ceremonials have specific connotations in Britain. There were two major themes highlighted in the Manchester context, one implicit, the other explicit. Implicitly, there is the underlying realisation of being, once again, a Muslim minority ruled by the British. Racism, racial harassment and racial abuse are something with which British Pakistanis must increasingly live as a constant factor in their daily lives. Their helplessness in the face of such abuse and their inability to redress the situation are tangible evidence of their lack of influence and lowly status in British society. At the same time the Manchester community has prospered economically and its younger generation is at present entering successfully into business or professional occupations. The ceremonials described here took place before the Rushdie affair and the open confrontation with the state it caused, and hence at the time *no direct reference* was made during either function to British Pakistanis' current predicament as a racial and religious minority. If a sense of threat and impotence existed, it was *displaced* either

historically, in mythic terms, or globally, on to the international arena. Indeed, in the pro-democracy function, an attempt was made to minimise the conflict with the British. One of the speakers who had earlier spoken of the broader fight against colonialism also pointed out that for an earlier leader, Sir Sayed Ahmed Khan

If the choice was between Hindu dominance or the dominance of the British, we should choose the British. Not because he loved the British, not because he loved slavery, but out of frustration that if Hindus are to run the country [we Muslims] would be better off with the British because at least they understand, they have the same God; they worship one God, we worship one God. Christianity is a part of Islam, we understand Christianity and Christianity understands that it is consistent with the tenets of Islam.

This ambiguity, which in some ways still characterises relations between British Pakistani immigrant settlers and their British hosts, constituted an underlying theme running throughout the ceremonials. British enmity and "dictatorship" on the one hand, and the commonality of values on the other, are open to differential stress depending on the current state of both national and international relations. There remains, however, a basic sense of suspicion and resistance. I never witnessed among Pakistanis, as I did in an India Independence Day celebration in Manchester, a toast to "The Queen, the Duke of Lancaster"!

The other side of this is the deep continuing commitment to, and identification with Pakistan, and more broadly, the Islamic Umma which the ceremonials represent.

The equation between the divinely chosen leader and the nation or community leads to a Muslim political mythology and civil religion constructed around the sacralised qualities and values of exemplary persons such as Quaid-i-Azam. As a central figure in this political

mythology Muhammad Ali Jinnah is clearly placed, in Bakhtin's terms, in 'epic' time. As

Bakhtin argues,

Epics are not simply set in time that has receded, for time is best perceived as value. What was in the past is automatically considered to be better, bigger, stronger or more beautiful.

In epic, someone is speaking about a past that is to him inaccessible, and he adopts the reverent point of view of a descendant. (Clark and Holquist 1984: 287).

Conclusion: Myths of Nations from the Margins

Members of the Jewish and Pakistani diaspora communities are located on the margins of two imagined communities: the national and the religious. Living at the epicentre of international power, in the West, exposed to a constant barrage of media images showing graphically the atrocities and deaths in the Middle East, Kashmir, Bosnia or Chechnya, both diasporas globalise their predicaments and fuse them with their deep sense of historical malaise and present trauma. In this process actors dramatise through ritual acts of reverent observance and passionate rhetoric, an interpretation that conflates old enemies with new ones. Even in the case of Israel, apparently a newly born independent nation-state, the process of ceremonial dramatization of Holocaust Day has led, as Handelman perceptively argues (1990), to the diasporisation of the Israeli nation, fusing it with the wider Jewish diaspora and its history of suffering. So too the nation-state of Pakistan, ever embroiled in constant enmity and war with India, diasporises itself, fusing into the wider, geographically distant, Muslim *ummah* and thus inevitably also into its bloody historical encounters with Christians and Jews.

Under these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that the Muslims of Britain⁸ rejected National Holocaust Day as silencing and indeed obliterating their own experiences of suffering inflicted at least partly, as they see it, by the Jews whose own past suffering Holocaust Day commemorates.

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¹ In particular Connerton (1989); see also the contributions to Bhabha (1990); Gillis (1994); Ben-Ari and Bilu (1997) and Richard Werbner (1998); Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1991, Chapter 2). On narrative constructions see Mitchell (1980) and Rimmon-Kenan (1983).

² I use 'political mythology' here, following Thompson (1985), in preference to other terms such as 'mythico-history' used by Liisa Malkki (1995: 54) following Tambiah (1985), but with the same basic assumptions about the moral constructedness and internal coherence of historical narratives.

³ There are several biographies of Jinnah. See, for example, Ahmed 1997. 160,000 of the total casualties of the Indian army, including many Muslims, are commemorated in war cemeteries in fifty countries extending from the Pacific Islands to UK, according to Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Several Muslims were awarded the Victoria Cross.

⁴ For a masterly account of the the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day Memorial ceremony in Israel and its symbolic significance within a wider spectrum of state memorialism see Handelman (1990). Since writing his account, the ceremony has added, significantly, the reading out of victims' names over the whole day, under the saying that 'Unto every person there is a victim'.

⁵ This and subsequent parts of this paper draw on Werbner 2002, Chapter 4.

⁶ This is an argument associated with Malinowski (1946) and taken up by others, for example Thompson 1985 in his analysis of Afrikaaner nationalist political myths in Apartheid South Africa.

⁷ Recently, a literature documenting the personal memories of victims who suffered during the Partition of India and Pakistan has emerged on both sides of the border. Much of this literature focuses on the oral histories of women, many of whom suffered atrocities of rape, bodily mutilation and murder, including by their own kinsmen who felt they could not protect them (on the Indian side of the border primarily see, for example, Das and Nandy 1986; Das 1991; Chakrabarty 1996; Butalia 1997, 1998; Menon and Bhasin 1998; on the Pakistan side, see Khan 1996a, 1996b, 1997, 2006). As in the case of Holocaust survivors, victims seem reluctant to speak of their experiences, which explains the relative dearth of personal oral accounts. The atrocities committed at the time on both sides remain unspeakable. Supporters of the peaceful resistance movement in the Frontier studied by Banerjee 2000 were remarkable in remembering friendships with Hindus in prison.

⁸ At the time of writing, the Muslim Council of Britain continues to boycott Holocaust Day but has made a concession to public pressure according to which its constituent members may decide in accord with their own conscience whether or not to attend.

**The Holocaust Denial in Iran
and
Anti-Semitic Discourse in the Muslim World**

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Holocaust Denial was seen in the past in relation to anti-Semitic propaganda, but in today's world it has become a new political force in the hand of religious and radical ideologies. Raising doubts about the veracity of the Holocaust is used both as a major and integral tool of contemporary anti-Semitism and as a trend for relativism and subjectivism in historical view. The persistent Holocaust denial by the Arab and Iranian leaders in the Middle East is a new attempt to demonize the Jews. In the past decades the theories of Holocaust denial of Western scholars have been adopted strongly by some intellectuals and political activists in the Middle East. Anti-Semitic propaganda has been a marginal phenomenon in the Muslim world for a long time, but unfortunately it has been gaining strength in several countries over the past 5 years. This worrying development can contain the positive action of those who are paving the way in the world for better Muslim-Jew relations. Holocaust education in the Middle East, directed especially toward younger generation, can help to nurture the better men and women, who have the capacity to struggle for justice and to replace violence by dialogue. A more profound understanding of the Holocaust as a singular, but not incomprehensible, event, could promote awareness in the Middle East to diminish the amount of violence in human affairs and to reduce prejudice and discrimination.

Holocaust denial is relatively new to the Muslim world. However, in recent times, Holocaust denial has grown rapidly in Muslim countries. A longtime phenomenon in the West, Holocaust denial now regularly occurs throughout the Middle East—in speeches and pronouncements by public figures, in articles and columns by journalists, and in the resolutions of professional organizations. Certainly, Holocaust denial has its roots not in the Middle East but in Europe and it stretches back to the years immediately following World War II. However, the anti-hate legislation in European countries condemning the Holocaust deniers has created a new interest for the Middle East among the Western revisionists. Today, Holocaust denial is actively sponsored by national governments in the Middle East. Many representatives from the Syrian and Iranian government, as well

as Palestinian political groups such as Hamas have published and promoted Holocaust denial statements. Denials of the Holocaust have also been regularly promoted by various Arab leaders and in various media throughout the Middle East. It is true that the Middle Eastern perception of the Holocaust has never been monolithic, and has often been influenced by the process of the Arab-Israeli conflict. But hatred of Israel has led some government officials and political leaders from the Middle East to deny and minimize the extent of the killing of Jews during World War II. Some even embraced Nazism as an attempt to oppose any normalizing relations with Israel. In the past decades the theories of Holocaust denial of Western scholars have been adopted strongly by some intellectuals and political activists in the Middle East. In the 1990s, many of the Islamic social and political movements in the Arab world joined the resurgent trend of Holocaust denial among European anti-Semites. Several Holocaust deniers turned to the Arab world for help when facing prosecution in various countries for illegal activities. Wolfgang Fröhlich, an Austrian engineer who testified on behalf of Swiss denier Jurgen Graf in 1998 about the impossibility of Zyklon-B gas being used for executing humans, sought refuge in Iran in May 2000, claiming that his arrest by Austrian police was imminent. He reportedly still resides in that country. Graf himself, who was convicted of inciting racial hatred by promulgating Holocaust denial in Switzerland in 1998, also resides in Iran, to which he fled rather than face a 15-month jail term. According to the Institute for Historical Review, Graf is presently living in Tehran "as a guest of Iranian scholars."¹ Since his arrival in Iran, Graf has authored an online book entitled *Holocaust, Revisionism and its Political Consequences*.

The best-known flare-up of Holocaust denial in the Middle East occurred in response to the trial of Roger Garaudy in France in 1998. Garaudy was charged with violating a 1990 French law that makes it illegal to deny historical events that have been designated as "crimes against humanity," and with inciting racial hatred. These charges stemmed from his 1995 book, *The Founding Myths of Modern Israel (Les mythes fondateurs de la politique israélienne)*, in which he stated that there was no Nazi program of genocide during World War II, and that Jews essentially fabricated the Holocaust for their financial and political gain. Garaudy was convicted on these charges in 1998. Before, during and after the trial, he was hailed as a hero throughout the countries of the Middle East --the trial was covered by media from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Egypt, Iran, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority. Formerly Roman Catholic and Communist, Garaudy had converted to Islam in 1982, and married a Jerusalem-born Palestinian woman, but this alone did not explain the outpouring of support he received; the "revisionist" message of his book -- whose Arabic translation was a best-seller in many of the region's countries -- clearly resonated across the region. The former president of Iran, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, announced in a sermon on Radio Tehran that his personal scholarship on the subject had convinced him that "Hitler had only killed 20,000 Jews and not six million," and added "Garaudy's crime derives from the doubt he cast on Zionist propaganda."² The main establishment newspaper in Egypt, *Al-Ahram*, defended Garaudy in a March 14, 1998, article that argued that there is "no trace of the gas chambers" that are supposed to have existed in Germany, and that six million Jews could not have been killed in the Holocaust because "the Jews of Germany numbered less than two million"³ at the time. Numerous professional and social organizations throughout the region issued statements

supporting Garaudy as well, including the Palestinian Journalists' Syndicate, the Palestinian Writers Association, the Jordanian Arab Organization for Human Rights, the Qatar Women's Youth Organization, the Federation of Egyptian Writers and the Union of Arab Artists. Support for Garaudy did not end merely with words. Seven members of the Beirut Bar Association volunteered to defend the writer in France, and Egypt's Arab Lawyers' Union also dispatched a five-man legal team to Paris in Garaudy's support. The United Arab Emirates daily, *Al-Khaleej*, was inundated with contributions and messages of support for Garaudy after it published an appeal on his behalf. The most surprising contribution came from the wife of United Arab Emirates leader Sheikh Zayed ibn Sultan al-Nahayan, who gave the equivalent of \$50,000, in cash, to cover the maximum fine that Garaudy would be required to pay if found guilty.

In August 28, 2002 the Zayed Center for Coordination and Follow-up, an Arab League think-tank whose Chairman, Sultan Bin Zayed Al Nahayan, served as Deputy Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates, promoted a Holocaust denial symposium in Abu Dhabi. The press release announcing the event noted that this symposium would "counter the historical and political fallacies propagated by Israel."⁴ In particular, the Center noted Israel was "spreading lies and exaggerations about Holocaust [sic] in order to squeeze out huge sums of money from European countries through worst [sic] forms of blackmail."⁵ The conference labeled the Holocaust a "false fable" perpetuated by Israel. Among other things, the Zayed Center published a book titled "Those Who Challenged Israel," containing the thoughts and theories of Holocaust deniers David Irving and Roger Garaudy. It also hosted academics such as Mohammed Ahmad Hussain of Cairo University, who said Jews invented the Holocaust as part of a "long term orchestrated

campaign aiming at the perpetuation of the 'persecution of the Jews' or what they call the Holocaust"⁶. One of the most important signs of the growing ties between Western Holocaust deniers and the Arab world came to light in December 2000, when the Institute for Historical Review announced that its fourteenth revisionist conference would take place in Beirut, Lebanon, in early April 2001. Soon after the conference was announced, several Jewish organizations voiced their concern about the possibility that the conference would lead to increased anti-Semitism in the region. The Simon Wiesenthal Center went so far as to urge the Lebanese government to intervene in the matter, saying that in the interests of regional peace, the conference must not go on. By the end of March 2001, Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri had announced that his government would not permit the conference to take place. The cancellation inspired another group, the anti-normalization Jordanian Writers' Association, to host a conference of its own, whose theme was described as "What Happened to the Revisionist History conference in Beirut?" Scheduled speakers included Lebanese, Jordanian and Syrian writers, one of whom pledged to read the paper Robert Faurisson had intended to give at the Beirut conference. Though the Jordanian authorities caused the postponement of JWA's conference at least twice (while the Jordanian king was visiting the United States), the conference eventually took place in Amman on May 13, 2001.

