

The role and impact of Shaykh Shakier Gamieldien in the establishment of modern Rational Islam in the Western Cape, with specific reference to his educational endeavours, 1950 - 1996

EGHSAAN BEHARDIEN



A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor Philosophy in the Faculty of Education, University of the Western Cape

Supervisor: Professor A. Fataar

November 2012

ABSTRACT

This thesis discusses the impact of modern Rational Islam on the Muslim community of the Western Cape between 1950 and 1996. It is particularly concerned with the role of Shaykh Shakier Gamieldien in establishing and propagating this discourse in the region through the use of education as his means of propagation.

The study defines modern Rational Islam as a discourse that emerged as a response to the incursion of modern Western culture into traditional Muslim regions during the 19th Century. The study further reflects on the local conditions in the Western Cape and assesses the progress that modern Rational Islam had made under Gamieldien's guidance in the period immediately after the Second World War. It investigates the negative impact that the forced removals of the community of District 6 from their urban homes in Cape Town had on Rational Islam who had lived in this area. It explores the emergence of alternative interpretive and discursive tendencies in the Townships and the apathy of the rationalists during this period.

Two issues come under critical scrutiny in the thesis in order to provide clarity on the changing strategy used by Rational Islam during period of forced removals. First, the creation of new structures that could be employed for purposes of Islamic education within the rational discourse. The second was its attempt to reach a wider audience because of the destruction of its primary base in District 6.

In assessing the impact of Rational Islam on the community of the Western Cape consideration is given to the changing contexts that existed between 1950 and 1996. The thesis examines the effect of the disintegration of the Muslim community and then the emergence of other discursive tendencies in the townships on Rational Islam. It also considers the indirect influence that Gamieldien's discourse had on the other Islamic discursive tendencies in its assessment of Rational Islam's impact.

The study is based on qualitative research methods, mostly oral interviews with groups of students who studied and worked with Gamieldien as well as with individual informants such as family members, friends and his leading students. This thesis investigates the emergence and impact of Rational Islam in the Western Cape and the contribution made by Shaykh Shakier

Gamiendien in its establishment in this region. It further investigates the role of education as used by Gamiendien as a means of propagating modern Rational Islam as an accepted local Islamic discourse.



DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis, 'The role and impact of Shaykh Shakier Gamieldien in the establishment of modern Rational Islam in the Western Cape, with specific reference to his educational endeavours, 1950 – 1996', is my own work, that has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

Eghsaan Behardien

Signed.....November 2012



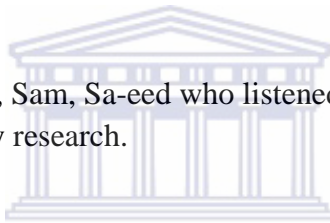
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to pay tribute to the following person who contributed in a variety of ways to the completion of the thesis:

To Professor Aslam Fataar who encouraged me in the first instance to embark on this project and who, as my supervisor continuously encouraged me to work towards its finality even in my darkest hours. I am grateful for the insight and analytical assistance he provided throughout.

To my wife, Zubeida, who so unselfishly and with great constance stood by me through the period of research.

To my friends and colleagues, Inez, Sam, Sa-eed who listened to and commented on my discussions through the years of my research.



To my children Ghaalid, Gouwa, Mogammad Yusrie, Aneesa, Ayesha, and their spouses Rushda, Whalleed, Shaheema and Unis.

To my grandchildren Ziyaad, Ameer, Ihsaan and Imrah

To my Creator who provided me with the sustenance to complete this work.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	i
Declaration	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of contents	v

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER 2 MODERN RATIONAL ISLAM IN EGYPT 7

2.1 Introduction	7
2.2 Taqlid	8
2.3 Ijtihad	11
2.4 Rational Islam	13
2.5 Shaykh Muhammad Shakier Gamieldien	15
2.6 Al-Azhar University	19
2.7 Rifa'a al Tahtawi	21
2.8 Jamal al Afghani	22
2.9 Muhammad Abduh	22
2.10 Al-Azhar's Influence on Gamieldien	30
2.11 Gamieldien's Return to Cape Town	33
2.12 Conclusion	35



CHAPTER 3 LOCALIZATION AND INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF MODERN RATIONAL ISLAM IN THE WESTERN CAPE 38

3.1 Introduction	38
3.2 Rational Islam in Cape Town- from international roots to localization	39
3.3 A Project of Transformation	42
3.3.1 Socio-economic conditions in the Western Cape	42
3.3.2 Al-Azhar Mosque in District Six	44
3.3.3 The al-Hidayah Movement	50

3.3.4	The al-Hidayah Adult School	56
3.4	The Muslim Judicial Council	61
3.5	Majlisush Shura Al Islami	67
3.6	Assessment	68
3.7	Conclusion	73

CHAPTER 4 THE IMPACT OF THE DESTRUCTION OF DISTRICT 6 ON MODERN RATIONAL ISLAM 75

4.1	Introduction	75
4.2	The Destruction of District 6	78
4.3	A Process of Reconstruction	81
4.4	The Influence of Alternative Religious Tendencies	83
4.4.1	Deobandi movement	83
4.4.2	The Wahhabi movement	86
4.4.3	Fundamentalist Revivalism	88
4.4.4	Islamism in the Western Cape	92
4.5	Majlisush Shura al Islami and the Usuluddin College	95
4.6	Training for Religious Leadership	107
4.7	Interpretive Differences	108
4.8	Conclusion	113

CHAPTER 5 FURTHER INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF MODERN RATIONAL EDUCATION 115

5.1	Introduction	115
5.2	The Training of Potential Religious Leaders	117
5.3	An Analysis of the Tafsir Course	118
5.4	The Teaching of Hadith and the Sunnah	126
5.5	The Teaching of Theology	132
5.6	The Practice of Rational Propagation	137
5.7	Gamieldien's Understanding of the Quran	141
5.8	Imams and Teachers	143

5.9	The Western Cape in the Early Nineties	147
5.10	Conclusion	153
CHAPTER 6...CONCLUSION		155
6.1	Reflecting on the Emergence of Modern Rational Islam in Egypt	156
6.2	Reflecting on Modern Rational Islam Locally	160
BIBLIOGRAPHY		167
LIST OF INTERVIEWEES		174



CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis investigates the emergence of Rational Islam in the Western Cape and the contribution made by Shaykh Shakier Gamieldien in its establishment in this region. It is particularly interested in understanding the role of education as a means of propagation pivotal to the establishment of Rational Islam as an accepted local Islamic discourse. The organizing research question of the study is; What was the contribution and impact that Shaykh Shakier Gamieldien made in the development of modern Rational Islam in the Western Cape, with reference to his educational endeavours between 1950 and 1996?

The main analytical steps of the theses are; tracing the international roots of Rational Islam and providing an account of its localization as a discursive tendency in the Western Cape; a historical account of Gamieldien's life as it relates to his understanding of Islam; an attempt to explain his work in the Western Cape, focusing specifically on his educational practices as a means of propagation; a contextual analysis of the social environment in which he worked and the changing nature of this environment; and finally, attempting to provide an analysis of the impact of his work in the Western Cape, giving some attention to competing religious tendencies in the region.

Modern Rational Islam emerged during the nineteenth century as a discourse in response to the impact of western modernism on Muslim society. The concept 'modern Rational Islam' is used in this thesis to explain this discourse that developed in a number of Muslim countries, in the first instance, as a self-conscious intellectual response to European imperial imposition in Muslim heartlands starting from the eighteenth century and, secondly, the attendant advancement in European science and technology and the rapid transformation in the organization of their societies along rational bureaucratic lines. Muslim discourse in Egypt saw the development of a modern Rational Islamic idiom in response to both impulses. Coterminous but not reducible to broader strategic ideological and political contests of the shape of state formation, a modern rational Islamic idiom was developed in response to the need for Egyptian modernization and development. 'Rational Islam' was the Islamic variant that provided the socio-political and religious framework for the Egyptian experiment with modernization. Not fully accepted as a legitimate Islamic discourse, especially opposed by a large section of Egypt's traditionalists, the

Rational Islamic variant began to make an impact on various social sectors such as the establishment of modern government bureaucracies, health services and, importantly educational modernization in aspects of the country's schooling and university sectors.

These developments found intellectual and pragmatic resonance all over the Muslim world. In the Western Cape, it found expression in the theological and pragmatic approaches of Shaykh Shakier Gamieldien who was a student at the then modern reforming Al-Azhar University in Cairo. Here he was trained as an 'alim at a university that was beginning to implement a higher education Islamic curriculum founded on a modern rational Islamic framework. Gamieldien and his fellow students could then be regarded as repositories or propagators of this Islamic discursive variant. He was one of a cadre of students who, upon completion of their studies, went on to implement Rational Islam's philosophical educational and pragmatic dimensions in their local contexts, Gamieldien went on to become the leading protagonist of this Islamic discourse in post-war Cape Town from the 1940s where this global discourse met the contingencies of the local environment. It is this study's aim to provide an understanding of the complex ways in which modern Rational Islam was implemented and localized.

Rational Islam as it emerged in the early period of Islam could be defined as referring to an understanding of Islam in which belief in a Creator is located in the idea that such a belief could be explained through logical evidence and rational discussion. Modern Rational Islam then simply means the application of logic in the process of assessment, from an Islamic perspective, of the approach used in western modernism to affect the advancement in 18th Century Europe. The term 'modern' has been attached to this concept so that greater accuracy may be achieved given the fact that in the early history of Islam a discourse which could also be described as rational had existed. While such a definition and explanation are obviously in need of much greater and in-depth discussion, analysis and debate, this thesis will proceed from the assumption that such a discourse did exist historically in the tradition of Islam. And, what this thesis is particularly concerned with is to establish how this particular religious variant traveled to a different part of the world, in this case the Western Cape Province, and was developed in its local context. The global or international context and discursive development interacted with particular contingent circumstances in the local context. As the carrier of this international Islamic variant a focus on the person of Shaykh Shakier Gamieldien, his early training in Egypt

and his later religious propagation in the Western Cape over five decades, is an apposite focus for understanding such global – local interaction and religious discursive development and practice.

The historical development of Islamic thought in the Western Cape is a neglected area of research. While scholars such as Achmat Davids (1980) and Abdulkader Tayob (1995) focused on aspects of the history of Muslim community of the Western Cape, this thesis investigates the divergent discursive or intellectual tendencies in the area after 1950. An important element, although only tangentially discussed, are the different religious variants that provided the competing or interlocking terrain in terms of which Rational Islam was localized and propagated.

The purpose of linking the study of modern Rational Islam with the history of Gamieldien rests in the pivotal role he played in establishing this discursive strand in the Western Cape. It seemed appropriate that a proper understanding of modern Rational Islam as it manifested itself locally could only be achieved if the story of Gamieldien's life as it intersected with the development of this religious tradition, is related. It is for this reason that the research topic has been titled, 'The role and impact of Shaykh Shakier Gamieldien in the establishment of modern Rational Islam in the Western Cape, with specific reference to his educational endeavours, 1950 – 1996'. I will argue in the thesis that the ideas contained in this discursive tendency was moved from its international context and located in the Western Cape by Gamieldien and that he had resolved to employ education as the means of propagation, a resolution that he maintained throughout his career as an imam and a teacher. I will further show that the different circumstances or contexts within which he had to function affected his ability to propagate Rational Islam and also impacted on the effectiveness of Rational Islam vis a vis other discursive tendencies.

Oral evidence plays a crucial role in this investigation because of the almost total absence of primary sources or historical writings on this subject. Oral evidence was therefore a necessary requirement that enabled me to access the material for this study. It is fortunate that a number of individuals who had assisted Gamieldien in the initiation of these projects were available to provide information regarding the establishment of the Al Hidayah Educational Institute. There were also many former students who had attended the classes at Al Hidayah mosque or at the

Rahmaneyah Moslem Primary School and who were willing to provide information about the establishment of these centres of Rational Islamic learning. It needs to be said that care has been taken to record an accurate account of the evidence presented and that checks were made to ensure the correctness of the historical accounts of events.

The next chapter, Chapter 2 examines some of the debates between the proponents of modern Rational Islam and traditional Islam in Egypt. In this debate some of its key features such as its emphasis on independent intellectual deliberation are examined in order to reflect on its capacity to incorporate some of the components of Western Modernism into its discourse. In the chapter much of the explanation about modern Rational Islam revolves around the issue of the need for reformation of its education system through the rational transformation of its administration, content and teaching methodologies. This focus on education as the primary vehicle for social transformation is one of the central areas of research in the thesis and one of its important themes.

The history of belief in the Western Cape, discussed in chapter 3, shows a dominant discourse that was trapped in a traditional framework, i.e. in a framework focused on reward and punishment and on belief without reflection. It outlines how Rational Islam addressed this form of belief and sought to replace it with a belief framework that opened up the possibilities for individual thought and for grounding belief in a this world logic. This historical account presents the background of local conditions providing the rationale for the propagation of a rational approach to belief. It further provides the rationale for the use of education as a strategy for developing the reflective capacities of the Muslim community of the Western Cape. The thesis suggests that for the rationalists the empowerment of the community by understanding the role of religion in a different way was one of their most important objectives.

Chapter 4 discusses post Second World War conditions in Cape Town and attempts to show how global realities impacted on the local economy providing opportunities for growth and job creation especially in sectors where Muslims had specific skills. It concentrates on the establishment and development of modern Rational Islam in the Western Cape, focusing specifically on the community of District Six where Gamieldien was the presiding religious leader (imam) at Al-Azhar Mosque. It argues that the socio-economic conditions during the

period after 1950 facilitated the establishment and progress of modern Rational Islam in Cape Town which in turn provided an understanding of Islam that facilitated incorporation. It shows that Gamieldien recognized the fundamental importance of education for an alternative understanding of Islam and that it was this conviction that led to a process of creating educational structures at Al Hidayah mosque and at the Rahmaneyah Moslem Primary School under the auspices of Al Hidayah Mosque Committee and the Al Hidayah Educational Institute respectively.

Chapter 4 also focuses on the impact of the Apartheid era forced removal period of the community of District 6 in Cape Town. It shows how the destruction of the Muslim community in District 6 worked against the further development and progress of the propagation of Rational Islam, while fragmenting the community in the process of resettlement on the Cape Flats and destroying the coherence of a settled community and negatively impacting Gamieldien's educational endeavours. The chapter shows how the newly created communities began a slow process of finding and re-establishing their religious compass by building new mosques and creating madrassas (Muslim schools) to provide religious direction for their respective communities. I also discuss the rapid emergence of a number of other Islamic discursive tendencies whose propagation efforts often thrived in the light of the new social conditions in the Western Cape's townships. I explain how and why these interpretations of Islamic belief and law found resonance in these communities. Second, the chapter discusses the inability of Rational Islam to make much impact in the townships and attempts to examine the reasons for its passivity during this period. The chapter presents the view that Rational Islam's consequent loss of credibility amongst large sections of the former residence was evident in their rejection of key principles of Rational Islam and their adoption of traditionalism.

Then chapter 5 focuses specifically on the educational strategies pursued by Gamieldien in the post-District 6 period, i.e. during the period of resettlement on the Cape Flats. During this time the establishment of the Usuluddin College, an adult education college had become central in the promotion of modern Rational Islam in the sense that the new leadership of this discourse was going to emerge from its students. The progress of the college in its various settings on the Cape Flats reveals some of the obstacles it faced and its successes between 1976 and 1990. The emergence many prominent students as leaders at mosques and madrassas throughout the

Western Cape will reflect on the success of the educational strategies up to 1996. The study will, in its analysis of Gamieldien's methodologies and of the content and objectives of his lectures, attempt to show how these in themselves reflected the changing socio-religious conditions of the Muslim community locally. The thesis will further attempt to assess the effectiveness of this project in light of the new contesting discourses that had overtaken modern Rational Islam in the townships.

Finally, chapter 6 provides an overall analysis of the impact of Rational Islam on the Muslim community of the Western Cape, arguing that it had a rich, nuanced and uneven developmental career during the 50 years under discussion in this thesis.



CHAPTER 2 MODERN RATIONAL ISLAM IN EGYPT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter outlined the parameters of this study and attempted to present an explanation of the methodological approach and the context of the research. It also discussed its scope by defining the boundaries and the time frame within which the study is located. The Western Cape and specifically Cape Town and its surrounds are identified as its locus of research while the time parameters are the post Second World War up to about 1997.

