



Unity

Newsletter of the Cambridge Muslim College
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Poppies bloom in our College garden



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Diploma Continues to Thrive

OUR CELEBRATED DIPLOMA in Contextual Islamic Studies and Leadership is now in its seventh year of operation! The programme has already graduated almost 80 students. The year-long intensive training programme takes students from British Muslim seminaries through 18 modules which include subjects such as history, politics, science and philosophy.

This year the students have heard a range of distinguished speakers, including **Lord Rowan Williams**, former Archbishop of Canterbury (on C.S. Lewis); **Roger Mosey**, former Head of BBC Television News (on engaging with the media); **Jawaid Akhtar**, former Deputy Chief Constable of West Yorkshire Police (on dealing with the police); **Yasser Quraishy** (on Western intellectual history); **Prof Rasjid Skinner** (on Islamic psychology); **Suleman Nagdi**, **Ibrahim Mogra** and **Shaukat Warraich** (on community development).

An integral part of the Diploma programme is a visit to Rome. This year the trip included meetings with British Ambassador to the Vatican **Nigel Baker**, and with **Edmund Power**, Abbott of St Paul's Behind the Walls. They also benefited from expert guided tours of the Roman Forum and the Vatican Museums. This deeply immersive experience has introduced our students to the centres of teaching of the Catholic faith. The highlight for many was participating in a public audience with **Pope Francis**.

This year's students have also started their chaplaincy placement in Cambridge's Addenbrooke's Hospital.



This gives them the chance to interact with patients from different backgrounds, and introduces them to the demanding work of hospital chaplains.

The Diploma remains a unique contribution to leadership development amongst British Muslims. Several of our graduates have recently completed university degrees, and we are also delighted to note that a number of our alumni are working as active imams in places as diverse as London, Glasgow, Manchester, West Yorkshire, Southampton, Dewsbury and Kirkcaldy. Our graduates like to stay in touch with each other, and CMC is developing plans for a support programme for these alumni that will seek to build on their experiences and continue to meet their training requirements. The expectation is that our graduates will form a new core community of British Muslim scholars who are strong in their understanding of the faith, confident and aware of their British societal context and fully engaged with their local communities.

Dr Atif Imtiaz, Academic Director





College Launches Four-Year Programme

THE MAJOR NEWS this year has been the announcement of our new Four-Year Programme in Contextual Islamic Studies. This unique course is rooted in authentic Islamic scholarship while remaining deeply engaged with the pressing issues of our time. Applications opened in May 2016 and the teaching is slated to begin in September of this year.

The first year of the new programme concentrates on the very intensive study of Classical Arabic, to allow students to go on to work with relevant fundamental texts in their original language. This intensive course is being delivered in partnership with Qasid Institute in Amman, a world-leading specialist language academy.

The year of Arabic will lead on to a planned three-year BA degree in Contextual Islamic Studies, taught here at the College. This focusses on the study of classical texts to introduce students to the major themes of the Islamic revelation as interpreted by the leading scholars of mainstream classical Islam. The course will draw on these to explore the coherence of the tradition and also

to illuminate its relationship to cultural and intellectual change over time and Muslim responses to modern challenges.

The award of a qualification with the formal status of a BA degree is dependent on the College's ongoing negotiations to secure an external validation agreement with a major British university. We have made very good progress with this and hope to be able to share more information later in the year.

The launch of the new programme is an exciting and important development for the College's work. It represents a major step toward the original vision behind the College's establishment, building on the success of its activity to date.

The College has high hopes that this new programme will – most importantly, and with the help of Allah – bring significant benefit to the Muslim community in the UK and beyond at a time of urgent need. Since none of the College's work would be possible without the generosity of its friends and donors, the staff and students would also like to take this opportunity to thank them sincerely and ask for their continued prayers and support as we take this critical new step!

Dr Abdulaziz Brown, Programme Officer

CMC PEOPLE

TRUSTEES



CMC was saddened to learn that Trustee **Christian Abdul Hadi Hoffmann** passed away on 19 January 2015. He was born in Berlin in 1948 and pursued a career in public affairs, including a stint of several years as the Christian Democratic Party's official public relations director. He converted to Islam in 1989. He later served as deputy Chairman of the Muslim Academy in Germany, and authored and co-authored several books on politics and religion. As a founder member of CMC's board of Trustees, Abdul Hadi played a significant role in liaising with key funders of the College.



The College is delighted to welcome new Trustee **Dr Ali Almihdar**, a barrister of the Outer Temple Chambers. He was educated in Law (MA & LLM) at Cambridge University and completed his PhD at Alexandria University in Egypt. Dr Almihdar was the Honorary Legal Advisor to the British Consulate in Jeddah from 1998 to 2010. He divides his time between the UK and Saudi Arabia. Dr Almihdar brings a wealth of legal and administrative experience to our board of Trustees.

NEW STAFF MEMBERS

The College welcomes two new College Co-ordinators to the team, **Dr Zainab AlKhatib** and **Amara Siddique**. Prior to joining CMC, Zainab worked as a post-doc researcher in the Pharmacology Department at Cambridge University. Amara, who has extensive experience in academic administration, has previously worked at City University and Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge. We would also like to welcome back **Dr Abdulaziz Brown**, who has re-joined CMC as Programme Officer. Abdulaziz oversees the development of CMC's new Four-Year Programme and its validation.

ALUMNI NEWS

CMC congratulates the following alumni on their new degrees: **Nafeesa Mistry**, BA in Study of Religions, SOAS (First Class), **Qasim Afzal**, MA in Islamic Studies, Edinburgh University, **Fozia Parveen**, MA in History of Art, University of York, and **Mohammed Aqueel**, MA in Islamic Studies, SOAS.