Hamas leaders have also promoted Holocaust denial; Abdel Aziz al-Rantissi held that the Holocaust never occurred, that Zionists were behind the action of Nazis, and that Zionists funded Nazis. The statement was released on the Hamas website in Arabic; it was not translated in the English section of the site, probably due to the Western resentment of such ideas. Hamas issued the press release in reaction to the Stockholm conference on the

Jewish Holocaust, held in late January 2000, in which several heads of state and officials from many countries participated. Finally, in a December 2005 speech, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad affirmed that the Holocaust was a “myth”⁷. This statement stirred uproars in Israel and in the Western countries. However, Arab governments appeared reluctant to condemn Iran's president for calling the Holocaust a “myth”. Many Arabic-language newspapers buried the remarks deep in their editions, with no commentary. Arabic language newspapers circulated widely in the Arab world, such as the London-based Al-Hayat and Asharq Al-Awsat, carried the news on their front pages, but also without editorials. Some Palestinians close to the Palestinian authority tried to distance themselves from Ahmadinejad’s comments. According to them, any denial of the Holocaust and Israel justified Israeli actions against the Palestinians. But Hamas political leader Khaled Mashaal called Ahmadinejad's remarks “courageous” and declared that “Muslim people will defend Iran because it voices what they have in their hearts, in particular the Palestinian people.”⁸ The Egyptian government newspaper *Al-Masaa* published an article by columnist Hisham Abd Al-Rauf on December 12, titled “*The Execution Chambers Were No More Than Rooms for Disinfecting Clothing.*” He wrote: “We've had enough of the lies and the falsification of the facts with which the [Israeli] textbooks are replete. The most serious lie is the Jews' Holocaust, which they have exploited in order to extort global solidarity. When Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad refutes this lie, the entire world is up in arms, and the Iranian president is inundated with accusations of madness, fanaticism, and falsification. [Ahmadinejad] was inundated with these accusations even though he did nothing more than state the truth, which a number of honest researchers have [also] reached. What this truth means is that

these massacres, which Israel alleges that the Nazis perpetrated against the Jews, never happened. The famous execution chambers [i.e., the gas chambers] were no more than rooms for disinfecting clothing. According to what we know, [the most recent of these researchers] is the courageous British historian David Irving, who paid a heavy price for his courage. Some other historians have proven that some of the massacres alleged to have been perpetrated against the Jews in World War II were carried out in coordination with the Jewish leadership, in an effort to push [the Jews] to emigrate to Palestine. It has also been proven that Hitler was not against the Jews, as disseminated by the Zionist historians, but that on the contrary, he permitted 120,000 Jews to emigrate to occupied Palestine in his first years in power, in order to appease the Jews. The onslaught against the Iranian president has intensified merely because he posed a logical and proper question to the Western countries, which planted Israel in the heart of the Islamic world, and which protected and continue to protect it. If you feel sorry for the poor Jews, why don't you establish their country on your lands?"⁹

In general, the silence from the Arab world has been deafening in the past few months. However, Egyptian newspapers, including those of the opposition, voiced most prominent comments. For example, **an Al-Ahram editorial** said that the Iranian President **lacked the political acumen** that might be expected from the president of an important sovereign country which was a member of the United Nations. According to the editorial, the age of inflated political statements intended to fan emotions and win support from extremist factions was over, or almost over. As for Samir Rajab, the former editor-in-chief of governmental *Al-Gumhuriya*, mentioned in his column that Ahmadinejad's remarks only complicated the situation and served Israel by making the

rest of the world hostile to Iran. However, the December 12th edition of *Al-Gumhuriya* contained two anti-Semitic articles in the same spirit as Ahmadinejad's remarks: Adel Abd al-Hamid accused the Jewish people of spreading “the fable of the Holocaust,” saying that the Iranian president had “again reminded the world of the doubts existing regarding the existence of the Holocaust.”¹⁰ The comments made by Muslim Brotherhood chief Mohammed Mahdi Akef made on the heels of his group's strong showing in Egyptian parliamentary elections echoed Ahmadinejad’s remarks. “ Western democracies have slammed all those who don't see eye to eye with the Zionists regarding the myth of the Holocaust.”¹¹

An increase in anti-Semitism and expressions of Holocaust denial has been recently observed in the Iranian media, including several television drama series. The Iranian Foreign Ministry-affiliated Tehran Times published an op-ed by columnist Hossein Amiri titled “Lies of the Holocaust Industry”, released to coincide with the international commemoration of the liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camp on January 27. The op-ed denied that the Holocaust took place, claiming that such large-scale use of gas would have been impossible, and that the Allies and Zionist leaders “formulated strange conceptions about the killing of Jews at Nazi camps” and “conjured up images of gas chambers.” It accused Israel and Europe of exploiting the Holocaust to justify the Palestinians' suffering, and claimed that the “issue of the Holocaust is only being highlighted to cover up Israel's crimes in Palestine.”¹²

Over the past two years, the official Iranian news agency MEHR has published a series of anti-Semitic articles, including interviews with two leading European Holocaust deniers. On December 29, 2004, Dr. Fredrick Toben of the Adelaide Institute in Australia claimed

that “the state of Israel is founded on the 'Holocaust' lie” and that “exposing this lie” would help “dismantle the Zionist entity.”¹³ In his interview on December 18, 2004, French Professor Robert Faurisson spoke about the “alleged 'Holocaust' of the Jews.” Several antisemitic TV drama series are currently being aired on Iranian TV. Two of them, “Zahra's Blue Eyes” and “The People of the Cave”, are Iranian-produced, and a third, 'Al-Shatat,' although Syrian-produced, is also supported by Iran in that it was originally broadcast by Hizbullah's Al-Manar TV channel worldwide. In 'Zahra's Blue Eyes,' airing weekly on the Iranian Sahar TV channel, the “Zionists” are graphically portrayed as kidnapping little Palestinian children and harvesting their organs. Traditional anti-Semitic stereotypes are interwoven in the series, such as Jewish racial superiority, as well as anti-Israeli political propaganda. Sahar TV is currently broadcasting the historical drama series, 'The People of the Cave.' In a recent episode, the Jews are portrayed as maliciously abusing Christ on the cross and as bribing the Romans to turn a blind eye. 'Al-Shatat,' originally broadcast by Hizbullah's Al-Manar TV channel, is currently being aired on the Iranian Sahar TV channel. It portrays the Jews as controlling the world through a secret global government and as being responsible for all the ills of the world, through political, economic, and sexual conspiracies, war-mongering, and political assassinations. The problem is that so far in the Arab world, very few political leaders and intellectuals are willing to tell their own people that they have to understand that the Holocaust did take place. The Holocaust denial in the Muslim world is directly related to Anti-Semitic in most of the Muslim countries. In the Arab world, many Arab intellectuals consider Auschwitz to be hardly an Arabic name. It is true that Anti-Semitic propaganda has been a marginal phenomenon in the Muslim world for a long time, but unfortunately

it has been gaining strength in several countries over the past 5 years. This worrying development can contain the positive action of those who are paving the way in the world for better Muslim-Jew relations. Better relations depend on better people. Specifically, better relations depend on people who are for a just dialogue and are against unjust violence. But such persons neither exist in abstraction nor do they appear by accident. Instead they appear in particular times and places where they have learned and practiced what dialogue truly means. Holocaust education in the Middle East, directed especially toward younger generation, can help to nurture the better men and women, who have the capacity to struggle for justice and to replace violence by dialogue. A more profound understanding of the Holocaust as a singular, but not incomprehensible, event, could promote awareness in the Middle East to diminish the amount of violence in human affairs and to reduce prejudice and discrimination. Perhaps we should not be surprised if learning and teaching about the Holocaust poses peculiar and challenging questions for the non-Jewish population in the Middle East. The Holocaust is a moral outrage which goes beyond the comprehension of the individual mind. But even if the Holocaust breaches the barriers put up by human morality, moral discourse can still describe and evaluate the nature of barbarities practiced by the Nazis. The best moral challenge to the Holocaust is to continually remember that it happened and that it can happen again at any minute. Holocaust education in the Middle East is not about the past but mainly about the future and about opportunities for dialogue and cooperation between different cultural and religious groups in this region of the world. In 1966, philosopher and sociologist Theodor Adorno wrote a now famous passage in his essay "Raising Children After Auschwitz": "The very first claim for education is that there will be never a second

Auschwitz.”¹⁴ should be the goal of all education. Adorno’s call seems more relevant than ever before in the Middle East.

¹ quoted in The Journal for Historical Review, December 23, 2000

² quoted in Holocaust Denial and the Middle East: The Latest Anti-Israel Propaganda Theme, Anti-Defamation League, New York, 2001

³ quoted in Al-Ahram, March 14, 1998

⁴ quoted in www.vho.org/aaargh/fran/livres5/cr0506.pdf

⁵ quoted in ADL Backgrounder: The Zayed Center, September 15, 2003

⁶ quoted in Tom Gross Mideast Media Analysis, June 29, 2003 at www.tomgrossmedia.com/mideastdispatches

⁷ quoted in International Religious Freedom Report 2006 Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, US Department of State, at www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2006

⁸ quoted in Holocaust denial at www.martinfrost.ws

⁹ quoted in Al-Masaa (Egypt), December 12, 2005. Al-Masaa is published by the Al-Tahrir Printing and Publishing House

¹⁰ quoted in Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Center for Special Studies (C.S.S), December 12, 2005, at www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia

¹¹ quoted in Pravda, December 23, 2005 at newsfromrussia.com/world/2005/12/23/

¹² quoted in Free Muslims Coalition, January 28, 2005 at memri.org/bin/articles

¹³ quoted in Mystical Politics, November 27, 2005 at mystical-politics.blogspot.com

¹⁴ This was first presented as a radio lecture on 18 April 1966, under the title "Padagogik nach Auschwitz." The first published version appeared in 1967. The English translation appears in Theodor Adorno, "Education after Auschwitz," Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), Page 191.

American Muslims Mobilize: Campus Conflicts in Context

Karen B. Leonard

The paper discusses the late twentieth century mobilization of American Muslims along both religious and political lines. It analyses the impact of 9/11 on these mobilizations, and it also considers changing views and practices toward Jews and Jewish organizations in America.

Introduction

This overview of American Muslim efforts to mobilize and define themselves as a political community in the United States, including activities on American college campuses, begins by surveying American Muslim organizational efforts before and after September 11, 2001. It then turns to an overview of increasingly angry Muslim discourses focusing on Jews, Zionists, and Israel, discourses sometimes provoked by and answered in kind by American Zionists. Finally, I review the escalating conflicts between activist Muslim and Jewish students on college campuses, particularly my own campus, the University of California, Irvine (UCI). These conflicts involve challenges to the constitutional right to free speech and attempts to condemn or regulate “hate speech.”

There are three major groups of Muslims in the United States: indigenous African American Muslims, who constitute from 25 to 42% of the whole; Arabic-speaking immigrants, some 12 to 33%; and South Asian immigrants, some 24 to 29%. Despite their very different histories, these groups were trying to move closer together at the end of the twentieth century.¹ They placed themselves proudly in the mainstream of Western civilization, claiming a place in America as one of the three Abrahamic religions. American Muslims began building religious and political

coalitions (see appendix I) and defining who was in and out of them. However, after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, immigrant Muslims and African American Muslims find themselves moving further apart and the national Muslim coalitions have lost control of defining the community.

More recently, American Muslims have been put on the defensive by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the continuing conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel, and now Lebanon. They have felt targeted by the Patriot Act and dismayed at American policies and actions regarding the Muslim prisoners at Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib. They have been deflected into debates with Christians and Jews, and hate-text quotations from the Quran and the Bible have circulated on emails. Jewish and Muslim leaders and groups have disagreed strongly about the roles of Zionism and Israel in America's foreign policy after September 11, 2001, and campuses have become major sites of such disagreements.

Setting the Scene

Some historical review helps one understand the rapidly changing landscape for American Muslims.² Indigenous African American Muslims were arguably the first in the US to mobilize on the basis of the religion of Islam, and they did so in the early twentieth century, seeking to attain social justice by building new and separate religious and socioeconomic communities as best they could. African Americans moving north from the American south in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were looking for alternatives to white and Christian domination. They created new and syncretic religions, several strongly oriented towards Islam. Because the leaders of the two early movements to Islam, the Moorish Science Temple of 1913 and the Nation of Islam of

1930 (see Appendix I), did not know Arabic or have English translations of the Quran, they pretty much invented religious beliefs and practices themselves, drawing on sources like the Freemasons and the Shriners for clothing, names, and rituals and proclaiming themselves and their followers “Moorish Americans” and “Asiatic Blacks” to opt out of the religious and racial boxes to which they had been confined. Although contact with early Arab Muslim immigrants may have furnished some of the impetus and provided some of the content of these movements, there was little significant interaction between indigenous African American Muslims and Muslim immigrants. Then a few dedicated Ahmadiyya or Ahmadi missionaries arrived from British India in the 1920s and gave both movements access to the Ahmadi English language translation of the Quran and some of the “old World” teachings.³ These and other African American Muslim movements based in poor inner-city communities have battled crime, drugs, and poverty by building economic self-sufficiency and offering new spiritual resources; they have been particularly successful in recruiting within America’s prisons.

