

Quranic interpretation and the application of legal principles, the rationalists emerged as the primary presenters of public opinion as an alternative to the hegemony of the Muslim Judicial Council. It is also crucial to reflect on the individual schools that were emerging all over Cape Town from the Bo-Kaap to Salt River and Kensington, and the townships in Manenberg, Heideveld, Mitchells Plain, Retreat, Somerset Strand and Hanover Park that carried the hallmark of Gamieldien's teaching content and style. Literally thousands of students attended these classes weekly. It was probably the most comprehensive teaching and learning programme in Cape Town even though it was not coordinated in a unified structure. But the fact that virtually all of Gamieldien's advanced students had embarked on their own teaching programmes ensured that the challenge of rationalism remained vibrant locally.

In the final period of his life Gamieldien focused almost exclusively on a study of tawhid and tafsir in order to provide a foundation for a rational belief system and an understanding of the origins and development of Rational Islam. Tawhid had for him always represented the foundation around which a proper system of belief had to be built. It seemed to have been the key that unlocked the essence of Islam in the sense that it provided the believer with a logical set of tools that empowered him/her to state with conviction the existence of a deity. One of the students⁴⁷ remarking on the issue of rational belief says,

The most important aspect of the subject of tawhid was that it took away the fairy tales in Islam disguised as hadith. It concentrated in the first place on the necessity for a Creator by examining the ordered nature of the natural world and its balance. Shaykh Gamieldien took us through a number of examples of the orderliness of our universe and then recited the verses from specific chapters of the Quran in which Allah challenges humanity to imitate His creation. In his discussion of the theory of legal obligations he concentrated on its role in the material world rather than on reward and retribution. Slowly we began to develop an understanding of the purpose of Islam as a divine message that enabled us to reflect on the more general question of revelation.

⁴⁷ Interview with Imam M.R. Behardien, 20 April 2010.

The simmering differences between the traditionalists and the rationalists finally exploded into open conflict in 1988 in Cape Town with what came to be labelled as the Eid ul Adha issue. The feast of Eid-ul-Adha was probably the clearest reflection of the historical differences in understanding Islam between the different religious variants. One of Gamieldien's students⁴⁸ related the essence of the conflict as understood by them:

When the issue of Eid-ul-Adha was raised in the Western Cape, two interpretations on when to celebrate were presented. Those who were in favour of the local sighting of the moon argued that the celebration should not be linked to the ibadah (worship) of Haj. They further argued that the reason for the celebration should not be questioned because we are told in the Quran to do so and because it was celebrated by the prophet Muhammad (SAW). Those on the other hand who favoured the celebration with Mecca argued that the day of Eid is an integral part of the Haj and was in fact ordained to celebrate the fulfilment of the Haj after the day of Wuqoof⁴⁹ which was the culmination of the Haj. Eid-ul Adha was therefore a part of a logical sequence of events following the completion of the ibadah of Haj just as Eid-ul Fitr was a celebration following the completion of the month of fasting in Ramadan. Those who followed the latter position actively engaged the Muslim leadership in the Cape in order to challenge their interpretation.

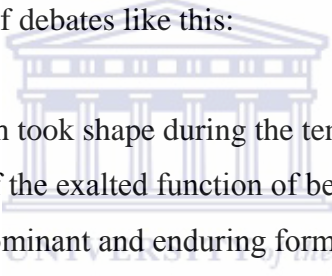
The debate of the issue of Eid-ul-Adha reflected the crucial difference between a rational interpretation of law that provided a logical explanation for religious practice and made intellectual sense as opposed to an atomistic view that failed to integrate such religious practice. Those who argued for Eid ul-Adha with Mecca saw the logic of a world community acting in unison and in support of an international event, which the haj was. Also, those who promoted an integrated view believed that the hujjaj (pilgrims) were the representatives of the world Muslim community and that the celebrations should reflect such a reality. They believed further that the legal requirements for the celebration of Eid ul-Adha in fact reflected this unity by denying the

⁴⁸ Interview with Imam M.R. Behardien, 20 April 2010.

⁴⁹ Wuqoof is the name given to the day when the pilgrims proceed to a place outside Mecca called Arafah to communicate at a personal level with God and to seek God's mercy.

global Muslim community the right to fast on this day, being one of the indicators that it was a day of celebration.

But the crisis in the community also reflected a much more profound debate. This debate revolved as much around the efficacy of a belief system that held conflicting views on whether religion needed to be understood in terms of normal rationality. Was it necessary, for example, to have a reason for a religious celebration, or was it reason enough that God had ordained that on a specific day a specific event should take place? The polemics at this time often revolved around the issue of the command of Allah rather than the purpose of that command. It would appear that this was the key area of difference between the traditionalists and the rationalists. The command for the former group became the end in itself! To do what one is commanded without question or reflection was the ultimate proof of the quality of iman (faith). Fazlur Rahman (1979, pp. 26–27) comments on the historical nature of debates like this:



This theology (kalam) which took shape during the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries C.E. came to claim for itself the exalted function of being the “defender of the bases of Islamic Law”, in its most dominant and enduring form of Ash’arism. As such it rejected causality and the efficacy of the human will in the interest of divine omnipotence (man was therefore only metaphorically an actor, the real actor being God alone), declared good and evil to be knowable only through the revelation (and not through natural reason) and denied that divine commands in the Quran had any purpose (they were to be obeyed solely because they were divine commandments).

Applying the theology of Ash’arism to the logic of the traditionalists in Cape Town, one would have to conclude that the celebration of Eid ul-Adha had nothing to do with the *haj* and thus no reason was required for celebration except that it was God’s command to do so. For the rationalists, however, to establish the objective(s) of each command developed in the individual an understanding that promoted faith and iglaas (sincerity). Soroush (2000, p. 150) explains this principle of belief and practice:

The faithful delegate their right of legislation to God. It is in this sense that the law of the religious society is understood as heavenly. However, the right to comprehend divine laws and to harmonize them with prudence and justice are thereby not abdicated and renounced.

This explanation emphasizes the inherent right of Muslims to attempt to make sense of divine revelation and to connect such an interpretation into a coherent system of practice. In the case of Eid ul-Adha, the concept of celebration was linked to a practice of worship (ibadah), namely the haj. The Quranic proof was deduced from specific verses to give support to the essentially logical interpretations of the rationalists. On both sides the issue of whether Eid ul-Adha should be celebrated in accordance with the Meccan sighting of the moon had become an issue of faith; in other words, both sides questioned whether those holding opposing views were acting against the direct orders of the Creator. It was precisely because religious practice was always linked to the issue of faith that the community was divided so clearly, and it was no accident that those mosques who promoted a rational understanding of Islam in general were also the ones that held Eid ul-Adha with Mecca. The fact that a sizable minority of the community of greater Cape Town celebrated Eid ul-Adha based on the days of haj in Mecca was testimony of the impact of Rational Islam in the Western Cape.

4.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter attempted to explain the influence of the mass removals of the Muslim section of the community from District Six on Rational Islam and the inability of its leaders to address the dominant political issue of the period, namely apartheid. One of the key arguments made in this chapter was that the religious vacuum left by the rationalists was filled by groups such as the Deobandis and the Wahhabis on the one hand, who both promoted the idea of a return to the purity of the original Muslim community and the example and practice of its leaders, and the Islamists and fundamentalists such as the Qibla Mass Movement and the Muslim Youth Movement on the other hand, who promoted the idea of an Islamic state or a state incorporating the Islamic value system as the basis for social reconstruction.

The chapter also investigated the role of Majlisush Shura Al Islami in the development of Rational Islam through its college, Usuluddin, where Shaykh Gamieldien was the most dominant influence. The use of oral evidence to provide proof for these historical events became necessary because of the lack of research in this area of the Muslim community. The analysis of the most crucial issues that shaped the development and impact of Rational Islam on the community of Cape Town was based on the theoretical understandings of Muslim theorists and theologians whose similar experience in other areas of the Muslim world and indeed the Western world helped to clarify beliefs and practices.

Chapter 5 will address one of the key areas of the impact of Rational Islam on the Muslim community. This will involve the emergence of a number of students who had studied for many years at one of the schools of Islamic education that had been discussed in earlier chapters. These students were interviewed on diverse areas such as the course content, the methodology and the teaching practices employed by Gamieldien, the kind of challenges his understanding presented to them and the shifts they needed to make in order to reconstruct their belief system. The chapter will also present and reflect on their discussions on the response of the various communities to their presentations of Rational Islam once they themselves took up positions of leadership such as the imam of a mosque or a teacher at a madrassa in the different areas of the Cape Flats. Chapter 5 will also attempt to assess the impact that Rational Islam made, taking into consideration its development during this period.

CHAPTER 5 FURTHER INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF MODERN RATIONAL EDUCATION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter examined the consequences of the destruction of District Six and the effect that the removal of the Muslim community had on its religious beliefs and practices in general, and on Rational Islam in particular. There was also an endeavour to explain the process of social and religious reconstruction led by individuals within these new communities. Of particular importance was the rise of other religious tendencies within Islam in the Western Cape and their influence on these communities in the process of reconstruction, with specific focus on their role in providing moral and practical direction for belief and practice. There was also a discussion on the relatively limited impact of the rationalists during this period, especially between 1975 and 1985, and the consequent waning of their influence in the townships where most of their former congregants had been settled. In addition, Chapter 4 examined the establishment of Majlis Ashura Al Islami as the option taken by Gamieldien to further his project through a process of higher education. The Usuluddin College provided this vehicle and, despite a number of obstacles, started producing students who could propagate his approach in the townships of Cape Town.

This chapter will further explain the role of Gamieldien's students in the propagation of Rational Islam. It will examine the intensive training they obtained in order to prepare them for their roles as imams and as teachers within the Rational Islamic framework. It will also discuss the skills that these students acquired in the interpretation of Quranic texts and in the selections of hadith (sayings and practices of the prophet Muhammad) that supported their explanations. At the same time their intellectual skills were being developed to assist in the process of reflection in their awareness of the connection between religious understanding and understanding of the world.

The chapter is based on extensive interviews with some of the former students who in later years became leaders of communities, both as imams and as educators. These interviews were intended to deal with the content of Gamieldien's lectures and to reflect on the way in which they empowered these students to deal with the requirements of being a religious leader within the Muslim community.

The changing socio-religious milieu within which the students were to work presented new challenges that required a range of different skills that Gamieldien did not have to confront during his earlier years in the Muslim Judicial Council. The diverse nature of the communities of the Cape Flats, the lack of basic religious facilities and religious training, and the absence of community coherence were crucial factors in the process of propagation. These factors changed the nature of the rationalists' work. Thus their relative success in the townships after 1985 (following their initial failure to address the plight of their congregants) has to be assessed when investigating the work done during the training sessions at Gamieldien's home.

The second issue that will be examined is the contestation within the township context between the rational interpretation of Islam and the more literalist understandings that existed on the Cape Flats. This contestation, which could be described as a conflict between intellectualism and traditionalism, also revolved around the actual needs of a community in a process of spiritual and moral reconstruction. A factor that characterised the contestation between Rational Islam and the literalism of the traditionalists was the support for traditionalism from a powerful group within the Muslim Judicial Council that had developed increasing sophistication in its organisational skills. The Muslim Judicial Council's transformation into a professional body was fundamental to its progress while the rising influence of the literalists in the Muslim Judicial Council made the propagation of Rational Islam more problematic.

Another issue that fundamentally influenced the direction the community took in relation to the different understandings of Islam was the introduction of Muslim radio stations in Cape Town in 1995. The impact that both The Voice of the Cape and Radio 786, operating in the Western Cape, had on the community has to be assessed, especially because they were managed by the Muslim Judicial Council on the one hand and the Islamic Unity Convention, with its strong fundamentalist tendency, on the other. The rationalists did not have much access to this form of media. The introduction of the radio stations as a means of communication and propagation occurred at the end of the period being researched and will consequently only be dealt with briefly.

5.2 THE TRAINING OF POTENTIAL RELIGIOUS LEADERS

By 1985 Gamieldien had begun a process of training some of his students to assume positions of leadership at mosques and madrassas in different areas of the Cape Flats. This was, in effect, a continuation of a project that he had begun to undertake some years earlier when he trained individual students at his home. This time, however, he selected a group that had obtained prior education, either at the Usuluddin College or at the Al Hidayah Adult School. He regarded these students as having the required prior knowledge and the character to lead communities and to disseminate the principles of Rational Islam.