Chapter 1 also provided an explanation of the historical relevance of the study and in the process attempted to show the heterogeneity of belief within Islam. The significance of this claim will hopefully become clear in subsequent explanations. While the study will confine itself to the development of a specific theoretical direction within Islam, it will, in order to reflect the contextual relevance of this direction, briefly deal with alternative understandings of Islam.

Chapter 1 also provides the necessary focus through the presentation of the key question reflecting the problem under review. The subsidiary questions that are linked to the main question will hopefully maintain that focus allowing the study to progress efficiently. Finally, the chapter provides a number of initial works that open the way and lay the foundation for a coherent discussion.

The most important theme of the research is the development and impact of Rational Islam in the Western Cape led by Shaykh Gamieldien up to his death in 1997. Of critical importance, and the chapter introduces the issue, is his central role as the primary proponent of modern Rational Islam in the Western Cape. This theme is developed through two distinct approaches to the study. Firstly, it will investigate the level of shared understanding of Rational Islam as propagated by Gamieldien in Cape Town, and secondly, it will make an attempt to assess its impact on this community.

The research will take into account the rupture on the development of Rational Islam caused by the mass removals during the Apartheid period after 1970. This issue will be discussed in chapter 3 and it will assess to what extent it influenced Rational Islam's impact.

Chapter 2 will focus on the historical background against which the development of Rational Islam in Cape Town could be assessed. Both the events in Egypt relating to its progress in that country and the key figures who drove the process of promoting Rational Islam are at the centre of this analysis. The importance of this discussion resides in the fact that the impulse to replace traditional beliefs and practices with rational equivalents impacted fundamentally on Al Azhar University during the period that Gamieldien studied at this institution. Such an explanation would hopefully establish the connection between the Egyptian and the Cape Town experience.

Another important explanation in chapter 2 will deal with some of the key concepts and terms that are used to make sense of the project of transforming the way in which Islam was understood in Egypt during the nineteenth century given the changing social conditions there. Such a discussion will hopefully also clarify and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the development of Rational Islam both in Cape Town. Concepts such as the methodological principles of taqlid (following) and ijthad (independent research) have to be explained in order to clarify the paradigmatic shift in thinking during the nineteenth century in Egypt and later by Gamieldien in Cape Town. It is also important that issues such as Rational Islam and modernism in Islam be properly contextualized in the lexicon of Islamic theory.

The chapter will conclude with an initial discussion of Gamieldien's work in District Six where he settled and became part of the imamate (religious leadership) at the Al-Azhar Mosque in Cape Town. The objective here will be to reflect on his attempt to understand traditionalism locally and to develop a strategy to transform beliefs and practices.

2.2 TAQLID

The issues of taqlid and Ijthad are, as had been explained earlier, crucial in understanding the education crisis in Egypt. It was the increasing challenge to the hegemony of traditional Islamic

thought brought about by the rapidly advancing societies in the west that motivated individual members of the ulama class in Egypt to call for a transformation in the understanding of Islam. This transformation was closely connected with another call, this for a change in the methodology of learning and teaching. The perception amongst some ulama was that progress is linked amongst other things to the organization of the educational institutions and to pedagogical practices. These religious experts identified the taqlid as one of the reasons for the backwardness in education.

The concept of taqlid is therefore important in this study both as a methodological tool in teaching and learning as well as for understanding the epistemological framework within which such teaching and learning take place. As a methodological tool taqlid asserts the legitimacy of rote learning and memorization as the fundamental way of understanding the world. It accepts that the research into and interpretation of primary texts done by others could be taken as the final word such of texts. The function of students studying such texts is to memorize its interpretations. Once this process has been completed such students are regarded as competent to teach. This method of teaching had become the dominant ways of passing on knowledge from generation to generation thereby stifling creativity and progress. In the different Islamic disciplines such as law (fiqh) and belief (tawhid), taqlid had become the norm in terms of method and of understanding. Fazlur Rahman, (1982, p. 37) explains this learning method and understanding of knowledge. He said that it was, ‘A major development that adversely affected the quality of learning...it was the replacement of the original texts of theology, philosophy, jurisprudence, and such, as materials for higher learning with commentaries and supercommentaries.’

Thus legitimate knowledge was seen as internalizing the interpretations of the great legal experts and theologians of the past and not to deviate from their conclusions. It is for this reason that taqlid is defined as, ‘following the legal opinions of a scholar without gaining knowledge of the detailed evidences for those opinions’, (Sajaad, 2009). A similar description is provided by Ahmed El Shamsy, (2008) who argues that, ‘Imam Shafi’i’s followers simply defined taqlid as, “the acceptance of a position without evidence.”

Historically, Muslims have adhered to the legal rulings of experts who had researched Islamic religious practice without themselves necessarily having studied the original sources such as the Holy Quran and the example of the prophet Muhammad (SAW), called the Sunnah. The acceptance of four schools of interpretation on all matters pertaining to Islamic Law was, according to Sajaad (2009, p.3) merely an extension of the concept of taqlid. He further explains that these schools of law called the madhab had through the years developed to represent a 'de facto Sunni Islam' (2009, p.8).

Muslim jurists and researchers (mujtahids) have through the centuries held widely divergent views on the acceptability of taqlid as a principle of legal and theological practice. With the rise of modern rational thought in Egypt the concept again began to receive major attention. Rifat Al Tahtawi, who had spent five years between 1826 and 1831 in France studying the education system in that country, called for the abolition of taqlid as a methodological practice in teaching and its replacement by independent research by scholars. He criticized, 'following precedent without studying the argument used in establishing it,' (Gesink, 2006, p.331). For scholars such as Al Tahtawi and later Jamal al Aghani and Muhammad Abduh this methodology undermined a progressive understanding of Islam because legal rulings of previous centuries did not reflect the changed and constantly changing conditions or the needs of modern society. They failed to address the issues that confront Muslim society. It was this problem according to the rationalists that led to the backwardness of the Egyptian education system especially in learning and teaching. Muhammad Abduh, the most influential rational thinker of the nineteenth century in Egypt, responded to this problem by seeing his essential struggle according to Fazlur Rahman, (1966, p.217):

as consisting in a presentation of the basic tenets of Islam in terms that would be acceptable to the modern mind and would allow further reformation of it on the one hand and allow the pursuit of modern knowledge on the other... Islam is not only *not* incompatible with reason but is the only religion which religiously calls upon man to use his own reason and investigate nature.

Modernist scholars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries thus rejected taqlid as a methodological tool in education and as a theory of knowledge. Indeed their view that education should foster independent research (ijtihad) and creative and analytical thinking became central to their project of reform.

2.3 IJTIHAD

Rifat Al Tahtawi was one of the first members of the religious leaders (ulama) to call for the use of the principle of ijihad in learning and teaching. He argued that, ‘the educational system must revive ijihad, which meant individual reasoning based on Quran and hadith texts to reach novel rulings.’ (Gesink, 2006, p. 331) Ijihad which literally means to do research is a methodological principle that appears to stand in direct contradistinction to the concept of taqlid or following without individual research. It is defined as, ‘the mujtahid’s exertion of maximum effort in seeking knowledge of the ahkam (rules) of the shari’a through interpretation.’ (Siddique, 2007)

As in the case of taqlid, ijihad represented more than a methodological model for understanding Islamic law and theology. It could be argued that ijihad, while providing a method for interpreting the Holy Quran and the sayings and practices of the prophet Muhammad (SAW), came to represent at the time of the Companions and the Successors a tool that assisted them to construct a worldview for the Muslim community that related to their relationship with the Creator as well as their inter-relationship within the community. In effect it established within Muslim society their social, political and economic relations. As a consequence of the research into the primary sources and the community practices during the time of the prophet, these mujtahids (researches) were able to establish spiritual and moral responsibilities and obligations as well as the religious rights of the members of their communities. Their research, while formally resting on the primary sources, also reflected a methodology that appeared to, “reconcile pure reason and accepted wisdom.” (Mneimnah, 2009) This seems to imply that the intellectual activity of ijihad focused on the problems of the era in which these mujtahids worked, and that they addressed the problems of their times using both the sources that were available and the interpretive categories that they felt were permissible (jaa-iez).

There were amongst the jurists and researches of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who seemed to argue for the re-introduction of the concepts of primary source research coupled with interpretation. These modern rationalist scholars, confronted by western advancement in the production of knowledge accompanied by material benefits to their communities, sought to establish similar processes in their countries. One of the issues they believed needed to be

restructured was the methodological approach to knowledge production. The belief in the re-introduction of ijtiḥād into the educational structures of Egypt appeared to have been motivated by the need for advancement which they perceived as being inextricably connected to a rational approach to knowledge. In practical terms this seems to mean that in the practice of research including teaching and learning, modern theorists wanted to replace rote learning and transmission teaching with a research based model. Muhammad Abduh the most outstanding of the Egyptian modernist scholars believed that, ‘the reform of Muslim society is only possible by reforming education...’ (Mohamed, 1996, p. 25) However, reform, he believed was only possible when they were able, ‘to revive the spirit of ijtiḥād to solve the problems of the present century.’ (Mohamed, 1996, p. 25) Abduh explained his project of replacing taqlid with ijtiḥād both as a methodological as well as an epistemological task.

It would appear from the research into the history of the principles of taqlid and ijtiḥād that in practice both concepts are in use in the interpretation of Islamic law and belief. It would also seem that these concepts in practice are not necessarily in opposition to each other as generally perceived. The use of taqlid in established ritual duties appears to be the dominant practice while the use of ijtiḥād to understand and resolve novel issues seems to be the norm. An example of this is the increasing acceptability of female attendance at public institutions of learning even in the most conservative Muslim communities.

The discussion on taqlid and ijtiḥād provide an important frame of reference in the research of Gamielien’s work. While a proponent of the concept of taqlid for established practices such as prayer (salaah), fasting (saum), pilgrimage (haj) and the giving of alms (zakaah), he was an enthusiastic proponent of research based knowledge and the use of expert opinion in the provision of legal interpretations for the community. An example of this method of using both the primary sources and rational judgments occurred when confronted in 1987 there was a request from a Cape Town hospital to provide guidance on the permissibility of using pig valves for heart replacement for Muslims¹. Using Quranic verses to show that only the consumption of meat from the pig was not permissible, he argued that the use of valves from its heart was permissible. Also using Quranic texts, he further argued that the preservation of life was

¹ Interview with N. Gamielien, 15 January 2008.

incumbent on every Muslim. Both taqlid and ijihad were therefore used by Gamieldien as complementary juridical principles within Islamic law.

2.4 RATIONAL ISLAM

An integral part of this study is an attempt to understand the way in which Rational Islam was also a response by the Muslim community locally to meet the challenges of modernism. While the dominant features of belief and practice in the Western Cape were a mixture of religion and cultural practice, the very nature of religion was both diverse and often medieval. Sufi practices centering on visits to the shrines of perceived saints in Cape Town were very common and beliefs that had no grounding in a rational discourse were accepted uncritically. It would therefore be appropriate to examine some of the key features of modern Rational Islam in order to understand Gamieldien's impact contextually.

Fazlur Rahman (1996, p.212) argues that the challenges for Muslims in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were different from anything faced in its history before this. Two key reasons for this were the disintegrating Muslim empire on the one hand and the rapid progress made in terms of economic and social organization in the west on the other. As a society with its integrity intact, Muslim had historically been able to meet the challenges of invading societies at all levels and in fact had been able to impose its own cultural values on them. Modernism on the other hand challenged Muslim societies through, 'religious and intellectual forms of impingement through various channels varying in degree of directness and intensity.' (Rahman, 1996, p.212) But even in these circumstances Muslim intellectuals had been aware of the internal decay and had begun a process of, 'positive lines of reconstruction. The elimination of superstition and obscurantism, the reform of Sufism and the raising of moral standards...' (ibid, p.213) were important outward features of reconstruction. While this process of reform took many different forms and took refuge within a number of paradigms even within a single community, the focus of this study is on the modernist reform process. Rahman (1996, p.214) argues that for modernists, '... the challenge was whether religion in general and Islam in particular could accommodate reason.'

Muslim modernists appear to have understood the problem of transformation in both methodological and epistemological terms. They firstly identified the approach to teaching and learning as problematic. By 1831 Al Tahtawi, the Egyptian and one of the first modern rationalists identified taqlid as the major obstacle to intellectual advancement. This theme was continued throughout the nineteenth century by modernists such as Jamal al Afghani and Muhammad Abduh. In the twentieth century the struggle to replace traditionalism with a rational framework was continued by Rashid Rida and Mustafa Maraghi amongst others.

It would also seem, at least at the level of methodology, that the majority of modern rationalists had identified ijtiḥad as the key to a new approach to understanding the modern world. The struggle to transform the institutions of learning and especially Al Azhar University revolved around the greater struggle to replace taqlid with ijtiḥad as the primary learning and teaching tool.

However, it also seems that other fundamental issues in relation to the encroachment of western modernism in Muslim societies had to be confronted. One of the issues had to do with the interpretation of knowledge. The Muslim pre-occupation with what they considered to be divine and therefore infallible knowledge obstructed their entry to and participation in the pursuit of rational enquiry. This, in essence, was the problem that modernists wanted to eliminate. In this sense taqlid had become more than a methodological tool used in teaching and learning. It had through the centuries become the very essence of identifying true knowledge. The core of the modernist project was to address this understanding critically and to uncover its flaws. Flowing from this was the re-introduction of ijtiḥad that opened the doors for the inflow of new knowledge and the critical assessment of existing knowledge. In effect, and at an even deeper level, the struggle for research-based knowledge could be understood as a struggle to locate dominant understandings of Islam as an interpretation of the primary sources rather than as its equivalent. From such a conception the modernists could then assert the permissibility of alternative perceptions of established knowledge as well as the acceptability of new knowledge.

At a theoretical level it could be argued that modernists, faced with the problem of justifying the relevance of rational knowledge, knowledge founded on empirical evidence or as many of the

traditional ulama called it, worldly knowledge, could explain such knowledge as originating from essentially the same source. The conservatives or muhazifun had objected vehemently to the introduction of the 'mathematical sciences' which they believed would lead to the, 'spread of skepticism' (Gesink, 1996, pp.337-338). Here it seems was the key to the apprehension displayed by traditionalists to the introduction of new methods of teaching and learning and to the introduction of rational knowledge. Moreover, the view expressed by the traditional scholars reflected the medieval conception of knowledge as that which had been revealed to humanity from Allah through the prophet Muhammad (SAW). The modernist view, in contrast was that all knowledge had a common source and that humanity had an inherent right and in fact a duty to access such knowledge for its own benefit. But their counter-argument appears to go further. Accessing knowledge from sources other than the Holy Quran and the tradition of the prophet was in effect faith based in that it provided evidence of the wonder of creation. Thus, proper and indeed rational belief and faith should be built on an understanding of our natural world.

Modernism in the Islamic context could therefore be perceived as the introduction of an alternative view of the purpose and objectives of religion in general and of Islam in particular. At an epistemological level it linked all knowledge within the context of its common origin but accessed differently. At a methodological level it (modernism) argued for strategies that made possible the access to new knowledge and the critical reflection of existing knowledge.

In the introduction of modern Rational Islam in the Western Cape many of the issues discussed in this section could be seen in its development. Gamieldien, as the primary (though not only) protagonist of rational Islam, assumed many of the positions taken by the Egyptian modernists such as Abduh and Maraghi on the methodological and epistemological approaches to Islam.

2.5 SHAYKH MUHAMMAD SHAKIER GAMIELDIEN

Shaykh Muhamed Shakir Gamieldien was born at 5 Keerom Street in Cape Town on the 5th November 1911. His father, Imam Abduraghman Gamieldien, was the resident imam of the Al-Azhar Masjid in District Six, on the edge of the city of Cape Town and his mother, Zainap

Talabodien, was a member of one of the prominent families in the Bokaap in the sense that a number of its member had high religious standing within the Muslim community being amongst a class of religious leaders to whom were given much reverence. Imam Abduraghman and his wife had five children by the time they decided to go and live in Egypt where they wanted their children to obtain an Islamic education. In my interview with Gamieldien's son², it became clear that the father understood the concept, 'Islamic education' in a much more liberal way than what had traditionally been assigned to the term. For him virtually all learning was considered 'Islamic' since knowledge as such originated from a single source. At the time that the family departed from Cape Town, there were three sons, these being Muhamed Shakir, Muhamed Eghsaan, and Muhammad Habib. They also had two daughters Jawyer who was the eldest of the siblings and Wardeyah while a third sister, Fareda died before the family left for Cairo. Three other children were born in Cairo, these being, Ahmad Fuad, Awatief and Nabeweyah. Imam Abduraghman had a second wife, Tomah, who also accompanied the family to Egypt. He had one daughter, Nabeweyah, from this marriage.