The second group to mobilize on the basis of Islam in North America was that of Arab Muslim first- and second-generation immigrants in the 1950s and 60s. Many had come, along with larger numbers of Christian Arabs, starting in the late nineteenth century; others were foreign students. Earlier, Arab Muslims had mobilized on the basis of national origin, of Arabic culture, together with Arab Christians. The early religious movements--the Federation of Islamic Associations (FIA), the Muslim Students’ Association (MSA) and later the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) that grew out of the MSA and the Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA)--mobilized to maintain and transmit Islam in North America, in Canada as well as the U.S. The leaders of these movements were Arab Muslims and their focus was inward, on members of their families and communities.

It was only after 1965, when the Immigration and Naturalization Act of that year spurred the immigration to the U.S. of increasing numbers of Muslims from all over the world, that American Muslims began to form political coalitions on the basis of religion and encourage participation in national politics. South Asian Muslims, a strikingly well-educated group of new immigrant professionals, now constituted the third major group of American Muslims, and they and other post-1965 Muslim immigrants gradually took American citizenship. Muslim national political coalitions sprang up in the 1980s and 1990s (American Muslim Alliance or AMA, American Muslim Council or AMC, Muslim Public Affairs Council or MPAC, Council on American-Islamic Relations or CAIR), and leaders told me they were inspired by the examples of the Jewish civil rights organization, the ADL or Anti-Defamation League, and the ADC or American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, itself modeled after the ADL. Arab and South Asian leaders made efforts to involve some African American Muslim groups in these coalitions. The renamed Nation of Islam led by Warith Deen Mohammed, son of Elijah Muhammad who died in 1975, was moving close to mainstream Sunni beliefs and practices and Warith Deen Mohammed participated in some coalition activities, notably as a member of the Islamic Society of North America's Shura or Governing Council.

At the end of the twentieth century, then, the three major groups of American Muslims were working on converging constructions of race, religion, and the nation and on converging religious and political trajectories. They were thinking about their place in the nation and in the world before 9/11 with great optimism.⁴ These national religious and political coalitions were and are led by immigrants, most of them Western-educated professional men. Not scholars of Islamic law and civilization, these leaders made their own literalist, often rather puritanical and conservative,

interpretations of the core Islamic texts and talked confidently about representing Islam not only in America but also about leading the umma or international Muslim community. They had high ambitions for their children and saw higher education as the road to integration and power; they cited the example of American Jewish educational achievements, like the ones cited in Yuri Slezkine's celebratory book, The Jewish Century (2004).⁵

At the same time, however, in their separate organizations, in the coalitions they were building, and in the surveys they were taking, these immigrant professional men were drawing boundaries that kept out those they considered marginal to the Muslim community. They excluded the Ahmadis despite their crucial early historical link to African American Muslims; this sect was declared legally non-Muslim in Pakistan in 1974.⁶ They excluded the Nizari Ismailis, the Shia followers of the Aga Khan, and some talked against and excluded other Shias. They excluded Sufis, followers of mystical paths in Islam, and they excluded the Nation of Islam, Louis Farrakhan's split off from Elijah and Warith Deen Mohammed's early Nation. The national leaders had no significant challengers in the 1990s, and their optimism and forward momentum led the national Muslim political coalition, AMPCC, to support the Bush/Cheney Republican ticket in 2000 (their primary consideration was the Israel/Palestine issue). African American Muslims were minor players in these coalition efforts.

Changes after 9/11

The traumatic attacks of September 11, 2001, on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center disrupted this process of convergence and boundary-marking. The self-appointed national Muslim leaders were challenged and often set aside as President Bush, other reigning politicians, and the

media looked for Muslim leaders who were less negative about American foreign policy, more willing to criticize Islamic extremism, and more sympathetic or “American” in appearance and accent. They found “more congenial” leaders among those marginalized by the American Muslim political organizations: Sufis, Nizari Ismailis, African American men and white women converts, and scholars of Islamic law and civilization.⁷ Newly in the spotlight were people like Sheikh Hamza Yusuf (a white convert, a Sufi and Islamic law teacher), Ali Asani (a Nizari Ismaili and Harvard professor), Khaled Abou El Fadl (UCLA professor of Islamic law), Shaykh Hisham Kabbani (the controversial leader of a transglobal Sufi order); Ingrid Mattson (a white convert and Islamic Society of North America officer); Siraj Wahaj (a powerful African American Sunni, *imam* of a Brooklyn mosque). These new spokespeople ably represented and defended Islam to the American public. Warith Deen Mohammed, leader of the Muslim American Society, the largest African American Muslim community, spoke primarily to his own people and emphasized being American, blending in. He had renamed his group several times: in the 1990s it was the Muslim American Society, with Mohammed saying that Islam came first, he wanted to orient his community towards Sunni Islam. After 9/11, W.D. Mohammed changed the name again to “put America first,” to American Society of Muslims. His and other African American Muslim efforts to emphasize racial issues after 9/11 have widened the split between immigrants and indigenous Muslims.⁸

After 9/11, then, the range of representatives of Islam and Muslims in the U.S. has widened and the national coalition Muslim leaders have lost control of the “community” and its boundaries. After 9/11, all major Muslim national organizations have more openly acknowledged differences among Muslims. ISNA has tried to retain its hegemonic position by reinvigorating its campus

MSAs and broadening the membership of its Fiqh (jurisprudence) Council. Both African American Muslims and Shias, however, have established new organizations (MANA⁹ and UMA) to serve their distinct constituencies. CAIR continues to receive funding from abroad, while MPAC and AMA (AMC has collapsed) emphatically do not receive such funding. All the Muslim organizations have become concerned with issues of freedom of speech and other civil liberties. In the broader arena, moderate or progressive Muslims have also organized (the Progressive Muslim Union or PMU), and a major component of the emerging progressive Islamic movement in America is the so-called gender *jihad*.¹⁰ Some Muslim women have been labeled feminists, and they and leaders of the Progressive Muslim movement have been attacked by other Muslims.¹¹ Like women in other religions in the US, Muslim women have played and play key roles. An early researcher, Abdo Elkholy, argued that in the early decades among Arab Muslims the energy and activity of women were crucial to establishing major mosques in Detroit and Toledo,¹² and American Muslims are beginning to recognize that early history and the key role of Muslim women today. The Muslim feminists writing about Islamic law and jurisprudence include indigenous and immigrant Muslim women and Sunnis, Sufis, and Shias.¹³ The gender *jihad*, like the progressive Muslim movement, works across “denominational” or sectarian boundaries and thus participates in the blurring of such boundaries now characteristic of American Christianity.¹⁴ A 2004 “march on a mosque” in West Virginia by six Muslim women (Arabs, South Asians, and one African American) attracted media attention, and since then, in an even more widely-reported event, Dr. Amina Wadud gave the sermon and led men and women in Islamic prayer in a New York City setting on March 18, 2005.

The open recognition of internal diversity and the broader range of religious and political actors is drawing all Muslims into closer engagement with the nation, yet it is also clear that more open conflicts have meant more attacks on each other. Distinctions are being drawn between moderate (also termed liberal or progressive) Muslims and puritans (also termed fundamentalists, Islamists, or Wahhabis). Khalid Abou El Fadl, for example, has attacked the latter in a compelling book, *The Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from the Extremists*.¹⁵ Troublingly, the Muslim external and internal discourses more often than in the past involve negative references to Jews, Zionists, and Israel and allege cooptation by “Bush and the Zionists.” While some American Muslims are participating with Rabbis and Christian ministers in interfaith activities, others are withdrawing, taking defensive or offensive positions in the escalating debates in the U.S. about religious and political beliefs and activities. Muslim interfaith activists who oppose Israeli policies and actions are being attacked by Zionists as anti-Semitic.¹⁶

Jews continue to be a very important reference group for Muslims in America. We have Stephen Schwartz’s “An Activists’ Guide to Arab and Muslim Campus and Community Organizations in North America.” This convert to Sufism uses the name Suleyman Ahmad al-Kosovi and provides interesting details as he brands most of the mainstream coalition organizations dupes of the Wahhabis or just plain Wahhabis. He calls these organizations the Wahhabi Lobby and chastises them for modeling themselves on American Jewish organizations but without any conception of the competition and diversity in vision among the American Jewish groups.¹⁷ An extremist of a different sort is Kaukab Siddique, whose *New Trend Magazine* claims to be the biggest Islamic website in the U.S. He has attacked Warith Deen Mohammed as a supporter of Bush and the US government and Dr. Amina Wadud (the African American Muslim woman who led the mixed

gender congregational prayer in New York last year) as a tool of the Zionist Jews and the Imperialists. He has charged ISNA (the largest of the national religious organizations) with supporting the American aggressions in Afghanistan and Iraq; he has charged CAIR with not only being spiritually dead but a “meet you in the Hilton” group of “bootlickers and lick spittles of the slave master.”¹⁸

Beyond the Muslim organizations, religious conflicts have loomed larger in mainstream arenas. In Los Angeles, for example, 300 copies of the Quran that had been donated by a local Muslim foundation were pulled from school libraries in 2002, because some footnotes were obviously anti-Semitic; the 1934 translation had been widely disseminated because Saudi-affiliated institutions made them available free or at a nominal cost.¹⁹ I received dozens of emails in early 2006 reproducing “hate speech” passages from the Quran and the Bible, a kind of dueling text battle stimulated by the Danish cartoon publications, as correspondents tried to understand the overall positions of the major religions on a range of issues. In a creative response to the rising criticism of Islam in the American public arena, San Francisco Muslims met with the Dalai Lama, seeking his help in quelling fanatical ideologies and in improving their faith’s image.²⁰ Tension between Jews and Muslims, or more accurately Zionists and Muslims, continues to be exacerbated by America’s foreign policies. The report in early 2006 by academics John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt on the Israel Lobby in the U.S.²¹ and furious critiques of that report, followed by the revelation that the Justice Department’s criminal case against the Islamic charity, the Holy Land Foundation, relies very heavily on Israeli intelligence,²² have kept religious tensions high. Then in late June of 2006 violence broke out again in Gaza and the Hezbollah/Israel war followed on its heels.

Campus Conflicts: Free Speech or Hate Speech?

UCI has become a site in the ongoing dialogue between the First Amendment and the regulation of hate speech. Hate speech regulations have in some other places triumphed “*in the face* of formal constitutionalism,” as Jon Gould puts it, in his incisive *Speak No Evil* (2005).²³ The United States Constitution and formal legal institutions should prevail, Gould argues, “But, just as important are the countervailing legal or constitutional norms that exist, and are practiced, in civil society by a public that is skeptical about the courts’ powers. People do not tolerate hate speech, they do not acknowledge a right to offensive public speech, because the courts have declared the First Amendment requires as much. To the contrary, large numbers of the public reject a right to hate speech and believe that they are entitled to be free from hurtful invective.”²⁴

American college campuses have been the sites of escalating conflicts between Muslim and Jewish student groups. American domestic and foreign policies since 9/11 have heightened conflicts on and off campuses among Christians, Jews, and Muslims nationwide. Jewish and Muslim students are well organized on campuses. There are at least 150 Muslim Student Associations on North American campuses affiliated with ISNA, and there are other Muslim student groups that are unaffiliated. The leading Jewish student organization, Hillel Jewish Student Union, has chapters on more than 500 campuses and specifies support for Israel as one of its missions.²⁵

Some of the student conflict has clearly been instigated by adults off-campus and the possible regulation or condemnation of hate speech is a major issue. A major contributor has been Daniel Pipes and his Campus Watch website, where he attacks academics whom he considers apologists for militant Islam or anti-Semitic. He also posts attacks on the Muslim Students’ Associations.²⁶ Another contributor is David Horowitz, editor of an online conservative political magazine,

FrontPageMag.com and author of a 2006 book listing professors he considers responsible for “political indoctrination” in higher educational institutions.²⁷

A strong initiative has also come from Israel, whose minister for Jerusalem and Diaspora Affairs, Natan Sharansky, toured some 13 American campuses in six days in the fall of 2003. Convinced that the continuing support of American Jewry for Israel depended on the younger generation, he observed that Jewish students, who had been at the center of student activism for human rights in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, had become relatively inactive. He believed that Jewish students were 10 to 20% of campus populations but that only 10% of them took part in Jewish or pro-Israel activity and that a small fraction of them actually spearheaded anti-Israel activity. Charging that campuses had been transformed into “hothouses of anti-Israel opinion” by alleged Arab and Palestinian financial investment in activities including the establishment of departments of Middle Eastern studies, he determined to put American campuses “at the center of my agenda.”²⁸

The Zionist Organization of America (ZOA), a pro-Israel organization founded in 1897 and based in New York, and StandWithUs, a pro-Israel advocacy organization founded in 2001 with offices in Los Angeles, New York, Israel, and Michigan, both have special units targeting campuses. Another organization, the International Campus Action Network (ICAN), considers American campuses the front in a campaign against Israel. Like many neo-conservatives, ICAN alleges that campuses are “breeding grounds for the anti-Americanism of the left.”²⁹ Georgetown University, Duke University, Columbia University, the University of California, Irvine, and several others have been especially targeted by ZOA and StandWithUs.