NEWS OF THE DEAN



Abdal Hakim Murad has published several new academic articles, including one on al-Ghazali's theory of intention (in Bülent Ucar and Frank Griffel (eds.), *900 Jahre al-Gazali im Spiegel der islamischen Wissenschaften*, 2015), and an essay on epistemology in Nadeem Memon and Mujadad Zaman (eds.), *Philosophies of Islamic Education* (2016). He also published a short book of *Turkish Sacred Songs*. He received a PhD from the Free University of Amsterdam in December 2015 for a dissertation on Scriptural Reasoning. He has given lectures at the International Islamic University of Malaysia (and also a *khutba* at its mosque), the Free University of Amsterdam, the London School of Economics, Oxford Brookes University, St-Martin-in-the Fields, the Bosnian Forum, and a series of eight lectures and seminars at the University of Tübingen.

RESEARCH FELLOWS

FOR THE 2015-16 academic year we have been pleased to welcome two new Research Fellows: **Dr Samer Dajani** and **Dr Dawud Bone**. Dr Dajani studies the different methodologies of the Sunni schools of jurisprudence, as well as broader theories on legal diversity and the nature of the *shari'a*, while Dr Bone is researching aspects of education theory, including opportunities to extend the work developed at CMC into schools. Last year's Research Fellows, **Dr Ramon Harvey** and **Dr Harith Bin Ramli**, continue to work at the College on a part-time basis.

We would also like to welcome **Dr Namira Nahouza**, a new affiliate Research Fellow, whose research focusses on contemporary Salafi theories of Qur'anic interpretation.

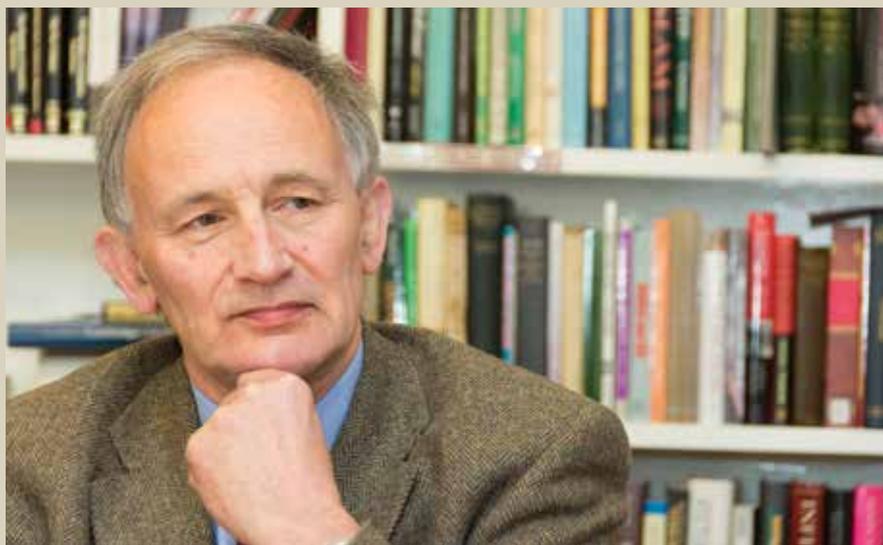
FORMER CMC LECTURER AND SUPERVISOR COMPLETES PHD



CMC congratulates former lecturer **Dr Amina Nawaz**, who successfully completed her PhD at the University of Cambridge in 2015. Her thesis examined the 16th century devotional writings of Morisco communities in Spain.

Amina is now employed as a post-doc researcher at the University of Tübingen.

Conferences



THE FUTURE OF THE MADRASA

IN MAY 2015, Cambridge Muslim College and Kalam Research and Media hosted a two-day meeting of Muslim educators in Cambridge. The theme focussed on 'The Future of the Madrasa'. Participants included **Abdal Hakim Murad**, **Prof Reçep Sentürk**, **Dr Saeed Foudeh**, **Shaykh Osama Elsayed**, **Shaykh Amin Kholwadia**, **Dr Mahan Mirza**, **Prof David Ford**, **Omar Qureshi**, **Dr Talal Al-Azem** and **Shaykh Hamza Karamali**. The participants each gave presentations on how the teaching of the Islamic sciences could be improved to respond to modern challenges. The meeting was thought-provoking and fruitful and is part of the Islamic Analytic Theology initiative led by Kalam Research and Media.

FROM REVELATION TO SCRIPTURE

CMC held its first academic symposium in September 2015, titled 'From Revelation to Scripture: A Symposium on Divine Speech and Prophetic Inspiration'. Ten papers were presented by an international group of scholars, including participants based in the USA, Italy, Iran, Norway and Germany. The outcome was an exploration of diverse Islamic traditions and contemporary Muslim thinkers through presentations of academic research that were, in turn, enlightening, surprising and entertaining.

New Book Series *Sapientia Islamica*

CMC trustee **Prof Lejla Demiri** and CMC alumna **Prof Sohaira Siddiqui** are two of the three general editors for a new book series dedicated to world-class research in Islamic theology, philosophy and mysticism. CMC Dean **Abdal Hakim Murad** is also on the editorial board. The publisher, Mohr Siebeck, has announced a call for submissions. For more details, and to submit a proposal, please email Prof Demiri on lejla.demiri@uni-tuebingen.de.

More Books!

We are grateful to the Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs, the Islamic Arts Museum in Kuala Lumpur, White Thread Press, and the Thesaurus Islamic Foundation (Liechtenstein), for very generous gifts of books for our library.