The training programme, which was conducted twice a week for two hours per session, included a structured course in tafsir (Quranic interpretation and analysis), critical studies of the sayings and practices of the prophet Muhammad (SAW), called hadith studies, and an interactive session on the principles of belief and on the primary sources on which those principles are founded. Gamieldien's module on ethics (ahlaaq) was integrated into the tafsir and hadith sections. Both these sections of the course were, however, primarily focused on those aspects pertaining to the application of law, in other words they were an integral part of Islamic jurisprudence, and on theology. This part of the course was conducted every Monday.

The Wednesday courses included studies in the practical aspects of imamate (religious leadership), amongst which were the management of the Friday congregational prayers, including the structure and delivery of the sermon (khutbah) in Arabic and the English or Afrikaans translation of the sermon. Students were also trained in the multiple tasks required of the imam in any community. These included the rites of the deceased, the naming of children, the procedures of marriage ceremonies and procedures in cases of divorce and inheritance. Students were also trained in the management of community issues (mas'alas). Students were not discouraged from acquainting themselves with the thikr (invocation) practices that were common in the Western Cape, even though this was not part of the training course conducted by Gamieldien. They were further encouraged to study and empower themselves by learning to speak Arabic and to read Arabic texts apart from the Quran. Proficiency in Arabic, Gamieldien is reported to have said,⁵⁰ would provide them with access to important works on law, tafsir,

⁵⁰ Interview with S. Williams, 11 November 2011.

hadith and tawhid, works that were often available only in Arabic. The study of the Arabic language as a separate module was, however, not part of the training programme. The study of meaning, however, was an integral part of the tafsir course.

These classes represented the final stage of the process of maintaining Rational Islam as a legitimate framework of thinking in the Western Cape, especially in view of the increasing hegemony of the literalism expounded by the traditionally trained ulama. It would therefore be important in understanding the development and course of Rational Islam to examine this training programme in some detail.

5.3 AN ANALYSIS OF THE TAFSIR COURSE

While the Usuluddin College (it had been decided to change the name of the institution from the Usuluddin Islamic Seminary to the Usuluddin College) had gone a long way towards shaping the hermeneutic skills of most of the students who attended the programme, Gamieldien considered it necessary for them to develop adequate reflective and analytical abilities that would contribute to their insight and provide them with greater access to the science of tafsir (Quranic exegesis). It was hoped also that they would begin to perceive at a much deeper level the nature and purpose of divine revelation that extended beyond the literal and the mundane. Gamieldien thought it to be indispensable that his students master the interpretive categories necessary for a coherent and consistent understanding of the Quran.

The training programme placed as much emphasis on the methodology of interpretation and the language of explanation as it did on the content. Students were required to select specific verses from the Quran and then take these through a range of processes. They would, as an initial process, establish the basic meaning of a verse by studying the specific text including the linguistic structure. This constituted the literal presentation of the verse. Gamieldien would then explain that in many instances this understanding would only represent the first level of meaning and that the verse required further investigation. For the Quran to be a book that was expected to retain its relevance through the ages there would have to be much deeper insight into its meaning. It was, according to Gamieldien, this meaning that needed to be discovered. The second process would then involve a search for similar verses in other sections of the Quran so that internal consistency might be attained in terms of understanding. These verses often

complement, expand and clarify the verse being scrutinised. The third process in the methodology of tafsir would then involve either a study of or a reflection on the material world. The purpose of this would be to explain a Quranic verse by studying or researching specific phenomena in the world that could be of benefit to humanity. Alternatively, if an analysis of a verse on issues of faith (iman) or ethics (ahlaaq) or an interpretation of an esoteric (mutashabihat) verse was required, students had to draw on their understanding of tawhid (theology) in order to present a logically coherent explanation. These methodological exercises necessarily enhanced the students' ability to present rational interpretations of the Quran, interpretations that remained firmly within the framework of Rational Islam.

Gamieldien believed that such an interpretive methodology employed in the process of Quranic interpretation provided access to explanations of religious belief that were linked to the material lives of Muslims. An inherent purpose of the methodology that students were required to employ was to develop their capacity to connect the knowledge of the world, both social and natural, to the divine message so that they could make sense of the different levels of meaning in some of the verses of the Quran.

An example of this methodology is reflected in the explanation of the following verse of the Quran given by a student⁵¹:

Shaykh Shakier quoted this verse from the Quran and wanted to know whether it had any meaning besides affirming the fact that He is the Creator of all things. He also said that we should try to extract some deeper understanding of the verse beyond its explicit meaning which he referred to as the first level of meaning.

“Verily! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of night and day, and the ships which sail through the sea with that which is of use to mankind, and the water (rain) which Allah sends down from the sky and makes the earth alive therewith after its death, and the moving (living) creatures of all kinds that He has scattered therein, and in the veering of winds and clouds which are held between the sky

⁵¹ Interview with Imam S. Williams. 11 November 2011.

and the earth, are indeed Ayah (proofs, evidences, signs, etc.) for people of understanding” (Quran, Ch. 2, Surah Baqarah, verse 164, p. 64).⁵²

The student went on to explain:

We could only attain what he called the second level of meaning which entailed an analysis of the things mentioned in the verse and its value to humanity. He then discussed what he referred to as possible objectives or purposes of the verse. What the verse said could also be perceived by our senses. At the level of understanding the observation of the creations between heavens and the earth both during the night and the day should be sufficient to convince humanity of the existence of a Creator. But those creations in the heavens and the earth that exist beyond our immediate sight and which could be of benefit to humanity have to be discovered by reflective human beings, those who have the capacity, the skills for research and discovery. The shaykh remarked that this was the third level of interpretation.

This was the interpretive challenge that students faced in the tafsir programme that had as one of its objectives the presentation of a practical model of interpretation that attempted to provide a methodology for understanding the link between empirical and revealed knowledge. The discussion of specific verses of the Quran in this way provided Gamieldien with the opportunity to develop the analytical abilities of his students. His methodology elicited interactive discussion and debate that were interspersed with questions that challenged some of the explanations offered by Gamieldien and the student participants.

It was also one of Gamieldien’s objectives in the process of Quranic interpretation to address verses that could not be verified either by means of empirical studies or through logic. These were the most problematic verses for rationalists to explain. It does appear that Gamieldien was in this sense not a thoroughgoing rationalist in the sense that he accepted that there were verses in the Quran that could only be explained beyond a logical framework. In order then to sustain the credibility of the efficacy of particular events or beliefs, it became necessary for the circle of explanation to be widened. A

⁵² Yusuf Ali First Edition, Lahore, 1934

former student⁵³ presented an example of such a discussion: During a study session on the interpretation of verses from one of the chapters from the Quran, it is stated that those who are to go to heaven will live there forever, i.e. “They will dwell therein forever” (Ch. 98, Surah Baiyina, verse 8, p. 1 769).

The shaykh wanted us to explain what we thought the Arabic word ‘forever’ could mean and how such a meaning would fit in with the essential nature of creation and with the explanation of the Quran on the nature of creation. This evoked the most passionate response from all of us sitting around the table. It dealt with the existence of the human essence after death. At issue was the fact that eternal existence belongs to the Creator alone. The question that Shaykh Shakier asked was whether the human soul had been granted the same status as the Creator. Within the context of Islamic theology the concept of eternal status of a creation was both incomprehensible and absolutely unacceptable because it had assumed one of God’s attributes. The notion of compromising the absolute unity of the Creator was anathema to the Muslim irrespective of the way they understood Islam. At the end of the debate the shaykh explained that the answer lay in the fact that the continued existence of any creation was subject to the will of God and they therefore remain creations with no independent ability to exist forever.

Gamieldien also referred to other verses from the Quran to highlight the problematic nature of a literal interpretation. He referred to the verse (Ch. XCVI, Surah Iqra’, verses 1–2, p. 1 761), where the verses speak of the creation (the beginning) and of the return (the end), i.e. “Read! In the Name of your Lord Who created. He has created man from a clot of congealed blood.”

The issues being debated in this example clearly had no empirical evidence, and neither could any argument be sustained within the parameters of what was regarded as ordinary logic. What was needed for such a debate to be coherent was an acceptance and a shared understanding of an existence beyond normal experience. Brian Fay (1976, p. 76) provides such a framework:

⁵³ Interview with Imam Ismail Waggie. [24 September 2011]

...attempting to set a social practice within the world-view of a social order of which it is a component involves elucidating the basic notions which people share about the world, society, and human nature.... In revealing these, the social scientist explains a given social order by articulating the conceptual scheme that defines the reality in certain ways, and in terms of which the actions that he views make sense...it attempts to reveal the a priori conditions which make the social experience what it is....

It was obvious that a discussion about eternal life, heaven and the afterlife could only make sense within a religious context in which a framework for intelligible discussion was possible.

Gamieldien created the possibility for such a discussion within a rational framework. He finally put together a coherent explanation within such a framework that incorporated some views offered by students and that also explained why others were problematic. He argued that the explanation that attempted to clarify the word 'forever' in the verse quoted, (They will dwell therein forever) could only be properly understood if the analysis proceeded beyond the literal and included a thorough understanding of theology (tawhid), which was imperative for such an analysis to be coherent and for the apparent contradictions to be explained. In this debate and in the final explanation, Gamieldien strove to develop his students' skills in the science of Quranic interpretation, which would ensure that their explanations of its verses did not contradict other verses or the fundamental theology of Rational Islam.

These classes therefore had very specific objectives. Firstly, it was an exercise in a mode of Quranic interpretation that recognised the inter-textual nature of the Quran as text. It was vital, according to Gamieldien, that there be no real contradictions from one chapter to the next for the Quran as a revealed message. Apparent conflicting explanations needed to be examined with the specific purpose of finding logical links between texts speaking on related topics in different sections of the Quran. He wanted his students to develop such hermeneutic skills that would provide them with access to analytic thinking about the very nature of revelation and, more importantly, to ground such interpretive skills in a broader theoretical framework.

Gamieldien's second objective was to provide interpretations that made sense and that could be applied in the everyday lives of ordinary Muslims, whether the verses dealt with moral, historical, scientific, theosophical or legal issues. This objective could often be

achieved through a process of reasoning or by contextualising the interpretation in the material world. The latter methodology, according to Gamieldien,⁵⁴ could be applied with positive results in the interpretation of law.

A student spoke of Gamieldien's interpretation of law as he believed it should be applied. He used the example of a major conflict that had erupted in Cape Town during the period when he was attending these classes. It had been discovered that the majority of the older mosques in Cape Town were not facing Mecca for the daily prayers. The majority of the ulama in the Western Cape held the view that the direction of prayer (qibla) as ascertained by previous generations should be maintained since mathematical accuracy for calculating the direction towards Mecca could never be assured. They believed that the knowledge and sincerity of previous generations had to be protected and that stability in terms of legal decisions (fatawi) should be preserved. Constant change, they argued, resulted in insecurity and conflict.⁵⁵

Gamieldien, however, expressed the view that modern technology and new knowledge had to be utilised to provide greater accuracy in the application of law and that in the case of the direction of prayers such technology had provided sufficient proof to permit the changing of the direction of prayer towards Mecca. He argued that the shari'a had to be interpreted in conjunction with information that was available during any historical period, even if such knowledge did not originate from religious texts. The only limit to interpretation was that the law should always remain within the general framework of its objectives. Thus the practical implementation of the law should accurately reflect its intention. In his legal jurisprudence (fiqh) session, he discussed the history, objective and implementation of the law on the qibla as well as the general methodology of implementation. The student reflected on this discussion:

In his discussion on the law pertaining to the direction to be faced for salaah he explained that when examining the legal basis of any religious practice, a proper study has to be made of the first source of law, viz. the relevant verse(s) in the Quran. In the case of the qibla controversy, the verses concerned were (Ch. 2, Surah Al Baqarah, verse 144, p. 58):

⁵⁴ Interview with I. Keraan, 12 October 2011.

⁵⁵ Interview with M. Abrahams, 15 November 2011.

“Indeed We see you turning your face (O! Muhammad) to the heavens, and now We shall turn you (in prayer) to a Qibla that you shall be pleased with. Turn then your face towards the Sacred Mosque and wherever you are, turn your faces towards it (for prayer) and those who have been given the (earlier) Book know well that it is the truth from their Lord. And Allah is not at all heedless of what they do.”

The shaykh in his discussion of this verse pointed out that from a legal perspective God had given an instruction to change the direction from the previous qibla to the mosque in Mecca called Masjidul Haram when performing the salaah. From a shari’a standpoint it meant that facing the mosque in Mecca when making salaah was a condition for its correctness. It was therefore necessary to establish the direction of Mecca by using the most efficient means available. He also explained that even those **means** needed to be revisited from time to time should even more efficient ones become available. He was at pains to explain that the law remained intact while the means of implementing the law might constantly be modified.