American Muslim college students, like their elders, represent a range of opinions about religion and politics. However, Muslim student groups on American campuses have been critiqued by the Sufi scholar Marcia Hermansen for promoting “culture-free,” increasingly conservative, and/or Wahhabi-influenced versions of Islam. Her observations were based on her years of teaching at several institutions and, a Muslim herself, she has been increasingly troubled by what she sees.³⁰ Hermansen commented on the role of adults from the communities near campuses in advising or guiding the students, and I have seen the same trends in the Muslim Student Union at UCI. Muslim students who are not members say that it is not really open to Shias, Sufis, liberal or secular Muslims, and various others (its website used to make fun of the Nation of Islam); the UCI campus also has a separate Ahmadi Muslim Students’ Union.

Whatever their positions on religious beliefs and practices, Muslim college students have become increasingly politicized by the events of 9/11 and subsequent wars and conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Middle East. As a southern California Muslim leader stated, “You go to the campuses, and the Muslim students are the most outspoken. They are asking—we are asking—how we can get the average American who knows the truth about the Middle East to have the guts to speak it. Our job is to say: ‘Shame on you. You criticize your President. But when you speak of Israel, you whisper.’”³¹

UCI has been pushed into a major role as tensions between Muslim and Jewish students have grown.³² UCI has some 1000 Muslim students and 800 Jewish students in the student population of about 24,000, and for several years there have been sharp conflicts between the Jewish and Muslim student organizations on campus. Student organizations (the Muslim Student Union or

MSU, the Society for Arab Students or SAS, the Anteaters for Israel or AFI [the anteater is UCI's mascot], the Hillel Jewish Student Union or HJSU) have become increasingly confrontational and disrespectful of each other, and these organizations have support from off-campus Zionist and Islamic leaders, organizations, and institutions. For the last six years, the MSU and/or SAS have sponsored a Zionist Awareness Week that attacks Israel; every year, the AFI and the HJSU complain about that and sponsor talks of their own that many Muslims find offensive.³³

Religious, ethnic, and national origin organizations on American campuses compete for student engagement. A pilot study by a student researcher at UCI found that both entering college and 9/11 and its aftermath strengthened students' Islamic and Muslim identities. She interviewed 26 Muslim UCI students in 2005-06, half of them marking their faith externally by wearing a *hijab* or head scarf (women) or wearing a *qofi* (cap) and having a beard (men). All the interviewees had come from strikingly multicultural backgrounds with respect to residence, schools, and friends (most had no close Muslim friends in high school). All felt that their religious identities had been strengthened because of the numbers of Muslims on campus and relevant resources (organizations, classes, and talks) and also because they felt challenged to defend Islam in the wake of 9/11. All had thought that the negative impact of 9/11 would not last long, but they noted that negative feelings about Muslims had increased rather than decreased. Those whose faith was externally marked had experienced various forms of harassment, whereas the others had encountered few or no negative experiences. Members of the "unmarked" group (drawn from the Persian Student Association) had taken a greater interest in their cultural identities, while the "marked" group (drawn from the Muslim Student Union) had taken a greater interest in their religious identities.³⁴ Another sign of increased interest in both ethnic and religious

heritages was the effort in 2005 and 2006 of Arab and Muslim students at UCI to organize Middle Eastern or Islamic studies courses and programs. Despite their constructive work with faculty members across the campus and mounting of cultural events like the February 13, 2006, “Artists for Peace Week,” these students attracted criticism from Zionists on the faculty and in the community.³⁵

At UCI, the spring quarter has become the time for the most severe conflicts. In the spring of 2003, UCI’s Hillel Jewish Students’ Union constructed a Holocaust Memorial on campus and it was vandalized. Because the perpetrators remained unknown, the incident was not labeled a hate crime and the Orange County Hillel Foundation’s executive director expressed satisfaction with UCI’s handling of the incident.³⁶ In spring of 2004, a few Muslim students wore green stoles over their robes at graduation, stoles with Arabic phrases that said “God, increase my knowledge,” and “There is no god but God and Muhammad is his messenger,” the latter the Muslim profession of faith or *shahada*. Local representatives of the American Jewish Congress claimed that the stoles showed support for the terrorist group Hamas, saying that they did not know what the Arabic meant and that Hamas used the color green. David Horowitz’s *FrontPageMag.com* headlined its story on this “Graduation Jihad,”³⁷ and the student President of the Anteaters for Israel stated that the *shahada* could be a call to martyrdom. The story was picked up nationally and Bill O’Reilly featured it on his Fox News show, inviting as guests Irvine Professor Mark LeVine and a former Secret service Agent; the latter termed UCI “a hotbed for Islamic radical fundamentalism.”³⁸ In the spring of 2005, a large Anti-Zionist mural erected by the Society of Arab Students was burned down.³⁹

In 2004, UC Irvine became the first campus in the nation to be the subject of an investigation of alleged anti-Semitism by the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights. Some UCI students, backed by a few faculty members and the ZOA Center for Law and Justice, filed a complaint in 2004 with that office, two of them alleging that they had been assaulted because they were Jewish. The ZOA followed up in 2005, complaining to the federal Commission on Civil Rights that UCI's administration was "overwhelmingly silent" and that the on-campus atmosphere was "hateful, hostile and threatening" to Jewish students.⁴⁰ Allegations were made that the university administration was creating conditions in which Jewish students felt physically threatened and were afraid to wear clothing or jewelry identifying them as Jewish. Not all mainstream Jewish organizations backed the ZOA efforts: the director of the Anti-Defamation League's Orange County office condemned them, commenting that "It is disconcerting when an outside group comes in with all guns blazing. Changes occur not through lawsuits but by education on campus and by working toward better communication."⁴¹ A story in *The Jewish Journal of Los Angeles* about campus turmoil at UCI⁴² drew defenses of the campus from a Jewish student and from the Chancellor in the spring of 2005.⁴³

UCI administrators have spoken out repeatedly, emphasizing the need for free speech, open debate, and orderly civil behavior in the face of tensions generated by the events of 9/11, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and continuing conflicts in the Middle East. The Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs, Manuel Gomez, stated in June of 2005 that UCI was legally bound to protect the right to expression even of "those who have spoken provocatively and with intentional anger." He reminded students that they were not legally required "to be wise" in their speech but urged them to be "thoughtful and mindful," to use the "right to free speech to facilitate dialogue and mutual

understanding.”⁴⁴ UCI administrators invoke authors like Jon Gould, Lee Bollinger, and Geoffrey Stone. Bollinger and Stone wrote: “The dangers of censorship and close-mindedness are greater than the dangers of robust and wide-open debate.”⁴⁵

UCI has received a grant from the Ford Foundation to host “difficult dialogues” on campus, hoping to encourage responsible and constructive speech on a range of issues. The grant also provides for undergraduate courses and seminars on religious diversity and conflict resolution. In 2006, conflicts began in the winter quarter. On February 27, 2006, faculty member Daniel Schroeter of the history department hosted a “difficult dialogue” between the Palestinian Ambassador to the UK (Manuel Hassassian) and a senior Israeli academic based in Maryland and Jerusalem (Edy Kaufman). The next day, February 28, the UCI College Republicans “unveiled” the Danish cartoons on campus, prodded by an off-campus adult group, the United American Committee. The Danish cartoon event far outstripped the dialogue exploring the peace process in the Middle East in terms of both media attention and attendance. The Muslim students mounted a teach-in outside the cartoon display that accused the Republicans of intolerance.⁴⁶

In the spring of 2006, the MSU titled its Zionist Awareness Week “Holocaust in the Holy Land” and one event was called “Israel: the Fourth Reich.” UCI’s Ahmadi Muslim Student Association criticized the MSU’s insistence on such offensive name-calling and said it would never hold such events, preferring to work toward peace.⁴⁷ The most fiery speaker that May, Amir Abdel Malik Ali, *imam* of the Masjid al-Islam in Oakland, California, speaks at campuses nationwide;⁴⁸ StandWithUs has made a video (*Tolerating Intolerance*) featuring his talk at UCI that has been

shown in synagogues throughout Orange County and elsewhere in the U.S. At the end of May, as the spring quarter ended, an *Orange County Register* columnist reported on talks at the local Pacific Club by the Chief of the U.S. Attorney's Office in Orange County and the head of the FBI's Orange County al-Qaida squad that hinted at surveillance of Muslims in Orange County, including students at UCI. This led to further talks and articles, capped by the FBI stating that it did "not monitor Muslim student groups at UC Irvine, USC or other educational institutions."⁴⁹

Conclusion

In public debate and discussion across the country and at many levels, Muslim leaders and organizations have moved from boundary definitions within the Muslim community and optimistic participation in politics to more open conflicts among Muslims and primarily defensive engagements with mainstream politics. Increasingly, intra-Muslim conflicts and the American Muslim engagements with mainstream politics involve allegations about the roles of Zionists and Israel in American politics, and Zionist activism has interacted negatively with the increasing levels of Muslim activism on American campuses. U.S. foreign policy and civil rights issues currently need strong and constructive engagement by Muslim, Jewish, and Christian individuals, organizations, and institutions. However, given the war between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon in the summer of 2006, the spring of 2007 is likely to feature continuing controversies among religion-based organizations on American campuses.

APPENDIX I: AMERICAN MUSLIMS

Founding Date	Institution/Organisation	Initial location	Other information
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African American Muslims

1913	Moorish Science Temple,	east coast, midwest,	founder Noble Drew Ali
1930	Nation of Islam,	Detroit, Chicago,	founders W. F. Muhammad, Elijah Muhammad
1975,	Warith Deen Mohammed,	Elijah Muhammad's son,	becomes leader of main body
1981,	Louis Farrakhan splits off and	reclaims the old name,	Nation of Islam
1980s,	main body renamed	American Muslim Mission	
1990s,	main body renamed	Muslim American Society	
2001,	main body renamed	American Society of Muslims	
2001	MANA, Muslim Alliance of North America,	east coast, midwest,	Siraj Wahaj, head

Immigrant Muslim Religious Organizations

1920s	Ahmadiyyas from India,	missionaries to African American Muslims	
1953	FIA, Federation of Islamic Associations,	midwest, Canada,	Lebanese immigrants
1963	MSA, Muslim Students' Association,	midwest, Canada,	Arabic-sp. foreign students
1982	ISNA, Islamic Society of North America,	Plainfield, Indiana,	grew out of MSA
1971	ICNA, Islamic Circle of North America,	New York,	Pakistani Jamat-i-Islami party
2002	UMA, United Muslims of America,	east coast,	Shi'i national coalition

American Muslim Political Organizations and Coalitions

1988	MPAC, Muslim Public Affairs Council,	Los Angeles, California,	multiethnic leaders
1989	AMA, American Muslim Alliance,	Fremont, California,	South Asian leaders
1990	AMC, American Muslim Council,	Washington, DC,	Arab leaders
1994	CAIR, Council on American-Islamic Relations,	Washington, DC,	Arab leaders
2004	PMU, Progressive Muslim Union,	nationwide,	multiethnic leaders
1999	AMPCC, American Muslim Political Coordinating Council,	combining the 4 above.	
2004	AMT, American Muslim Taskforce on Civil Rights & Elections,	combining 10-11 groups	

¹ For the numbers, see Karen Isaksen Leonard, *Muslims in the United States: the State of Research* (New York: Russell Sage 2003), 4; for a brief overview, see Karen Leonard, 'American Muslims: Race, Religion, and Nation, *ISIM Newsletter* (International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World, from the Netherlands): 14 (April 2004), 16-17.

² For further details, see Leonard, *Muslims in the United States*.

³ Yusuf Nuruddin, 'African-American Muslims and the Question of Identity: Between Traditional Islam, African Heritage, and the American Way,' 215-262, in eds. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and John L. Esposito, eds., *Muslims on the Americanization Path?* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press 1998); Ernest Allen, Jr., 'Identity and Destiny: The Formative Views of the Moorish Science Temple and the Nation of Islam,' 201-266, in John L. Esposito and Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, eds., *Islam on the Americanization Path?* Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press 1998); Edward E. Curtis IV, *Islam in Black America: Identity, Liberation, and Difference in African-American Islamic Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press 2002).

⁴ Leonard, 'American Muslims;' Mohammed A. Muqtedar Khan, 'Muslims and American Politics: Refuting the Isolationist Arguments,' *American Muslim Quarterly* 2 (1-2, 1998), 68.

⁵ Yuri Slezkine shows Jewish enrollment in higher education as students and as professors rising dramatically: see especially pp. 348-49, 367-68, and 318 (*The Jewish Century*, Princeton: Princeton University Press 2004).

⁶ For example, the survey done by Ihsan Bagby, Paul M. Perl, and Bryan T. Froehle, *The Mosque in America: A National Portrait. A Report from the Mosque Study Project* (Washington D.C.: Council on American-Islamic Relations 2001). On the Ahmadis, see Antonio Gualtieri, *The Ahmadis: Community, Gender, and Politics in a Muslim Society* (McGill-Queens University Press 2004), for appendix one (justifying their claim to be Islamic) and appendix two (about the Pakistani government-sponsored publication of a book alleging a British Zionist connection of the Ahmadis).