The family who had initially lived in the Bokaap in Keerom Street, then moved out to the Cape Flats where Imam Abduraghman had a smallholding in Flat Road, Rylands Estate, which was then known as Doring Hoogte. In 1921 the family left Cape Town by boat, first traveling to Bombay (Mumbai) before arriving in Cairo in the same year. The Gamieldiens had family who had settled in Cairo years before to welcome them and with whom they stayed during the initial period after their arrival. They resided in the suburb of Saydina Zainap and thereafter settled in Baabi Luk in Cairo. It was also fortunate that Imam Abduraghman was familiar with the city because he had studied there during his youth and he could speak both Arabic and Urdu fluently.

Shakier Gamieldien was about 10 years old at this stage and he was immediately placed in a primary school in Baabi Luk where he spent the first three years of his primary school education in Egypt, from grade 3 three to grade 6. At the same time his father also enrolled him at a Hafith school under the tutorship of an eminent Hufaath (one who has memorized the Quran), Mawlana Hasan. He spent 3 years memorizing the Holy Quran.

² Interview with B. Gamieldien, 27April 2008.

He was then sent to the Al-Azhar Preparatory School from grade 7 to grade 10 as a preparation for entry into the Al-Azhar University. During this period of his education Gamieldien was required to study what was considered secular subjects as well as Islamic courses such as fiqh, tawhid, Islamic history and basic tafsir and hadith. The secondary level of education allowed students to become familiar with and study the basics of Islamic law and belief while the curriculum allowed for the study of a number of 'secular subjects' such as arithmetic, grammar science and algebra.. This process laid the foundation for advanced studies even from the first years at the university. In effect students who went through Al-Azhar schooling system were streamed towards the study of a specialized Islamic curriculum for which the university was established. Gamieldien, who had also passed a special examination in Arabic to enable him to enter the preparatory school, was now well placed to become the first South African to enter this prestigious Islamic university, widely regarded by Muslim academic and particularly the clergy as being the ultimate institution of Islamic learning.

In 1928 Gamieldien entered the Al-Azhar University and began his tertiary education in the Islamic sciences. He pursued a course of study until the end of 1937, a period of 10 years. Between 1928 and 1932 he completed the primary course called the Auwalliah and obtained this certificate on 6 Jamadil Auwal 1351/ 7 September 1932. The certificate is registered and filed in the al-Azhar archives as certificate no. 7. His further studies took him into the secondary course called the Thanawiah which was duly completed in 1935. He was issued with a second certificate on 16 Shawaal 1354/ 11 January 1936 this certificate being registered as no. 60 in the archives. Gamieldien then proceeded to specialize in the area of theology and entered the college of Usuluddin in 1936. He completed this course in 1938 and was awarded the certificate on 12 Thul Qida 1356/ 15 January 1938. He had attained the distinction of having completed the higher standard, the Alimiyya in tawhid and returned to South Africa immediately after the completion of his studies in September 1938.

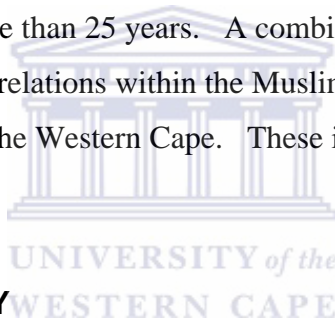
A critical reflection on the courses of study required for the completion of each of the certificates showed a marked similarity to the explanation provided in the Encyclopaedia of Islam (1979, p. 818). In the preparatory years the courses included Islamic studies, Arabic grammar, arithmetic and algebra and science. During the auwalliah course students had to complete courses of study

in tafsir, (Quranic exegesis), hadith (prophetic pronouncements and practices), Fiqh (Islamic Law), Legislative History, arithmetic and algebra, Arabic writing and composition, Islamic History, science and geography. It is clear even from a superficial inspection of these courses, the influence of the reform process on the university. The Thanawiah curriculum reflected the religious nature of the university while simultaneously again showing the impact of reform. The courses included tafsir, hadith, and the science of hadith fiqh, history and legislative history, Islamic Philosophy, logic, science and geography. In the specialization course which lasted 2 years the curriculum included fiqh, tawhid and tafsir.

Gamieldien, had spent eighteen years studying the Islamic sciences at various levels in Cairo, Egypt. His entire education in Egypt had been through the medium of Arabic which had become his first language of communication. Even though he could speak some Afrikaans in the Western Cape dialect, his thought process, language structure and expression resembled the Arabic formulation. As a result the local community initially found it difficult to follow his lectures. In the early years therefore he often confined his work to the Al-Azhar mosque in District Six where he had gathered a substantive following from the congregation. He did however also attract some students from other areas and other masajid. It was at that time customary for members of the community to attach themselves to a specific mosque even though this was not a religious requirement and in fact not considered desirable because Islam did not recognize priesthood. However, internecine squabbles and conflict often led to congregants not attending mosques where they had disagreements with the Imam or senior members of the mosque. It was also customary that congregants learn their religious duties and belief system from the presiding Imam. It was often regarded as a betrayal of the imam or shaykh to attend religious classes at other mosques. Many congregants from other mosques attended Gamieldien's classes in spite of these social restrictions. Since Gamieldien had returned from Cairo with a measure of fanfare, having been preceded by another Al-Azhari of note, namely Shaykh Ismail Hanif Edwards who had developed quite a reputation as a very learned scholar and a graduate from the same institution of Islamic learning as Gamiedien, his coming had thus brought much expectation and excitement within the community. Ebrahim (2004, p.103) remarks in his book on Hanif Edwards that, 'Shaykh Isma'il...said...'do not make a fuss of me, the learned scholar from CapeTown, Shaykh Shakier Gamieldien, is still to come from Al-Azhar

University”. Amongst the ulama his reputation had preceded his return but there was still a feeling of trepidation amongst them. Ebrahim (2004, p.103) in an interview with Shaykh Abdul Karriem Toffar, discussing the arrival of the Azharis to Cape Town, reports that Toffar related a story to him that his father had told him that, “Daar sal mense kom met lang baatjies wat die Qur’an sal verdraai.” (There will be people wearing long coats, who will distort the Qur’an). Those scholars who had studied at the Al-Azhar University had worn the distinctive three quarter jackets instead of the traditional coat. Hanif, who had arrived in Cape Town seven years prior to Gamieldien, had also built a reputation for controversy because of his deeper understanding of Islamic law and belief. His interpretations and judgements often set him in conflict with his conservative and limited colleagues.

Gamieldien arrival in Cape Town therefore was the beginning of the dominance of Azhari trained shaykhs for a period of more than 25 years. A combination of factors after 1976 changed the religious and political relations within the Muslim community leading to the waning of the impact of Rational Islam in the Western Cape. These issues will be investigated in subsequent chapters.



2.6 AL-AZHAR UNIVERSITY

Understanding the education structure of the university and its position in the Islamic world would provide some perspective of Gamieldien’s achievement when he was accepted to pursue his studies at this university. Al-Azhar University has historically represented to Muslims the cradle of Islamic learning and the centre from which understanding of what constitutes legitimacy in terms of belief and practice within the community of Islam is distributed. Moreover, the Muslim world looked to the university to guide it through periods of turmoil and political uncertainty and to assert an Islamic perspective on those issues at the root of the turmoil or political strife. The scholars who had been trained at Al-Azhar were generally seen in the Muslim world as highly competent individuals who were capable of providing the necessary guidance to the community and to impart the required knowledge for Muslims to conduct their daily lives.

The perception of an Islamic institution providing the community of Islam with competent experts of Islamic law and belief was severely tested by western encroachment in the domain of effective education, real knowledge and proper learning. Having swept aside the deficiencies in their own institutions of higher education, and having begun to taste the fruits of success in the adoption of rational learning theories, the Europeans especially had begun to extend their influence to countries outside of Europe. Students from the colonies and other states began attending European universities and accepting the administrative and educational structures created at these institutions. They began to internalize the methodologies inherent in the interchange of ideas, the free exchange of views and opinions, and the challenging of hegemonic understandings and long held interpretations of social practices. In Egypt, the realization of the intellectual gap between Europe and the Islamic world had already begun to dawn on some scholars who demanded reform in the education sphere. As early as 1825 they sent a mission under Rifa'a al-Tahtawi (The Encyclopedia of Islam, vol. 2 p.817) to Paris as the imam of young military cadets to be trained by the French military. There he investigated their education system and structures as well as their learning and teaching methods. He returned in 1831 convinced that Egypt needed to adopt the French educational structures and teaching methodologies especially in their higher institutions of learning. The conservatism of Al Azhar educators however prevented any reform in the administrative or educational approaches at the institution. The university was during this period an essentially Islamic institution of learning focusing solely on the Islamic sciences. The Encyclopaedia of Islam (ibid) makes the point that, 'the conservative section of al-Azhar did not appreciate at the time either the necessity of creating new academic branches ...or of reforming the organization and programmes of religious teaching in Al-Azhar.'

Ali Pasha Mubarak (ibid., p. 819) records that:

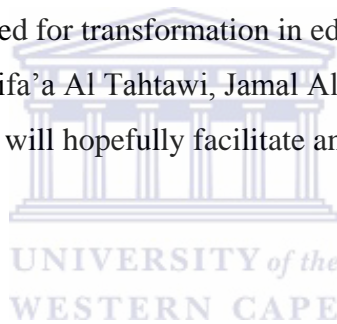
al Djabarti described life at al-Azhar as it was in 1875 at the dawn of the modern reforms... This picture gives an idea of the ancient customs: the students were grouped in a circle (halka, literally 'circle', extended to mean 'course') seated on the mats (hasira) of the mosque around the teacher, who himself was seated Turkish fashion on a low wide armchair placed at the foot of a pillar, each pillar having its accredited holder and being up to 1872 the undisputed property of one juridical school. Morning lectures were reserved for the most important subjects, that is to say successively *tafsir*, *hadith*, *fiqh*

and then at noon the Arabic language: other subjects were kept over for the afternoon lessons. At the end of each class the students kissed the hand of the teacher... There were no examinations at the end of the course of study... Those who left al-Azhar obtained an idjaza to teach; this was a certificate given by the teacher under whom the student had followed courses, testifying to the student's diligence and proficiency. Teacher-student relations had a rather patriarchal aspect..."

This description reflects traditional learning within the university both with regard to its organization and to its teaching-learning relationship. The position of the teacher as the unquestionable holder of knowledge which is imparted daily to students to be absorbed and internalized appears to be quite patent. It was this relationship that modern rational educators wanted to transform.

There were, as had been alluded to earlier, a number of individuals within the body of ulama who had begun to propagate the need for transformation in education. Three of the most important agents of change were Rifa'a Al Tahtawi, Jamal Al Afghani and Muhammad Abduh. A brief sketch of their contribution will hopefully facilitate an understanding of Rational Islam.

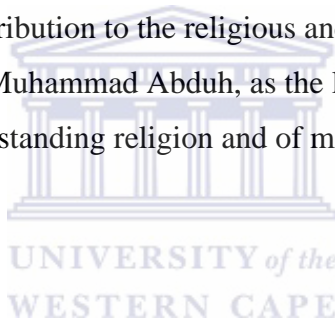
2.7 RIFA'A AL TAHTAWI



Al Tahtawi is often perceived in the history of Egyptian education as the pioneer of its renaissance known as the Nahda. An Al-Azhari, Tahtawi was sent to Paris in 1826 as the imam for a number of Egyptian cadets training at the Paris military academy. As a result of his experience in France, he advocated that the education system in Egypt should undergo a fundamental transformation if Egyptian society were to survive western advancement. He did however warn that the changes should be affected after adaptation to the values of Islamic culture. It was his propagation that ijthihad should replace taqlid as the primary methodological principle in education that defined him as a pioneer of modernism and which set in motion the transformative development in Egypt.

2.8 JAMAL AL AFGHANI

Al Afghani, though not an Egyptian, was influential as an activist in the country who sought to re-establish the legitimacy of Islamic belief and practice both in the face of what he believed to be the dogmatism, stagnation and corruption of Islam and the simultaneous success and technological and scientific advancement of western societies. He called for the redefinition of the outmoded interpretation of Islamic doctrine and a revision of the principle of taqlid. His belief in ijtiḥad was at the same time much broader than that of al Taḥṭawi in the sense that for him ijtiḥad meant, ‘a spirit of intellectual curiosity which he understood to be the very essence of Islam,’ (Gesink, 2006, p.322). He defined taqlid on the other hand, ‘...as a violation of explicit Qur’anic commandments...’(ibid., p.333) It was in this sense that al Afghani contributed to the educational and indeed the religious debate that developed in Egypt during the nineteenth century. As important as his contribution to the religious and educational debate, was the emergence of one of his students, Muhammad Abduh, as the leading Al-Azhari scholar to adopt Rational Islam as a means of understanding religion and of meeting the challenges of science and technology in the modern era.



2.9 MUHAMMAD ABDUH

The process of modernization of the educational system in Egypt and in Al-Azhar University in particular was imposed on it by the rapid encroachment of western culture. Yaasin Mohamed (1996, p.18) writes that “due to the process of modernization European-orientated schools emerged in Egypt, and Al-Azhar had to reform itself to compete with the new economic and educational realities...The person to have contributed to the reform of Al-Azhar was Muhammad Abduh.” Mohammad states further that, Abduh’s contribution to the process of educational reform began with a change in the theoretical direction of the institutions of learning including Al Azhar. The one of the results of the reform process was the emergence of the Salafiyyah School which Mohamed (1996, p.18), argues was founded on the following principles:

(1) the purification of Islam from corrupting influences: (2) the reformation of Muslim higher education: (3) the reformulation of Islamic doctrine in the light of modern thought, and (4) the defense of Islam against European influence.

The word Salafiyyah itself has historical significance in that it presents a view that argues for a return to the examples and practices of the prophet and his companions and the great men of the early period of Islam. One of its purposes was the elimination of beliefs and practices within current Islam that were not perceived as being in conformity with the example of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH). These practices were regarded as innovation (bid'a) and therefore un-Islamic. From a legal and theological standpoint it also propagated a strict adherence to the prescriptions set by the great men that followed immediately after the prophet and his companions.

The basis of this view is that for Islam to prosper it should shed all innovation that have taken the ummah (the Muslim community) away from the essential teachings of Islam and that this purity is to be found in the practices of the three generations starting with that of Muhammad (PBUH) himself. This view originates from his saying that:

The best people are those of my generation, and then those who will come after them (the next generation), and then those who will come after them (i.e. the next generation) (Bukhari, no.1)

However, it is crucial that a more critical understanding of this concept (salafiyyah) is developed given the fact that it is often used in other paradigms, some completely opposed to the reforming theories of the modernists such as al Afghani and Abduh.

The term appears to have been employed by many leaders and members of the ulama fraternity who had been disaffected by what they considered corruptive innovations into Islamic law and practice. This seems to be where the similarity between these different groupings ended. What they considered to be the prophetic example and the practice of the companions appear to differ quite markedly from group to group. Abduh and the modernists on the one hand extracted from the term salafiyyah, the understanding that the Qur'an and the prophet's sayings and practices were open to interpretation in order for his followers to extract from them the underlying principles. The principle of ijtiḥad for example, for the modernists meant the permissibility for rational research aimed at benefiting humanity.

For the more conservative ulama it meant establishing the ways in which it was practiced at the time of the prophet and the early companions and then following the example. Y. Dumbé and A. Tayob say that, ‘Salafis claim an uncompromising return to the original sources of Islam, and a rejection of innovation in religious thought and practices. They consider the literal meaning of the Qur’ān and ḥadīth to be sufficient for religious life and oppose those who argued that their meanings may be extended in new contexts.’ (2011, p.190). Both groups would consider themselves of the salafiyyah.

Abduh wrote in a commentary that ‘the Quran had to conform to the dictates of reason and had to be interpreted according to it.’ (Mohamed, 1996, p.19) This view of Quranic interpretation was a radical departure from a traditional understanding of belief which generally acknowledges that the Quran should be placed above human reason. Human reason was at best regarded by the majority of the most prominent ulama at the time as unreliably fallible and at worst the genesis of misguidance. These experts on Islamic exegesis in the main demand complete submission to a literal understanding of the text. .