ISLAMIC ARTS MUSEUM, KUALA LUMPUR

CMC IN THE CITY



TRUST IN RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP

The Woolf Institute hosted a panel in October 2015 about 'Trust in Religious Leadership' with the **Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby**, the Chief Rabbi **Ephraim Mirvis** and the Dean of CMC **Abdal Hakim Murad**.

TRAINING BRITISH MUSLIM RELIGIOUS LEADERS

CMC joined hands with London professional network City Circle to host a panel to discuss the pertinent topic of how British Muslim religious leaders are trained and whether their message is relevant. Speakers included CMC Research Fellow **Mufti Abdur Rahman Mangera**, CMC alumnus **Hassan Rabbani** and **Shaykha Safia Shahid**. The talk is available on the City Circle's YouTube page.

ISLAMIC EDUCATION AND THE FUTURE OF MUSLIM LEADERSHIP

In January 2016, CMC Programme Officer **Dr Abdulaziz Brown** was invited to speak with **Prof Ebrahim Moosa** at the Ashford & Staines Community Centre about 'Islamic Education and the Future of Muslim Leadership'. Following Prof Moosa's talk on the historic and contemporary development of the madrasa system in South Asia and the West, Abdulaziz introduced CMC's work and future vision to support the provision of Islamic education in the UK.





ROME COLLOQUIUM

On May 3 2016 the CMC students, plus a group of Muslim theology students from Tübingen, attended a public colloquium at the Lay Centre in Rome on the theme of ‘Mercy and Justice: Muslim and Christian Perspectives’. Several ecclesiastics and ambassadors were present in the audience. Presentations were given by **Adela Collins**, Professor of New Testament at Yale Divinity School, **John Collins**, Professor of Old Testament Criticism at Yale Divinity School, and CMC’s **Abdal Hakim Murad**.



HOLKHAM HALL

Holy Norfolk

ON APRIL 20 the Diploma students spent a day visiting sites of religious significance in North Norfolk, including Walsingham, Castle Rising and Holkham Hall (childhood home of **Lady Zainab Cobbold**).

CMC in Istanbul

Two alumni from our Diploma year 2013-14, married couple **Shams Tameez** and **Halimah Shams-Tameez**, had the opportunity to participate in an exchange trip with the Istanbul Foundation for Research & Education (iSAR) in summer 2015. The students were able to experience life in Istanbul and studied the Turkish language and Arabic logic. We were also delighted to host a student from iSAR last summer.

CMC WELCOMES BBC PRODUCER

THE COLLEGE HOSTED award-winning senior producer **Rosie Dawson** in the summer of 2015 for a one-week placement. Rosie, best known for producing Radio 4’s programme ‘Beyond Belief’, was taking advantage of a scheme offered by the BBC’s Religion and Ethics department whereby producers can seek refreshment and inspiration away from the demands of programme production and deadlines.



CMC's website already hosts several lectures in the Travelling Light series. The College has just completed a 50-page study of the online Islamic education market, and on this basis has taken the decision to launch an online learning curriculum. This spring, Istanbul-based illumination artist and academic **Gülnihal Küpeli** transformed a college outbuilding with intricate, hand-painted Ottoman designs to give us an exquisite recording studio. The new facilities were inaugurated in May with a professional recording of songs by Goethe and Rilke in praise of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. As it evolves our online learning platform will come to form a significant part of the College's outreach programme, and we look forward to releasing further updates shortly.

CMC Inspires New Book

We are delighted to have received a copy of **Ralf Wüstenberg's** new book *Islam ist Hingabe: Eine Entdeckungsreise in das Innere einer Religion* (Islam is Devotion: A Journey to the Interior of a Religion), published by Gütersloher Verlag (2016). Wüstenberg, director of the Theological Institute at Flensburg University, spent time at CMC in 2014-15, engaging with staff, fellows and students.

This is the cover blurb of his book:

At the Cambridge Muslim College, Ralf K. Wüstenberg encounters an Islam that does not fit at all with the image of the 'dark religion'. He meets Muslims of seriousness and devotion. Are they, in faith, in God's image, and in understanding the world, not so far from Christians? In the work of Arabic theologian and mystic al-Ghazali, Wüstenberg finds a companion in Islam's interior. He discovers that Islam is startlingly close in many respects to the ideas of the Protestant reformers. Food for thought for a deeper dialogue between the religions.

REQUEST FOR PRAYERS



CMC requests your prayers for **Baraka Khan**, a talented graduate of the University of Cambridge, who was loved and known by many at CMC. Baraka lost her battle to lung cancer after two years and nine months, at the age of 24, on 18th February 2016. After her diagnosis, Baraka raised over £500,000 for charitable causes close to her heart. Please visit barakakhan.com to learn more of her work.



It is with sadness that we announce the passing of **Kaniza Islam**, who returned to her Lord in March 2016. Kaniza is the beloved mother of CMC friend Hina Belitz. Hina Belitz also manages the property for our female students.

Sisters Act

This year's four female Diploma students have been active in instructing schoolteachers at the Cambridge supplementary Muslim schools on best practice in Arabic teaching. The sisters have also been learning Tai Chi with **Maymuna Acevedo**, and have been learning a number of songs, including the College Song.

New Promotional Videos

CMC is delighted to be able to thank **Moez Masoud**, the leading Egyptian TV personality and broadcaster, whose company Acamedia has kindly created four short promotional films on the College in English and Arabic. We would like to congratulate Moez on his *un certain regard* distinction at the 2016 Cannes Film Festival.



Community Outreach

LAUNCH OF SCIENCE READING CLUB

CMC has launched a monthly reading club for Muslims engaged with science. This is an opportunity for Muslim scientists to discuss religion and science-based issues on the College campus, by gathering each month to discuss a paper or designated chapter from a book. Recent topics have included 'Implications of Food Science and Technology Innovation' and 'The Nature and Necessity of Scientific Revolutions'.