⁷ Karen Leonard, 'American Muslims, Before and After September 11, 2001,' *Economic and Political Weekly* 37:24 (June 15, 2002), 2292-2302.

⁸ Leaving aside the puzzling and unresolved current state of Warith Deen Mohammed's community (in August of 2003, Mohammed unexpectedly stepped down from the leadership of his community and did not install a successor to lead this community of some 1000 *imams* and mosques), the most significant change for African American Muslims is the new African American-led split-off group from the immigrant-led Sunni Muslim groups, MANA, the Muslim Alliance of North America. Powerful African American Sunni Muslims were involved in planning this since 1999, with Jamil Al-Amin (the former H. Rap Brown) in Atlanta and Imams Siraj Wahaj and Talib Abdur-Rashid in New York; they conferred with other indigenous leaders, including Shaykh Hamza Yusuf. After Jamil Al-Amin's arrest in 2000, MANA was formally inaugurated in February of 2001. Its head is Siraj Wahaj, Sunni *imam* of the Al-Taqwa mosque in Brooklyn and a very charismatic speaker; other leaders include Ihsan Bagby, long a key insider in the Islamic Society of North America, and *imams* in Cleveland, Detroit, Ann Arbor, New Haven, and North Carolina.

⁹ MANA leaders have turned away from the national immigrant-led organizations because of their failure to work for social justice for African Americans. They argue that the national organizations do not reflect the concerns of indigenous Muslims, they focus on overseas agendas and trying to become part of the dominant or white mainstream culture. The leaders of MANA are also alienated from Warith Deen Mohammed's community, charging it with ignoring the problems facing black Americans and trying to join the American middle-class. MANA goals call for maintaining a critical stance toward American society; MANA defines "indigenous" as "anyone who is native to America, thus including second generation immigrants (www.mananet.org/about.asp)."

¹⁰ Gisela Webb, ed., *Windows of Faith: Muslim Women Scholar-Activists in North America* (NY: Syracuse University Press 2000), 7.

¹¹ Not only radically orthodox spokesmen like Kaukab Siddique but Sherman Jackson, a respected African American Islamic law scholar, classify feminist reinterpreters of Islam as moving to placate white mainstream America. Jackson believes the progressive movement has been co-opted by immigrant intellectuals impervious to the needs of African American Muslims: Sherman A. Jackson, 'Islam(s) East and West: Pluralism between No-Frills and Designer Fundamentalism,' in Mary L. Dudziak, ed., *September 11 in History* (Durham: Duke University Press 2003).

¹² For the general point, see Ann Braude, 'Women's History Is American Religious History,' 87-107, in

Thomas A. Tweed, ed., *Retelling U.S. Religious History* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1997); for the early history, Abdo A. Elkholy, *The Arab Moslems in the United States: Religion and Assimilation* (New Haven, Conn.: College and University Press 1966).

¹³ The African American scholar Amina Wadud called in her 1999 book for a radical and continual rethinking of the Qur'an and *hadith*, and another African American Muslim (and a Sufi), Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons, wrote about the growing number of Muslim women scholars and activists "seeking to separate Islam, the religion, from culture, tradition, and social mores....at times bringing to the foreground the interpretations of earlier sects or groups in Islam who were labeled heterodox and their views dismissed." See Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*. (New York: Oxford University Press 1999) and Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons, 'Striving for Muslim Women's Human Rights - Before and Beyond Beijing,' 197-225, in Gisela Webb, ed., *Windows of Faith: Muslim Women Scholar-Activists in North America* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press 2000), 205.

¹⁴ Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith Since World War II* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press 1988).

¹⁵ Khalid M. Abou El Fadl, *The Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from the Extremists* (New York: HarperCollins 2005). See also his many other books.

¹⁶ Dr. Maher Hathout, a long-standing Los Angeles leader of MPAC, was nominated by the Los Angeles County Human Relations Commission for its annual humanitarian award in 2006, and the ZOA of southern California and StandWithUs challenged the award: *Los Angeles Times* stories by Teresa Watanabe of September 9, 12, and 13, 2006. See also Daniel Sokatch, 'Looking for Extremism in the Wrong Places,' *Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 14, 2006; Sokatch is executive director of the Los Angeles-based Progressive Jewish Alliance.

¹⁷ Schwartz is devoted to the cause of Kosovo, the Chechens, and Muslims in the Balkans and rails against "Saudi Arab's Islamo-fascist Wahhabi sect" and its targeting of Shias and Sufis. An excerpt of his pamphlet appeared in FrontPageMagazine.com of May 26, 2003. He is quite vicious in his criticisms of other Muslims.

¹⁸ For these allegations, *New Trend Magazine*, www.newtrendmag.org: April 30, 2005; March 13, 2006; March 8, 2006; May 27, 2006. Siddique charged ISNA leader Siraj Wahaj (the *imam* who is also a founder of the new African American Muslim organization, MANA) with helping Zionists by having dinner with "this mass murdering Jewish woman" Madeline Albright, Secretary of State under President Clinton: March 13, 2006.

¹⁹ Doug Smith, Henry Weinstein, and Teresa Watanabe, 'Schools Remove Donated Books,' *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 7, 2002. The Omar Ibn Khattab Foundation had donated them as a goodwill gesture in response to 9/11. According to Khaled Abou El Fadl, that translation reflected the stereotypical images prevalent at the time, about both Jews and women, and he stated that use of them would be inappropriate unless properly contextualized.

²⁰ Louis Sahagun, 'Moderate Muslims Seek Help from the Dalai Lama,' *Los Angeles Times*, April 16, 2006.

²¹ John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, 'Faculty Research Working paper series: working paper no. RWP06-011,' Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University John F. Kennedy School of Government, 2006.

²² Greg Krikorian, 'Questions Arise Over Case Against Islamic Charity,' *Los Angeles Times*, June 18, 2006.

²³ Jon B. Gould, *Speak No Evil: The Triumph of Hate Speech Regulation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2005), 186.

²⁴ Gould, *Speak No Evil*, 186-187.

²⁵ 'About Hillel,' <http://www.hillel.org/about/default>, Hillel, The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life; the Israel on Campus Coalition (ICC) convened an emergency summit in the summer of 2006 to prepare for expressions of solidarity with Israel during September and throughout the fall: 'ICC Convenes Emergency Summit,' September 12, *ibid*.

²⁶ For example, Jonathan Dowd-Gailey, 'Islamism's Campus Club: The Muslim Students' Associations,' *Middle East Quarterly*, spring 2004, posted on www.campus-watch.org/article/id/1180.

²⁷ The David Horowitz Freedom Center in Los Angeles, California, publishes FrontPageMag.com; the magazine is a strong proponent of Israel, the Iraq War, and the "war on terror." The book is *The Professors: The 101 Most Dangerous Academics in America* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Pub. 2006) and UCI's Mark LeVine, historian of the Middle East, is one of those listed.

²⁸ Natan Sharansky, 'Tour of U.S. Schools Reveals Why Zionism Is Flunking on Campus,' *Forward*, October 24, 2003 (Forward.com/issues/2003/03.10/opedl.html).

²⁹ Hugh Taylor, 'Campus Fight Needs Practical Action,' *The Jewish Journal of Greater Los Angeles*, 2005-03-11 (www.jewishjournal.com/home/searchview.php?id=13780). Hugh Taylor, founder of ICAN, is a software marketing executive in Los Angeles; he sees the Palestine Solidarity Movement as the main enemy.

³⁰ Marcia Hermansen, 'How to put the genie back in the bottle? "Identity" Islam and Muslim youth cultures in America,' in Omid Safi, ed., *Progressive Muslims: On Justice, Gender, and Pluralism* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications 2003).

³¹ Dr. Maher Hathout of the Islamic Center of Southern California, quoted by Robert Fisk, 'American and Muslim: six million people in search of an identity,' *The Independent*, 21:33 (September 3, 2006), <http://news.independent.co.uk/world/fisk/article1325459.ece>.

³² I thank Dr. Manuel Gomez, Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs at UCI, for sharing his collection of relevant materials with me, and I thank Barbara al-Bayati, Manuel Gomez, and Daniel Schroeter at UCI for their careful reading of drafts of this article.

³³ This year, in the same week as the MSU's Holocaust week, Yossi Olmert talked about Israel's new Kadima party moving toward peace, but his remarks about Hamas and Iran drew hostile responses from Muslims in the audience: *New University* 39:29 (May 22, 2006), 3, 7; see also Ben Ritter, 'MSU Provokes with "Holocaust" Week,' in the same issue, 1, 8.

³⁴ Faryal Saadat, 'Personal Identity Post 9/11,' Undergraduate Research Project, 2006, supervised by Karen Leonard. At UC Berkeley, a similar division between members of the Muslim Student Association and the Pakistani Student Association exists: Mohammed Abbas Husain, 'The Tenuous Relationship between MSA and PSA,' *Pakistan Link*, December 10, 2004.

³⁵ The students, spearheaded by some in Political Science, established a Middle East Studies Student Initiative. The "Artists for Peace Week" featured the Pakistani rock band 'Junoon,' a Jordanian pianist, Zade Dirani, and art and poetry by Hanna Al Wardi, Dina Hilal, and Cahit Kulebi. I do not know the basis of the criticism.

³⁶ Lura Jacques, 'Holocaust Memorial Defaced,' *New University*, May 12, 2003.

³⁷ Roberta Liguizamon, 'Graduation Jihad,' with the opening sentence "UCI's Muslim Student Union hopes to incite its members to 'martyrdom' at Friday's graduation services." *FrontPageMag.com*, June 2006.

³⁸ Jeff Gottlieb, 'Debate Colors Muslims' Plan to Wear Stoles at UCI Graduation,' *Los Angeles Times*, June 18, 2004; Daniel Yi, 'UCI Graduation Controversy Is Overblown, Muslim Students Say,' *Los Angeles Times*, June 19, 2004; Stanley Allison, 'A Political Yet Peaceful Graduation at UC Irvine,' *Los Angeles Times*, June 20, 2004. The number of students wearing the stoles increased from 11 to 30, and UCI's administration pointed out that similar stoles had been worn previously at UCLA and UCB graduations without incident.

³⁹ Sona Patel, 'Anti-Zionist Wall Burns to Ashes,' *New University*, May 5, 2005.

⁴⁰ ZOA news release, October 15, 2004 (www.zoa.org/pressrel20041015a.htm); Susan B. Tuchman, 'Zionist Organization of America's Center for Law and Justice Fights Israel-Bashing and Anti-Semitism,' (www.zoa.org/oped/oped20050404a.htm) wrongly asserts that religion is included in Title VI of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964; Mary Beth Marklein, 'Anti-Israel bias at colleges scrutinized,' *USA Today.com*, posted 4/3/2006; Ashraf Khalil, 'Mideast Debate Takes Root at UC Irvine,' *Los Angeles Times*, May 27, 2006, B1, 12.

⁴¹ Joyce Greenspan, quoted in a ZOA news release of April 5, 2005: 'ZOA Dismayed by ADL's Statements Undermining Efforts to Stop Israel Bashing And Anti-Semitism at UCI Campus,' (www.zoa.org/pressrel2005/20050405a.htm). For a report on the Commission's recommendations, see Susan B. Tuchman and Morton A. Klein, 'Fight Against Campus Bias Gets Boost,' *The Jewish Journal of Greater Los Angeles*, 2006-05-05 (www.jewishjournal.com/home/preview.php?id=15799).

⁴² Marc Ballon, 'Campus Turmoil,' *The Jewish Journal of Greater Los Angeles*, March 11, 2005, reviews events of the last few years, mentioning off-campus Jewish advocacy groups like StandWithUs and the American Jewish Committee of Orange County and pointing to outside speakers brought by the Muslim Students Union like Amir Abdel Malik Ali of Oakland.

⁴³ Jacob Knobel, student, in 'Letters,' www.jewishjournal.com/home/searchview.php?id=13836, and Chancellor Ralph J. Cicerone and Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs Manuel Gomez, in 'Letters,' www.jewishjournal.com/home/searchview.php?id=13896.

⁴⁴ Manuel N. Gomez, 'Respecting Free Speech in Our Community,' *New University*, June 20, 2005.

⁴⁵ Lee C. Bollinger and Geoffrey R. Stone, P. 31, 'Dialogue,' in Lee C. Bollinger and Geoffrey R. Stone, *Eternally Vigilant: Free Speech in the Modern Era* (Chicago, UC Press 2002), 31.

⁴⁶ Mark A. LeVine, 'Cartoongate Comes to Campus,' <http://hnn.us/blogs/entries/22407.html>.

⁴⁷ Kimi Yoshino, 'Fresh Muslim-Jewish Discord on Campus,' *Los Angeles Times*, May 12, 2006.

⁴⁸ Amir Abdel Malik Ali is part of the Sabiqun movement, linked to Malcolm X and the provision of services to African Americans in urban America, and the Al-Masjid movement. Both movements are led by Imam Abdul Alim Musa of the Masjid Al-Islam in Washington, DC. Imam Musa works to bridge the gap between African

American and immigrant Muslims and places himself in mainstream Islam, although most consider his teachings, drawn from Ayatollah Komeini, Sayyid Qutb, Maulana Maududi, and Kalim Siddiqui, part of the extremist fringe of Islam.