This rationalist view about the nature of knowledge is expressed by Soroush (2000, p. 16) who argues that

This thesis poses the question whether there is such a thing as religious knowledge with a collective nature; my answer is affirmative. The contention is then that this form of knowledge is, like other forms of knowledge, subject to all the attributes of knowledge. It is human, fallible, evolving and most important of all, it is constantly in the process of exchange with other forms of knowledge. As such, its inevitable transformations mirror the transformation of science and other domains of human knowledge.

It would appear that Gamieldien’s conception of religious knowledge was that it was essentially a human interpretation of the divine text, subject to reconsideration when informed by other disciplines in the course of time. This view has serious implications, especially in Islamic law.

An incident related by one of Gamieldien's sons⁵⁶ provides insight into the interpretive methodology to which he exposed his students and highlights these implications:

An alim came to visit my father and told him that he had been schooled in the Hanafi⁵⁷ tradition and that he had heard that my father was an expert in the Shafi'i legal school. He said that he had been taught that all the answers to legal issues in Islam had already been recorded and that his task as a (lawyer) was to give judgment according to the documented law on the issue. Whenever he was confronted with an issue that required a legal opinion (fatwa) then he would refer to the books on law where the answers would be available. He requested that my father explain his method of providing judgment. My father replied that he would listen to a specific case and only then could he consider the evidence provided. He remarked that there were no answers unless there were questions. He further explained that laws provided the general or theoretical framework and that it was the task of the hakim (judge) to interpret the law by first considering the evidence available.

This discussion graphically reflected the core difference between the literal a priori interpretation and a contextual one. The issue of interpretive categories in the implementation of law as opposed to prescriptive judgments was therefore a key difference between the rational thinkers and the traditionalists in Islam. In the example quoted, Gamieldien argued for the implementation of Islamic law within a framework of a functioning society in which the conditions of living had to be considered. His questioner, however, understood the law as static and independent of the social conditions of life. Gamieldien considered such an approach as impoverished because it was unable to resolve the problems of society at any given point in their development. He believed that it was necessary to give practical substance to laws that dealt with generalities and provided universal guidance. It was to him the responsibility of the judge (hakim) to apply them in specific instances.

The same kind of interpretive methodology was demonstrated in the discussions on the sunnah of the prophet Muhammad (SAW). In this instance, however, Gamieldien showed great caution in

⁵⁶ Interview with N. Gamieldien, 15 November 2011.

⁵⁷ One of the four juristic schools of Sunni Islam law.

the analysis of the assessment of the texts because of the historical and political factors that affected this content.

5.4 THE TEACHING OF HADITH AND THE SUNNAH

Gamieldien's discussion of hadith and the sunnah of the prophet Muhammad (SAW) also revealed clear differences from traditional interpretation and application. A student⁵⁸ explained his understanding of hadith as "having to be consistent with the first source of revelation, namely the Quran". Fazlur Rahman (1966, p. 68–69) explains this consistency as follows:

The Qur'an, the most consummate and final revelation of God to man, must be made the primary and indeed the sole director of human life and the source of law.

Now the Quranic body of statements is both universal and concrete enough to inculcate a definite attitude to life: it enunciates not only eternal spiritual and moral principles but also guided Muhammad and the early Community...in the constructive task of the nascent state...(However) The only natural method to be adopted in his comparative and interpretive procedure for a fresh application of the Quran to any given new situation was to see it as it had been actually worked in the lifetime of the prophet, who was the most authoritative factual exponent and whose conduct belonged a unique religious normativeness. This was the sunnah of the prophet.

Rahman's comments on the link between the Quran as the fundamental source of law and the historic role of the sunnah of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in its implementation and clarification and explains why the moral ordinances as set out in the Quran can only be properly understood through the example set out by Muhammed (PBUH) in his moral exemplification (the sunnah). His explanation entails the idea of an inextricable link between the Quran and the sunnah of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH) that provides the foundation of Islamic jurisprudence. Rahman further implies that the application of law by Muhammad during the Medina period represents the example for the way in which a legal principles should be applied in a given context. It also means that the contextual conditions have to be taken into account during any period when considering the application of laws as it had been during the time of the

⁵⁸ Interview with M. Abrahams, 15 November 2011.

prophet. The example extracted from his practices must necessarily conform to those underlying principles inherent in the application. The sunnah of the prophet is thus more than the mere observation of practices but involves analysis of the purpose and objectives of the practice situated in the conditions in which it was applied.

Gamieldien tended to use only those sayings and practices of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH) that supported, explained, elaborated on or demonstrated the meaning of verses of the Quran. Moreover, the primary focus of his use of hadith was as an explanation of the practices of worship (ibadah). The general principle established in the case of salaah, for example, was that the companions imitated the prophet's example in its performance. He is reported to have said, "Offer Salaah as you see me offering" (n.d. Bukhari). Similarly, for the haj Muslims were instructed to follow the prophet's example: "Take your pilgrimage rites from me" (n.d. Bayhaqi, p. 125).

The details of the performance of these acts of worship (ibadah) are thus contained in a body of hadith detailing each part. In a similar way there were hadith relating to fasting, alms, marriage and divorce, inheritance and other religious practices. While the Quran presented the legal framework for a specific religious rite or practice, it was the responsibility of the prophet Muhammad (SAW) to teach his followers its application.

Secondly, Gamieldien also showed his students those authentic hadith relating to the ethical system of Islam and the moral code into which Muslims are tied. However, it was for him fundamental that the initial reference to this moral code in Islam was explicitly contained in the Quran and that the example of the prophet represented an explanation of the Quranic text. Gamieldien avoided using hadith that were considered weak or that focused on rewards and the horrific explanations of punishment. In his use of the hadith relating to the ethical norms within Islam, he used only those that could be understood through the use of the intellect and that could be employed in the development of a morally sound community. On the issue of alms to the poor, for example, the prophet is reported to have said the following:

"It is indispensable for every Muslim to give charity." The people then asked: "(But what) if someone has nothing to give, what should he do?" The Prophet replied: "He should

work with his hands and benefit himself and also give in charity (from what he earns).” The people further asked: “If he cannot find even that?” He replied: “He should help the needy who appeal for help.” Then the people asked: “If he cannot do (even) that?” The Prophet said finally: “Then he should perform good deeds and keep away from evil deeds, and that will be regarded as charitable deeds” (n.d. Bukhari)

This hadith shows the moral responsibility that the prophet through his instructions and example imposed on all Muslims with regard to their possessions and their actions and social practices. The imposition was of such a nature that it required of individuals in the community to acquire possessions if they had the capacity to do so in order that they could dispense charity. The extent of the social responsibility of the community members to one another undermined the very concept of the accumulation of wealth while poverty and need prevailed. Gamieldien considered this as the foundation of morality. Compassion was for him the basis on which a socio-political system with an economic structure superimposed on it should be structured. Gamieldien believed that the historic community of Medina during the time of the prophet and his companions, guided by his example, provided the principles of compassion. The hadith bore testimony to these principles.

It also seems that Gamieldien’s understanding of hadith as the second source of divine knowledge (albeit an indirect source) acted in support and often as an explanation of references in the Quran. As such he was sceptical of those hadith for which there was no evidence in the Quran and that in some instances were in conflict with Quranic explanations. Also, at the level of societal conduct, he saw in the hadith and especially in the practices of the prophet the means to develop shared understandings of the morality particular to Islam and an ethical system that represented the framework for Muslim actions and social practice. Gamieldien explained that many of the hadith, such as those quoted, became points of reference in the building of the community in Medina and were then transmitted from generation to generation as an integral part of Islamic culture and norms. Gamieldien’s lectures on hadith and the sunnah of the prophet appear to have provided explanations affirming the validity of religious practices and, based on the example of the prophet, to have developed a normative practice in relation to worship (ibadah) as well as to individual and social morality.

There was a further aspect of the hadith that Gamieldien appeared to have regarded as fundamental to the development of the community. Those hadith that referred to education and the pursuit of knowledge were given priority in support of the Quranic verses that dealt with the same theme. The Quran (Ch. 22, Surah Haj, verse 54, p. 866), for example, makes a conceptual link between knowledge and the search for truth, according to one of the students⁵⁹:

And that those on whom Knowledge has been bestowed may learn that (the Qur'an) is the Truth from your Rabb (Cherisher and Sustainer), and that they may believe therein, and their hearts may be made humbly (open) to it: for verily Allah is the Guide of those who believe to the Straight Way.

To explain the issue of the search for knowledge, Gamieldien⁶⁰ referred to the sayings of the prophet that relate to this. He would, for example, present students with a hadith:

“The seeking of knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim” (Tirmidhi)⁶¹ and
“Acquire knowledge and impart it to the people” (Tirmidhi).⁶²

The hadith on knowledge served as explanations for references in the Quran that urge Muslims to search for knowledge and then to use it for the benefit of humanity. Gamieldien explained to his students⁶³ that because of the diversity of the knowledge available in the world, most of the ulama have argued that the search for knowledge in specific areas becomes a community responsibility (*fard kifayah*), which means that it is obligatory that some of the members of the community acquire knowledge in a particular discipline, while the search for knowledge generally is an individual responsibility (*fard ayn*).

These sayings of the prophet then served as the basis of in-depth discussions on the concept of knowledge and the necessity for learning and teaching as practices of worship (*ibadah*) in the broader sense and as individual and collective obligations on the global Muslim community. During such discussions students were required, both for the purpose of conceptual clarity and

⁵⁹ Interview with M. Abrahams, 15 November 2011.

⁶⁰ Interview with M. Abrahams, 15 November 2011.

⁶¹ Tirmidhi no.71

⁶² Tirmidhi no. 74

⁶³ Interview with M. Abrahams, 15 November 2011.

for effective, accurate and consistent presentation to their audiences, to reflect on questions that dealt with the fundamentally indispensable link between knowledge and belief. The formulation of the hadith was of particular significance since the prophet's (PBUH) statements on knowledge were all inclusive and not limited to explicit religious knowledge. A student⁶⁴ explained that in their debates Gamiieldien would present them with a range of questions relating to the importance of knowledge in Islam as inextricably interwoven with belief (iman) and he would require of them to explain this in a coherent manner. He referred them to the courses they had completed in tawhid, particularly to guide them to the answers. The explanation that all knowledge had a single source and origin then logically led to the conclusion that knowledge by its very essence was Islamic in character. This was in effect a controversial conclusion that raised a number of problems. Were there, for example, kinds of knowledge that were essentially bad or evil? Was there knowledge that was not beneficial to humanity? Was there knowledge that was forbidden for humanity to pursue? If there were such knowledge, could the claim that all knowledge emanates from the same source be sustained? If not, was it possible that there was another source of knowledge? These are some of the issues that students debated in their search for rational explanations with regard to the concept of knowledge.

The student⁶⁵ further explained that even though all of them considered themselves equipped to address many of the questions that required a good understanding of tawhid, they had great difficulty in dealing with others. They first pursued the issue of free choice in relation to good and bad knowledge as a viable explanation of the nature of creation. They argued that even though the Creator was responsible for establishing both good and evil, human beings were given the ability to choose their own direction. However, the problem of choice came under scrutiny as it was pointed out that even choice was a creation and therefore subject to the Creator's will. They then attempted to explain this phenomenon in terms of neutrality whereby everything in this world was neither good nor bad but its value lay firmly in its utilisation. This meant that all human beings might be judged in the manner that they employed those things that God had created. It further meant that nothing that was created could be defined as inherently good or bad because it was there to serve humanity. How people employed its use would

⁶⁴ Interview with M. Abrahams, 15 November 2011.

⁶⁵ Interview with M. Abrahams, 15 November 2011.

determine its moral status. Again students were confronted with a problem in their primary claims, namely whether human beings were free agents in their choice of actions. Gamieldien again reminded them that within their framework of thinking, choices were part of creation and therefore subject to the same determined restrictions as any other creation. At the end of the debate he explained that only the Creator had the power to provide people with the independent choice that would enable humanity to take responsibility for the actions that it pursued. People's independence was therefore willed by the Creator, and while their consequent status gave them the opportunity to make choices, it also placed the burden of responsibility on them for those choices. It was in the choices that human beings make about the utilisation of knowledge that morality intruded.