Abduh’s appointment therefore, as a member of the advisory committee of Al Azhar in 1895 was considered extremely controversial. Abduh began to discard the revolutionary approach of Afghani in favour of what he thought was the most effective way to deal with the problems that impacted on Islam. This approach he called a process of ‘educational and cultural revival.’ (Mohamed, 1996, p.20) He considered such an approach the most appropriate way to ‘evolutionary change through education’. (ibid). Mohamed (1996, p.25) also asserts that Abduh reflected some key thoughts of the positivism of Comte and the scientific rationalism that transformed Europe. He had struggled to come to terms with the transformation of the European political-economic landscape which had been driven by the emerging industrial realities in Europe, and attempted to restate Islam in the following way:

Thought should be liberated from the shackles of taqlid, religious knowledge should be weighed on the scales of human reason; and religion must be accounted a friend of science. The mark of a true Muslim society is not only law, but also reason. It submits to God’s commands and interprets them rationally. Islam is the true sociology: the science of true happiness in this world and the next. (p. 24)

Abduh’s view (Mohamed, 1996, p.25) that ‘modernity is based on reason, Islam does not contradict reason, therefore Islam is compatible with modernity,’ encapsulates his conviction that

an interpretation of Islam that uses rational methods of understanding religion would bring its adherents into the modern world of science and technology.

Amongst the recommendations he made for reform was "... to embrace initially the curriculum, a system of supervision, examinations and focus on comprehension rather than memorization." (Mohamed, 1996, p.25) These effort however to bring about effective reform based on a rational conception of religion and integrating worldly and spiritual knowledge while reforming the curriculum and introducing new methods of interpretation failed to a large extent because of opposition from the conservative shaykhs at Al-Azhar and from the political leadership within Egypt.

The nahda however, continued especially in the educational arena where the modernists believed the future of Egypt and of Islam had to be grounded. Thus the process of transformation that was initiated at the end of the nineteenth century and continued in the first half of the twentieth century was both institutional as well as educational. From an institutional perspective it revolved around attempts to reform the administrative structures and to structure the content of learning. From an epistemological viewpoint the reforms concentrated on the presentation of knowledge and interpretive categories. At the root of these reforms, at least amongst the modernist ulama, was the conception that knowledge previously understood as secular and therefore of little value in the realm of Islamic belief and practice needed to be acknowledged as legitimate within a religious framework. These perceptions had drawn the battle lines between traditionalists who wanted to maintain the purity of the religious sciences through a process of separation from 'worldly knowledge' and those who, had argued earlier in the nineteenth century as al Tahtawi did that 'Taqlid (following precedents) was more than a legal methodology; it was a worldview opposed to change...training students to do ijtiḥad would not be damaging but would actually contribute to the revival of Islamic society...' (Gesink, 1996, p. 331-332)

It is significant that Abduh had already begun constructing a national education policy for Egypt during his exile from Egypt in France between 1882 and 1887 that attempted to bring a balance between the practical use of specific subjects, those subjects necessary for scientific expertise and those revolving around religious and moral knowledge. At an organizational level he

wanted to reform Al-Azhar in such a way that its administrative structures had an organized curriculum that would reflect what he called, contemporary relevance. Gesink (1996, p.335) explains that Abduh in fact wanted to impose on the Egyptian education structure a “European-style administrative system with registration, examinations, attendance records, moral supervision, practical application of subject material ...” Even in religious education he provided a critique of what he called the method of teaching reading through Qur’an memorization... words without meaning” . (Gesink, 1996, p.335).

Abduh as a member of the advisory board initiated a number of the reforms at the end of the nineteenth century that he perceived as necessary. He enacted reform codes in 1896 that transformed Al Azhar from a medieval madrasa into a modern educational institution with defined academic courses, a structured curriculum and bureaucratic structures to administer the university. He introduced non-religious subjects into the curriculum at secondary level as supportive of the religious subjects being taught. Gesink (1996, p.325) explains this period of reformation in nineteenth century Egypt saying that, ‘This reformation involved transformative debate over the purpose and methods of Islamic education.’ She also explains that, ‘...Abduh had resolved to cut the chains of taqlid... (because)... Humans have free will and should be empowered to use it: the authority of human reason should be liberated from all chains except submission to God...religious scholars’ role as mediators of texts and discursive knowledge would eventually become obsolete.’ (Gesink, 1996, p.325).

When Gamieldien began his university career, this struggle for transformation was still ongoing. The issue of whether secular courses should be offered at the university had not been resolved. The compromise position that was agreed on during this period was that the secular subjects would be taught only as support for the Islamic sciences such as tafsir, hadith, fiqh and tawhid. This period of reform and reconstruction appeared to have been an extremely turbulent period with the ulama fraternity either supporters of Muhammad Abduh and his reforms or fierce opponents of the modernization process and of government interference in the autonomy of the university. The conservative ulama (muhafizun) at Al-Azhar vehemently opposed the reforms initiated by Abduh. They held on to the view that the introduction of secular subjects into the curriculum would undermine the essentially religious mission of the university, a mission that

had been its historical *raison d'être* from its inception during the ninth century. Gesink (1996, p.338) quotes from an Al-Azhari scholar, Muhammad al Safti, who commented that, 'the circumstances do not permit other than the current subjects...If we were to require the students to acquire mathematical subjects as is now the plan, without increasing the time... the matter would end in abandoning important parts of the *shari'a*... Thus would the *shari'a*³ of the messenger of God, peace be upon him, be annihilated.' Another scholar, Muhammad al Mahdi, reflected that, "the religious scholars should not become generalists; they fulfilled a specific function for society by performing a *fard kifa'i*⁴, an obligation that could be fulfilled on behalf of all." (Gesink, 1996, p.338).

Their opposition was not solely in their understanding of secularism as an opponent of religion but also in the dilution of what they considered as knowledge belonging to religion being replaced by that belonging to the material world. It was the notion of conceiving of knowledge in this way that rational Islam wanted to undermine. The introduction of the secular branch of knowledge into this religious institution particularly was thus a conscious attempt by Abduh to break down the dichotomy between this artificial division that existed in the minds of the traditional ulama. Moreover, the incorporation of the empirical sciences into an area where knowledge presented to students were primarily of a spiritual nature and its premises beyond rational discussion, would allow students a unique opportunity of developing skills that would enable them to reflect on knowledge presented within the more speculative areas of study, areas such as *tawhid*, *hadith* and *tafsir*.

Certainly there was a fear amongst the traditional and conservative staff of the university that the foundations of religious belief could be destroyed by the introduction of secular areas of study. An Al-Azhari scholar wrote that 'the new subjects would distract students from religious studies...If this is the case, the desired outcome, which is training of people to be *shari'a* judges or *muftis* or *imams* of mosques or professors would be lost' (Gesink 1996, p. 335) Al Safti protested against the introduction of, "mathematical sciences and the fruits of progress, which,...cause the spread of skepticism." (Gesink 1996, p. 335)

³ Islamic Law

⁴ This term is used in Islamic Law and means a community obligation.

However, Abduh pushed through his reforms after 1896 which allowed secular subject to be introduced in the initial years of study. Also, his division of the academic years into a progressive course based programme was a radical change in the understanding of the content. Knowledge now had to be graded both in terms of methodology of presentation and depth of study, with lecturers having to re-organize their work. Abduh had therefore transformed the very way that the Al-Azhar University presented itself as an institution of learning. As a result he compelled religious leaders to reconsider their position on matters of education and of their society. Indeed, the search for solutions to the problems presented by western encroachment was a challenge that Muslims religious leaders had to resolve within the area of religious thought and practice. For him, providing the intellectual and simultaneously the religious basis for incorporating a modern rational approach to religion seemed an appropriate response. To obtain the overall support of a sceptical ulama class was another challenge he had to address. It was left to his successors like Mustafa al Maraghi, the rector at Al-Azhar to implement his ideas more effectively in the late 1920's and again from 1935 to 1948.

The reforms brought about by the Advisory Council under the direction of Abduh after 1896 was focused both on the structure of the academic work as well as on the rational administration of the work. The division of the subject into four or five year courses, the writing of examinations, minimum entry qualifications and proper certification at the end of an academic study period were all structures imported from western university organization. Gesink (1996, p. 332) described this process as “its colonization and indeed the colonization of Egypt.”

The reform process at the Al-Azhar proceeded over a number of years. The Encyclopaedia of Islam (p. 818) describes these reforms;

A law of 20 Muharram 1314/ 1 July 1896 ... fixed the minimum age for the admission of pupils at 15; declared that conditions for admission were to be able to read and write, and to know half of the Kur'an by heart; it reorganised the programmes, forbade the teaching of glosses to new pupils and restricted it to older ones. Two examinations led, either after a minimum of 8 years study to the diploma of ahliyya or, after 12 years, to the diploma of 'alimiyya (with three honours classes). Modern subjects were introduced, either obligatory (such as elements of arithmetic, algebra) or optional (such the history of Islam, composition, elements of geography).

The law of 2 Safar 1326/ 6 March 1908 set out the studies in three standards, primary, secondary and higher, each of four years duration with a certificate after each final examination. The optional subjects of 1896 were made compulsory. The law of 14 Djumada 1329/ 13 May 1911...laid down that...In the conditions for entry for pupils, the age limit was from 10-17 years. In 1921 the condition of entry required knowledge of the whole of the Kur'an...

In the law of 13 Muharram 1342/ 26 August 1923, the highest standard was renamed 'specialization' (*takhasus*)..."

A law of 24 Djumada 1349/ 16 November 1930 ...stipulated that students should be under 16 years of age on admission (18 in the case of foreigners who were exempted from knowing the Kur'an by heart). The primary course was 4 years the secondary 5 years, the higher 4 years in one of the three faculties constituted by this law (Islamic law or *shari'a*, theology or *usul al-din*, the Arabic language or *lugha 'arabiyya*), and in appropriate cases more specialization or *takhasus*, in those faculties... The programme in the higher standard (*alimiyya*) was completed by the special mention of those who had attained distinction in their specialist studies, for example the grade of *ustadh* in such and such a subject etc.

The Encyclopaedia of Islam (1979, p.820) commenting on the reforms, said,

the question of Al-Azhar has from time to time been a vexed one. Fundamentally, it is a question knowing what exactly Al-Azhar's real mission is with respect to the needs of the Muslim community of the twentieth century, and further whether the intellectual and moral instruction that she provides is adapted to those needs."

Gamielien entered the university having completed his secondary education in 1928. Many of the reform features had by this time been adopted and he was to benefit from the new approaches to teaching and learning as well as from the changed education structures and administrative controls. Most crucial for this study is the fact that all the religious faculties had made serious attempts to adapt its approach and philosophy of religion to one that incorporated an acceptance of their disciplines as rational areas of research. Gamielien therefore became the first South African not only to enter the Al-Azhar University, but also the first South African to obtain a rational religious education.

2.10 AL-AZHAR'S UNIVERSITY INFLUENCE ON GAMIELDIEN

One of the most influential rectors of the Al-Azhar University during the period of reform and transition was Shaykh Mustafa al Maraghi who was first appointed to this post in 1928 (Esposito). An ardent supporter of the process of reform at the university and a proponent of Rational Islam, he was an enthusiastic student and follower of Muhammad Abduh (Asad, p.188). He believed that Islam could only become relevant in the face of Western encroachment if it embraced modernism with all its technological and scientific methodology in resolving the problems that faced societies throughout the world. In effect, he believed that Islam had historically started the search for rational knowledge and had later in its history discarded the search for worldly knowledge in pursuance of a world of spirituality. This, he believed was a distortion of the message of the Quran. Western adoption of the scientific approach for the resolution of societal problems had resulted in major advancement in all areas of knowledge. The Muslim Ummah had on the other hand stagnated in a world of superstition and irrationality. Islam however did not endorse such an approach to belief. On the contrary, both the Qur'an and the prophetic example guided Muslims on the path of a search for knowledge and the use of the natural resources for the benefit of humanity. Moreover, he promoted the idea that humanity had an obligation to seek to understand our world and all that is in it. He believed that was incumbent on the community to train from its members to search for answers to problems in all areas of human endeavour. Failure to do so by some of its members would result in the entire community sinning against its natural existence.

When he became the rector of Al-Azhar, he was considered an outsider by the ulama of that institution because he was not a member of the elite 'high ulama'. However, he managed Al Azhar and imposed on the dissenting shaykhs a detailed document that constituted the essential changes to the education structures and that were in line with rational administration and pedagogic requirements. One of the consequences of this transformation was that the secondary level of education was now separated from the tertiary education courses and modules. In other words, whereas students had previously simply proceeded along a course of study from the primary to the secondary and then into tertiary education as if it was one continuous course of

study, the new system separated primary from high and then from university studies. Following the European model the tertiary level was separated allowing students to proceed to school and then to graduate and be selected to go to university. Even though the Al-Azhar maintained administrative and educational control of the primary and secondary phases of education, it no longer constituted a single continuous course of study. This change also opened the way for students from other institutions of higher learning or pupils from other high schools to enter Al Azhar for their tertiary education.

Another fundamental change brought about by Maraghi was the division of tertiary study into three distinct faculties, thereby recognizing a number of educational principles with regard to the specialization of knowledge.

First, and in line with European management and educational approaches, Maraghi recognized the distinct disciplines of study, in this case the areas being shari'a', usuluddin and the Arabic language. But his reconstruction went beyond the administrative and management changes. Maraghi also wanted to embrace a rational approach to the teaching of the Islamic disciplines. He pursued the idea of replacing the traditional methods of teaching with modern approaches that promoted intellectual stimulation and creative thinking. It was the opposition from the Khedive and the senior Al-Azhari shaykhs to Maraghi's proposals that led to his resignation in 1929.

It is often felt that the first real reform in actual classroom practices and interpretive approaches to knowledge occurred under the leadership of al Maraghi. He had adopted the administrative ideas of Muhammad Abduh and implemented them during his first period as rector of Al-Azhar. But like Abduh before him, resistance against a radical transformation of teaching strategies and theoretical approaches to interpretation of content still prevented him carrying his transformation process through.

His second appointment in 1935 however, saw him continue his reform process. With Maraghi again as rector a section that specialized in the preparation of teachers to implement the methodologies and teaching strategies that promoted ijtihaad was created. He also set up "a

section that specialized in the preparation of teaching materials” (Encyclopaedia of Islam, 1979, p. 822). It is also significant that Maraghi initiated a programme, “for sending students abroad for higher studies to Britain, France and Germany. Upon their return these individuals exerted great influence for the further reform of the university.” (Encyclopaedia of Islam, p.822) He remained rector until his death in 1948.

Gamieldien was a student at Al-Azhar University during both periods of Maraghi’s rectorship and benefited from the administrative as well as the educational changes initiated by him. In terms of methodology and theoretical direction he was again exposed to research based work since students were allowed to reflect on the content and to present different ways of interpreting legal arguments and conclusions. In particular when it came to subjects like tawhid or tafsir students were invited to give their understandings of different verses of the Qur’an and to support their interpretations with arguments. One of Gamieldien’s students tells this story of one such debate during a lecture on tawhid where the topic was whether there was only one God.

Shaykh Gamieldien told us that during the final year of his studies their ustadt (lecturer) presented them with a problem which they had to resolve by debate. How would they present logical proof without reference to the Qur’an or the sunnah of the prophet, that there was only one God. He was part of the group that would argue for multiple deities. The shaykh related that he had to present proof that it was possible that there was more than one god. As he presented his argument, his father entered the lecture hall and on hearing his ‘view’ immediately left. At home he was castigated for presenting such an argument. He says it took him sometime to explain that this was part of a process of education that developed their capacity to think independently.

The significance of this story lies in the changing approach to religious teaching during Maraghi’s tenure as rector at Al Azhar University. In contrast to the transmission teaching approach and the virtual ban on independent thinking this debate reflected an approach to teaching that stimulated independent thought that undermined the fear of retribution and developed the ability of critical thinking.

2.11 GAMIELDIEN'S RETURN TO CAPE TOWN

It was this approach to the teaching of Islam that Gamieldien brought to Cape Town with his return in 1938. He returned to the Cape where much of the beliefs and practices that had been dominant in Cairo during the nineteenth century. Much of the obscurantism that the Egyptian ulama had struggled against was still a feature of the beliefs and practices in Cape Town. Gamieldien himself had not been exposed to these beliefs and practices there because his own experience at the university had been that of a changing institution. He was therefore very surprised at what he thought was the backwardness of the Muslims locally.⁵

District Six was a part of Cape Town where the resident community was composed of people from a range of religious backgrounds, colours and ethnicity. In many ways District Six represented an enclave in South Africa that reflected the diversity of this country in the south. The Muslim community of District Six attended the three mosques in the area, viz. the Al-Azhar Mosque in the lower part of District Six, the Galeelul Rahman Mosque in the upper section and the Kannemia Mosque representing the majority of Muslims of Indian descent. The Azzavia Mosque just outside District Six also drew a substantial section of the community. The Muslim community of the Western Cape who were called Cape Malays according to the 1951 census consisted of about 62000 inhabitants. (Patterson, 1953, p. 319).