⁴⁹ Frank Mickadeit, 'Feds warn O.C. of terror lurking 'down the street,,' *Orange County Register*, May 25, 2006; Frank Mickadeit, 'Monitoring by the FBI and a mea culpa,' *Orange County Register*, May 30, 2006; Cindy Carcamo and Vik Jolly, 'FBI says Muslims at UCI aren't monitored,' *Orange County Register*, June 6, 2006; H.G. Reza, 'FBI Tries to Reassure Muslims in Irvine,' *Los Angeles Times*, June 7, 2006; Sonya Smith, 'Local Muslims seek info from FBI,' *Irvine World News*, June 8, 2006; Cindy Carcamo and Sonya Smith, 'Muslims leery of FBI activity,' *Orange County Register*, June 17, 2006.

Challenges in Jewish-Muslim Dialogue: The American Context

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This paper seeks to identify and categorize a range of activities initiated to improve relations between Muslims and Jews, to illuminate specific concerns around which these initiatives were organized, and provide a broad analysis of their effectiveness. Data was collected through reviews of popular literature and the media, participant observation in a variety of contexts, and qualitative interviews. The study categorized and studied various types of initiatives and motivations for engagement in them, and developed criteria for assessing their success. Conclusions include recommendations for initiating Jewish-Muslim dialogue and for improving the efficacy of various categories of existing programs.

In this study, the meaning of “dialogue” extends far beyond the stereotyped image of people sitting together and discussing religion. A Muslim and a Jewish community leader or scholar speak together before an audience of college students; Jews and Muslims post photographs on a website or host an online message board highlighting their similar and dissimilar concerns; rabbis and imams convene a public meeting to make a pronouncement about the role of religion in the incitement of violence; individuals gather with a facilitator to engage in intentional listening techniques and discuss their lived experiences as Jews and Muslims; synagogue members meet with a group from a local mosque to hear a lecture on the role of *tzedakah* and *zakat* (required giving) in their respective traditions; or Jewish and Muslim musicians perform on the same stage. Each of these examples, every one of which stems from the actual projects included among the data gathered for this research, is a form of dialogue.

Historically, most modern attempts at dialogue between Jews and Muslims have emerged from difficult circumstances, and responses to these circumstances have often led to creative and varied approaches to inter-group exchange. Motivations for engagement, which often begin with a desire to humanize the other, are complicated by group self-interest. The dynamics of

dialogue are further complicated by both perceived and real differences between the American Jewish and Muslim communities in terms of religion, culture, and politics, in addition to how these factors internationally.

This study is based largely upon primary data from qualitative interviews of dialogue group leaders and participants, and participant observation in the United States during 2003-2005. Secondary data were gathered from a review of scholarly and mainstream literature, as well as articles from newspapers and other periodicals. Although few scholarly investigations that focus on Jewish-Muslim dialogue exist to date, many articles may be found in popular news sources or on other topics including religious dialogue, conflict resolution and issues related to Israel and Palestine. While the sample is not representative, research subjects were selected to illustrate a broad range of dialogue activities and varying leadership roles. This paper is based on a study of meetings, programs and interviews. It cannot map all the complexities of the topic fully, but it illuminates the key issues that groups must come to terms with in order to begin to produce meaningful dialogue experiences in the United States today.

The development of Jewish Muslim dialogue in the United States

Although Muslims and Jews have lived together since the 7th century and have engaged in informal as well as formal dialogue for almost as long, dialogue as a form of conscious community building and civic engagement is a recent phenomenon. Three historical developments serve as primary motivators for this. The first, historically, is the founding of the State of Israel in 1948. That event and the ensuing wars both fueled and reflected tremendous conflict between Muslims and Jews. For the first time since the Crusades, lands historically controlled by Muslims came into the hands of non-Muslims. As a result of these political

changes, once dormant religious and political issues related to Israeli-Arab and Jewish-Muslim relations emerged into the foreground. These issues provided the catalyst for Jewish-Muslim dialogue both within Israel and in other parts of the world in the following decades.

The roots of modern Jewish-Muslim dialogue can also be traced to the larger project of interfaith dialogue brought about in the Post-Holocaust era of Vatican II and the publication in 1965 of *Nostra Aetate*, which details a “Declaration of the Church’s Relation to Non-Christian Religions.” Vatican II articulated the need for, and legitimacy of, inter-religious dialogue, most specifically with Jews but also with Muslims. According to the theologian, William Cenkner,

Even before the end of the Council, Pope Paul VI established in 1964 the Secretariat for Non-Christians, but Pope John Paul II in 1989 renamed it the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue. This indicates both the centrality given to dialogue with the religions of the world and the development of Catholic thinking in twenty-five years... Catholics were called to take the initiative in dialogue with those of other faiths over such issues as religious freedom, cultural and social development, civic order, and building up human community.¹

Acknowledgement of Christian Anti-Judaism and the participation of some Catholic leaders in the Nazi persecution of Jews motivated Christians to examine the Catholic and other Christian origins of this hatred. Although Christian-Jewish dialogue is rooted in this troubled past, rich connections between Jews and Christians have developed based on shared religious heritage and texts, the role of religious minorities living among Christian majorities, and the meaningful ways religious groups can engage in civic life.

Despite the watershed event of Vatican II, however, Christian Jewish relations in the United States was of enough interest for the founding of the National Council of Christians and Jews more than a generation earlier in 1927.² The organization aimed to foster “good will among all classes” and to “educate all people to embrace inter-group understanding.”³ Motivated by the growing interest in understanding differences between religious groups, NCCJ

held a number of summer inter-group educational workshops for teachers in 1945.⁴ This program offered pedagogical tools to help educators adjust to their students' cultural and religious differences.

The third historical development to promote increased dialogue, in this case among all three Abrahamic faiths, was the growing presence of Muslims as a demographic force in the United States following waves of immigration in the 1960s. Christian and Jewish groups organized dialogues with Muslim groups independently, and partnerships of Christians and Jews also reached out to growing Muslim communities, incorporating them into preexisting dialogue activities. As a result, participants and leaders in Jewish-Muslim dialogue are often veterans of other Abrahamic dialogue or interfaith groups.

Since the 1960s, Jewish-Muslim dialogue projects in North America have tended to ebb and flow in relation to the larger political context surrounding Israel and Palestine. In some groups, the central role of Israel is explicitly stated, while in all cases tension around this issue exists at some level and is often directly avoided. "It's kind of like the elephant in the room," said Danielle Josephs, a Rutgers University student and founder of the Middle East Coexistence House, where Jewish and Muslim students live together and attend coexistence seminars."⁵

In fact, the very willingness of groups to engage in dialogue has been profoundly affected by developments in the Middle East political process. The signing of "A Framework for Peace in the Middle East" at Camp David in September, 1978, had a largely positive impact. Prior to that in Los Angeles, for example, the burgeoning dialogue efforts that had been championed by interfaith pioneer Rabbi Alfred Wolf, were significantly hampered in the wake of the 1973 October war. Jewish-Muslim dialogue flourished again in the 1980s, with groups engaging in both political and religious discussions. Ira Rifkin, a journalist and veteran of dialogue, observed

that “dialogue began in earnest in the 1980s...Muslims were invited to synagogues, Jews visited mosques.”⁶ Yet the beginning of the first Intifada in December 1987 again stalled dialogue efforts. The prospect of more fruitful relations between Jews and Muslims again blossomed with the promise of the Oslo Accords in 1993. The second Intifada in 2000 curtailed some Jewish-Muslim dialogue activities while it simultaneously provided a new source of motivation for other groups.

Most recently, events largely unrelated directly to Israel have impacted the ebb and flow of dialogue between Muslims and Jews. The events of September 11, 2001 and the ensuing "war on terror" have motivated Jews and Muslims in the United States to engage in dialogue activities. With the great rise of distrust and suspicion toward Muslims and Islam that followed the events of September 11th, many mosques that had not been interested in outreach outside their communities were motivated to open their doors and engage with the larger American population and Jews more specifically. Mosques with strong track records of dialogue and community outreach programs heightened their efforts as well. Synagogues also held lectures and educational seminars on Islam, and even took field trips to local Islamic institutions in an effort to better understand their neighbors.

Contemporary Community Motivations and Approaches to Dialogue

One of the primary motivators for Jewish-Muslim dialogue projects is the desire on both sides to reduce stereotypes. Dialogue leaders and participants often claim that combating Islamophobia and Anti-Semitism through encountering the “other” is of primary importance. Similar motivating factors drove even the earliest Christian-Jewish dialogues, which focused on

“shared concerns [that] are linked to the need to live with others, extending to those who differ from us culturally and religiously.”⁷

A few groups in the study employed techniques for engaging with the other that are rooted in the methodologies of compassionate listening and couples therapy. Trained facilitators would move the participants through a non-linear process by teaching therapeutic techniques like intentional or active listening, and individuals would share personal stories and emotions in a controlled setting. Proponents of this type of program assert that building trust to support authentic interpersonal sharing creates meaningful bonds and empathy between participants.

The topics addressed in dialogue groups are as varied as the groups themselves. There are, however, a number of common themes that emerged between the Jewish-Muslim dialogue projects in this study. Some groups came together around shared status, culture and traditions. Focusing on commonalities was one way that groups attempted to avoid the potential divisiveness of discussing political issues.

Jews and Muslims in the United States share the status of religious minorities within a historically Christian and largely Protestant society. As a result, Jews and Muslims have sometimes connected through their shared cultural context as outsiders to the dominant culture and religion. A few groups even acknowledged that, as Muslims and Jews, their religions and cultures are more closely aligned with each other than with than any other group.

Dialogue groups engage in varying levels of interpersonal exchange. Some approach dialogue as an ongoing process of reflective interaction. These groups tend to develop projects aimed at establishing an environment of trust where dialogue partners can ultimately grapple with issues of mutual concern. To this end, Edward Kaufman, Senior Research Associate at the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace, Hebrew University of

Jerusalem, asserts: “In dialogue, one must aim to develop a mutual trust that will be able to withstand misunderstandings that are bound to emerge.”⁸ Other projects offer Jews and Muslims unique moments to interact informally at one-time communally organized events. These demonstrative encounters offer opportunities for individuals to familiarize themselves with the other without a significant, ongoing personal investment of time and commitment.

Other groups draw Muslims and Jews together who share a common demographic. One example of this type is The Children of Abraham Project. Founded in 2004, this venture is an international, web-based photography and essay exchange for high school-aged Jews and Muslims. The project aims to illustrate, literally, various religious traditions in order to facilitate online dialogue. Through the ability of the Internet to shrink large distances through hyperspace, young adults are enabled to engage with each other from their own homes by posting photos of their various religious activities, as well as provide written questions and comments. In this situation, technology advances a kind of dialogue in which participants are deeply engaged personally, while completely distant from the actual physical presence of the other. It might seem paradoxical that the Internet, which can provide near total anonymity, might provide a valuable arena for in-depth interpersonal exchange. The way in which virtual environments affect a fundamental goal of dialogue, namely humanizing the other is an important phenomenon and worth pursuing in future research. The founders of the Children of Abraham Project contend that the privacy of online dialogue fosters greater openness and even a level of positive vulnerability. Participants are able to through the Internet to discuss difficult and highly personal issues on message boards that are self-moderated. The program continues to grow and develop, most recently having entered a new phase that uses emerging technologies like wikis and open

source bulletin boards to create an online “Mutual Discovery Guidebook for Muslim-Jewish Relations.”

Some groups tend to engage around religious texts and legal traditions. The Qur'an and Hebrew Bible share many of the same stories, though often with substantive differences. Dialogue groups examine texts and histories from multiple perspectives. Because both traditions are legally based, their legal traditions of *halacha* and *shari'a* may also come under discussion. Several groups have met, for example, to learn about the legal and traditional role that *zakat* and *tzedakah* play in their respective religions.

Similar or parallel dietary laws are also a source of connection and study, with the laws and traditions governing *kashrut* and *halal* sometimes explored in dialogue. Shared dietary needs have also been the impetus for interaction between the two groups. For example, Muslim and Jewish students at Dartmouth and Oberlin Colleges eat together in dining halls that offer food that is both kosher and *halal*.⁹

Another commonality that has motivated communication and dialogue is the use of heritage languages. The sacred texts and traditional prayers of Judaism and Islam occur in Hebrew and Arabic respectively. Jews have created institutions to support the teaching of Hebrew to young people. Muslims have looked to Hebrew programs as models, as the need for Arabic training in the U.S. grows.

Community leaders have come to dialogue in response to incidents of community violence. In some cases, both Jews and Muslims have been targeted. In other circumstances one group was seen as a threat to the other. In Montreal, Canada, Congregation Talmud Torah's day school was firebombed after the assassination of a prominent member of Hamas. Jewish and Muslim congregations were called to engage in dialogue with support from the Canadian-Arab

Federation, Muslim Student Association at Concordia University, and Beth Israel Beth Aaron Synagogue. Through this initiative, the two communities aimed to diminish local violence and build relationships to prevent future incidents.