It became possible within the conceptual boundaries of the argument presented by Gamieldien to explain Islamic knowledge more definitively as encompassing all knowledge, some of which could be researched empirically, this being broadly described as scientific knowledge, while other knowledge could be described as revelation. Still other types of knowledge could be accessed through a process of logic and rational thought, this being a capacity given to human beings as an inherent part of their creation. The last category was described by Gamieldien⁶⁶ as knowledge that allowed human beings to construct societies and to understand and construct abstract thought on issues such as justice, equality, fairness and compassion. This knowledge could be acquired through research or through rationality, independent of divine revelation. Revelation confirmed both the right to the search for knowledge and the validity and otherwise of moral issues.

But the concept of all knowledge being Islamic also raised a further problem. Moosa (2000, p. 16) raises the concept of the "Islamization of knowledge", which he argues is generally unacceptable to modernists such as Fazlur Rahman. Moosa (2000, p. 16) then defines the Islamization of knowledge as that phenomenon whereby

all human and natural science should be studied in such a manner that it does not fail to disclose some revealed metaphysical principle or must by necessity lead to a theomorphic

⁶⁶ Interview with I. Waggie, 24 September 2011.

understanding of the self and the universe.

The implications of this concept seem to be that the Quran contains some reference to the knowledge that is available in the natural world and that Muslims can search for these references in the Quran before embarking on empirical research or, as an alternative, find the references after having completed the research. In both instances, it was argued, this position would substantiate the claim that all knowledge was Islamic in character.

This was, however, not the position that Gamieldien adopted in relation to Islamic knowledge. For him Islamic knowledge simply implied that all knowledge originated with the Creator. In the material world, therefore, the discovery of knowledge would be open to all who were prepared to initiate the necessary research. It was this process that Gamieldien termed *ijtihad*. This understanding of knowledge was also consistent with the concept of divine justice in that it opened up knowledge to all who searched for it. Muslims had no advantage in the acquisition of or the search for knowledge except in the exhortation of the Quran and the sunnah to seek for knowledge.

What was significant was that debates such as these inculcated in Gamieldien's students the ability to identify the impoverished logic of traditional explanations of good and evil and of punishment and reward. These debates also empowered them with the capacity to discuss issues such as human action and social practices in such a way that these were perceived as originating within specific social contexts rather than referring such actions to the power, knowledge and will of the Creator in every instance. At the same time it provided the students with the mechanism of not excluding the Creator from human actions and decision-making processes by subjecting this ability to His original sanction.

5.5 THE TEACHING OF THEOLOGY

Abdelwahab El-Affendi (p.411, 1998) describes theology as

‘*Ilm al-kalam* (literally ‘the science of debate’) [which] denotes a discipline of Islamic thought generally referred to as ‘theology’ or (even less accurately) as ‘scholastic theology’. The discipline, which evolved from the political and religious controversies

that engulfed the Muslim community in its formative years, deals with interpretations of religious doctrine and the defence of these interpretations by means of discursive arguments.

It was through this history of religious controversies that the content of Islamic thought was constructed as it meandered through the political upheavals that afflicted the Muslim community in its formative years. Gamielien was part of the latter-day struggle that faced the challenges of modernism which sought to reconstruct the very concept of belief within his own framework of thinking. ‘Ilm al-kalam sought to lay bare the diverse nature of Islamic belief and the search for the very meaning of belief in Islam. The passion that was displayed in the debates before the suppression of free thought in Islam on issues such as the unity of the Creator (tawhid), free will and determinism (qada and qadr), divine justice and retribution, the use of the intellect (al aqli) and the uninterpreted acceptance of revelation (al naqli) reflected the core issues that divided Muslim opinion about Islam.

The debates, however, went much deeper than divergent interpretations of the Creator’s attributes or whether human beings had freedom of choice in relation to their actions. The very notion of the science of ‘Ilm al-Kalam as a legitimate Islamic science was vigorously contested through the centuries and is still not resolved. Some of the most noted scholars in Islam spoke strongly against the use of kalam, that is, rational argument to assess and debate revelation. Imam Shafi’i, who was the founder of one of the four schools of Islamic law, is reported to have rejected kalam when he said,

My judgment with respect to the partisans of Kalâm is that they be smitten with fresh leafless palm branches, that they be paraded among the communities and tribes, and that it be proclaimed: “This is the punishment of him who has deserted the Book and the Sunnah, and taken up Kalâm!” (Bayhaqi, p. 462).

Similarly, Imam Ahmad bin Hambal, also a founder of one of the four schools, gave his followers advice on relations with people of kalam. He is reported to have said, “If you see a man loving Kalâm, then warn against him!” (Ibn Battah, 2008, no. 54).

As a result of opposition to ‘Ilm al-kalam, it was suppressed for a number of centuries and rejected as part of the education in the Islamic sciences. It was revived in the 19th century by modernists such as Jamal al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh as one of the tools for the modernisation of Islamic education in Egypt.

For Gamieldien tawhid was regarded as the study of the history and theory of belief in the unity of the Creator. ‘Ilm al-kalam for him therefore meant a study of the different interpretations of this unity and the political and social influences that impacted on such thought and understandings. In his quest to develop a holistic understanding of Islamic thought through the different periods of its progress, he constructed a course that assisted students to locate Rational Islam within the general framework of belief.

This was the third module that Gamieldien taught during the Monday session. While most of the students had completed the Usuluddin Diploma that included the three-year course in tawhid, the purpose of this course was to link Islamic belief with the interpretation of law and tafsir. The class was based on interactive discussions on specific topics and establishing their Quranic foundations and support from the sunnah of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Most importantly, however, the module required of these students to develop interpretive skills and the capacity for independent thought. They were required to probe without fear of sanction into issues that were traditionally regarded as self-explanatory and historically settled. An example of such an issue was outlined by one of Gamieldien’s students whose views reflected this freedom. The issue dealt with the historical events relating to the prophet Isa (AS) and had been interpreted in many ways by Muslim exegetes through the centuries. The problem for rationalists had always been whether Isa had been raised by God to the heavens and whether he would return at the end of time. It appeared that the majority opinion amongst Muslims was that he had been raised and that he would return. This was the issue that students were required to debate.⁶⁷

The shaykh introduced the question of the return of nabi Isa (Jesus). He wanted to know whether, from a purely theosophical viewpoint, this was at all possible. We began to argue vigorously using both the Quranic verses as support and our own independent

⁶⁷ Interview with M. Abrahams, 15 November 2011.

thought. Most of us felt that there was clear proof in the Quran and in the books of hadith on the finality of prophethood. We used Quranic sources to bolster our argument. For example, we referred to the following verse in the Quran, “O people! Muhammad has no sons among ye men, but verily, he is the Apostle of God and the last in the line of Prophets. And God is Aware of everything” (Quran, Ch. 33, Surah Ahzab, verse 40, p. 102). We would support our position by invoking a tradition (hadith) of the prophet Muhammad, reported by Ibn-e-Hazam, when he said;

“My position in relation to the prophets who came before me can be explained by the following example: A man erected a building and adorned this edifice with great beauty, but he left an empty niche, in the corner where just one brick was missing. People looked around the building and marvelled at its beauty, but wondered why a brick was missing from that niche? I am like unto that one missing brick and I am the last in the line of the Prophets” (2007, p. 77).

As students, we were of the view that this emphatic assertion of the finality of prophethood appeared to be contradicted by interpretations from the Quran and acceptance of hadith that ostensibly confirmed the return of Isa as a prophet of God. We quoted the following verse to highlight the apparent contradiction: “He (‘Isa) is a Sign of coming of the Hour (of judgement). Have no doubt about it. But follow me. This is a straight path” (Quran, Ch. 43, Surat az-Zukhruf, verse 61, p. 1 337).

We further asserted that the claim that Isa would return was strengthened by the tradition of the prophet Muhammad (SAW) when he said, “The hour will not be established until the son of Maryam (AS) i.e. ‘Isa (AS) descends amongst you as a just ruler” (Bukhari, 2005, p.6).

We argued amongst ourselves saying that if this assertion was correct then Muhammad (SAW) would not be the last ‘in the line of the prophets.’ If, on the other hand, Isa did not return as a prophet this would undermine the very prescriptive understanding of a prophet, viz. that he (Isa) had been granted certain attributes as a prophet that he would not have if he were to return as an ordinary person.

This was the problem and the dilemma that Gamieldien placed before the students. Students were thus faced with two apparently contradicting verses from the Quran and, similarly, two conflicting traditions on the status of the prophet Isa (AS). What Gamieldien wanted of these students was to obtain what he termed proof from the intellect (dalil aqli) to resolve the issue. After much debate there was some agreement that Isa would not be returning to participate in the affairs of humanity. The former student⁶⁸ explained their individual and collective reasoning based on their understanding of tawhid:

Since Allah had created the world to function naturally, i.e. within a framework of natural laws, it would be inconceivable that he would deviate from those natural laws. While it was theoretically possible, given Allah's attribute of power (qudrah), to do anything, to go against His laws was logically inconceivable. Since all human beings are created to live under specific conditions and survive only for a period of time in this world, talk of survival outside of his natural conditions and for a time period, far beyond the natural existence of the human species, would require a suspension of those natural laws. For those reasons the return of Isa (AS) was not possible.

The development of a logical argument against the possibility of the return of Isa (AS) was then followed by a presentation of proof from the Quran to support the students' interpretation of the events around Isa (AS). The students argued that there was universal agreement amongst Muslim theologians and exegetes (mufasirrin) that Isa (AS) had not been crucified, a fact confirmed in the Quran (Ch. 4, Surah Nisaa, verse 157, p. 230):

That they said (in boast), "We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah";-

but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ

therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of a surety they killed him not;-

⁶⁸ Interview with M. Abrahams, 15 November 2011.

There was also a majority interpretation that he was raised to the heavens where he presently resides. This interpretation was based on the verse from the Quran, “Nay, Allah raised him up unto Himself; and Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise” (Ch. 4, Surah Nisaa, verse 158, p. 230). Those holding this view also asserted his return before the end of the world.

The minority view and the view, it would appear, of the students was that the verse asserts that Isa (AS) had been saved from the humiliation of crucifixion. This according to them was the meaning of the term raised (rafa’a) in the Quran. His ultimate fate was in the knowledge of the Creator.

This debate and understanding of historical events reflected the core difference in the framework of thinking between the rationalists and the traditionalists. It also reflected the difference in the interpretive methodologies employed in the understanding of these historic-religious events. The students, who had debated issues such as these as exercises in developing their capacities in rational thinking and in the rational interpretation of Quranic texts and hadith, became skilled in the science of tafsir and tawhid. In later years they were able to use their rational knowledge and deliberative skills to promote the rational framework in those areas where they were employed as imams and teachers.

5.6 THE PRACTICE OF RATIONAL PROPAGATION

The Wednesday sessions had a completely different focus. Gamieldien’s objective here was to initiate and develop practical and communication skills that would enable students to deal with community issues that would confront them as imams at mosques or teachers at madrassas. The first of these skills was that of leading the Friday community prayer (juma’a) services. From an educational perspective, the congregational services probably represented the most important means of propagation for these students in their role as evangelists because it was during these services that a framework of thinking that would allow for some reflection on issues when contested could be perceived differently. It was primarily through the presentation of specific Islamic concepts during the Friday juma’a that the congregation was exposed to such reflection. As a result mosques were often labelled in terms of the ideological statements and positions of

the imam. During the 'Id al-Adha (Festival of Sacrifice) controversy, this claim was most graphically demonstrated when those who propagated the rationalist or progressive views of Islamic theology celebrated 'Id al-Adha with Mecca while the traditionalists accepted the local sighting of the moon for celebration.

The lectures and discussions about the Friday juma'a sermons were very interactive, comprising the selection of relevant topics and current events. Gamieldien encouraged his students to approach their talks from within the framework of theology. It did not matter what the topic was; the theoretical foundation within which it worked always preceded its presentation. A student⁶⁹ discussed the process of sermon preparation:

In general the shaykh selected the topic for the session, this being located in the verse from the Quran supported by a hadith from the prophet Muhammad (SAW). If for instance the topic is ethics [ahlaaq] within the community context, the selected verse from the Quran would address this issue directly. In this case the verse that was selected to introduce the topic was in Chapter 4 (Surah Nisaa, verse 36, p. 191) of the Quran:

“Serve Allah and join not any partners with Him: and do good – who are strangers, the Companion by your side, the way-farer (ye meet) and what your right hands possess: for Allah loveth not the arrogant, the vainglorious.”