HIFZ CLASSES AT CMC



As part of our community outreach, CMC now offers weekend *hifz* classes, with our Diploma students as instructors. We have begun with Surat al-Zumar, using **Ali Keeler's** beautiful recording in the Caledonian style. All proceeds from the classes go towards repaying the loan for the purchase of our new building.

Centre for Islam and Medicine

AS THE HOST institution for the Centre, CMC welcomed scholars, researchers and practitioners for a one-day training workshop with **Dr Aasim Padela** of Chicago. In the past year, the Centre has continued to take significant strides towards its goal of enriching the field of bioethics and ethical decision-making in healthcare. The team has recruited four additional trustees, presented at two international conferences, delivered an Islamic bioethics module for the University of Birmingham Medical School, and has contributed towards original, peer-reviewed research

published in the *Journal of Religion and Health*. Further opportunities will be created for all those interested in the field. For more details, please visit www.thecim.org.uk.



VISITING SPEAKERS

The College continues to attract guests and visiting speakers of world renown. Among those we have welcomed over the past year are **Prof Daniel Madigan [1]** on 'Muslims and Christians in the 21st Century'; **Mishal Husain [2]** on 'Engaging with the Media', **Prof Jorgen Nielsen [3]** on 'Training of Islamic Theologians and Imams in Europe Today', **Shaykha Tamara Gray [4]** on 'Leadership for Social Change in Muslim Communities', **Prof Barbara Metcalf [5]** on 'Islam in South Asia' and **Prof Jonathan Brown [6]** on his book *Misquoting Muhammad*.



Development Report

WHEN TWO HOUSES were purchased in 1284 in Cambridge to house 14 'worthy but impoverished fellows', it must have been difficult to imagine that these foundations would eventually flourish to become the University of Cambridge's most ancient college, Peterhouse. And when Cambridge Muslim College was established in 2009, lessons were conducted in a tiny rented house. It is through the vision and benefaction of our supporters that CMC has been able to expand its programmes and to purchase its own beautiful campus. Although we still have some way to travel, we aspire to become a long-standing institution of the highest level, like the University colleges and faculties that surround us and which supply much of our teaching talent.

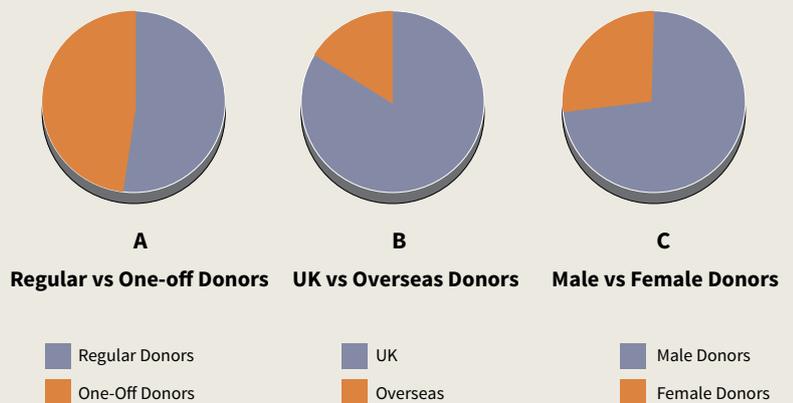
It is pleasing to note that over half of our donors choose to give on a regular basis (A), and that we now have a strong, highly-engaged support base in the UK. We have worked hard to improve participation from the British community as well as from donors overseas (B), and it is encouraging to see that the figures reflect this. In the coming months, we also hope to see an increase in female supporters(C)!

Since 2015, the College has started to reach out to more supporters, both in the UK and abroad, and we have been delighted by the response. In a single year our donor base has increased seven-fold, and we are also heartened that many of our supporters choose to give *sadaqa* regularly (See 'Friends of CMC' on the next page).

This year has also brought some particularly generous contributions from individuals, families and foundations. The Faizan family in Manchester have created the 'Irshad Akhtar Memorial Scholarship' of £5,000 per annum, named after their late mother, for students of the Four-Year Programme. The 'CMC Idris Tawfiq Memorial Scholarship' has been established to honour the legacy of **Idris Tawfiq**, who passed away this February 2016 (see page 13). Two charitable foundations from East Asia have started sponsoring us by covering a third of our annual budget. The College has also received a generous grant from the Templeton Foundation to subsidise the costs of our science module for the next three years, as well as sponsoring two full-time Research Fellows in Religion and Science beginning in 2016-17.



CMC'S FIRST CLASSROOM



Property is also a valuable long-term asset for the College. We are grateful that the DCD Family Trust of London partnered with us in late 2014 for the acquisition of the nearby building to maximise the potential of our entire site.

We would like to convey our heartfelt thanks to all our donors for their support. All donations, whether big or small, are immensely valuable to CMC at this critical stage of its development. For details on how you can support us, please visit www.cambridgemuslimcollege.org/support-us or email: dl@cambridgemuslimcollege.org.

Davina Levy, Development Officer



CMC and Ramadan

LAST YEAR, WE made a Ramadan appeal for the first time, raising over £50,000. Abdal Hakim Murad also kindly gave us some of his unpublished Contentions for us to tweet every day throughout the month.

This year, we have asked a number of alumni, current students and lecturers to record short reflections on each *juz*' (portion) of the Qur'an which will be released every day on our social media pages (#JuzADay). You can find these recordings on our Sound Cloud or via the CMC website. CMC is also sponsoring an *iftar* meal at the local mosque on Thursday 16 June.