From the beginning of his work in District Six Gamieldien felt it his duty to correct some of the misconceptions the community held about Islam and to propagate and teach what he considered to be authentic religion. However, he soon became aware of the deep-rooted nature of Islamic practice in the Cape. As a trained theologian who had specialized in tawhid he was especially sensitive to the nature of belief locally. Amongst the issues bothered him deeply was the belief in the pre-ordained nature of existence, and the belief that God had created human beings and set out their life paths and yet they were held responsible for their actions. His religious understanding of justice as set out in the Quran left him bewildered and deeply troubled⁶. He was also disturbed by the Cape Town tradition of visiting the saints who were buried around the city,

⁵ This became clear in the interview with his eldest son, N. Gamieldien and his wife G. Gamieldien on 15 January 2008.

⁶ Interview with N. Gamieldien and (Mrs.) G. Gamieldien, 15 January 2008.

for the purpose of intercession. This practice he regarded anti-Islamic (shirk). Moreover, he was appalled by the excessive use of the sayings of the prophet called hadith without checking its authenticity and consistency with the first primary source of belief, the Quran. Finally, he wanted to change the widely held perception that ‘secular’ knowledge was anathema to Islam.

He soon became aware of the conservative nature of the local Muslim community and the suspicion they had for anything that they considered new or innovative in the Deen of Islam. He began to understand that he needed to build from the accepted Muslim practices, whether religious or cultural, and then introduce new approaches to the understanding of Islam. On the issue of zakaah for example, it was a common practice to hand over the annual payment to the Imam of the mosque who generally regarded such payments as his own to be used as he pleased. Unless the congregation member commonly known as the mureed specifically stated that the money should be distributed to the poor, this was not done as a matter of course. At the Al-Azhar mosque this was certainly the practice. His son⁷ told the following story:

The residing imam at the Al-Azhar mosque when my father returned from Egypt was his uncle Imam Abubakar Gamiieldien. The practice during the month of Muharram was that the congregation gave their zakaah to the imam who distributed whatever he wanted and kept the rest. Also, the zakaah was in the form of rice or flour, generally regarded as the staple foods amongst Muslims. My father, on seeing this practice, decided to have a talk with the imam to correct the malpractice. He explained that the purpose of zakaah was that it should be distributed to the poor and the indigent and that the imam is merely the conduit for this process. He also discussed the issue of mathahab (school of law) with the imam and explained that it was possible within the shari’a (Islamic Law) to give the zakaah in monetary form. This would help the poor to decide for themselves what their requirements were. The Al-Azhar mosque was the first to change both these practices with the other mosques following suit during the succeeding years.

This pragmatic approach in dealing with the matter of zakaah, characterized much of his juristic opinions within the legal framework of Islam known as the shari’a in the early years of his work in Cape Town. He therefore began to develop an educational programme at the mosque where he was the assistant to the resident imam. By 1952 he had initiated a study group where he taught interpretation (tafsir) of the Holy Quran. This was a historic moment in the existence of the mosque because this class continued for a period of forty two years and ended only when

⁷ Interview with N. Gamiieldien, 15 January 2008.

Gamieldien became too ill to leave his house in 1994. During this time he completed the tafsir only twice each one taking up to twenty years.⁸ It is also significant that students attending his lectures often commented on the fact that Gamieldien did not refer to any classical texts as would be the norm in the tradition of explaining the meaning of verses in the Quran. The development of this study group would be dealt with in greater detail in chapter three. This was the beginning of his work in Cape Town and his quest for transformation in the content and nature of belief and practice of the Muslim community.

2.12 CONCLUSION

This chapter attempted to trace the history of Rational Islam from its nineteenth century roots in Egypt to the first half of the twentieth century. In the process it tried to explain the reasons for its development in that country and to reflect on the work of some of the key figures who helped to shape its form. The Egyptian paradigm presented Muslims with the dilemma of understanding and coming to terms with the impact of modern western culture and its overwhelming onslaught on traditional Islamic society. It was clearly this impact that forced the educated classes to reflect on their religious interpretation of Islam and the effect such an interpretation had on their social and particularly their economic existence. As important was the fact that they began a process of reflection on their education structures and on the relevance of religious and secular education for their community and national progress. More fundamentally they looked critically on their understanding of what education in the modern sense of the term meant.

This chapter also looked at the struggles within Egyptian society and particularly amongst the ulama in their search for a balance between the worldly and the spiritual. The struggle for modernization in the educational arena met with strong opposition from those who wanted to protect the community from the materialism that characterized modern western societies. At the same time they wanted the benefits of the advancements made in these societies and, as important, they wanted to create the societal structures that provided the impetus for advancement. The dilemma for Egyptian society, steeped in the tradition of what they believed to be a culture of Islam, was that they could not adopt the social culture that accompanied the

⁸ B. Gamieldien interview on 27 April, 2008.

material benefits of science and technology. This lay at the root of the struggle between the traditionalists amongst the ulama and the modernists like Al Tahtawi, Al Afghani, Abduh, and Maraghi. The development of modern educational institutions was thus fundamentally linked to the need for transformation of Egyptian society. And the change in the interpretation of Islamic theology was also inextricably connected to this need.

A crucial component of the chapter is the search for and analysis of the historical thread that pervaded the Islamic history of Egypt from the early nineteenth century leading eventually to Gamieldien as one of the heirs of the struggle to eliminate obscurantism in Islam and to replace it with scientific rationalism that would introduce Islam to western approaches to the modern issues of our social world. Gamieldien was a student at Al-Azhar during the period of educational turmoil that began with Abduh in 1896 and continued with Maraghi. He was to benefit greatly from the substantive changes initiated by Maraghi during his first period as rector particularly during the second period from 1935. The introduction of ijihad in place of taqlid as a fundamental methodological and theological principle was a crucial factor in shaping Gamieldien's understanding of Islam. Moreover, it was the consistent use of critical assessment of the dominant and current texts which had up to then been sacrosanct as classical texts on law and theology that paved the way for his education within the framework of modern Rational Islam. This was the Islam that was brought to Cape Town in 1938 and which was introduced into Al Azhar Mosque in District Six.

The chapter also introduced Gamieldien's work in the Western Cape by surveying the religious landscape for further investigation in the next chapter. It introduced some of the dominant understanding of what constitutes religious belief in Islam and Gamieldien's initial response to such beliefs.

Chapter 3 will attempt to outline and reflect on his work in District Six in Cape Town where he was one of the presiding imams for more than fifty years. It will research his interpretation of religious beliefs and the educational institutions that were created to further Islam. The chapter will also attempt to analyze the methodological approach to teaching and the theoretical paradigm that constituted for Gamieldien the way to understand Islam.

Finally, chapter 3 will assess Gamieldien's impact on the community of District Six prior to the implementation of the Group Areas Act as part of the Apartheid programme during the nineteen sixties and seventies.



CHAPTER 3 LOCALIZATION AND INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF MODERN RATIONAL ISLAM IN THE WESTERN CAPE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Rational Islam was a response to the encroachment of Western modernism on traditional Islamic societies during the 19th century. Rational Islam has to be understood as a reaction in Egypt to an external colonially inspired impulse that had initiated a process of dislocation within its social fabric because of the apparent material success of its modern social organisation. In this sense the response was different from the revival of the 17th and 18th centuries that was initiated as a response to internal factors within Islam and that does not form part of this investigation. It is mentioned, however, because it reflects the capacity of Muslim society to reform itself whenever circumstances required it to do so. Fazlur Rahman (1966, pp. 212–213) comments on the western challenge and its impact on Muslim society. He makes a comparison with the internal challenge of the earlier period and the successful reformation that had taken place. He then explains the modern challenge on Islamic society:

Very different was the case at the time of the Western impacts on Islam in the 12th/18th and especially in the 13th/19th century.... Muslims were vanquished and politically subjugated directly and indirectly. The most patent and direct challenges were ... the modern thought of Europe and the study and criticism by Westerners of Islam.... The unsettlement that ensued...rendered the Muslim psychologically less capable of constructively rethinking his heritage and meeting the intellectual challenge of modern thought....

Rahman (p.213) suggests that this at least was the, "irresistible impression on an external observer (whose observations have...influenced many Muslims...) that Islam has become internally incapable of reconstituting itself..."

Rahman (p. 213) argues further that, "That this impression is...palpably false is shown by the pre-modernist reform attempts..." during the early 18th century that were brought about by internal revival. The point made is that the Muslim community was absolutely capable of meeting the Western onslaught.

The modernist response to the Western challenge was neither a total rejection of Western principles of social organisation nor their complete embrace. Rather it was an attempt to incorporate the positive aspects of Western society, its science and technology as well as aspects of its administrative and management practices into an Islamic ethical code. The theme of reform within such a context will be pursued in this chapter.

This chapter will thus examine the way in which the issue of the incorporation of Western practices into the Muslim community of the Western Cape was dealt with. Gamieldien's role will be investigated in order to establish his understanding of Rational Islam and how this understanding impacted on the Muslim community in Cape Town. An important aspect of this analysis will be an examination of the educational institutions and structures that acted as conduits for Gamieldien's teaching. Indeed, the al-Hidayah Islamic Movement and al-Azhar Mosque became Gamieldien's primary avenues of propagation and re-education.

An important issue that has to be investigated is the changing realities that began to shape the consciousness of the people of Cape Town. The post-Second World War period brought in its wake key changes in the economy of the Western Cape that affected the social stability of the community, especially that of the Muslims. To be able to respond positively to these changes required a considerable mind shift in their understanding of Islam. Rational Islam became an important vehicle at this historical moment for local Muslims, allowing them to make the necessary intellectual adjustment that could facilitate their capacity to accept the transformative processes. The parallel between the Egyptian experience and that of the local Muslim community has to be explored in order to fully understand the impact of Rational Islam as a means of mediating the transformation. This issue will be fully explored.

The concluding section of the chapter will endeavour to reflect on some of the most important discussions and show how Rational Islam effectively impacted on the perceptions of sections of the local community in its interaction with an increasingly modern world.

3.2 RATIONAL ISLAM IN CAPE TOWN- From International Roots to Localization

Gamieldien returned to Cape Town in September 1938. He went to live with his grandmother in the Skotche Kloof area called the Bo-Kaap, which was on the periphery of central Cape Town. He became the assistant imam at al-Azhar Mosque in District Six where his paternal uncle, Imam

Abubakar Gamieldien, was the presiding imam. He was the first South African to have graduated at al-Azhar University, having attained the Alimiyya Certificate with specialisation in tawhid (belief) and advanced training in Islam as a benefit (rahmah) to humanity and way of life that opened up opportunities for human beings to investigate and research the wonder of creation and then to use it for human benefit. The dominant themes of local teaching, however, revolved around the importance of supplication (ibadah), the rewards that accrued as a result of this and the punishment for its neglect. The focus on the spiritual aspects of Islam and the almost total absence of practical content unsettled Gamieldien to the extent that he considered it his primary objective to initiate a process of re-education, starting with his own congregation in Aspeling Street, District Six. He became aware of and sensitive to the dominant religious practices within the Muslim community of Cape Town. He identified⁹ three major areas of concern.

Firstly, Gamieldien believed that a literalist interpretation of the Quran lay at the root of some key beliefs and practices. An example of this was the fear of secular education within the community, which it referred to as ‘Christian knowledge’. Most of the religious leaders had interpreted the seeking of knowledge as meaning Islamic knowledge, which to them meant knowledge from the Quran or from the example of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Other kinds of knowledge were flawed and led believers to stray from the righteous path. The community thus avoided sending its children to school except for the development of the most basic skills such as literacy and numeracy. For Gamieldien such an interpretation of Islam was rooted in an impoverished religious epistemology that divided knowledge into different categories. This perception he believed needed to be corrected.

Secondly, he was disturbed by the community’s preoccupation with the use of intermediaries or intercessors instead of direct communication with the Creator in its search for salvation.

Gamieldien believed that the Sufi practices that were widespread in the Cape Town religious culture carried within themselves a number of highly contentious sets of belief principles that in his view brought into question fundamental assumptions about the Creator. The visiting of the graves of saints (karamah) and their use as conduits for reaching the Creator were considered by him as practices that did not conform to essential Islamic belief.

⁹ Interview with N. Gamieldien, 4 December 2009.

Thirdly, Gamieldien rejected the use of taqlid (following) as an overall methodological principle that should act as the cornerstone of religious practice. While he accepted that the ‘doors of ijtihad’ (independent research) on matters of ibadah were closed and that taqlid could be used in such circumstances, that the laws pertaining to prayer (salaah), fasting (saum), the giving of alms (zakaah), the procedures of pilgrimage (haj), marriage, divorce and inheritance cannot be altered even by consensus, he also believed that all other matters relating to our social existence were subject to a process of consultation, (shura) consensus (ijma’) and comparison or analogy (qiyas). He further believed that even the existing legal framework within which the settled religious practices were located had enough flexibility to allow a properly trained lawyer room for interpretation that would satisfy modern requirements. It became one of his objectives to educate his immediate students in the culture of rational belief that would empower them to understand the conceptual framework that Islam required of its adherents.

In an interview with one of his students,¹⁰ the issue of belief in the oneness of God was discussed. The student explained how Gamieldien understood the concept of oneness:

Shaykh Shakier taught us that our communication must be directly to Allah. There must be no intermediary otherwise it could border on giving partners to Allah (shirk). During the period of the time of ignorance (Jahiliyyah) the people used to make idols through which they appealed to God because they believed that one could not ask directly. He emphasised that they did not actually believe in the idols but used them as symbols of the Creator. If we use the saints we are no different.

Gamieldien believed that the concept of tawhid or belief in the oneness of God was the most fundamental belief in Islam. Any dilution of this principle is absolutely rejected by Muslims of all categories. Even though there are disagreements between the Sufi-orientated groupings and others, the theoretical criteria remain the same. It is in practice that interpretations diverge.

For Gamieldien the connective thread between theory and practice, however, remained inextricable. The key features of Gamieldien’s initial period at al-Azhar Mosque were his focus on a religious framework that would promote an understanding of what he considered to be proper belief. His lectures after the -Second World War and especially after 1950 concentrated

¹⁰ Interview with Imam Abubakar Japtha, 14 July 2009.

on issues such as the essence and the attributes of Allah and why it was necessary (wajib) for a God to possess such attributes. He believed that it was only through a proper understanding of what it means to be a Creator that false perceptions could be eliminated from a belief system. He knew, however, that the community had historically imbibed very deeply in beliefs that were often irrational and that it was involved in practices that it considered Islamic but that were highly contentious when scrutinised against fundamental beliefs. Thus a process of re-education in Islamic theology was for him crucial in correcting these beliefs and practices.

3.3 A PROJECT OF TRANSFORMATION

Gamielien believed implicitly in the capacity of Islam to face the challenge of the modern world. He considered it the duty of the Muslim community (ummah) globally to contribute to the advancement of humanity through a process of research of the material world, which he considered as the creation of Allah. His belief in the fundamental need for Muslims to reflect on Quranic interpretations of the past and to review basic Muslim conceptions of the natural and social world in light of new discoveries and of human advancement drove him to pursue the objective of making Islam relevant in the modern world. His own community, specifically the congregation of al-Azhar Mosque, needed a process of re-education based on an alternative conception of the purpose and objectives of religion in general and of Islam in particular.

The post-Second World War period also represented a time of transformation in the colonial relations between Europe and the Third World countries. This was especially relevant in terms of their political and economic bonds. These realities would crucially impact on the development of religious belief locally.

3.3.1 Socio-economic conditions in the Western Cape

While the investigation will confine itself to those aspects of the colonial relations that impacted on the Muslim community of the Western Cape, it will attempt to reflect on the overall relevance of those relations. . The post-Second World War period in the Western Cape experienced a flurry of economic and industrial development spurred on by the destruction of Europe and its consequent inability to provide for its Third World dependants. Dagada, (2011, p.1) states that, “South Africa was unable to import goods from Europe and she was compelled to manufacture them. Other than local consumption, most manufactured products were exported overseas”.