The verse according to the sheikh sets the tone for the content of the lecture providing the basis for the understanding that a pious Muslim who believes in the oneness of the Creator would serve that Creator through the formal supplication and would serve humanity by 'doing good' to them. The instruction to do good is infinite in that it includes an immediate act of kindness to the most complex of research projects aimed at benefiting humanity, the categories mentioned in the verse serve as examples of who should be amongst the recipients of good deeds. The verses such as this then becomes the foundation of a discussion that ranges from the purpose of existence to the attributes that human beings possess that render them capable of practices that could promote the

⁶⁹ Interview with Imam S. Williams, 11 November, 2011.

welfare of humanity in general. It would further deal with the concept of morality (ahlaaq) that draws the boundaries of our responsibilities as human beings to help our fellow creations.

The hadith under the broad topic of ahlaaq would relate to the kind of morality displayed by the prophet within his community. Gamieldien would take into consideration when choosing a hadith that it was required to supplement the selected verse of the Quran. In this case he chose a hadith in which the prophet was reported to have said, “I was sent to perfect good character” (Malik, p.8).

Here the concept of good character is linked to the Quranic concept of doing good. Whatever the prophet had done in his life or had instructed his companions to do, or had encouraged them to practice would be defined as doing good thereby developing good character. A lecture such as this would allow students to select a wide range of specific topics that would reside under the concept of ‘doing good’ or developing a ‘good character’. Any specific examples that would be relevant to a community were left to the imams for their own selection in their lectures.

Students were required to build a sermon using these sources as the basis for their understanding of ethics in Islam. A sound knowledge on the life of the prophet relating to his social interaction with his companions, his neighbours, his family, the orphans and the poor and needy and all the other categories stated in the relevant verse. They would also have to reflect explicitly on how their explanation encapsulated the concept of ‘good character’ and ‘doing good’. These explanations serve as the backdrop for the ‘message’ of the sermon.

The sermon would then be required to link the essentially historical and religious discussion of the conduct of the prophet, as the paradigm of Muslim ethics, not only to the day-to-day existence of the community but also to the way in which Muslims perceive of their own practices. Moreover, on a more universal level it required of the Muslim community to reflect on their global responsibility to promote the welfare of humanity in general.

This represented the evangelical section of the sermon. But for the shaykh this was not sufficient. It was crucial for him to propagate the concept of the relevance of Islam in this world rather than as a means of achieving reward for the next. Students therefore had to allocate some of the sermon time to talk about Islam as having the content that emancipated them as human beings so that their genius were released in such a way that it could be beneficial to humankind. The benefit that would accrue because of the creative quality given to people was to be utilised within an ethical system that is essentially altruistic. Gamieldien believed that in the modern world the Muslim concept of 'doing good' and having a 'good character' must be put in the marketplace together with the ethical frameworks of other societies who are also using human creativity for the wellbeing of its citizens.

It was in this context that issues of justice and economic care were explained within a moral rather than a political framework as a responsibility of civil society as much as that of the state in taking responsibility for citizens. Legal concepts such as collective responsibility (*fardul kifayah*) were made a contextual part of the sermon to provide the parameters within which such responsibilities were to be discharged.

It was clear from the discussion of some of the former students that their teacher wanted them to propagate the concept of an alternative ethical system in which Islam provided the moral foundation on which a Muslim society or community could be structured. One of the key platforms for the propagation of such a view was the Friday juma'a, which had historically been employed to address social issues that confronted the people. It was for Gamieldien a means of addressing a wider audience on a weekly basis where the practical nature of Islamic practice could be presented to congregants.

The Wednesday sessions could therefore be described as consisting of a skills development programme whereby potential leaders, imams and teachers of Rational Islam could be empowered to propagate a framework of thinking that confronted traditionalism and an archaic notion of theology. But it was for Gamieldien as important that a group of skilled teachers be trained to take over the leadership of the rationalist project in the Western Cape to continue the work that he had taken responsibility for since the post-Second World War period. The fact that more literalist views had swept the Muslim world, especially making their impact felt in the

theological sciences, meant that only enclaves of Rational Islam, based on the Muhammad Abduh legacy, remained in small pockets around the world. In the Western Cape Gamieldien had succeeded in retaining such a pocket of Rational Islamic discourse in rapidly changing local circumstances that affected his *modus operandi*, reach and impact.

5.7 GAMIELDIEN'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE QURAN

Gamieldien made no attempt to locate scientific explanations in the Quran or the sunnah of the prophet Muhammad (SAW) except to argue that the Quran is essentially a book of guidance in all areas of human experience. He accepted the position that the Quran in various verses shows specific areas for possible investigation while not providing definitive explanations of those areas of possible deliberation and explanation. In chapter 23 of the Quran (Ali, pp. 875-876), for example, there is a reference on the process of fertilization of the female egg in human beings:

And we did create Man from a quintessence (of clay)

Then we placed him as a drop of sperm

In a place of rest, firmly fixed:



The verses are not scientific in the technical sense of the term. But it is an indication that challenges Muslim to investigate and do research into the process of human fertilization. It could further be argued that the purpose of verses such as these in the Quran was to probe into ways of easing the process of childbirth. Certainly, greater knowledge of this process would have made, from a medical point of view, childbirth so much safer.

Gamieldien believed that this was an inherent part of the methodology employed in the Quran to initiate deliberative discussion and investigation within the Muslim community. In effect these indicators, which he believed could develop a culture of reflection and deliberation amongst Muslims, were for Gamieldien one of the most fundamental underlying messages of the Quran. It is for this reason that he wanted students to understand rational deliberation and reflection as part of the primary tools for the development of faith, spirituality and piety. The acquisition of knowledge and its utilisation in the public domain were for him representative of important components of the attributes of faith and spirituality because they were essentially social in

character. Faith and spirituality for Gamieldien could not be developed in isolation of social practice. In the course of his teaching, the advanced students, whom he considered as having the capacity to perceive some of the more sophisticated concepts in Islamic thinking, did not attempt to propagate what Moosa (2000, p. 16), as quoted earlier, referred to as the “Islamization of knowledge”. In explaining the position of Fazlur Rahman on the issue of the Islamization of knowledge, Moosa argues that knowledge should have “an unfettered intellectual exploration free from dogma and cultural limitations”. The discovery of new knowledge is open to humanity in its search for understanding and the utilisation of resources. For Gamieldien as a theologian it had the added value of presenting rational proof for the existence of a Creator and for the development of faith and spirituality firmly grounded on knowledge.

The advanced education sessions, because they were based on an understanding that students had completed their basic training in the Islamic sciences and had also gone through an intermediate phase after having obtained their initial diplomas, were considered to be appropriate for producing students who would be able to pursue a direction in Rational Islam that could transform local thinking. It was further hoped that the community would be able to participate actively in initiating alternative understandings of some of the verses of the Quran. In this people could become producers rather than receivers of new knowledge in the general progress of humanity, even if only at the local level. It was for this reason that Gamieldien addressed theoretical issues on the objectives of specific religious practices, even though the students already understood their laws.

Another of the focus areas that were debated involved the issue of the value of formal worship (ibadah) in the search for knowledge. For the traditionalists, worship had two key interconnecting purposes. Firstly, it provided Muslims with the means to show gratitude for the ni'mah (bounties) that He had provided to all of humanity, and, secondly, it provided a means of reward with the ultimate prize being paradise. Professor Omar Hasan Kasule explains that;

Structured ‘ibadat can be obligatory or non-obligatory. The obligatory prayers and paying of zakat are examples of structured ibadat.... Obligatory acts of ibadat are associated with a reward if performed and punishment if neglected (1998, p. 1).

This view was contested by the rationalists locally without necessarily rejecting all of the arguments of the traditionalists. The issue of gratitude for favours bestowed on humanity in general and on Muslims in particular is a theme that pervades all discursive tendencies. Rationalists, however, argue that the performance of the formal ibadah in itself does not reflect gratitude if it is not accompanied by practices that demonstrate gratitude. They further assert that maintaining a righteous life and good moral standards is in itself only part of the process of showing gratitude. An inherent part of that process is the responsibility to search for answers in this world regarding the purpose of everything that had been created in this world. The training and education of individuals from within the community of Islam are therefore compulsory and intimately linked to showing gratitude to the Creator. Worshipping God, seen from such a perspective, must be interpreted as having much more profound objectives. A student⁷⁰ explained that Gamieldien had used the hadith of the prophet Muhammad (SAW), who is reported to have said, “The prayer is the ascendance (mi’raj) of the believer” (Bukhari, 2005). The interpretation given of this hadith included an explanation of the spiritual heights that Muslims were able to attain with the development of a solid foundation provided by the salaah and the development of the intellect. Gamieldien explained the purpose and objectives of the formal ibadah in terms of their utility value to Muslims in the course of their lives.

5.8 IMAMS AND TEACHERS

By 1987 some of these students were being appointed in stand-in, temporary and, in some cases, permanent positions as imams of the many mosques that had sprung up in Cape Town’s township areas. Social conditions had furthermore undergone substantial changes since the initial settlement of these communities. People had begun to settle into these new and different circumstances and had begun the slow process of reconstructing their lives around their new realities. The changed economic conditions were also beginning to be reflected in the physical circumstances of the townships and in the people themselves. There were also far less obvious, more subtle changes in the very atmosphere that pervaded these townships. The vibrancy associated with communal comfort had disappeared from the people’s lives and was replaced by a communal tension that hung over the townships. Hundreds of young and older individuals loitered around the flats and the houses, around bus terminuses and taxi ranks, most having given

⁷⁰ M. Abrahams, 15 November 2011.

up any hope of finding a job or unwilling to undertake the task of looking for work. In a sense an atmosphere of fear and mistrust had replaced the mutual trust and respect of their former lives.

It was from amongst these communities that individuals had begun to emerge to initiate the task of constructing mosques and madrassas and in the process also of reconstructing their communities. But because these people came from divergent backgrounds, there were differences in their understanding of some issues of belief, these often resulting in contestation amongst the leadership in the appointment of imams and madrasa teachers. In those areas where the former residents of District Six had been resettled, there was strong support for the appointment of Gamieldien's students. Rational Islam therefore had some representation in areas such as Manenberg, Heideveld, Hanover Park and some parts of Mitchell's Plain where the imams were elected from the students who had or were attending the advanced courses at Gamieldien's home.

It is, however, crucial that the diversity alluded to in the previous paragraph be properly explored in order to understand the on-going struggle at a number of mosques in the years following their completion. Unlike the kinds of dispute described in Davids' book, 'Mosques of the Bokaap' (1981, p. 50), which were often dominated by personal power struggles, the differences amongst the congregants at these mosques in the townships also revolved around theological and ideological issues. These disputes often represented or seemed to be connected at a local level to the divergent interpretations of Islam globally, where the struggle to find a niche between modernism and traditionalism continued to plague the Muslim Ummah. An imam⁷¹ spoke of an issue that split a township community, leading to attempts by a section of the jama'a to remove him as the imam and reflecting the conflicting understandings of theology and their impact on historical interpretation:

On the night of the remembrance of the Night Journey and the Ascension of the prophet Muhammad (SAW) called the Isra' and Mi'raj the community normally meet at the mosque. I related the events that took place as recorded in the Quran, hadith records and books of history. I left out all the stories that were inconsistent with the tawhid. My

⁷¹ S. Williams, 11 November 2011.

primary focus was on the salaah which the prophet had been ordered to instruct his community to perform five times daily. I also pointed out some of the problematic versions of the nights events. Many congregants had heard this many times before having attended the Al-Azhar Mosque in District Six for many years. However, other congregants were highly incensed and in the course of the week approached me to ask me to retract what I had said and to apologise to the congregation. I reasoned with them and a few accepted my explanation while other remained adamant that I had violated key beliefs in Islam. Some of the congregants claimed that they had approached other imams and shaykhs to give their view on this issue. These religious leaders had confirmed the history of the night's events that I had rejected. They believed that my version of the events of the night of Mi'raj was an act of unbelief (kufr). This led to major upheaval at the mosque with a small group of the congregants deciding to stop attending the mosque until I resigned or had my contract terminated.

This intensity of the dispute reflected the radical differences in the understanding of Islamic theology. From the perspective of traditional Islam, the claims regarding Muhammad's ascension (mi'raj) contained in a body of hadith were accepted unconditionally as valid explanations of the events of the night of mi'raj. The most important of the claims was that the night journey (isra') and the ascension (mi'raj) were physical. The second important claim was that the prophet Muhammad (SAW) had received instructions from the Creator that formal prayers (salaah) would become obligatory for Muslim 50 times daily. This number was reduced to five by the Creator after advice had been given to the prophet Muhammad (SAW) by the prophet Musa (AS) to make representations on the burden that 50 salaah would present to the Muslims. The third claim related to the experiences that the prophet had on the ascension part of the journey.