For Ramadan, we have enlisted the help of our supporters to spread the word about the College, which has already seen an increase in the number of 'Friends of CMC' as well as one-off and zakat donations, *alhamdulillah!*

Friends of CMC

LAST YEAR WE launched a 'Friends of CMC' scheme to encourage regular *sadaqa* giving and to build up a dynamic community of supporters. The rationale is that regular donations, of any size, are essential to the College's sustainability. For example, 1000 people giving £20 a month would cover half of our annual budget! We are humbled by the support of many of you, and ask you to please spread the word and keep us in your prayers.

PROFILES OF SOME FRIENDS



"An investment in CMC is an investment in the future of my own children. As the father of two young boys it is my paramount duty to ensure that my children have the opportunity to fulfil their potential both academically and spiritually in harmony with the Prophetic tradition. This is unlikely to happen unless we have long-term access to stable institutions that are consistently furnished with a highly skilled and effective leadership. I firmly believe that CMC, with its hugely talented management team and authentic vision, is the primary UK-based institution that can help build and sustain this critical pipeline."

Imran Ahmed, Software Developer



"I am a convert who recently moved back to the UK. I am continually inspired and amazed by the breadth of the work of the CMC both in its teaching and with its outreach activities in the local community. I have seen first-hand the value of its role in integrating traditional Islamic scholarship with the life that we are living today. It is a dynamic college which is continually expanding its diverse web of interests for students and the local community, and is playing an increasing role in supporting converts nationally."

Joanna Fatima, Property Manager and mother of two



"Muslim communities in Britain face multiple challenges. Confusing ideologies are being thrown around without the opportunity of challenging the moral or religious context of the issues. CMC is committed to promoting high standards of academic excellence in Islamic studies and simultaneously maintaining the authentic teachings of the Qur'an and the hadith. This is crucial for our next generations – our children and grandchildren and *insha'Allah* their descendants too. We sincerely believe that there cannot be a more worthy cause than the CMC in Britain today. We would urge you to become a CMC Friend and donate generously."

Dr Mohammad Hossain, GP and Yasmin Hossain, Family & Child Welfare Consultant

For more information please visit cambridgemuslimcollege.org/support-us/friends-of-cmc

CMC RETREAT 2016

ALL FRIENDS OF CMC receive an exclusive invitation to our annual retreat at (a very modest) cost price. Our very first retreat was held this March in Cambridge's Selwyn College. The programme included talks by CMC Dean **Abdal Hakim Murad** ('Riding the Tiger of Modernity'), Research Fellow **Dr Harith Bin Ramli** ('Prophets as Heroes'), CMC alumnus **Hassan Rabbani** ('Reflections of a British Imam'), CMC Research Fellow **Dr Samer Dajani** ('The Importance of Dreams in Islam'); a *tafsir* of Surat al-Mulk by CMC alumni **Safyya Dhorat** and **Muhammad Kazi**; a British Muslim songs session and a tour of Cambridge and the Cambridge Muslim College.

Most of these talks are available for streaming. Please visit www.cambridgemuslimcollege.org/outreach/public-lectures.

Zahra Rajput, a Friend who attended this year's retreat, writes this ...

"Struggling to balance my daily routines and responsibilities, and constantly in the service of others, I found myself feeling drained and losing the meaning of what I was doing. I desperately needed the time and place to introspect, reflect and re-focus my heart on Allah; to go back to 'being' rather than 'doing'. The CMC retreat was the perfect opportunity and exactly what I was in search of. It was an amazing weekend experience to cherish; full of contemplation and reflection. The atmosphere was both refreshing and rejuvenating, and it was the ideal environment for the spiritual re-charge that I yearned for.

From the early morning post-fajr reflections to the evening of Qur'an recitation and Muslim songs, there was not a moment



where I was not intrigued, and my heart and mind were fully present. The variety of topics and sessions delivered by inspirational individuals sparked a lot of reflection and there were many practical lessons for us to take away. What was most profound for me was the overwhelming positivity that was felt and encouraged throughout the programme and the tranquillity I experienced.

I was enlightened by Shaykh Abdal Hakim Murad's guidance on 'Riding the Tiger of Modernity' – being active agents of change in this era – rather than passive subjects falling prey to it. We live in a time where meaning has been lost and identities confiscated – a crisis that many are battling with. Hearing the Shaykh's insightful elucidations on how to retain our identity and values and revive meaning in all spheres of life was heart-warming.

The tafsir session was an inner awakening for me; connecting our hearts to the divine, by allowing us to experience exactly what Allah is telling us in Surat al-Mulk, bringing the lessons to life.

I want to say a huge thank you to the team at CMC for organising it, and to all who contributed to its success."

Launch of CMC Idris Tawfiq Memorial Scholarship

Idris Tawfiq (31.12.57 – 17.02.16) began his career as a Roman Catholic priest. After leaving the priesthood he embarked on an inner pilgrimage which led him to Egypt. It was in Cairo that he first encountered Islam and grew to value and eventually embrace it. He became a well-loved public speaker in both the West and the Arab world, inspiring thousands of all faiths with his gentle character, wise approach and his message of unity and love. Even in his last days he was still writing and teaching. Idris is buried in Woking's Brookwood cemetery alongside other legendary figures of British Islam such as Hasan Le Gai Eaton, Marmaduke Pickthall and Abdullah Yusuf Ali.

To continue his legacy, his family and friends contacted CMC to discuss the possibility of setting up a scholarship in his name. The 'CMC Idris Tawfiq Memorial Scholarship' was officially launched in April at



a London event dedicated to celebrating his extraordinary life. Speakers included CMC Dean Abdal Hakim Murad, community activists Julie Siddiqui and Bilal Hassam, and Rev Bonnie Hill-Evans as well as Idris's younger sister. We have already raised over £1,000 since the event, and funds are still coming in.