Some dialogue groups bring Muslims and Jews together to work for a common cause. By collaborating in social action, Jews and Muslims have worked to address local social needs, often not the immediate needs of either community but rather, efforts to promote the more general social good. The Baltimore Jewish Council and the Maryland Muslim Council are part of an ongoing dialogue program that includes a service component. Citing the importance of coming together to work toward common goals, one participant of that program observed:

We can be more productive working together than fighting each other...deep down inside, we all want the same thing, which is to live in safe and meaningful communities."¹⁰

In some cases, dialogue groups' attention to social justice has been channeled into a broader peace movement. Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb of Congregation Nahalat Shalom and Abdul Rauf Campos-Marquetti of The Islamic Center of New Mexico started the Jewish Muslim Peace Walks. Despite the name, the Peace Walks do not have particularly Jewish or Muslim characteristics, for the complicated relationship between Muslims and Jews tends to be evoked as a general symbol for conflict. In fact, participants in the Jewish Muslim Peace Walks are as often Christian and Buddhist as they are Muslim or Jewish. Describing the event, Rabbi Gottlieb explained:

We make this religious and symbolic journey together to show that peace between people of all faiths is possible. It is a religious event and we will not carry political signs. We hope to change misconceptions about each other.

As is apparent from the previous examples, the groups studied did not have a consistent definition for the term, "dialogue," which describes any number of activities through which an

encounter with the “other” is meant to take place. The sole commonality among the groups’ use of the term is that at least one member from each group, Jewish and Muslim, is present in the engagement. Consequently, there are no recognized standards that may be utilized to evaluate the relative success of such endeavors across this broad category.

Within a single group, members may embrace several notions of dialogue. In fact, some groups operate with a fluid notion of the term, engaging in multiple types of activities that imply different definitions. For example, a number of groups engage in personal sharing based on a therapeutic model, while they also undertake collective social action. Engaging in multiple approaches enables groups to appeal to a broad range of potential participants and effectively encompass participants’ differing motives for engagement.

Motivations for dialogue are varied, but tend to be driven by a combination of altruism and self-interest. When asked about Jews’ motivation to connect with Muslims, Rabbi Daniel Brenner of the Auburn Theological Seminary’s Center for Multi-faith Education, asserted: “to be a Jew means to be in dialogue with the surrounding culture and thus dialogue is an expression of the long-standing Jewish tradition.”¹¹ Other leaders take a more functional approach. They point to the inevitability of domestic problems between the communities and view dialogue as a proactive measure. Others believe that reducing tensions among Jews and Muslims in the United States may also positively impact the Middle East. Some of the Jews interviewed for this study emphasized the necessity of building ties with Muslims as a domestic political strategy; as the size of the American Muslim community groups grows, so will its political power in the United States. Therefore, some Jews claimed that it is in their self-interest to have Muslims as allies.

Muslims who are involved in dialogue have similar motives. Some of the Muslim dialogue leaders interviewed expressed the belief that ties with Jews will ultimately benefit their

own communities. Jews are seen as a successful minority whose significant political power in the United States might be of benefit. Jews' social, political and economic success might also serve as a model that Muslims can emulate. Other Muslims expressed hope that relationship building might influence the situation in the Middle East, moving towards more humane policies for Palestinians. Both groups are motivated by the idea that reducing tensions locally might eventually have a global impact.

September 11, 2001 produced a sizable upswing in American Jewish and Muslim engagement and in the public visibility of these projects. However, some participants have pointed out that while initial interest was high, many have not been sustained over a long period of time. The following sections will address some of the factors contributing to the difficulty of contemporary dialogue between American Jews and Muslim.

The dynamics of power and privilege

Jewish Muslim dialogue is a discourse that takes place between two groups who are generally viewed as being in conflict with one another. Each of the groups examined in this research project formed in response to conflict. Louis Kriesberg notes: "social conflicts always involved one or more groups who see themselves as distinct and therefore have different collective identities."¹² The fundamental perception of difference complicates the two parties' ability to meet as partners. In this study, we found that on a spectrum from unequal to more equal partnerships, those groups engaging closest to true and equal partnerships seemed to be more satisfied with their dialogue experiences. Nevertheless, truly equal partnership was not fully realized in any group observed as part of this research. The unequal nature of the dialogical

relationship tends to reflect the unequal status of the two communities in the U.S., despite their common position as religious minorities in an overwhelmingly Christian country.

In a recent study of Muslims in America, Ihsan Bagby estimates (or according to critics, overestimates) the Muslim population to number upwards of seven million.¹³ According to the 2000-2001 National Jewish Population Survey, the Jewish population in the U.S. is estimated at 5.2 million people.¹⁴ Despite this basic similarity in size, the Jewish and Muslim communities in the United States differ significantly in their communal structure, in the extent to which they are accepted in the society at large, and in terms of their political access and influence.

The Jewish community structure — both locally and nationally — is significantly more established than its Muslim counterpart. Following the mass emigration of Ashkenazi Jews from Eastern Europe that began in the 1880s, Jews began to organize a vast network of religious, political and communal institutions.¹⁵ The expansive and ever shifting institutional landscape has a generally high public profile, and communal leaders are fairly accessible.

The major waves of Muslim immigration, by contrast, occurred nearly a hundred years later than the largest wave of Jewish immigration. After President Johnson repealed immigration quotas favoring Europeans in 1965, large numbers of Arab Muslims began to immigrate to the United States. That wave was followed a decade later by their South Asian co-religionists. At the same time, the population of American born Muslims was growing due to the conversion of many African Americans to Islam. These diverse sources produced a multi-layered American Muslim community.¹⁶

While Jewish religious denominations are demarcated by clearly articulated approaches to religious observance and theology, the relationship between different Islamic schools of thought and practice is much more ambiguous. American Muslims have also differed

significantly from their Jewish counterparts in the nature and number of their religious institutions. Whereas Jews commonly become dues-paying members of congregations, Muslims have less structured ties to mosques. The Muslim concept of clergy is also quite different from that of Jews. There is no Muslim equivalent for training imams to the Western-style seminaries in which rabbis are trained. Jews who are public representatives of the community are typically full time religious and communal leaders. Muslim public figures who speak on behalf of their community tend to be lay people who are professionals such as physicians, accountants and engineers. Indeed, Bagby notes that most mosques do not have any full time staff and only ten percent have more than two paid staff members.¹⁷

Muslim civic organizations are far fewer in number and range than those representing Jewish causes and concerns. The Muslim organizations, many of which were founded in the last twenty years, tend to be geared toward advocacy and civil rights projections, such as the Council of American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) and Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC). MPAC board member Nayyer Ali described the structural differences with these words: “you have both the ADL (Anti-Defamation League) and the AJC (American Jewish Committee). We have to fit everyone under one organization.”¹⁸ Additionally, because Muslim organizations tend to be identified in relation to specific ethnic groups such as Arabs, South Asians or African Americans, powerful organizational bodies have not yet emerged to address cross-community needs.¹⁹ The disparity in communal infrastructure partially explains why every program examined in this study was instigated initially at the behest of a member of the Jewish community.

The motivations of the initiating party and those of the invited partner often differ. Melodye Feldman, the founding director of Seeking Common Ground²⁰, observed these

differences in action. She asserted that members of a privileged group more often wish to move forward from historical wrongs so that contemporary issues can be productively addressed. She notes, in her extensive experience in dialogue among young high school-aged people, that members of the less privileged group seek redress from the privileged group and want their grievances to be heard.²¹ According to Kuttub, “It is only when members of the oppressor or dominant group find it in their interest to engage in dialogue that it moves very rapidly and fruitfully.”²²

Jewish organizations tend to be better positioned than Muslim organizations financially and organizationally to support dialogue groups. In the face of more immediate crises, like racial profiling and deportation, members of the Muslim community tend to make dialogue a lower priority. Rather than initiating dialogue, Muslims are more likely to focus on addressing immediate issues related to human rights and discrimination in the United States.

Examples of Jewish initiated projects are numerous. The Baltimore Jewish Council began the dialogue in their community by reaching out to Muslims, as part of their larger community outreach to other groups. The Children of Abraham Project began when a Jewish donor who was interested in supporting an endeavor to engage Jews and Muslims found an emerging leader to develop the project. The project is co-directed by two young adults: Ari Alexander, an American Jew, and Gul Rukh Rahman, originally from Pakistan. Maria Ali-Adib, a European Asian Muslim, served as the initial co-director with Alexander. This project is one of the few examined in this research in which a Jew and a Muslim are equally responsible for running the programming and the organization. It is also currently funded by both Jewish and Muslim sources equally. Although the two collaborate in the leadership of the group, the initial impetus for the project was Alexander’s.

In addition to initiating dialogue groups, Jews tend to be overly represented as participants. This may be the result of event locations. When Jewish groups establish and organize meetings, they tend to be held in Jewish venues. The overrepresentation of Jews at such events is also related to Jews' initial leadership role in organizing dialogue projects.

Another dynamic created by Jewish initiation of dialogue is in the Jews' tendency to scrutinize potential partners based on ideology toward Israel. For many Jews interviewed, Muslim partners' acknowledgement of the State of Israel's right to exist was necessary precondition for dialogue. Consequently, Muslim participants faced a troubling paradox; they were forced to articulate a position before they could engage in a process that is supposedly meant to allow them to articulate and express their position. In her research on the Muslim community's relations with the Jewish community, Raquel Ukeles delineates other litmus tests used to dismiss certain Muslims as unfit partners in dialogue:

First, organizations and their leadership, as well as individuals who actively endorse violence against noncombatants to further religious and/or political ends in general, and who promote international organizations committed to the destruction of Israel in particular; and second, Muslim individuals or organizations who are or have been affiliated/in contact with the above organizations or individuals.²³

Such preconditions limit the potential of dialogue activity.

The balance of power in dialogue certainly depends on the composition of the group and its leadership, the source of financial backing and the venue of the dialogue. Yet dynamics of power and privilege among Jews and Muslims in dialogue are also affected by their own perceptions of group status. Depending on the context, both Muslims and Jews engaged in the dialogue situations examined in this study have felt or have been threatened and excluded on occasion.

The Jews interviewed for this research generally recognized themselves as members of a privileged group in the United States, yet some expressed that they see that status as tenuous. They bear in mind the Jewish history of persecution. Jewish research participants generally recognized the American Muslim community as a less privileged group, but remained cognizant that Muslims seem to threaten Jewish collective interests globally, and specifically in Israel.

Muslim research participants generally felt that their community was under siege from discrimination and racial profiling in the name of national security. They also tended to view their position through the historical lens of colonialism, identifying with the international oppression of Muslims. They evoked broad generalizations about the American Jewish community, commenting on the groups' inordinate power in terms of access, wealth, and political influence both in the United States and internationally.

Approaches to the topic of Israel in dialogue

For many groups, exploring differences and similarities is a foundational stage on which to situate discussions of more complex and emotional topics such as terrorism, violence, political issues associated with Israel, Palestine, Jerusalem and Zionism. Among dialogue partners, the existence of the State of Israel and the rights of Palestinians are pervasive issues, whether overtly confronted or not. Many interview participants repeatedly asserted that without the State of Israel, there would be no reason for Jews and Muslims to dialogue.

Others reject the notion that dialogue between Jews and Muslims must focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Some Jewish groups seek to down-play Israel as a central focus in the construction of American Jewish identity. Other more extreme Jewish factions are overtly non-Zionist. Some Muslims interviewed asserted that issues surrounding Israel/Palestine are of

particular concern to Arabs rather than Muslims more generally. They criticize the common Western misconception of “Arab” as synonymous with “Muslim,” which is especially untrue in the United States where the majority of Arabs are Christian.²⁴ On the other hand, the terms Jewish and Israeli remained undifferentiated in some of the discourse among Muslims.

The dynamics that emerged during the Daniel Pearl Dialogue for Muslim Jewish Understanding are illustrative of the complex role of Israel and Palestine in Jewish-Muslim dialogue. This effort is a public dialogue between Akbar Ahmed, a leading Muslim scholar born in Pakistan and the former Pakistani Ambassador to the United Kingdom, and Judea Pearl, computer science professor at the University of California, Los Angeles and an emigrant from Israel, born in Tel Aviv.

In October 2003, following the 2002 kidnapping and murder of Judea Pearl’s son Daniel in Pakistan, the American Jewish Committee invited the pair to speak together. The audience of that first event numbered over 400 people, including many South Asian Muslim leaders. Prior to the dialogue, Ahmed asked his friend Umar Ghuman, a member of the National Assembly of Pakistan, to offer an apology to the Pearl family for the death of their son. The official agreed, but asserted that following his apology, he wanted to ask for an apology for the situation of Palestinians. Ghuman was persuaded to ask for forgiveness without seeking an apology in return. Reflecting on Ghuman’s words, Ahmed writes:

Umar pointed out a link between our backgrounds that had not been highlighted: Only three nations were founded in the pursuit of religious freedom — the US, Israel and Pakistan. These were bold and courageous statements considering the confrontational political climate dividing the Abrahamic faiths in many parts of the world.²⁵

Since that initial event, the two scholars have conducted public dialogues in the United Kingdom, United States, and Canada. Participant observation for this research was conducted at

the eighth dialogue, which took place at the University of California, Irvine in May, 2005. The event was conducted in a loose format, including an introduction by a moderator, and a short statement by both Ahmed and Pearl. The two then questioned each other about topics including theology, the controversy about the treatment of the Qur'an at the U.S. detention center at Guantanamo Bay, and the need for Jews and Muslims to speak out against violence. The tone was cordial. The two men identified themselves as grandfathers talking to each other as individuals, neither representing any groups. They stressed that empathy was at the core of their dialogue.