The local rationalists, while accepting the first claim for which there was Quranic proof,⁷² rejected the other two claims on the basis of their conflict with the conventions of revelation and on the basis of their understanding of tawhid. On the issue of the salaah, for example, the rationalists argued that the Quran only referred to five salaah being made obligatory and that there was no reference to anything else. They also argued that there was no mention of any other

⁷² Interview with M.R. Behardien, 12 July 2011.

purpose for the mi'raj. There was therefore no obligation on Muslims to accept events unrelated to the salaah.

This dispute could be assessed at a number of levels within the parameters of Islamic interpretation. The acceptance of hadith without analytical input represented a key feature of traditional Islam and of the principle of taqlid. From the perspective of belief it also reflected an explicit demonstration of faith (iman) in the acceptance of belief in issues for which there was neither empirical nor rational evidence. Moreover, this approach to religious understanding also reflected an acceptance of the superiority and greater authenticity of revealed knowledge over empirical and rational knowledge. Rejection of the hadith was therefore tantamount to a rejection of the revealed sources.

For rationalists, the need to scrutinise hadith for consistency with the interpretive categories of the Quran was a logical process and failure to follow such an approach to understanding the essential message of Islam for them led to beliefs that were not only flawed from an Islamic perspective but also failed to address the problems of what they considered as proper belief. The issue of the events of the mi'raj was representative of what it meant for each group to be a Muslim submitting to the meaning and purpose of God's creation and what it meant to transgress in terms of belief. The withdrawal of a section of the congregation from the mosque and its demand for the resignation of the imam were outward signs of the depth of the schism between the groupings. Issues such as the interpretation of the mi'raj are seldom resolved within such a community context, and the division in this community, according to the imam, remained as a source of conflict. The failure to understand the issue as a manifestation of much larger hermeneutic differences that could only be resolved with a degree of tolerance towards alternative views probably lay at the root of the problem.

5.9 THE WESTERN CAPE IN THE EARLY NINETIES

By the 1990s the Western Cape Muslim community was reshaping itself as it began to grapple with global issues that increasingly began to impact on local perceptions of Islam. The fall of the apartheid state and the re-emergence of South Africa from the isolation of the past 30 years also had an effect on the South African Muslim community as it began interacting with the global ummah. Leaders representing different interest groups in the community, including religious

groupings, also began interacting with the new democratically elected government at all levels and participating in political and other structures. They now felt free to seek opportunities for the benefit of their community. The Voice of the Cape, the first Muslim radio station in the Western Cape, first went on the air in January 1995, under the auspices of the Muslim Broadcasting Corporation, serving the Muslim Community in the Western Cape, when the Muslim community was granted a license to manage a radio station that would broadcast programmes of a religious nature. After some conflict about control, it was decided that the license would be shared by the Muslim Judicial Council and the Islamic Unity Convention. This was a crucial decision because even though both organisations were representative of sections of the community, they were also both ideological in the sense that each projected a specific image of Islam. Also, because the license was granted as community ownership, the general interest of the entire Western Cape community had to be considered in the presentation of programmes. This meant that groupings that were not included in the license agreement had the right to have their views on Islamic issues presented. In reality this theoretical position was seldom put into effect and the views of the license holders dominated the airwaves. While the Muslim Judicial Council was representative of the traditionalists with strong salafi tendencies, the Islamic Unity Convention reflected the perceptions of the fundamentalists with strong Islamist worldviews. The radio stations radio, Voice of the Cape and radio 786, operating under the auspices of these two organisations were powerful communication and indeed propagation instruments for their views. Consistent with a literalist understanding of Islam, the radio stations propagated and popularised the traditional views. The constant and consistent presentation of these interpretations together with the affirmation of the indispensable role of the local ulama in providing guidance to the community were key factors in ensuring the hegemony of traditionalism. The transformation in the discourse of Islamic belief and practice was evident as the community gradually adopted the perceptions provided on the two radio stations. The change in culture from one of vigorous engagement on religious issues to one of submission became one of the most patent characteristics within the community as it succumbed to the influence of the clergy and increasingly abdicated its responsibility for decision making on Islamic issues. Even simple issues such as the code of dress and terminology related to religious practices were affected by the bombardment of specific religious explanations from the clergy. Paulo Freire explains the phenomenon as succumbing to a culture of silence:

Domination and oppression are worked into the traditional educational setup, through which a culture of silence is formed by eliminating the paths of thought that lead to a language of critique (Giroux, 2001, p. 80).

To a large extent the media instead of opening debate and providing space for reflection rigidly followed the interpretation of the traditionalists. The use of the media as conduits for propagation provided traditionalists with unprecedented access to the community in the Western Cape, thereby shifting the balance of influence even further in their favour. Besides having the use of the majority of mosques for the Friday sermons, traditionalists were now able to entrench their interpretation and turn away from the intellectualism that modernists and rationalists understood as an integral component of Islam. Having achieved political hegemony over the Muslim community, they turned spirituality into a ritual grounded in fear and expectation and religion into a contest between good and evil. In this process of contestation between traditionalism and fundamentalism on the one hand and Western culture on the other, Rational Islam became an enclave confined to the mosques where Gamieldien's students presided throughout the peninsula.

A number of other issues that had an influence on the community consciousness during the early nineties also contributed to the success of traditionalism in the Western Cape. Ironically, many of the same issues contributed simultaneously to the survival of Rational Islam. Some of these issues were internal to the interpretations of Islam while others were located both in the community and in the social and political conditions that often helped to shape community consciousness.

The traditionalists – those who were thought to strive for the restoration of the values and system of ethics that were perceived as originating from the period of the prophet and the companions – based their understanding of modernity on the reality of Western society. Soroush (2000, p. 40) describes the traditional perception of the world:

...traditional humanity regarded everything as settled and predetermined and seemed it neither possible nor desirable to change the world ... it believed that the 'natural' order of the world (both in society and in nature) should not be disturbed.

Also:

...traditional humankind perceived itself as a guest in a ready-made house, in which the occupant had no right or opportunity to object or change anything. Human beings were content with their 'share' of life....

Soroush (2000, p. 40) further explains the fear that had overtaken traditionalism:

There were those who consider the values of secularism and liberalism as the unavoidable prerequisites of development.... This identification of development with repugnant prerequisites and consequences cannot help sending another chill up those spines of those weary believers who stand on the brink of the modern world....”

The response of traditionalists globally, it would seem therefore, did not indicate a rejection of the technological and scientific advancement made in the West. It appeared to have been a rejection of the value system and ethical norms that inevitably seemed to accompany such advancement, a value system that was conceptually bound to pervade all areas of social existence. Traditionalists therefore actively embraced the benefits that such advancement brought without wanting to participate in its social and cultural effects.

Islamic modernism and Rational Islam, however, acknowledged the changing and changed social world as a natural outcome of human creativity and as such sanctioned in the primary sources in Islam. Rahman (1979, p. 216) explains the position of modernists such as Jamal al-din al-Afghani whom he describes as “the first genuine Muslim Modernist”, saying that al-Afghani propagated the idea that

there was nothing in the basic principles of Islam that is incompatible with reason and science...he aroused the Muslims to develop the medieval content of Islam to meet the challenges of a modern society (Rahman, 1979, p. 216).

It was clear that modernists wanted Muslims to be participants in the revolutionary transformation that had overtaken the world even though it was being led by the West because they believed that the process of development was in itself not a threat to Islamic values and norms. On the contrary, the process of research, discovery and advancement was to modernists historically and theologically Islamic in character. It was, they believed, inherent in the Islamic conceptual framework of knowledge an essential contributor to understanding the nature of

creation, thus allowing for a more complete submission to the Creator. The accompanying value system of the West was for them contingent on the essential process of research. Afghani's appeal to the ulama to transform the medieval content of Islam meant that he believed that Islam had the capacity, with its own ethical system and the guidance of the primary sources, even though these sources themselves required reinterpretation, to deal with and become a contributor in the development of new knowledge. His belief in the capacity of what could be described as Islamic morality to withstand the onslaught of Western values strengthened his confidence in the positive engagement with the Western world. It was these views that ensured the relevance of Rational Islam as a framework of thinking within the Islamic context. Gamieldien held similar views on the role of Islam in the modern world, especially on the active role that Muslims should be playing in the process of human advancement. In the Western Cape these views were being kept alive as a legacy from al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh's rational interpretation of Islam. For the modernists, from al-Afghani and Abduh on the international stage to Gamieldien locally, a moral system guided by the principles of ethics (ahlaaq) as referenced in the Quran was regarded as sufficient to function as the parameters within which advancement could be structured.

Rationalists thus addressed the issue of values, morality and ethics in Islam within the context of Western modernism. They asserted the contingent nature of the connection between development and values and presented two crucial arguments that had their roots in the link between progress and value systems. These represented a fundamental shift from the values of the pre-modern era. Firstly, rationalists argued that whereas the medieval conception presented a picture of ethics as attaining the "empyrean of spiritual perfection and the afterlife", modernism steered it "towards the terra firma of happiness and felicity in this world" (Soroush, 2000, p. 41). Morality therefore for them had to act as the means by which a structured society, guided by the Quran and the principles along which the prophet organised the Medina community, should be able to organise itself socially and to function effectively so that all of its members are able to benefit from such organisation. Inherent in the principles of this management system are such issues as justice, economic and social security, human rights, freedom and religion. The political organisation of the state should be subject to these principles without prescription on the form of the state. Secondly, while the traditional values laud poverty, asceticism and austerity as a "prescription for redemption" whereby the "rich are further removed from salvation and more

susceptible to a host of affliction...” (Soroush, 2000, p. 47), progress and development for modernists represent a means of eliminating the scourge of poverty and deprivation. Thus the modernist project of producing wealth at an individual and societal level is understood as a natural human endeavour and therefore divinely inspired and sanctioned in the sacred texts. Then, within the context of legal and moral responsibility, Quranic laws pertaining to the proper distribution of wealth obviate exploitation and suffering.

The position of traditionalism locally was rather different from the majority of Muslim contexts wherein there was greater homogeneity in terms of values and cultural norms. In order to properly understand the position of the traditionalists in the Western Cape, their particular framework of thinking has to be located in the local conditions so that its key elements could be unravelled from global perspectives. The difference between a predominantly Muslim society and the mixed one in South Africa and specifically in the Western Cape was that the Muslim community was less able to influence change as it occurred in the community.

The local Muslim community had through the years integrated many of the local customs into its own social lives and had interacted with people of other religions and cultures in so many ways and at so many different levels that many of its social practices were indistinguishable from the practices of those communities. Within working class districts interdependence and cultural integration were common features of everyday living. While the apartheid era did create class distinction on the basis of property and led to petty bourgeois values of individualism and self-conscious identification of a religious persona distinct from the other, in the working class districts a kind of social interdependency was still a dominant feature of community life, often transcending religious differences.

The complexity of this socio-cultural relationship between Muslims and communities from other religions militated against exclusivism and consequently advanced the process of cultural sharing. In spite of this, the Muslim community guarded its formal religious practices while selectively adopting social and cultural practices from the wider community. The rise of salafi traditionalism during the 1980s resulted in serious attempts to reverse this process and to develop a measure of cultural exclusivism within the larger community. The alternative strategy therefore was to propagate an Islam that rejected cultural integration in theory even in the face of selective cultural integration in practice. The general proposition that the moral code and the

ethical norms practised during the time of the prophet and his companions should be maintained was upheld by traditionalists when confronted with the reality of the changes brought about by a rapidly industrialising society. Traditionalists thus actively encouraged an outward display of Islamic appearance in terms of dress, general appearance, terminology and education. These strategies found resonance within the community, especially in the townships where Islam had become an important component for rehabilitation. By the nineties the essence of the talk about Islam had changed radically from the norms of the District Six period. The hegemony of traditionalism had by this time become much more pronounced.

For the rationalists in the Western Cape the debate appeared to have been much harder. The Muslim community, together with other oppressed communities of the apartheid era, had been betrayed by modern capitalism in its apartheid guise. This had been the only form in which modernist development had been experienced by these communities, and they were distrustful of its objectives. The message of rationalism to use worldly knowledge in order to achieve material progress as well as spiritual comfort did not always find resonance amongst the poorer sections of the community. Their material conditions militated against economic or social progress and success at every level. Even education to them was seen to have been provided in a vacuum with total disregard for development in other areas of social needs. The conditions of the community within which education was being provided, that is to say those other areas of inequality and deprivation, were being ignored so that its living conditions gave little hope for improvement.