If you would like to donate in Idris' memory please visit www.justgiving.com/CMC-Idris-Tawfiq-Memorial-Scholarship or donate using the giving form at the back, writing 'IDRIS TAWFIQ' clearly.

Exploring the Qur'an

IMAGES AND REALITY

Prof M.A.S Abdel Haleem, CMC Trustee (*Translator of Qur'an, Oxford World Classics*)

CMC Trustee Prof Abdel Haleem has written a new book, - *Exploring the Qur'an* - which will be published at the end of 2016 by I.B. Tauris. Prof Haleem was kind enough to give us a glimpse of its contents. Below is a summary of the introduction:

PROF ABDEL HALEEM'S new book is a challenge to many of the images presented of the Qur'an – both western and Muslim, classical and modern, especially those presented by modern extremists from all sides. It argues that these images are often highly selective, hastily produced and actually ignore important parts of the Qur'anic text, sometimes even from within the same verse being discussed. They sometimes ignore the essential context, style and rhetorical aspects of the Qur'an. They often force norms of Arabic grammar and rhetoric on to the English –simultaneously foregoing eloquence in translation and disregarding the power of the original Arabic. Sometimes they overlook the text itself, and rely only on the tradition of exegesis (*tafsir*) or images and ideas that have accumulated in the West over centuries. These approaches unwittingly emulate the pagan Arabs, described by the Qur'an saying:

When it is said to them, 'Follow the message that God has sent down,' they answer, 'We follow the ways of our forefathers.' What! Even though their forefathers understood nothing and were not guided? Q. 2:170

The book therefore focusses on the Arabic text of the Qur'an itself, rather than views of imperfect *tafsirs* or translations, or polemical readings of the text which subvert its original meaning. Linguistic analysis is then used to foreground the Qur'anic context, style and habits of expression in order to challenge tradition or convention where it stands in contradiction to the text itself. Prof Abdel Haleem does not, however, set out to criticise all Muslim writers, nor all western writers on the Qur'an, recognising that many have made significant contributions to Qur'anic Studies that have complemented the scholarship of Muslim authors.

The book is presented through three categories: teachings, style and impact. The first part (Chapters 1–4) covers certain illustrative controversial issues. The second (Chapters 5–10) covers questions where the Qur'anic style gives rise to a number of common misunderstandings. The final part (Chapters 11–13) deals with some aspects of the impact of the Qur'an within



and outside the Muslim world, with particular reference to issues raised by Western writers.

Chapter 1, for example, focuses on the so-called 'Sword Verse', highlighting the myths that have isolated it from both its textual and historical context. For polemical reasons, what the Qur'an actually says on the subject has been ignored, when in fact, for example, not one single person was killed as a result of this verse at the time when it was revealed. The subsequent chapters of the section on teachings expose similar misunderstandings of the Qur'anic concepts of *jizya* (Chapter 2), *jihad* (Chapter 3) and Paradise (Chapter 4).

As the book moves to discuss aspects of the Qur'anic style, it similarly juxtaposes later images of the Qur'an with its original text. In Chapter 6, for example, Prof. Abdel Haleem discusses the role of euphemistic style and the sensitive issue of sexual etiquette. Chapter 10, on rhetorical style, demonstrates how the priority of creating effect through rhetorical style sometimes overrides formal grammatical considerations, correcting the view of many western scholars who seem unaware of this aspect of the Qur'anic language and consequently imagine grammatical errors where they do not exist.

The final section on the impact of the Qur'an begins in Chapter 11 with a discussion of its relationship to the languages, literature and cultures of the Muslim world. Chapter 12 assesses the long history of translations of the Qur'an into English, highlighting the extent to which they have often missed very important considerations of the style and effect of the Arabic text, thereby contributing to the problematic images discussed in the first section of the book. The final chapter continues this theme with particular reference to the negative effect of inadequate translation on interfaith relations.

With extensive and detailed discussion of examples from the text itself, this book shows the extent to which many images of the Qur'an are indeed problematic and how they can obscure a genuine understanding of the Qur'an itself.

(The translation quoted is that of M. Abdel Haleem, OUP 2010).

Interviews with CMC Alumni



Sumayyah Bostan (2011-12)

Can you tell us a bit about where you come from, and what you did before studying at CMC?

I come from Bradford and attended Jaamiatul Imam Muhammad Zakaria, an Islamic girls' boarding school, from the age of 11 to 17. I developed an interest in the Arabic language and Islamic Studies during this period. In my opinion, the CMC is the perfect next step for people graduating from the *darul uloom* system.

How did you find your time at CMC and what did you do afterwards?

I thoroughly enjoyed my time at CMC, and always look back on it fondly. The most memorable extra-curricular activity I partook in while at CMC was volunteering weekly at the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit, based in the Cambridge University Library. I worked on editing the translation of Arabic manuscripts for the book *Medical Prescriptions in the Cambridge Genizah Collections*. Currently I am in the final month of my BA in Arabic and Islamic Studies at SOAS, University of London.

You won joint first prize for a project you undertook at SOAS – congratulations! What was the project about?

I spent 2014-2015 in Amman, Jordan as part of a compulsory year abroad programme for Arabic students. We were given the task of writing a 3,500 word independent study project on any subject of our choice in Arabic. I remember stumbling upon an article about the Bidoun of Kuwait, and it piqued my interest in the plight of stateless people. The existence of discriminatory nationality laws in Jordan, and the direct effect of these laws on the children of Jordanian mothers and foreign fathers, led me to my title 'Statelessness in Jordan and Kuwait.'

What plans do you have for the near future?