The development of a number of industries, and especially the clothing and building sectors locally, resulted in rapidly increasing demands for skilled and semi-skilled labour. Apart from the major social upheaval as a result of urbanisation, shortage of housing and health services, this development had important consequences for the Muslims in the Western Cape. As probably the most skilled section amongst the disfranchised communities, they were well suited to be incorporated into the rapidly growing industrial sector.

For the Muslims themselves, the transforming economy and the consequent changing social conditions compelled them to confront what Soroush (2000, p. 54) calls their “worldviews”. Traditional Islam had imposed on its followers, specific roles and precepts in relation to their responsibilities. These included the divergent roles of men and women in a marital relationship, regulations with regard to gender intermingling and admonitions with regard to the consequences of materialism. It had also pronounced on the value of secular and religious knowledge and on acceptable and unacceptable education. The transforming world in the Cape, however, provided opportunities for economic advancement but also presented challenges to the dominant social practices within the community because these practices were informed by a religious and moral theory that obstructed an easy passage into the changing world. What was needed was a re-evaluation of religious and moral theories.

The most important first step in this process was an acceptance of the difference between the religion of Islam and the understanding and interpretation of that religion. Soroush (2000, p. 30) describes this as making “the distinction between religion and religious knowledge”. This distinction implies, according to Soroush (2000, p. 31), that “the sacred scriptures are (in the judgment of followers) flawless; however, it is just as true that human beings’ understanding of religion is flawed”. It is only when this distinction was accepted in the community that a process of intellectual transformation was able to proceed. The Muslims of the Cape had to face the reality of their belief system and begin a process of reflection in light of this reality. For Gamieldien and for Rational Islam, this was the ideal moment to confront traditional Islam and present the community with alternative modes of understanding and belief. Social and economic conditions were presenting the community with opportunities for material progress but also with a religious problem that needed to be resolved if the community was to benefit from such opportunities. Rational Islam as understood and interpreted by Gamieldien provided the rationale

for the acceptance and integration of secular knowledge as an essential part of Islamic knowledge, albeit of a different kind, thus paving the way for Muslims to adopt an interpretation that could facilitate a process of social transformation. The fear of social absorption, of the dilution of those aspects of Islam held most dear, of the introduction of innovations into its religious beliefs and of the influence of secular knowledge on its children's religiosity had been stark realities that the community needed to address. The trepidation that Muslims experienced about the loosening of the family unit and the increased freedom of women were clearly issues to which they had to respond. Also, their fear of exceeding the bounds of what they considered as Islamic law and practices meant that only a transformation of the essence of their belief structure would bring about a change in their social practices. This is what modern Rational Islam sought to bring to the community of District Six.

3.3.2 Al-Azhar Mosque in District Six

From the evidence provided by members of al-Azhar Mosque,¹¹ it would appear that Gamieldien was initially motivated by the misconceptions in the understanding of Islam that prevailed within his own congregation, (jama'a). However, this negative impulse was supplemented by a more positive desire to develop an understanding of the Muslim religion as one that was able to address the needs of the community given the challenges of modernism in general, while at the same time maintaining the ethical foundations that Gamieldien believed Islam could give humanity. In fact, Gamieldien's driving passion was to integrate the advances of Western civilisation with an Islamic moral basis. In terms of his methodological approach, he used the content of traditional Islam as the basis for discussion and reflection so that his students could develop the capacity to confront and assess their own beliefs. This allowed them to replace knowledge or interpretations that did not pass the test of rationality with reasoned understanding based on intellectual application. . Gamieldien was especially critical of the way in which the community accepted beliefs that did not have any foundation in, or support from, the Quran. He was also suspicious of the authenticity of some of the quoted sayings and practices of the prophet. He therefore laid down clear guidelines¹² for the assessment of the authenticity of these sayings and practices, referred to in Islamic law as hadith. The most important of these

¹¹ Interview with I. Schroeder, 7 January 2010.

¹² Interview with M.R. Behardien, 20 September 2010.

guidelines was consistency between the logic of the Quran and that of the hadith. An example provided revolved around the logic of the provision of law:

The shaykh dealt with the Quranic directive making prayer compulsory for Muslims five times a day. In his explanation he related the historical events that preceded the directive. These events involved the journey undertaken by the prophet to the heavens. This journey was called the Mi'raj. He described it as a physical manifestation of the spiritual height to which human beings could aspire. The Creator gave the directive that the daily prayer called the salaah would be compulsory for every Muslim five times daily. This prayer, if properly practised, would become the vehicle for the spiritual ascension of the believer.

There are many hadith relating to this journey. Some of them alluded to the fact that the Creator had instructed believers to perform prayers 50 times per day and had gradually reduced it at the request of the prophet until it was eventually brought to five. The shaykh addressed this issue from a rational (aqliyya) perspective arguing that God as the All-knowing would have been aware of the most appropriate directive for the welfare of Muslims. He also rejected all the hadith pertaining to the changes in the directive as inauthentic from a legal perspective primarily because it had no Quranic support but also because it did not logically fit the overall pattern of revelation.

In addressing topics such as this, Gamieldien touched core issues that the community held as central to its understanding of the Creator. He established some key principles that appeared inviolable for Rational Islam. This was a fairly radical position because not only did it completely undermine the Sufi doctrines of esoteric (batini or mutashabihat) knowledge but it also undercut many traditionalist explanations of Islamic beliefs. Gamieldien also laid down clear guidelines that allowed the community to understand the nature of belief in Islam and the process of revelation. Firstly, he asserted the absolute primacy of the Quran as source for proper belief and for the validity of Islamic duties (ibadah). Crucially, he defined all other sources as clarification and the embodiment of the primary source. Therefore, the three other sources, viz. the sunnah of the prophet Muhammad, (PBUH), the consensus (ijma'), of the prophet's companions and comparison (qiyas) between new legal decision and established decisions, should bring no new information about a specific instruction or directive. They should only expand on its performance while maintaining consistency with the original directive. Any other

form of instruction is to be regarded as invalid. The role of the sunnah (the example of the prophet) is a supportive one and not an independent source of revelation containing instructions that are obligatory.

But the overall effect of such educational sessions was that Gamieldien's students and his jama'a began to develop the capacity to reflect on dominant interpretations and practices in the Western Cape. They increasingly began to assess these interpretations and practices against the standard of rationality that Gamieldien was setting. The transformative process that he had initiated at al-Azhar Mosque was grounded in a process of reflective assessment of commonly held perceptions that the community had accepted without necessarily thinking either about the origins of such perceptions or of the logical consequences. Brian Fay (1975, pp. 84–85) refers to this as the “quasi-causal accounts in which certain ... conditions give rise to ... common meanings ... (and) ... the pattern of unintended consequences of actions”. The logic of specific beliefs and practices in the community often resulted in contradictions in them that the community was often not aware of. What Gamieldien seemed to argue was that specific interpretations of historical events had been adopted, internalised and passed on through the generations, eventually becoming part of the religious tradition. These interpretations had been incorporated as an essential part of the faith of the believer through a process of shared understanding and acceptance of the content of historical explanation. He also appeared to assert that Muslims did not quite understand the theoretical implications when certain interpretations were adopted as valid beliefs in the Islamic context. Any set of beliefs or social practices brings with it results that were not part of the initial purpose. In the case of the directive of salaah, the historical explanations of the events were in conflict with the essential understanding of the Creator. Fay (1975, p. 115) calls such explanations as being “internally incoherent”.

But there is an even deeper purpose of the process of addressing such issues of historical explanation. Gamieldien appeared to be developing an alternative set of principles that included intellectual proof (*dalil aqli*) in the assessment of religious explanations. This meant that the hadith that had been collected and historically regarded with almost the same reverence as the Quran according to him had to be subjected to intellectual scrutiny to assess its authenticity. For Gamieldien the fundamental test for authenticity was consistency with the Quran. He argued that the text of the hadith had to conform to the essential message in terms of the logic of the

attributes of the Creator. If the text of a hadith contradicted this logic, such a hadith had to be considered inauthentic or, at the very least, weak (da'if). Similarly, any interpretation of the text of the Quran that was in conflict with Allah's essential characteristics would be invalid. These two principles laid the groundwork for critique of the two sources of law and belief. They also became the *raison d'être* for an alternative tafsir of the Quran and a more critical selection of the narrations of the prophet. In District Six and especially at al-Azhar Mosque, this type of theological approach, asserted and substantiated by Gamieldien on his return from Egypt could be heralded as the beginning of a process of religious transformation.

The mosque in effect seems to have become the laboratory for Gamieldien's socio-religious project whereby he focused on two areas of concern. Firstly, he wanted to transform the very concept of belief from one that assigned to the Creator a predetermining role in the conscious actions of humanity, to a belief in a Creator who had designed creation in such a way that it was able to function on its own, given the natural laws within which humans were permitted to work. Within such a context, human beings, as self-conscious creations, had been provided with a unique faculty of intelligence (aql) in order to understand creation and in order to use the natural resources around them for their benefit. Gamieldien's interpretation went further. He attempted to provide some explanation of humanity's role in the world.

According to one interviewee¹³, Gamieldien explained that with the use of the intellect, it was possible for human beings not only to understand the essence of all other creations in this world but also to utilise them, to recreate or modify them, or even to transform them for the benefit of all humanity. However, there were conditions for the use of nature. Muslims were theologically bound to pursue knowledge vigorously so that they were able to empower themselves.

Knowledge of the world not only facilitated the use of nature for human advancement and progress but it would also promote an understanding of the wonder of creation. This brought Gamieldien to the second area of concern. He argued that all of humanity had been created with intelligence, irrespective of religious affiliations or convictions. Thus, all human beings have the same opportunity for discovering and using the natural phenomena. Religion has the unique task of providing the moral framework and the ethical boundaries that would act as the foundation for the equitable use of the natural resources provided by the Creator. For Muslims, therefore, the

¹³ Interview with I. Schroeder, 7 January 2010.

equitable use of natural resources implied that they were only the trustees of the wealth of this world and that it should be used to benefit humanity in general. This was the ethical parameters within which Muslims, according to Rational Islam, were to function.

Gamieldien, as reported by his students,¹⁴ consistently also discussed the issue of the compulsory nature of education as a means of understanding the purpose of each creation. He was, however, insistent on the use of the ethical foundations rooted in a Quranic framework that were inextricably connected to the attainment of knowledge.

Thus the role of prophets became crucial for Gamieldien. He argued that advancement at whatever level for religious people generally had to be grounded in a moral framework that ensured that justice as expounded in the Quran functioned as the fundamental goal of all social action. It appeared that his suspicion of Western democracy was rooted in his belief in its inability to deliver social justice as required by the Quran. For him it would seem that the proposition that democracy and justice were inextricably connected was invalid. Justice implied more than anything else the elimination of hunger and suffering. Therefore, the equitable distribution of God's natural resources for the benefit of ordinary members of society (ammah) was the ultimate form of justice.

For Gamieldien's Islamic modernism, this conception of justice represented the most fundamental objective of religion itself. It represented the very purpose of Islam, both historically and theosophically. The history of Islam, even at the point of the first revelation, was permeated by two major issues. One was the affirmation of the unity of the Creator and the second was the focus of the unjust society in which the prophet lived. The first was to raise the consciousness of the Meccan society initially to be aware of the Creator and the role of human beings in the world while the second pointed to injustice as ignorance (jahiliyyah) of that role. More importantly, it pointed to humanity's inability to effect justice without divine guidance. Gamieldien also linked the prescribed supplications (ibadah) in the Quran to social action. Ibadah was understood as being a means rather than an end in itself. The objective of prayer, fasting, almsgiving and pilgrimage was to him not only to seek the satisfaction of Allah as an obedient servant in a direct sense. These acts were, more importantly, to serve as a constant

¹⁴ Interview with I. Williams, 14 January 2010.

reminder of Allah's sovereignty and a motivation for the believer to live with justice in order to obtain optimal benefit from the bounty that the Creator had provided in this world. The purpose of sending prophets, therefore, besides having to confirm the existence of the Creator, was to confirm and assert this moral framework. The divine guidance in the form of Holy Scripture, Gamieldien explained, was precisely to set the framework for pursuing a social existence rooted in a system of equity and justice from which all of humanity would have a right to share. Human rights within the rationalist framework were conceptually connected to a system that enforced sharing of the natural resources amongst all as a God-given right and were therefore locked into a divine paradigm that affirmed the relative rights and responsibilities of all creation. Soroush (2000, p. 132) explains the Islamic framework as follows:

In the opinion of believers, justice is at once a prerequisite for and a requirement of religious rules. A rule that is not just is not religious. Justice in turn, aims to fulfil needs, attain rights, and eliminate discrimination and inequity. Thus justice and human rights are intimately connected.

As a modernist and a rationalist, Gamieldien cherished the Islamic principles of justice and equity as expounded in the Quran. He constantly recited the verse from the Quran, "Behold thy Lord said to the angels: I will create a vicegerent on earth" (Yusuf Ali, trans. Ch.2, Verse30, 1934, p. 24). Ali (ibid) explains the concept of vicegerent as "he who has the power of initiative himself but whose independent action always reflects the will of the Principal". It therefore appears that this verse urges Muslims as the inheritors of the earth to deal with its bounties with justice and fairness as an integral part of Allah's will. These issues became constant themes for Gamieldien's sermons and a further means of transforming current perceptions about the purpose of religion in general and of Islam in particular.

Al-Azhar Mosque thus presented Gamieldien with the space to propagate his interpretation of modern Rational Islam to a community that had been schooled in the practice of dogmatic beliefs and practices and for which religion meant using these practices as a means to obtain what it believed was the satisfaction of Allah, thereby attaining paradise. The link within such a conception of Islam to social justice and equity was tenuous at best.

By the beginning of the 1960s, al-Azhar Mosque had become an enclave of modern Rational Islam. Gamielien's influence after 1952 had grown rapidly in District Six where he was considered to be the most learned of the ulama (religious leaders) in the Western Cape. Even beyond his own congregation, his teachings were being sought as his students, filled with a spirit of evangelism, took every opportunity to discuss and explain what they considered to be legitimate belief. His own personality as a community person within the precincts of District Six helped tremendously to popularise him within the community. Unlike his colleagues who seldom had daily jobs, he worked in a butcher shop in the heart of District Six where he also had his residence. He thus had ample opportunity to interact freely with the inhabitants of the area as he walked daily from his home to the butcher shop in Hanover Street. By 1960 he was regarded as the leader of the Muslims of District Six. The impact of his work had been felt throughout this community.

3.3.3 The al-Hidayah Movement

The madrassa system in the Western Cape had through the years developed well-structured patterns of learning of the Islamic subjects. A specific culture of learning and teaching had emerged that was the result of both international influences and the peculiar circumstances at the Cape. These traditional teaching and learning practices continued into the 20th century, with education structures remaining outside of the formal state structures. Islamic education was essentially community based. During the post-Second World War period, Muslims living in the urban areas such as District Six and the Bo-Kaap as well as in peripheral areas around the city such as Salt River, Claremont, and Wynberg continued using traditional teaching techniques with young children from the age of six years attending these private madrassas at the homes of individual teachers, called khalifas and later mu'allims, where they were taught to recite the Holy Quran, how to believe and how to perform the basic rituals of Islam. With the increase in the number of young people attending secular schools provided by the state, especially after the war, the madrassa was held after the completion of their secular schooling. Teaching methodology at the traditional madrassas was fairly rudimentary with pupils generally being required to learn the Arabic alphabet, this being followed by developing reading skills in Arabic. These reading skills were exclusively used for reciting the Holy Quran, and no attempt was made to promote understanding of the reading text. Often in cases of learning to read, talented pupils were

encouraged to memorise the entire Quran by heart, a feat considered to be an act of great faith. Such pupils then became highly respected individuals in the community and often became religious leaders at mosques and institutions of learning. Similarly, the teaching of theology (belief) left little room for an understanding of how to believe and why belief in one god was important. Believing in a Supreme Being was in the first instance understood to be self-evident with no requirement of rational evidence. Secondly, it was generally taught that the proof of such existence resided in the Holy Scripture and the sayings of the prophet Muhammad (SAW), this being the only evidence of real substance. Learners were therefore required to learn specific passages that confirmed this belief. Learning in this sense was ritualistic, dogmatic and without any space for thinking or reflection.