Modernists had after the Second World War already become entwined in the by-products of Western modernism. The rationalist philosophy brought to the Cape by Gamielien had contributed much to the period of transition in which Cape Muslims were able to accept secular education as a legitimate means of acquiring knowledge. The period of the 1980s and early 1990s, however, brought its own challenges as the traditionalists sought to impose the salafi interpretation of Islam. With the passing of Gamielien in 1997, it was left to his students to maintain one of the few enclaves of Rational Islam. Without the stature of the mentor to lead the process, however, it had become unclear whether the influence of Rational Islam would continue to be felt as powerfully in the Western Cape. With the absence of highly trained ulama propagating this understanding of Islam, the waning of its influence locally seemed to have become inevitable.

5.10 CONCLUSION

The period under review showed major attempts by rationalists under the direction of Gamieldien to engage with the emerging communities, those who had been relocated in newly founded townships and who were beginning to settle into their situations. The period also reflected the process of intensive education provided by Gamieldien in order to acquire the interpretive and analytical skills and understanding to effectively interact with these communities. The emergence of traditionalism as the dominant tendency in the interpretation of Islam presented the most serious challenge to the survival of Rational Islam as a legitimate framework of thinking within the context of the Western Cape. The absence of university-trained theologians with strong backgrounds in Rational Islam locally undermined the process of propagation. It was clear during the period of the nineties that irrespective of the learning and training processes that locally educated members of the ulama fraternity went through, they could not obtain the recognition of university-trained theologians. By the mid-eighties the majority of institutionally trained religious leaders were from the Saudi Arabian universities that offered traditionalist curricula or from the Indian subcontinent with similar content and methods of teaching.

Global events with their focus on emerging resistance to Western expansionism and their attempts to neutralise the last vestiges of opposition to liberalism and Western democracy saw a retreat to the ways of the past by Muslim societies accompanied by acts of violence and retaliation. Convinced of Western culpability in attempts to destroy Islam, the traditionalists had begun to see any attempt at change as a sign of defeat. Locally, and especially after the fall of apartheid and the re-entry of South Africa into world affairs, Muslims began to integrate increasingly into the global Islamic perspective of world affairs. In the process rational debate about belief and the essence of religion became superfluous and, in fact, a sign of weakness and sometimes even of betrayal.

By the early nineties the debates in the Western Cape were following the pattern of global issues and the core movement was inwards towards isolation. Gamieldien's deteriorating health and the absence of a credible successor were important indicators of the possible decline of Rational Islam that could be traced back to al-Afghani and Abduh. It was during this period that Rational

Islam was also being challenged by a more pragmatic modernism that was overtly political, focusing on local and international issues of the day, issues such as the Palestinian problem internationally and gender issues such as women's rights in Islam, especially inheritance laws, marriage and divorce rights, the female dress code, intermingling of the sexes and leadership roles for women in Islam. The currency of these issues far outweighed the classical modernist debates that focused on more theoretical issues such as the primacy of the mind and the intellect. They (the modernists) were still applying these inappropriate techniques for understanding and resolving issues and for the intellectual interpretation of the primary texts.

By the time of Shaykh Gamieldien's death the future of Rational Islam was clearly uncertain. It was left to his students and the few mosques where its core principles were still being propagated to continue the process of education.



CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

This chapter will attempt to provide both a summary of the most important issues that were dealt with in the previous chapters and to show, via the case presented in this thesis, the continuity of the development of Rational Islam as it proceeded from the international arena and rooted itself on the local stage. In an examination of Egypt, which is the focal point of this research at the international level, as an example of the global Muslim reality especially during the 19th century, an attempt was made to understand its capacity to respond to the pressure of Western Modernism. This thesis sought to explain why Rational Islam became the strategic framework of thinking propagated by leading religious thinkers such as Jamal al Afghani, Muhammad Abduh and Mustafa Maraghi to confront Western Modernism during this period of reform in Egypt.

But more importantly, the research attempted to explain why and in which way these global issues found relevance in the local Muslim community of the Western Cape during the post Second World War period. Clearly the personality of Shakier Gamiieldien was a factor, but it required a fertile set of circumstances to facilitate a framework of thinking that often contradicted the dominant traditional thinking about religious belief. Significantly these circumstances also impacted on local social practices in that they pressurized the local community, restricted by their own understanding of Islam, into seeking new ways of reconstructing their religious practices. Crucial in this discussion, therefore, is that the changing local social and economic landscape that resulted directly from the war provided the needed pressure on the community for transformation to be initiated to allow them entry into the changing landscape. This thesis suggests that Rational Islam presented a section of Cape Town's Muslim community the intellectual content to address the new set of socio-economic circumstances that they were facing.

But South Africa, during the post-war period had been developing its own peculiar political and social reality that radically affected various communities of the Western Cape. The thesis analyzed the way in which apartheid undermined the progress that Rational Islam was making in the District 6 community and beyond. It is crucial to attempt to understand why the process of forced removal affected Rational Islam negatively while other tendencies flourished in the newly established townships and emerging communities.

In the final section of this concluding chapter some analysis of the limited success of Rational Islam both globally and locally would be appropriate. As an initial claim that I proffer is that in both the content of traditional Islam and in the external circumstances that confronted it, the difficulties were such that it was unable to reconcile the general culture of Western Modernism with the international understanding (of which the local component was an integral part) of the role of religion in society. I contend that the perception of the purpose of religion in traditional Islam and that of Western Modernism was so radically different that even the attempt by rationalists within Islam had limited success in transforming those perceptions.

6.1 REFLECTING ON THE EMERGENCE OF MODERN RATIONAL ISLAM IN EGYPT

The aggressive nature of Western Modernism driven by its own needs demanded revision from other cultures including those of Muslim countries. It had successfully marginalized Christianity as a significant factor in its own society with the establishment of secularism a century earlier and had liberated Europe from the restrictive forces of religion. It was now, it would seem, extending its influence, via colonial conquest, to other cultures. In Muslim countries such as Egypt which represented the Islamic frontline, at least from an educational perspective, the response reflected a process of introspection, an examination of the dominant understanding of religion in the lives of their communities. It also showed how this understanding inhibited or promoted their social practices. It was clear from the debates of some of the leading members of the religious fraternity that many were critical of the lack of progress in Muslim countries and that they were willing to address this state of affairs. It was also clear from the debates that education was to be the focal point of the rationalists' transformation strategies. But even more importantly, was the very willingness of large sections of the ulama fraternity to concede to the inherent weakness of their interpretation of Islam rather than a weakness in the content of Islam itself.

This admission meant two things. Firstly, it meant that a re-examination of the primary sources of Islam was fundamental for revealing the support for research (ijtihad) and for the positive utilization of all available resources for the benefit of humanity. Secondly, it revealed the poverty of current interpretations of the primary sources. Thus the weakness of the dominant interpretation of Islam, they further conceded, was the root cause for the lack of progress in other

areas of their social reality. In fact their argument went much further than that. The Rational Islamist claim that the very understanding of the purpose of religion was flawed, was motivated by a desire to find in the interpretation of the primary sources the spark for transforming the dominant understanding of Islam. . They had argued that the objective of Islam was to alert humanity to the nature of creation and of their sacred duty to unravel its complexity. They further argued that even though some of this process of discovery had been affected by other cultures this did not absolve Muslims from embracing its benefits and participating in the process. The Rational Islamists found it consistent with their wider perception of Islamic belief that co-operation with others and participation in a quest for knowledge of this world and of understanding its benefits was acceptable within an Islamic theory of belief.

The argument presented in previous chapters however points to the fact that this perception was not shared by the more conservative theologians in Egypt. The dilemma that they faced was the possibility of a challenge to the traditional culture and community practices that were rooted in an Islamic framework. Thus, in contrast to Rational Islam's confidence in the ability of Islam to withstand the impact of western culture, there remained an overwhelming perception that the benefits inherent in modernism were far outweighed by the effects of the destructive forces of its liberal morality and by the possible unraveling of community cohesion. The conservatives appear to have believed that these negative effects were driven by both individualism and materialism as integral components of the liberal philosophy of modernism.

Perhaps this was one of the most revealing aspects of the contrasting understanding of human destiny. On the one hand Western Modernism drew its energy from beliefs that were located in the inherent genius of humankind and their ability to discover and recreate. Western Modernism further sought to utilize this capacity as the central component on the road to human progress. Moreover, part of this project was to set up the social conditions that would facilitate the process of development and to emancipate people for initiation into this culture of development. On the other hand Islamic traditionalism proclaimed the belief in the pre-ordained nature of human existence and the sojourning role of humanity in this world. This resulted in a quietist approach to their relationship with the natural world, one in which its bounties were to be utilized and respected without any attempt to transform its content.

Soroush, (2000, p.54) highlights the contrast between modernism and traditional and conservative beliefs;

...traditional humanity regarded everything as settled and predetermined and deemed it neither possible nor desirable to change the world...It believed that the “natural” order of the world (both in society and in nature) should not be disturbed.

Perceived against this backdrop, Rational Islam, it would appear, was an attempt to bridge the divide between Western Modernism and Islamic traditionalism by presenting in the first instance an understanding of Islam that made it possible to incorporate the progressive aspects of modernism into Islam while in the second instance maintaining those practices that were considered essential.

It would seem however, that the Rationalists in this study at least appeared to have been somewhat naïve in their assessment of the theories and underpinnings of Western Modernist theories. They appeared to believe that in the process of discovery, the west would be inclusive in the distribution of benefits, that there would be a process of sharing of the technology and of scientific discoveries. There also appeared to be a perception amongst those Muslim leaders who propagated the integration of some aspects of Western Modernism into the culture of traditional Islam that colonial countries would be able to participate on an equitable basis in the development of their respective countries. There appeared to be an uncritical understanding of capitalist principles and the theories of nationalism and how these principles and theories affected relations between countries and nations. Rational Islamists clearly believed that the adoption of Western Modernism would draw them into the circle of nations with whom they would march together on the road to prosperity. What they failed to understand was that the freedom that was ushered in with liberal democracy in the 19th Century was also accompanied by self-interest rather than a social agenda. Within such a framework the belief in the sharing of the benefits of progress was both politically and economically naive.

A critical assessment of the Rational Islamist programme of reform in Egypt further revealed that they depended almost entirely on education as the vehicle that would take them into the modern era. It would therefore seem that Abduh and his predecessors and successors also had an inadequate understanding of social change. The Egyptian modernists considered education as

the primary instrument for the transformation of their society because they believed that the reorganization of their institutions of learning along rational lines together with a reinterpretation of the concept of legitimate religious knowledge would fundamentally transform the society. Such transformation, they believed, would then allow for a range of alternative practices that would bring their country into the modern world of the west. Muhammad Abduh, the leading Rational Islamist in the late nineteenth century, had as his single most important project for the educational transformation of Egypt, the reform of Al-Azhar University from which he believed all other educational institutions would follow. Mohamed (1996, p.24) explains that, “Abduh believed that the reform of Muslim society is only possible by reforming education, particularly Al-Azhar, whose graduates have a powerful influence on society.” It was clearly naïve to believe that, in the short term the reformation of a university would affect such drastic changes as were needed for Egypt to enter into the modern era as structured in the west. As important as Al-Azhar was in providing teachers for Egyptian schools, it was inconceivable that this process, even if efficiently managed would succeed in achieving what Abduh and other modernists believed were necessary. However, more importantly, the very belief that education could take upon itself the task singlehandedly of transforming the social relations, showed that aspects of their religious beliefs and some of the values related to such beliefs, was unrealistic. Ruth Jonathan (2003) writing in a different context about the role of education in the process of social change, says that,

The ...providers and users of education ... seek social progress primarily through educational reform, i.e. ... they delegate to the educational system the kinds of structural social change which require radical social and fiscal policies... (p. 7).

A transformed public education system is thus presented not simply as one of the key levers of social change, but as its primary engine... (p.3)

...it is social policies not merely educational policies, which are required to bring positive and systemic societal change ... (p.12)

These assertions from Jonathan attempt to explain both the role of education in the process of societal change and the flawed perceptions that often exist in the assessment of the role of education in such a process. In Egypt this flawed understanding explains the limited and

temporary success that Rational Islam had in determining the course of transformation in education in the final decade of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. It also explains the absence of any impact that resulted from the changes in the structure and administration of education on the broader society. It is therefore possible to assert that the Rational Islamists did not consider transformation on the basis of change in the social and political policies of that country. They failed to understand the complexity of transformation and this shortcoming undermined the effectiveness of Rational Islam itself.