Although I am graduating shortly, I feel that my academic journey is just beginning. After graduation, I plan to join my husband in San Francisco and apply for a Master's programme in the USA. He and I plan to travel to Mauritania this December for eight months to study classical Arabic texts and to experience a different way of life.



Qasim Afzal (2014-15)

Can you tell us a bit about where you grew up, and what you did prior to CMC?

I grew up in Edinburgh and moved to an Islamic seminary in England when I was 14 years old. I completed my secondary education there and gained a certificate in Islamic Studies and Arabic Literature. I then moved back to Edinburgh and spent almost a year working as an imam before travelling to Egypt for a short spell in pursuit of further Islamic education. I returned to the UK after I decided that I wanted to take a more practical approach to Islamic studies and how I go about engaging in community relations and development.

What was the most memorable experience you had at CMC?

To be honest, every day was an experience in itself but most memorable perhaps is the trip to Rome. I got to engage in interfaith work while travelling with a cohort of British Imams.

After graduating from the College, you decided to pursue a Master's degree at the University of Edinburgh. What drove you to make this decision, and did CMC have a role to play?

I always had the aim of pursuing higher education but following graduation from the seminary I still lacked the skills needed to go into a Master's level course. CMC was instrumental in providing me with the Western-style academic writing and research skills needed, and gave me the confidence to make my mark at this level.

What are you doing now and what plans do you have for the near future?

Following CMC and university, I'm looking at expanded horizons and trying to make a difference where it matters. I'm in contact with Scottish Imams who aim to improve the future for Scottish Muslims. My plans are to work alongside the existing establishments to raise standards and to learn from similar organisations elsewhere, with the long-term goal of setting up an institution tailored to the needs of Scottish Muslims.



The Qur'an and the Just Society

DR RAMON HARVEY, CMC RESEARCH FELLOW



Dr Ramon Harvey studies the Islamic scriptural sources and classical disciplines with a focus on Qur'anic interpretation and the *shari'a*. He received his MA and then PhD in Islamic Studies from SOAS, University of London, completing a thesis on

societal justice in the Qur'an. During his fellowship at Cambridge Muslim College he is working on revising his thesis to become a monograph. This piece is an excerpt from the result. It is an introductory summary of Dr Harvey's book *The Qur'an and the Just Society*, to be published in 2017 by Edinburgh University Press.

THE IDEA OF justice is compelling yet elusive. Plato, in *The Republic* (*Politeia*), arguably began the Western tradition of ethics with his reasoned attempt to elucidate the principle on which to found the just society. A parallel concern is found in the world's great scriptures. Here, the discourse concerning the establishment of social justice is often more exhortatory than discursive, and is mirrored by a focus on the divine justice of the final judgement and the eternal settling of accounts.

This universal significance of the concept of justice, and the practical aspiration of striving to realise it, seem connected to the idea that it is a crystallisation of ethics as a whole. In the words of Aristotle, echoed in Islamic intellectual history by no less a figure than al-Ghazālī, 'justice is complete virtue to the highest degree because it is the complete exercise of complete virtue.' It is unsurprising, therefore, that it perennially unites otherwise diverse political, social and legal actors in relating their struggles to a higher moral ideal. Justice grounds many discourses, including politics, war and peace, the distribution and use of resources, family relationships, and punishment. Its abiding resonance within our moral lives proves its continuing relevance as a subject of intellectual enquiry and demands of us that we continue the timeless search for its principles.

My forthcoming book frames this quest as a reading of the scripture that perhaps deals most directly with issues pertaining to justice: the Qur'an. Within its world view, the continuous human responsibility to establish justice within society is identified as one of the reasons for the descent of revelation into the world, 'We sent Our messengers with clear signs (*al-bayyināt*), the Writ (*al-kitāb*) and the Scale (*al-mīzān*), so that people could uphold justice (*al-qist*) (Q. 57:25).'

An argument can be made that the inherent difficulty of defining the idea of justice, a problem extending beyond the confines of Qur'anic studies, has contributed to this lacuna. Commentators seem to simultaneously view it as a universal concept – with an essential form acknowledged by virtually all cultures – and a relative one, dependent on speaker and context. J. D. Gericke sums up Plato's attempt to solve this conundrum as follows, 'What Socrates promises us is a standard of justice; what we get is an elaborate metaphor. But so it has been ever since, with the great discussions of justice.'

In my work I produce a thematic reading of the Qur'anic blueprint for the just society. That the Qur'an could contain such an ethical structure beneath the surface of the scripture's language, and encoded within the dynamic reshaping of the lives of its first audience, has been a fundamental assumption in writing this book. Angelika Neuwirth seems to have a similar idea in mind when she states, 'There was a vivid image in the Qur'an of the Ideal City – the City of God – long before al-Fārābī's famous reworking of *Plato's Politeia*.'

I read the Qur'an, therefore, as an intensely moral text, continuously and repeatedly hailing the reader, or listener, as a responsible agent who must make ethical choices with deep spiritual implications. Despite this concern with morality, the Qur'an proffers no formal ethical theory, rather it is the interpreter who must discern a pattern of meaning within its discourse, and build a theoretical edifice consonant with its injunctions.

Despite conceiving of the Qur'an's ethical principles, or *hikmas*, as universal values, the question of their

practical application in times and places beyond the initial revelatory context must remain outside the scope of the study. I recognise that for many modern Muslim thinkers, the purpose of trying to extract such values is precisely for contemporary interpretation of the *shari'a* (divine law and moral code). The risk that such scholar-activists face is that, in interpreting the Qur'an in order to service a particular reform agenda, their emphasis on activism can belie a lack of sound scholarship. I am nonetheless hopeful that in some way my book will have a beneficial impact on tangible questions of justice today. That I do not directly address such contexts reflects the limits of my knowledge and expertise, as well as the space available and my judgement that, at a time of rushed appeals to scripture, the Qur'an must be deeply understood before it is used to campaign.