While Israel/Palestine was not a focus for Ahmed and Pearl, audience members raised the topic as a central issue.²⁶ When the question and answer period of the evening was opened to the audience, individuals erupted with challenges about victimhood and comparisons of suffering. A condemnation of Israel's treatment of the Palestinians was demanded. Reflecting on a similar dynamic at other dialogue events with Pearl, Ahmad responded in an Arab News opinion editorial with these words:

There had been debate in the Muslim community both in Pittsburgh and elsewhere about the event. Many felt that the victimization and killing of Muslims around the world provided no reason to talk to the "Jews." Others pointed out that the Pearl family was associated with Israel and therefore no dialogue or reconciliation could take place unless the problem of the Palestinians was resolved.²⁷

During the event itself, the frustration on Ahmed's face was visible as he identified the Palestinian issue as a regional Arab problem that is not necessarily a central issue to Muslims around the world. He asserted that acts of violence should be condemned as un-Islamic, and discussed the need for a Muslim renaissance. In doing so, Ahmed effectively distanced the evening from the topic of Israel. Pearl, on the other hand, spoke of his Jewish identity as

inseparable from the State of Israel. He stressed the importance of Israel as the unifying center for all Jews.

While this program made strides toward understanding and demonstrating how a Jew and a Muslim can discuss issues of mutual importance, it also illuminated the centrality of Israel, the blurring of political and religious interests, and how the conflicting approaches to the issue of Israel leads to tension and frustration among participants and observers.

Similarly, Libby and Len Traubman, who have engaged in Jewish-Palestinian dialogue since 1992, have witnessed the increased conflation of religion and politics in their discussions. In 2004, that dynamic was also observed during participant observation at “Building Bridges for Peace,” a summer program for teenage girls from Israel, Palestine and the United States. During the intensive summer program, participants learn communication techniques, develop leadership skills and engage in activities that promote peace and the empowerment of women. When the issue of terrorism and its victims was discussed among the participants, the Israeli and Palestinian participants used Israeli and Jewish interchangeably and the Palestinians spoke about freedom fighters who become *shaheed* (holy young men and martyrs to some and suicide bombers to the others). The conversation was peppered with language that blurred any boundary between the political and religious.

Some dialogue groups attempt to avoid the blurring of such boundaries by establishing ground rules for their meetings. Most agree to avoid any political topics (i.e. issues related to Israel/Palestine). At a Muslim-Jewish dialogue group formed in 2003 at Washington University in St. Louis, students hosted presentations by faculty, discussed issues they faced as Americans and shared holiday celebrations. The topic of “politics” was studiously avoided.

In Baltimore, a group of Jews and Muslims who meet regularly through the Baltimore Jewish Community Relations Council (BJCRC) and Baltimore Muslim Council also avoid the contentious topic of politics.²⁸ A friendship has developed between the staff person at the BJCRC and the head of the Baltimore Muslim Council as a consequence of this project. Yet, even informally, the two avoid discussing Israel and Palestine. They focus instead on shared communal concerns (including local political issues). In a joint interview, when asked their positions on the “difficult issues” (as they called them), neither was willing to offer an opinion.²⁹

Since Middle East issues are seen as intractable, these groups construct their dialogue around areas that are less problematic. Critics of this approach point to the superficial nature of such interactions. In their assessment of this method, Kuttab and Kaufman contend: “[this type of dialogue] ignores the real conflict and instead emphasizes some superficial manifestation of it.” The two continue: “[events] conclude with activities in which Jewish and Palestinian children sing each other’s songs together; all smiles and everyone is happy.”³⁰ While this criticism has some merit, it discounts the fact that many groups begin with ground rules discouraging the discussion of politics as a strategy for initial trust building and aim to reach achievable goals such as humanizing the other. Such a strategy might allow for a more candid treatment of the Israel/Palestine issue later.

Rather than engage in more politically ambiguous Jewish Muslim dialogues, some groups self-consciously participated in more narrowly defined Arab-Jewish or Palestinian-Jewish projects. In those endeavors, Middle East peace and coexistence were the overtly stated focus, and participants shared their personal experiences of conflict and their ties to the region. Nationalist identities and aspirations of peoples with conflicting territorial claims were central to the discussion. The religious backgrounds of the group members were not exclusively Jewish or

Muslim. In fact, Christian Palestinians often seem to be over-represented in such forums. For some, this type of involvement was their primary expression of religious identity. Those who engaged in this type of dialogue tended not to be religiously observant or affiliated, and the discussions about religion that did arise tended to focus on the related issues of suicide bombings, settlements, and religious claims to land.

Whether groups attempt to avoid political issues, construct the Muslim community as non-Arab, or define the issue of Israel/Palestine as a regional problem, these strategies actually demonstrate the centrality of the Middle East conflict in Jewish-Muslim dialogue. These approaches are mechanisms to cope with tensions and establish good will by attempting to shift the focus. Ironically, however, in their effort to move dialogue forward, such groups establish ground rules that prevent members from discussing the very issues that motivate Jews and Muslims to come together in the first place.

Factors effecting sustainability

We found that the fundamental issue of parity has a tremendous impact on the success or failure of Muslim-Jewish dialogue. Parity in commitment, demographics, leadership, attendance, power, goals, and motivations is essential. According to Kuttab:

One of the first and most serious pitfalls encountered by those interested in dialogue is the assumption of a false symmetry...Yet the reality of the situation mandates major differences in terms of the freedom of expression granted to members of each group, their immunity from retaliation, options other than dialogue available to members of these two groups to pursue their goals, and the resources and general interests that each group has in its furtherance of dialogue."³¹

Facing these challenges, Jewish-Muslim dialogue groups are complex endeavors that are difficult to sustain over a long period of time.

Many projects are planned as unique events, such as when guests are invited to break-the-fast *iftars* during Ramadan and Passover *Seders*. At these types of events, dialogue occurs informally as people share a meal and experience each others' religious rituals. These events occasionally act as catalysts for in-depth and continuing programs. More often, however, follow-up after a single major event is minimal.

A number of issues complicate the prospect of sustainability for projects with a long-term focus. In addition to discrepancies in groups' motivation, perceptions of privilege, and assumptions about the other, dialogue projects are challenged with more mundane problems, such as the lack of financial resources needed to sustain meaningful and substantive programming.

Most of the dialogue groups in this study were operated by non-profit organizations, and volunteers within those groups are responsible for many of the administrative tasks. The typical challenge for many non-profits is scarce resources, which tends to limit the duration of dialogue groups. To be successful, dialogue groups need space and staff. Since most dialogue projects do not have guaranteed or ongoing funding, many face the prospect of donors' shifting priorities.

Sustaining projects is also difficult because dialogue is so strongly tied to current political issues. While goodwill and interest among leaders might remain intact, the number of potential participants from within communities decreases along with popular interest. Following the initial interest in dialogue created by 9/11, for example, many groups have lost momentum. Since dialogue commonly emerges in response to traumatic events, interest in dialogue ebbs as the immediacy of a problem fades. Some groups attempt to continue building relationships that are focused around other than political circumstances so that a forum already exists when issues arise.

In-depth dialogue projects can be long and difficult processes characterized by emotional intensity and requiring substantial investment of participants' energy and time. Often, individuals are simply unable to engage with the necessary rigor. Projects oriented toward the particular needs of their participants and those with structured flexibility are more likely to be sustainable.

Preconceived individual and organizational assumptions become problematic in dialogue when they remain unexamined. Rarely do groups begin by acknowledging these issues. Yet through the dialogue process, assumptive differences inevitably come to light. Because assumptions most often remain internalized, groups fail to build a foundation of trust to draw upon once the dialogue intensifies. This phenomenon emerged as a particularly confounding circumstance when a group that had avoided political issues was faced with a problematic current event. In some cases, participants were pressured to make proclamations and denouncements or publicly demonstrate their opinion. As a result, some veterans of dialogue left with a general feeling that dialogue is pointless. Groups disintegrated because participants lacked the skills required to work through the tough issues.

Conclusion

Jewish-Muslim dialogue groups are a contemporary phenomenon resulting from the need for inter-group communication about religious, political, and cultural issues. The imbalance in the Jewish and Muslim communities' positions, structures and motivations for dialogue make the work of dialogue difficult to undertake and even more difficult to sustain. The complexity is exacerbated by the simultaneously central and ambiguous role that Israel and Palestine play in dialogue. Despite the difficulties, the importance of Jewish-Muslim dialogue groups cannot be

underestimated. Although the long-term impact of dialogue is yet to be seen, participants maintain that they are able to decrease tensions between Jews and Muslims by creating a climate where the other is recognized as fully human and where differences are dealt with in ways that do not lead to violence.

¹ Cenkner, William, "Mission and/or Dialogue: A Roman Catholic Perspective" *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, Vol. 17 (1997), 132.

² The organization is currently known as the National Conference for Community and Justice and has expanded to include Muslims (among others) in their activities.

³ *New York Times*, December 11, 1927.

⁴ Seamans, Herbert, "1945 Summer Workshops in Intergroup Education" *Journal of Educational Sociology*, Vol. 18 No. 9 (May, 1945), 569-572.

⁵ Ben Harris, "Issues in Focus: A dialogue of the deaf? Questions raised about outreach to Muslims" *JTA News*, January 22, 2007

⁶ Ira Rifkin, "Strained Relations: September 11 and the Second Intifada in Israel interrupted years of improvement in Muslim-Jewish relations"

http://www.myjewishlearning.com/history_community/Jewish_World_Today/ContemporaryInterfaith/muslimjewish.htm

⁷ Eckhardt, A. Roy, "Recent Literature on Christian-Jewish Relations" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (Mar. 1981), 99.

⁸ Kuttab, Jonathan & Edy Kaufman. "An Exchange on Dialogue," *Journal of Palestinian Studies*, vol. 17 n. 2, 1998, 94.

⁹ Weiner, Julie "As US Muslims outnumber Jews, Alliances and Disillusionment grow" *JTA Global News* May 1, 2001.

¹⁰ Scherr, Andrew "Muslims, Jews, Join to Rehab Home" *Jewish Times*, April 22, 2005

¹¹ Interview with Daniel Brenner June 2, 2005

¹² Kriesberg, Louis "Mediation and the Transformation of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict" *Journal of Peace Research*. Vol. 38, No. 3, 2001, 374.

¹³ Bagby, Ihsan; Perl, Paul M.; and Froehle, Bryan T., "The Mosque in America: A National Portrait," Unpublished report of the Mosque Study Project, Council of American-Islamic Relations, April, 2001

¹⁴ *The National Jewish Population Survey 2000-01: Strength, Challenge and Diversity in the American Jewish Population*, A United Jewish Communities Report in Cooperation with the Mandell L. Berman Institute – North American Jewish Data Bank, September 2003.

¹⁵ Smaller waves Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews also emigrated to the U.S., but Ashkenazi Jew remain the most highly organized and visible Jewish group.

¹⁶ Ukeles, Raquel "Muslims in America: The Impact of 9/11" *Mosaica*, Winter 2003-4

¹⁷ Bagby, 7.

¹⁸ Interview with Daniel Sokatch, July 14, 2005

¹⁹ One should keep in mind that a century ago the American Jewish community was similarly divided into *Landsmannschaften*, ethnically organized sub-communities based on ethnic and linguistic background very similar to the current trend among American Muslims. Given the trans-ethnic trend among second and third generation Jews, one might expect to find a similar trend among second and third generation Muslim.

²⁰ Seeking Common Ground is a non-profit organization in Denver, CO that focuses on leadership training, peace-making and dialogue. In the interest of full disclosure, both of the authors of this paper have had a relationship with this organization. Brie Loskota worked for two SCG summer programs- Face to Face and also Building Bridges for Peace, Reuven Firestone's daughter attended the Face to Face program.

²¹ Interview with Melodye Feldman, August 19, 2004

²² Kuttab, 84.

²³ Ukeles, Raquel "Locating the Silent Muslim Majority: Policy recommendations for improving Jewish-Muslim relations in the United States" Mosaica- Research Center for Religion, State and Society, Winter 2003-4, 8.

²⁴ One estimate from a scholarly publication places the ratio, probably incorrectly, at 90% Christian and only 10% Muslim (Alix Naff, "Arabs in American: Historical Overview," in Sameer Abraham and Nabeel Abraham, *Arabs in the New World*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1983, 9). Generally cited estimates from Arab-American groups claim the total population is closer to 75% Christian. In either case, the majority is clearly Christian.

²⁵ Ahmed, Akbar S., "A Small Step Toward Interfaith Dialogue" Arab News, Opinion Editorials, November 2003.

²⁶ This may be heightened in this particular context because of an increasingly tense climate between Jewish and Muslim students at the University of California, Irvine.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ JCRCs are undertaking similar outreach attempts across country. This unique subset of Jewish-Muslim dialogue projects is worthy of further investigation.

²⁹ Interview with Erica Hobby and Shahab Qarni, May 31, 2005

³⁰ Kuttab, 86.

³¹ Kuttab, page 85