6.2 REFLECTING on MODERN RATIONAL ISLAM LOCALLY

Locally the same flawed understanding of the capacity of Rational Islam to initiate and to drive positive change in the apartheid ravaged communities could again be attributed to a lack of understanding of the process of change. The first issue to understand in that process is that religion works at the conscious level as a discursive force which has a material effect on the lives of Muslims, in that it shapes their understanding of their social world giving meaning to their everyday lives. But it is not the only force that shapes people's lives, or not even the primary force. A range of other forces impacts on the shaping of the material contexts of people's lives as well as on their conceptual and religious understandings. . . It is the way in which a specific interpretation of religion is able to respond coherently to those other forces by providing some form of direction in resolving the problems which may be seen to stem from those other forces that gives it (religious interpretation) legitimacy. It is when a specific interpretation of Islamic belief provides some answers to the issue of forced removals for example or to the new set of circumstances that communities faced, that it becomes meaningful. It is also to the extent that it (Islam) was able, in this specific instance, to provide spiritual comfort and draw the community together and to create a shared sense of collective protection under its banner that it is seen to have material value. It is further its participation in the political arena, in the economic practices, or its capacity to deal with the social problems of the country both at the level of providing moral guidance and at the practical level of debating and constructing pragmatic policies, that transform religion into a dynamic and relevant force capable of contributing to the issues of the day. Rational Islam appeared to have fallen short when required to provide more comprehensive answers in a period a great hardship and strife.

What had also been observed as an important difference between the pre-removal period and the actual period of forced removal and its aftermath was that during the first period the community was stable and secure and Rational Islam was able to penetrate the established practices and even the beliefs in which these practices were rooted. In District 6 the abandonment of the practice of giving a staple food for alms (zakaah) and replacing it with money went ahead without much rancour even though it had been an established practice to give rice or bread from the time of the establishment of Islam in the Western Cape. Similarly the changing role of women occurred gradually but with little controversy, although here the Rationalist stayed clear of the calls for gender equality by younger progressive Muslim groups that would later create controversy.

The period following the clearing of District 6 represented a radically different social reality in which uncertainty, instability and fear were the primary features. The consequent search for meaning was the driving force that promoted the rise and dominance of those religious tendencies that called for a return to the initial period of Islam. It was also the cause for the difficulties that Rational Islam experienced in the townships. Its propagation of a policy of inclusivism into a social system that had been responsible for the destruction of their community lives was unacceptable to people who wanted to retreat into an existence that protected them from the ravages of modernism.

Thus, unlike the District 6 period where divergent interpretations of Islam belief and practice were treated with reasonable tolerance and innovations such as those which Rational Islam had introduced, were considered and often absorbed into the fabric of current understandings, the period after the removals hardened the attitude of the new communities against such innovations and divergent interpretations. Moreover, the struggle against the specific conditions that had arisen as a result of the apartheid policies, led to the search for solutions from within the historically known Islamic practices rather than from new interpretations. These factors all militated against the positive development of Rational Islam.

While these objective factors restricted the progress of Rational Islam in the Western Cape, it was clear that a number of subjective factors played a fundamental role in its limited growth. Firstly, there were the conscious strategies of the Traditionalists to achieve dominance through their literalist interpretation of the primary sources and their reliance on the practices of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to substantiate their claim to the authenticity of specific

interpretations. It was this drive for hegemony in the Western Cape that secured for them the newly established townships through the mosques that had been built in these areas. Secondly, the rapid rise of religious colleges first in other provinces but then also in the Western Cape resulted in an over-abundance of locally trained religious leaders who could be utilized as teachers and evangelists of traditional Islam. Thirdly, the rise of hafith (quran memorization) schools coupled with the removal of young children from formal schooling in order to fill these institutions were factors that led to the entrenchment of perceptions of knowledge that were directly connected to Islam to be pursued as an outward sign of a sincere believer. Fourthly, the establishment of the Muslim community radios, one under the direct control of the traditionalists and the other controlled by an amalgam of marginal groups, further increased the impact of traditional Islam vis-a-vis its rational counterpart. These issues radically altered the balance of influence that was being exercised over a community who at that point of its development required decisive leadership.

The development and progress of Rational Islam in the Western Cape could therefore be assessed within a framework of two specific periods divided as it were by the removal of the people of District 6. The advantage of such an analysis is that it portrays the two sets of social conditions within which Rational Islam had to work and makes it possible to reflect on its impact on the community in each of the periods. It further highlights the issues that facilitated the progress made by Rational Islam as a response to the needs of the community while at a different point in the history of the community it could reflect on the difficulties that Rational Islam faced as consequence of its inability to respond to such needs. Such an approach would also allow for a critique of the different external and internal factors that uniquely affected the progress of Rational Islam.

During the District 6 period Gamieldien had brought from Egypt many of the most dominant aspects of Rational Islam. A reflection of his propagation practices reveal that he had, like his counterparts in Egypt earlier, focused on education as the means of transformation. The significant feature during this period was the willingness of the community to adopt the Gamieldien's teachings and to transform the understandings that they had historically held. An explanation of this phenomenon is probably that in the first instance their linkage to the mosque itself played some role in their flexibility. They had begun to trust their imam on matters of

religious interpretation and was confident that it was within the bounds of proper belief. But it also be said that the interpretation provided them with the space to explore new possibilities without feeling that they were in violation of key aspects of Islam. The education of their female off springs was a case in point. The District 6 period was therefore, at least from a Rational Islamic perspective, a positive period for its progress.

The period after the removals on the other hand reflected a different position. As an emerging community struggling to find its compass, it sought to remain with the known and the secure. It became more resistant to new and creative ideas especially if the sources were not perceived to be overtly Islamic. It sought to cover itself in the cloth of its own history and to seek the comfort of a known culture. It wanted to speak the language of Islam and use the expressions and the grammar of religion. The community wanted to be assured that an abode that would counter the hardship of their present reality awaited them. In such an atmosphere Rational Islam as a philosophy of change had little impact. Two further issues could be seen to have influenced their perceptions of their changed conditions. Firstly, was the fact that they had been dispersed far away from the culture of their religious practices. Secondly, they had been mixed with people from diverse cultures and backgrounds. Both these issues had been discussed before. However, the significance for this analysis is that these were contributing factors in the inward movement of the Muslims in the townships and therefore provided fertile ground for the call of the traditionalists to return to the known ways and not to succumb to foreign cultural practices or norms.

An analysis of the progress of Rational Islam both internationally and locally seems to show that the Rationalists in Egypt as well as in the Western Cape did not grasp the global and local Muslims' need for direction in their struggle to make sense of what was perceived as a western onslaught on Islam. It could be argued that the majority of the religious leadership as well as Muslims in general understood the role of religion quite differently from the interpretation that rationalists had assigned to it. Far from acting as a kind of initiator of, and a guide for social or scientific action, religion was assigned the role of spiritual protector of the human self. Religion was reduced to a means of earning a place in the next world. In a sense it placed religion almost in opposition to the activities that occupied humanity in this world. It actively propagated the view that the striving for wealth and fame, for power and position and for the material

acquisitions and the pleasures in this present life, were activities that distance the individual from success in the next life. For the leadership and adherents of traditional Islam the primary and objective purpose of the existence of religion was the striving for God's satisfaction through a process of formal and prescribed worship. This was also presented as the fundamental reason for the creation of humanity and therefore the very purpose of existence. One of the consequences of such a spiritual role of religion was that it detached religion from almost entirely from a range of human activities that were crucial for its social existence. It further released the adherents of Islam from any legal responsibilities of active involvement in the process of advancement and progress in the social existence of society except in the most peripheral sense. Thus with the traditionalist interpretation of Islam, Muslims were held responsible only for the formal social responsibilities related to the distribution of alms as a compulsory duty and for the voluntary distribution of charity in the widest possible sense as a strongly recommended practice. All other responsibilities were not seen as religious and therefore not a requirement on Muslims.

An assessment of Rational Islam in the context of its confrontation with traditional beliefs and practices would necessarily have to take into account the deep rooted nature of the traditional understanding of Islam and the historic experience of their religious practices and indeed their general social practices that were to a greater or lesser extent connected to Islam. Being seen as a way of life for the Muslims the dominant Islamic culture had become ingrained in the fabric of Muslim societies to the extent that they were not able to make clear distinctions between community and religious practices. But it also has to be understood that these beliefs and practices had served Muslim society well through the different periods and had protected them from other societies and cultures. The attempts globally to introduce new ways of thinking about religious beliefs and religious practice therefore met with stern resistance, the core arguments focusing on the attempts to undermine established practices that have its origin in the original community of Islam. These powerful rebuttals of what was perceived to be innovative and foreign practices clearly impacted negatively on its chances of success.

Within this context any consideration of the impact of Rational Islam has to be more nuanced. The transformation in education for example, led by Abduh could be said to have been highly successful. He had introduced 'secular' courses into a religious curriculum and had compelled

the religious leaders to conceptually accept these as an integral part of religious knowledge. Al-Azhar University had since then transformed itself to the extent that graduate and post graduate courses were being offered allowing students also to select from the different areas of study.

Locally, the reification of specific traditional practices as natural and essential constructs of Islam, were successfully countered during the District 6 period as communities began to adopt alternative ways of understanding religious practice. The importance of education as an Islamic injunction for example effectively undermined the practice of denying all but the most basic education to girls.

However, the relatively nuanced assessment of the success of the rational project should be considered against an analysis of its attempts to integrate religion into the worldly practices of societies. These explanations of the role of Islam were perceived by the local religious leadership as succumbing to the realities of a world transformed by processes that were regarded as outside of the domain of religion. For Western Modernism, its lack of success in making an impact in Muslim countries and locally could be ascribed to its policies of exclusion of religion from the sphere of political and socio-economic decision making and policy implementation. The restructuring of ethical norms and social morality appeared to have been a prerequisite for scientific and technological progress during the period of enlightenment and Christian intrusion into the field of politics and social norms were seen as debilitating. Muslim traditionalists in the 19th century feared a similar fate for Islam with the hegemony of secularism. The same sense of trepidation had gripped the local Muslim leadership who saw the rationalist project as capitulation to secularism and the demise of Islam as a way of life.

It was in these ways that the Cape Town paradigm mirrored the Egyptian struggle of the previous century but with distinct features that reflected its unique character. While its traditional understanding of Islam was very much in line with the Egyptian model, and the local Muslim community reflected the same suspicion of western motives in its attempt to absorb Muslims into the modern era, they had been historically exposed, as a Muslim minority, to the social practices and norms of other communities with whom they had existed for much of their own history as a single community. The post war rise of industrial development in the Western Cape impacted on them as part of a larger entity. They had absorbed many of the local customs and social

practices as part of their own culture and were less conscious of the more subtle changes that had occurred within the broader society.

In spite of this distinctive position of the local Muslim community, their response to the invasive nature of modernism was markedly similar to the Egyptian religious leadership. In both instances there was a collective cloud of trepidation, followed by a retreat to the safety of the known (often regarded as the prescribed) structures and practices of the prophet and his companions and successors (the *salaf*). Also in both instances, the inability of Rational Islam to build a coherent and convincing case for the adoption of modernism, and to appropriate its principles within an Islamic paradigm, led to its failure as an alternative social theory of Islam.

In assessing the impact of Modern Rational Islam on the Muslim community, consideration has to be given to the particular socio-political circumstances during the different periods under review. During the pre-removal period there appeared to have been a rapid growth in the development of modern Rational Islam. This could be ascribed as much to needs and opportunities that became available during the post-war period as it was to the personality of Shaykh Gamielien and to the strategies he had employed to propagate this distinctive discursive strand. The waning of its influence on the other hand may be seen as a direct result of the forced removals and to the inability of rationalists to confront and respond to the process. But the assessment has to take into consideration the changing strategies employed by the Rational Islamists which gave them access to of the community via a number of mosques in Cape Town. Finally, the assessment has to consider the influence modern Rational Islam had on the interpretation of important aspects of belief and law within other discursive tendencies.

Given all of these factors modern Rational Islam may be said to have made a considerable impact on the belief and practices of the Muslims locally. It has undoubtedly left an indelible legacy in the local community. The legacy is an ongoing one with constantly new issues being raised for consideration. Its impact on legal and theological interpretation remains a consistent source of public debate within the community. Amongst these are such issues as state recognition for Muslim marriages, the legality of multiple marriages in Islam and the rights of spouses in Muslim marriages as heirs. Overarching these issues is the larger question of permitting non-Muslims a say in the conducting of what is considered Islamic matter in a secular state. Modern Rational scholars and traditional religious leaders are still locked in these debates.

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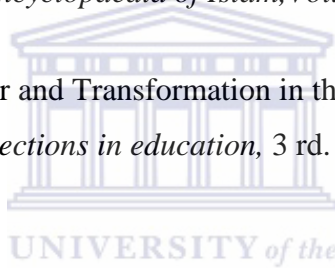
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