In my preference to separate my contextualising and reconstructive hermeneutic from its potential modern-day implications, my work has similarities with the four stage model proposed by Abdullah Saeed. In it, he puts such analysis at the third stage, after initial engagement and textual study, but before the final stage of application to the contemporary context.

Of course, I recognise that, despite my best efforts to understand the Qur'an in its own *Weltanschauung*, the interpretive process necessarily also takes place, to a degree, within the framework of my contemporary concerns, or 'horizon' in the terminology of Gadamer. I am, therefore, not concerned with trying to reach a pure state of dispassionate objectivity – a scholarly chimera – but rather to aspire to consistency in following my own theoretical and methodological postulates.

I build upon these postulates to propose a definition of *qist* (societal justice) within the Qur'an and a model by which the discrete *hikmas* that embody it can be extracted and thematically arrayed. One of my central claims is that the concept of human stewardship over creation lies at the heart of the moral narrative that sets out the relationship between God and humanity within the Qur'an. In my reading, the coherence between the scripture's vision for the role of God's steward and its wider religious message signals a vital contribution to the discourse of justice throughout the ages.



Reflection: Islamic Education is no Longer a Luxury, it is a Necessity

DR DAWUD BONE, CMC RESEARCH FELLOW



Dr Dawud Bone is researching new perspectives on education theory and school management, exploring opportunities of extending the work developed at the College into schools.

ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS are one of the latest and most prolific of Muslim enterprises in the UK, with private Muslim schools, free schools and *darul ulooms* being developed in every city that includes a significant Muslim population. These institutions are of a wide variety of types and utilise a broad spectrum of approaches. Some follow a conservative traditional curriculum that emphasises the revealed sciences and minimises the National Curriculum, while others may best be described as separatist secular institutions distinct only in their target market. In the light of this, more and more people are starting to question what exactly 'Islamic education' is.

We urgently need to develop an integrated approach and attitude towards education that develops a new generation who have both knowledge of the creation and the understanding of our role as its custodians, whose love of the purity of science is matched by their love of and gratitude towards the One who gave them life and created this world as a test for us all. Secular scientists cannot be trusted to develop our technology unrestrained by the divine writ and we can no longer support the so called 'naql-heads' who believe they can and should interpret the revealed texts (*naql*) in the absence of an intellectual framework (*aql*) and the context those same texts so consistently emphasise. Islamic education needs to come of age, not to evidence simplistically the superiority of the faith but as the only solution to the imminent destruction of our home and the demise of our species.





CMC's residential week-long Islamic Psychology course, taught by Prof Rasjid Skinner, was held again this April due to popular demand. One of the participants, **Myira Khan**, offers her reflections:

I WORK AS a qualified counsellor from my private practice in Leicester, offering therapy to individual adults and couples via face to face or online counselling sessions. My core counselling training was in the psychodynamic modality. As a Muslim counsellor I wanted to be able to offer a model of counselling to my Muslim clients, which was inclusive and based upon an Islamic understanding of psychology and psychotherapy, to help clients to work holistically with their issues as they impact on mind, body and soul. The Certificate in Islamic Psychology and Psychotherapy, as offered by Cambridge Muslim College, fulfilled all my needs to learn about a model of Islamic Counselling, which is now directly beneficial in my private practice, as I have since incorporated and offer Islamic Counselling as part of my counselling service. The teaching style of lessons plus evening seminars by guest speakers was intense but also very enjoyable, as I felt it was a rich and broad course, covering all the topics and aspects of the model that I had wanted to learn about. The college was very welcoming and the atmosphere of the surroundings was one of calmness and time for reflection, a great space to be open for new learning and discussion. For any qualified therapeutic or pastoral practitioner wishing to learn about Islamic Counselling and incorporating this into your practice, I would highly recommend this course. The bonus is that it covers all you need to know whilst at the same time allowing you to meet like-minded fellows and leaving at the end of the week with a new group of friends as well as knowledge and understanding of Islamic Psychology, Psychotherapy and Counselling.

Myira Khan, Counsellor (BSc, Dip HE, MBACP)
www.myirakhancounselling.co.uk



Reflection by CMC Research Fellow **Dr Samer Dajani** on BRAIS' third annual conference:

THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION for Islamic Studies (BRAIS) hosted its third annual conference this April. The conference is one of the largest in this field, which means there is always a great variety of themes being discussed, from scriptural and historical studies to those that deal with modern day social and political realities.

Two of CMC's Research Fellows presented this year at the conference. **Dr Ramon Harvey** gave a presentation on societal justice in the Qur'an, based on some of the findings of his forthcoming book, which he is working on at CMC. I gave a talk on the contribution of Sufis to the hadith literature, in particular hadith commentaries. This investigation was an offshoot of my work on Sufi approaches to jurisprudence, and I would like to thank a third CMC Research Fellow, **Dr Harith bin Ramli**, for encouraging me to do a survey on this topic which had barely received any scholarly attention up to this point. The reactions of the audience only confirmed to me how much people are unaware of the significant impact that Sufis have left on the genre of hadith commentaries, and the extent to which they were quoted by the masters of the field.

Besides my panel on Sufism and Ramon's panel on the Qur'an, I was able to attend panels on Islamic Law and Ethics, British Islam, and Islamic Education in Regional Contexts. The last of these panels included a paper on the work of Cambridge Muslim College itself and its pioneering approach to training imams and scholars in Britain.



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