The history of the dominant madrassa system thus reflected three essential features. Firstly, its methodology relied primarily on rote learning and memorisation and the development of specific reading skills for recitation of Quranic text. A second feature was the promotion of a belief system founded on unquestioning acceptance of the religious text and the dogmatic following (taqlid) of its precepts as interpreted by the religious experts (ulama). The third feature was more complex. It reflected a conception of Islam rooted in a particular understanding of the purpose of creation. Essentially the perception was that human beings had been created for the purpose of worship and the extent to which Muslims submitted to such an understanding of the reason for their existence would determine their reward in the hereafter. Conversely, the level of neglect of the formal forms of worship would determine the punishment individuals would receive. One of the fundamental objectives of education then would be to teach learners how to worship and to inculcate in them the lessons of reward and punishment. This understanding of Islam was designed to maintain a culture of obedience and submission. These beliefs, supported by dramatic descriptions of punishment for disobedience and of the wrath of God on the one hand and extravagant explanations of rewards on the other, had the effect of developing at the same time a culture of fear of divine punishment and expectation of bliss amongst Muslims. With an educational approach whereby the need for understanding was considered superfluous, the ordinary Muslim became increasingly subservient to a powerful clergy. It was through unquestioning submission to the Creator's will and complete obedience to prescriptive practices that heaven was to be attained. All other kinds of knowledge were considered to be nonessential for this purpose precisely because these were worldly and were motivated by material advantage.

Thus the culture of fear of the unknown that this kind of education created and lack of proper understanding led to an inevitable tradition of dependence.

Abdulaziz Sachedina (1) describes this dependence:

...the advancement of religious dogmatism has often undermined freedom and independent inquiry. Religious customs and beliefs are replete with superstitions that ridicule reason and the use of commonsense approaches to everyday situations. The masses' blind acceptance of the religious authority of the seminarians has remained a stumbling block to any progress ... in the Muslim world... their (the seminarians) insistence upon their followers' unquestioning submission to their religious edicts smacks of authoritarian(ism)

Having understood the dominant understandings of the belief system in the Western Cape and the religious and social practices that were created within the community to give meaning to these beliefs, Gamieldien committed himself to the task of initiating a programme of education for the Muslim community that would present it with different ways of interpreting Islam. And it was against this background that the al-Hidayah Madrassa was established in 1953.

Gamieldien and some of the senior members of the al-Azhar Masjid congregation saw the need for the creation of an institution of learning that would provide the community with a school where learning would be more formal, structured and rational, both in outward appearance and in content, methodology and purpose. The selection of Rahmaneyah Moslem Primary School also as the Al Hidayah Madrassa was therefore a conscious decision to establish the outwardly formal nature of learning. The establishment of the al-Hidayah Madrassa was further, at least in part, an attempt by Gamieldien to facilitate the understanding that the process of learning and teaching Islam was as formal as any other areas of study. It was a self-conscious and deliberate endeavour to confront the hegemony of outmoded and traditional educational thinking and practices and to present the community of District Six with an alternative schooling model.

One of Gamieldien's primary objectives during this period was to establish Islamic educational institutions that were administratively similar to secular schools with a prescribed syllabus, learners who were graded according to their ages and progress based on competence assessed by normal examination procedures. He also wanted teachers to employ modern teaching styles that promoted thinking and reflection. It seemed that he had set himself clear objectives in the

establishment of the al-Hidayah Madrassa. He clearly wanted to initiate an educational project that provided alternative facilities and approaches to current structures and practices.

While the initial shift was not dramatically obvious, a number of changes reflected a marked change from traditional madrassa practice. An important symbolic difference, for example, was the use of the building of the Rahmaneyah Muslim Primary School, a secular government-assisted community school, for madrassa purposes. It was the first madrassa that had been organised in such a way that it mirrored the secular school and that reflected Gamieldien's notion that formal education should take place within a school environment where the necessary infrastructure was available. Learners were divided into age categories and classroom teaching became the norm. Syllabuses were constructed for each subject. There were two teaching sessions, the first lasting one hour for learners from standards 1 to 4 and the second lasting for one and a half hours for standards 5 to 8. The results were dramatic as hundreds of young children returned to the Rahmaneyah Primary School building in Aspeling Street every afternoon between three o' clock and half past five, after having attended day school. Children from all over District Six attended the school, making it the most influential in the community. From its inception the al-Hidayah Madrassa remained a beacon of rational teaching up to the completion of the process of forced removal of the people from District Six. It finally closed its doors in 1978 when most of the people had been evicted from their homes. This project, funded by the community of District Six, was the first of its kind and by far the largest madrassa organised by members of any community up to then. Its annual fundraising event held in the Liberman Institute in Muir Street, District Six, where the community library was housed, was probably the biggest event on the social calendar in District Six outside that of the end-of-year coon carnival.

But it was in the presentation of the content that the conceptual differences were most apparent. The al-Hidayah Madrassa represented at this level a significant departure from the tradition of the dominant practices even though it retained some crucial aspects of the traditional approach. Gamieldien was acutely conscious of the value that the community placed on specific areas of learning that it considered vital components of being a Muslim. These areas included the recital of the Holy Quran and the skill required to perform the daily prayers. He therefore maintained a vigilant watch over those areas of learning. A former pupil¹⁵ recalled how they were required to

¹⁵ Interview with G. Karriem (Mrs), 4 April 2009.

go to al-Azhar Mosque on the other side of Aspeling Street in District Six every Friday after the congregational prayers in order to be taught practically how to perform the daily prayers. Pupils were, as in the case of other madrassas, required to develop their reading skills in Arabic, this representing the outward signs that their madrassa schooling was successful. Learners were also taught the fundamental ritual practices such as fasting, pilgrimage and almsgiving, things that all Muslims are required to know and perform.

The key differences, however, were in Gamieldien's approach to the area of belief. Here he introduced the subject of *tawhid* (literally meaning belief in the oneness of Allah), which according to all the former pupils interviewed transformed their thinking in such a way that they were unable to accept religious knowledge without rational deliberation. They referred to it as proof from the mind (*dalil aqli*). Le Kemal defined *dalil aqli* in the following way: " *dalil aqli* derives from formal or informal logic, inductive reasoning, deductive reasoning, or other modes of *intellection*." (p.1)

Gamieldien developed arguments that laid the foundation for later understanding and introduced a process of presenting logical arguments to prove the existence of a Creator. Without reference to scriptures, Gamieldien introduced learners to a process of reflection on existence and allowed them to ponder over possible answers. In more advanced classes the themes would become more complex, dealing with the functions of the creations in the world and their benefit to humanity. The key debate, as understood by pupils, was about whether the balances in nature could be accidental or the result of a holistic structure of creations that were inter-supportive in one another's existence. The supporting natural laws served as the cement that maintained the auto dynamic framework. By referring to the water cycle, the oxygen cycle, the laws of gravity and centrifugation, the different functions of the atmosphere and the consistency of nature, Gamieldien pursued the theme of accidental existence and the alternative, the possibility of a Creator. Senior learners at the *madrassa* pursued a train of thinking that encouraged a questioning mind and a system of logical reasoning. From here the debate would probe into the nature of such a Being should He exist. At the end Gamieldien would provide evidence from the Quran (*dalil naqli*) to demonstrate that the Holy Scriptures do address issues for reflection on the material world.

The results of this methodology in religious education were indeed far reaching in so far as it broke free from the formalistic, rigid and stifling approach that did not allow for critical reflection or questioning. Moreover, it encouraged the pursuit of empirical or scientific knowledge, which traditional madrasa education frowned upon. Gamieldien constantly reminded pupils of the obligation that rested on Muslims to search for knowledge, offering as proof for this view the assertion of the prophet that, “Seeking knowledge is mandatory for every Muslim” (M.S. Afifi, 1988, p. 71).

From the evidence collected in the oral interviews with a number of Gamieldien’s former pupils, it seemed clear that in the presentation of content lay the essence of the theoretical framework that allowed students to develop an understanding of modern Islam. In contrast to the dominant perception of ‘unbelief’ as *that* phenomenon that occurs as a result of expressing divergent views to the historically accepted ones, he addressed questions and views that had been considered ‘heterodox’ within the dominant understanding of belief.

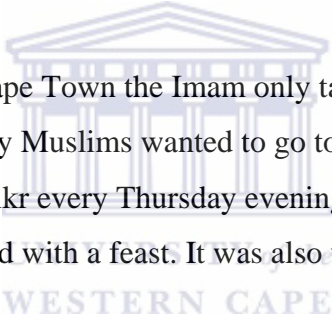
The al-Hidayah curriculum was therefore both developmental and progressive in the sense that the content reflected increasing levels of difficulty and abstraction. Here a rudimentary survey of different views and approaches to understanding the existence of God was given to the older learners, probably in standards 7 and 8. The openness of these presentations in a fundamental way liberated these young people from fear inspired by superstition and the mystification of religion. Learners were thus empowered to deliberate on issues of creation, the human intellect, morality and ethics, and prayer and devotion as well as issues of divine justice and redemption, predestination and free will. However, in the area of worldly justice and freedom, Gamieldien appeared to have adopted a more cautious approach. A student¹⁶ explained that he was very suspicious of the morality that underpinned Western conceptions of freedom and democracy that furthered individual greed and exploitation.

The evolution of pragmatic practices in the development of Rational Islam in the Western Cape could thus be located in these rather humble beginnings in District Six with al-Azhar Mosque and the Rahmaneyah Moslem Primary School providing the space for its initiation and Gamieldien providing the intellectual content.

¹⁶ Interview with A. Smith, 20 January 2010.

3.3.4 The al-Hidayah Adult School

As in the case of the al-Hidayah Madrassa, the adult school was a response to the existing adult schools in Cape Town. Part of the education tradition at the Cape was the learning classes organised and managed at the mosques where the imam (religious leader) taught members of his congregation some of the Islamic subjects that would enable them to perform their religious duties and develop an understanding of the religion. These classes had through the years performed a number of functions. They ranged from entrenching the different interpretations of Islam to developing loyalties and financial support for the mosque or for the imam. One of the older community members¹⁷ who had resided in District Six until its destruction related the story of the kind of teaching that was prevalent at some of the mosques in and around Cape Town:



At one of the mosques in Cape Town the Imam only taught the haj. This brought him a large audience because many Muslims wanted to go to Mecca every year. At another mosque the focus was on thikr every Thursday evening. This group continued late into the night and normally ended with a feast. It was also well attended.

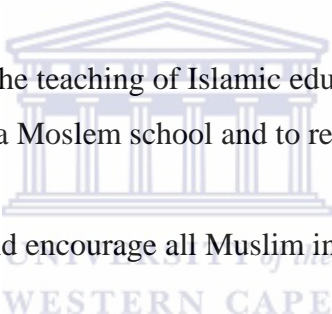
The topics covered in these classes were quite extensive and led to a fairly vibrant and active Muslim community that centred many of its activities around its religious life. The creation of the al-Hidayah Islamic Educational Society in 1953 was the culmination of the work of members of the al-Azhar Mosque congregation under Gamieldien's leadership. One of the key objectives was to establish an organisation that would be able to control and administer Islamic education in District Six for adults and for young learners. It was in effect the beginning of a process by which the al-Hidayah Society brought a number of educational institutions under its control, directed towards providing propagation space for Gamieldien to initiate his programme of re-education. From the oral evidence¹⁸ available, it would appear that the creation of the al-Hidayah Society, which in turn created the al-Hidayah Madrassa for children and the al-Hidayah Adult School, consciously took these steps in promoting education that would have a rationalist

¹⁷ Interview with S. Hartley, 24 February 2007.

¹⁸ Interview with S. Hartley, 24 February 2007.

approach to interpreting Islam. It was an attempt to provide Gamieldien with a platform to promote a modernist interpretation of Islam in an organised and structured form. The founder members were all members of the congregation (mureeds) of al-Azhar Mosque. The al-Hidayah adult classes met on a Thursday evening and their focus revolved around studies in fiqh (Islamic law), tawhid (theology) and tafsir (exegesis). From time to time Gamieldien also gave short courses in legislative history. He had by this time already developed a strong shared understanding amongst his students of the most important constitutive elements of Rational Islam. Students were able to identify explanations that fell short of the test of rational exposition and to develop alternative explanations. They were therefore enthusiastic about a co-ordinated process of propagation in District Six.

The al-Hidayah Society listed the following aims and objects:

- 
- (a) To promote the teaching of Islamic education.
 - (b) To establish a Moslem school and to render assistance to indigent Muslim scholars.
 - (c) To protect and encourage all Muslim interests and to promote family welfare.

In the area of operation, as recorded in the Constitution of the al-Hidayah Society, it is stated, “The society shall operate in places within a radius of (15) fifteen miles from the city hall, C.T. and shall for the time being establish no branch organisations.”

While the al-Hidayah Constitution gave no indication of the actual purpose and objectives of the society, its members were very clear on the direction that it would pursue in the propagation of Islamic knowledge. A member of this committee commented that it was Gamieldien’s prerogative to develop the course content while the committee made recordings of the lectures. Individual students were also permitted to do this.¹⁹

For practical purposes the primary geographic area of operation of the al-Hidayah Society was, in fact, District Six, and it used the building of the Rahmaneyah Moslem Primary School as the

¹⁹ A. Rozier, interviewed on 2 February 2007.

locus of its educational programme. The Rahmaneyah Moslem Primary School (Ajam, 1986, p. 218) was established in 1913 to implement the state education curriculum for Muslim children. It was a community-based state-aided school funded partly from community funds and donations and partly by the state. The al-Hidayah Adult School was community based, receiving its funding entirely from students and other benefactors. It was open to Muslims with no restrictions on qualifications or literacy. Also, it was not restricted to the jama'a of al-Azhar Mosque but was open to whoever wished to attend. There was no compulsory fee to be paid, but students were free to give donations to members of the al-Hidayah Committee from which Gamieldien would be paid. There was no agreed fixed wage or salary so that he received whatever the committee could afford weekly. Members of the al-Hidayah Society often subsidised the amount given to him from their own pockets.

The al-Hidayah Constitution did not set out a programme that was intended to confront the way Muslims in the Western Cape understood and practised Islam nor did it address any specific policies that it would pursue that would help achieve some of the aims for which it was being established. But it was quite clear from the interviews that most of the members of the al-Hidayah Society were aware of the innovative programme that the organisation was on the verge of initiating. A member remarked, "It was the intention of the society to teach the people of Cape Town what it means to believe in a Creator."²⁰ It was therefore clear that members of the jama'a knew of the work that would be done by the al-Hidayah Society.

The school itself was simultaneously formal and informal in character in that it had a fairly well-organised and structured set of syllabi that was very strictly adhered to. Gamieldien himself was in control of the learning material and the work to be completed at different times and in the various subjects. The work schedules provided guidance and continuity to the work done over long periods of time. His exegesis of the entire Quran was done verse by verse, each one being contextualised both in relation to other verses in the Quran and in light of the material and social world. Thus in the discussion of some of the Quranic verses, discussions would range from Darwin's theory of evolution to the exactness of the celestial bodies in their movements to our human capacity to investigate, understand and record data. For Gamieldien the tafsir of the

²⁰ A. Rozier, interviewed on 2 February 2007.

Quran meant the inclusion of all areas of learning and research into its interpretation because he believed that a proper understanding of the aim and purpose of the Quran was not possible without reference to other areas of learning. Far from only being an abstract and theoretical explanation of the verses of the Quran in which humanity was constantly being urged to be morally good and pure or to praise the Creator at every opportunity, the discussions sought to give practical meaning to these verses that would give relevance to religion in people's daily lives.

The school was informal in the sense that its organisation made no provision for tests and examinations, nor did it grade the content based on previous knowledge or learning. Also, since attendance was voluntary, no record was maintained of the regularity of attendance. Payments were also not recorded because there were no fixed fees attached to the attendance of classes. Students could for purposes of analysis be divided into three types.

First there were the regular students who attended consistently for years and who were able to converse comfortably on crucial philosophical and legal issues within Islam. These students were the carriers of Rational Islam because they became evangelical in the sense that they used every opportunity at community gatherings to engage in discussions on religious issues that they considered relevant. Moreover, they challenged other interpretations given by individuals and even by members of the ulama (imams and shaykhs) when they differed in understanding of any issue. Their self-confidence in relation to their own understanding had removed any doubt about their positions on the issues under discussion.

There were also the intermittent students who would attend for lengthy periods then stay away for a year or two only to return when they felt the need to do so. These students often had a fairly coherent understanding of the rational nature of the presentations without necessarily being able to explain these to outsiders.

Finally, there were the casual students who attended a few lectures then stayed away permanently or returned after years only to drop out again within a month or two. These students

were often confused and explained Gamieldien's views in ways that often resulted in community conflicts and tension.

Gamieldien's methodology reflected a combination of the old and the new. His pragmatic approach to teaching and learning showed, on the one hand, an understanding that a community needed to be led and be provided with information that it would be able to absorb into its own framework of understanding. On the other hand, he interspersed his lectures with key questions that even though students were not expected to answer them, it allowed them space to reflect on traditional views that they had internalised through the years without having examined them critically and without having to find the language to explain their thoughts. The effect of this approach was that students began to develop skills that enabled them to make logical connections among a range of different explanations about the nature of the Creator and creation. An example of this phenomenon is the following story told by a student²¹:

In response to an explanation from the shaykh on the finality of prophethood, with Muhammad (SAW) being the final prophet, I asked him whether Nabi Isa (AS) would then be returning to earth to confirm the finality of Muhammad's message and to eliminate evil from this world as a preparation for the end of existence. His answer was in the form of a question. He said, "If the Holy Quran confirms the finality of prophethood and calls on believers to eliminate evil, do you think that any further intervention is required or necessary?"

It was this type of interaction between teacher and student that undermined any fear of contemplation on sensitive or controversial issues and that allowed students to understand the complexity of the concept of faith in Islam. With the development of these skills they were able to make sense of an approach to religion that for them at least was unique. Many of these students revelled in their newfound ability to understand the world that was connected to the religion of Islam and to the God they worshipped in a coherent way. No longer did they merely make utterances about the omnipotence and omniscience of Allah, but they were able to understand what these meant by referring to the world in which they lived.

²¹ Interview with I. Schroeder, 7 January 2010.

Gamieldien's influence, however, stretched beyond the immediate areas of his education and propagation structures. As a community leader he was perceived even by his colleagues as a highly qualified theologian and one of very few who had studied at the prestigious al-Azhar University. As such his opinions on matters of Islamic law and practice were sought after all the time. Religious matters of community importance were generally referred to him for resolution. What was lacking in the community of the Western Cape, however, was a central co-ordinating body to oversee and administer its religious affairs. This was an issue that Gamieldien and others addressed soon after his return from Egypt.

3.4 THE MUSLIM JUDICIAL COUNCIL

Religious leaders in the Western Cape had traditionally worked within the confines of their local congregation (jama'a) and little attempt had historically been made to create structures or institutions that would facilitate common and unified approaches to community problems. It was the general practice that these leaders got together whenever common issues needed to be addressed or problems facing the community had to be resolved. The sighting of the new moon monthly and the establishment of halaal food were examples of projects handled by autonomous bodies often working in co-operation within the jama' of the different masjid without formal sanctions by the imam or the management of each individual masjid. Often, however, religious disputes arose within the community and especially amongst the imams and shaykhs of the Cape. Without organised or established structures to manage the disputes, these leaders resorted to public debates to resolve them. These debates, called becharas (Tayob, 1995, p. 52), generally took place at mosques that had the capacity to house large sections of the community. Tayob (ibid) describes the bechara as "...a meeting of the community where conflicting opinions amongst the religious leaders were presented to the public for evaluation". Tayob further makes the following point:

The inconclusiveness of the debates and the fights that often resulted signalled a premature death for Islamic democracy.... The failure of the bechara, and the need for coordination, eventually led to the formation of the Moslem Judicial Council in 1945.

The democratic resolution of technical matters such as law and theology was clearly unsatisfactory. In most instances the ordinary people were totally ignorant of the matters under discussion or the proofs required to support the conflicting views. In virtually all cases, support for a particular view was the result not of its correctness but rather of the persuasiveness of the individual imam or shaykh presenting the view. It was the failure of what Tayob (1995, p. 52) calls anarchic democracy that prompted the move towards a centralised organisation.

The initiative towards the establishment of a representative body for religious leaders was taken by the Cape Progressive Society under the leadership of Dr Aburahim Abrahams. Tayob (1995, p. 82) describes this development as

the emergence of organizations with modern structures and procedures (which) were indicative of the changes taking place in the Muslim community. The period...witnessed the emergence of the Moslem Judicial Council as the organized authority of the imams and shaykhs.

Dr Abrahams, who was a well-known doctor in the District Six community, had consulted Gamieldien, whom he regarded as the leading theologian,²² on the creation of a unified ulama body. Gamieldien also provided him with the necessary religious guidance. The Muslim Judicial Council was established in 1945 with Shaykh Ahmed Behardien as its first president and Gamieldien as head of the Fatwa Committee. All legal rulings thus had to be sanctioned by him. As a senior member of the Muslim Judicial Council, he exercised a great deal of influence on community issues, especially in terms of the direction that the religious leaders would take on matters of shari'a' (law).

With the position of hakim (judge), Gamieldien was entrusted with providing religious guidance on matters that affected the community and with specific judgements on matters of marriage, divorce, inheritance, halaal foods, community-held property (waqf) and a range of other matters. It was clear that recognition of his understanding and interpretation of shari'a' was indeed widespread, especially amongst the religious leaders of the Cape. However, this did not mean that he could venture too far from known traditional practices. Tayob (1995, p. 52) notes that

²² Interview with S. Hartley, 24 February 2007.

...the greater respect and reverence accorded to shaykhs by the people did not mean that they were able to change the practices and structures of Cape Islam. The most effective of the shaykhs were those who came to accept the peculiarities of the Cape Muslim practice.

In the provision of fatawi (legal opinions), Gamieldien was extremely pragmatic and at times even conservative. Examples of some of the issues on which he gave religious rulings would provide insight into the rationality of his understanding of Islamic law while at the same time using traditional sources on which to base his rulings. The innovation that underpinned these judgements was overshadowed by the logic of his interpretation. The rulings reflected the changing interpretative framework that was emerging in the Cape. These were at the same time the outward signs of the changing social relations that were developing within the Muslim community. But the rulings themselves had sufficient content with which the community could identify. The following two cases also reflect the differences between modern Rational Islam and traditional Islam.

The first case²³ involved a young Indian lady who had selected a non-Indian Muslim suitor for a potential husband. On hearing of the affair between the two and their plans for marriage, the young lady's father objected vigorously, stating that he would under no circumstances give his consent for such a marriage. It was a general custom within the Indian community that girls would marry within their own community rather than with non-Indian suitors. Also, it was a generally accepted custom that had its foundations within specific interpretations of Islamic law that a woman required the expressed permission of her father in the selection of a spouse. Marriage without such consent was regarded as invalid and sometimes led to the excommunication of the couple from the community.

This case was referred to the Muslim Judicial Council, and as the hakim, it was brought before Gamieldien. His ruling was as follows:

1. A delegation of community members consisting of family members from the future husband and from the ulama fraternity would be sent to the father to discuss with him his objections and to explain to him that in this instance the

²³ Interview with S. Hartley, 24 February 2007.

hakim did not consider the consent of the father as fundamental in the marriage contract.

2. It was also the duty of the delegation to inform the father that should he continue to obstruct the process, the marriage would take place without his permission and the hakim would take it upon himself to appoint a wakeel (representative for the bride). This would be done in consultation with the bride.

This was indeed a ground-breaking ruling in the Western Cape since it was the first time in the history of the Muslim Judicial Council that a marriage would be conducted against the wishes and without the consent of the father. However, the ruling, while giving great offence to the conservative Indian community and even to non-Indian Muslims, was given much support by senior members of the ulama in the Muslim Judicial Council and by women generally.

The ruling weakened fathers' total control over their daughters' choice of husband and their ability to abuse this control. It was also a landmark ruling in the sense that it restored to women their inherent rights as prescribed by the shari'a. However, Gamieldien also provided the following parameters for rulings of this nature. He stated that the father's right as the compulsory representative of his daughter had not been violated in this ruling. In fact, it had been strengthened. What fathers needed to take into account was that their rights, as is true with all other rights, had limitations and responsibilities. These were also prescribed in the same law that granted them the right of representation. Amongst these limitations were that the father was required to seek consultation with his daughter, that just reasons should exist for refusal based on Islamic principles and that the prospective husband's character as well as his ability to take care of his future wife should be considered. Another key element in determining the father's right of representation was his own suitability, which was also determined in terms of Islamic law. In the case cited above, these considerations were ignored by the father pertaining to the suitor.

In a second case²⁴ cited by one of his students and corroborated by others, Gamieldien was faced with a divorce application. This application came from a woman whose husband had violated her rights of maintenance, known in Islamic law as nafaqah. In the law of marriage in Islam, it is

²⁴ Interview with S. Hartley, 24 February 2007.

compulsory for the husband to provide all the requirements of maintenance in relation to housing, food, clothing, and so on. This injunction still holds even if the wife has an independent income or is in possession of material wealth. Should he not comply with these requirements, the wife has the option of seeking a divorce on the basis of breach of contract. In the Western Cape, the law of divorce had been practised in such a way that women had little access to divorce. Should the husband violate any of the marital laws, the hakim generally asked him to issue his wife with a divorce decree, a request that he had the right to refuse. Women were therefore completely powerless in such cases and were often trapped in a marriage they did not want. Moreover, the husband, even if he issued a divorce decree, still had the right to invoke a withdrawal of this decree (muraja'a) since he had three rights of divorce before it became irrevocable. He had the option to revoke his divorce decree within a period of approximately three lunar months. Other restrictions also counted against the wife as a consequence of the divorce decree. In another radical departure from traditional practices, Gamieldien introduced the concept of nullification of a marriage (fasakh) at the request of the wife when the husband violated her rights as stipulated by the marital contract. This legal principle empowered women for the first time in the Western Cape to seek relief from an unwanted marriage. Again Gamieldien in his judgment provided the legal framework for the application of this law.

While in both cases the shaykh did not venture beyond the established law, Gamieldien's interpretation and application provided a wider framework for acknowledging women's rights within the context of Islamic justice and compassion. Pointing to the rational interpretation of legal precepts, he was able in both cases to convince his colleagues of the veracity of his judgments, resulting in a much more liberal application of the shari'a. These applications became the foundation for future judgments and replaced previous applications of law in the Western Cape.

The influence of the Muslim Judicial Council grew rapidly between 1950 and 1976 when Gamieldien resigned as a member of the body. Tayob (1995, p.52) asserts,

The Moslem Judicial Council had become the largest representative body of the imam and shaykhs in the Cape.

With the death of Shaykh Ahmed Behardien, who was the venerated senior leader in the Western Cape, the mantle of overall leadership fell on Gamieldien. Even though his influence as the highest qualified theologian had been recognised during Behardien's leadership, the latter's political influence in the community and Gamieldien's personal respect for him had limited the presentation of interpretations of law and belief that would have resulted in conflict situations. As the president of the Muslim Judicial Council, Gamieldien was able to steer this body in a direction that allowed for rational judgements and decisions. During the Ahmadeyyah crisis in 1967, for example, the issue of whether the adherents of this movement were Muslim or not and how they were to be handled within the Muslim community became an issue of extreme importance. Families were divided and marriages broken as a consequence of this issue. It was indeed by far the most devastating crisis that the Muslim community had experienced since the Tana Baru cemetery issue in the early 20th century.

During the mid-1960s new movement emerged in Cape Town under the banner of Islam, calling itself the Ahmedeyyah Movement. The key issue responsible for the crisis was its claim that its leader, Mirza Ghulam Ahmed, was a prophet. They contested the Muslim position that Muhammad (PBUH) was the final prophet. The Ahmedeyyah group claimed that the prophet Muhammad (SAW) was not the final messenger but was merely the 'seal of prophethood'. They therefore opened the door for Ahmed to claim prophethood. The Ahmedeyyah Movement had been universally condemned by Muslim theologians, and in Cape Town the community was incensed to the extent that it excommunicated followers of this sect from all mosques, forbade marriages with any of its adherents, banned its members from burying their dead in Muslim cemeteries and generally ostracised them and their sympathisers socially. Families were split as parents cut off relations with children and vice versa, and violation of this code was often met with violence and acrimony. Gamieldien, who was at the centre of this strife, gave a ruling as the hakim that the sect was not Muslim, resulting in the excommunication of its adherents.

According to one of the students²⁵ of that period, Gamieldien argued as follows:

The evidence in the Quran had been accepted universally in the historical and contemporary text of tafsir to mean the final prophet. There also existed sufficient

²⁵ Interview with I. Schroeder, 7 January 2010.

evidence both in historical writings that this was the accepted position from the beginning of Islam. Finally, shaykh Gamieldien explained that in the hadith there is sufficient evidence to support the Muslim position that Muhammad (SAW) was the final messenger.

But he went beyond this position in his ruling. Appealing to the logic of prophethood, he argued that if the Quran represented the final message, a position accepted by the *Ahmedeyyas*, was there a necessity for another prophet? What would be his function since the Creator would not send a prophet without a purpose or message? Does Muhammad's message require confirmation? And if, as Muslims claim (also the *Ahmedeyyas*), Muhammad was the greatest of the prophets, would the Creator send a lesser individual to confirm Muhammad's message?

It was clear from the ruling that Gamieldien did not rely on scriptural proof only but also used logic that would appeal to the rationality of Muslims and non-Muslims alike. The community, according to the interviewee, found this kind of explanation particularly acceptable because it could access its with reasoned application.

This movement was regarded as an intrusion into the belief system of the Muslims of the Western Cape, and it was thought that a more co-ordinated response was required for future issues. The Muslim Judicial Council therefore felt the need for unified organisation consisting of the *ulama* and of experts in other fields in the community to handle Muslim affairs. This led to a process of negotiation that would lead to the creation of such a body.

3.5 MAJLISUSH SHURA AL-ISLAMI

By 1967 there was a decisive push amongst individuals for a representative organisation to handle Muslim affairs in Cape Town. These discussions led to the establishment of the Muslim Assembly in 1967. The Muslim Judicial Council also began a process of negotiating with mosques about creating a consultative body. The idea of a consultative community organisation coming from the Muslim Judicial Council under Gamieldien's leadership was the clearest signal of his rational understanding of Islam. Using the Quranic verse referring to the concept of

consultation, he explained the need for a vehicle to give effect to this process. The establishment of Majlisush Shura al-Islami in 1968 was not merely an attempt to provide representation to the Muslim community of the Western Cape on matters in which it could contribute to the welfare of the community, but it was also a recognition of the legitimacy of the community's knowledge within the broader Islamic context. For Gamieldien, Shura, as it became known, was a symbol of the change in thinking about the role of religion in community matters. The clause in the original Shura Constitution that relegated the authority of the Muslim Judicial Council to purely shari'a' issues reflected his views on the importance of the use of appropriate expertise in community matters. Matters of education, social welfare, finance and community-owned property were to be handled by laymen who were schooled in these areas. The eventual split between Shura and the Muslim Judicial Council over issues of general control and management was a key reason for Gamieldien's resignation as a member of the Muslim Judicial Council in 1976. Gamieldien then became the religious head of Shura, which continued to pursue its goal of establishing Rational Islam as a dominant force in the Western Cape. A more detailed critique of this institution will be presented in the next chapter of this research.

3.6 ASSESSMENT

It would seem that Gamieldien in his teaching methodology employed what could be defined as an interpretive methodology in that he did not merely use the classical works as explanation. His primary source in the case of tafsir was the Quran. Students often said that he used the exegesis of Mustafa Maraghi²⁶, the rector of al-Azhar University when he was a student there, as the basis for his own interpretation. For the interpretation of the verses on matters of science, Gamieldien employed the tafsir of Shaykh Tantawi Jouhari²⁷, who was the rector of the Darul Ulum College in Cairo at the same time that Gamieldien was studying at al-Azhar University. All students concur, however, that he never used these works in his classes. Gamieldien's son²⁸ revealed that his father would not go back to bed after the morning prayer (subh) but would sit and read from the texts before preparing his lecture on specific verses of the Quran. He also

²⁶ Interview with M.R. Behardien 20 September 2010

²⁷ Interview with I. Keraan 12 October 2011

²⁸ Interview with B. Gamieldien, 27 April 2008.

commented that the examples that his father employed to illustrate a theoretical point were drawn from the contemporary world.

Ebrahim Moosa (2000, p. 11) calls this approach to interpretation a “Quran-centered hermeneutic”. This approach to tafsir was different from the traditional method in significant ways. Traditional approaches to tafsir generally made use of classical authorities whose works were widely accepted and taken as the ultimate interpretation of the text. Very seldom would they develop independent interpretations that differed from or even challenged accepted works from the past. The result in many cases was anachronistic and outdated understandings that were presented as the actual meaning of the verses rather than an interpretation. Challenges to the authenticity of such interpretation were construed as a rejection of the Quran itself. Scholars have thus been reluctant to approach the science of tafsir critically, resulting in stagnation of understanding the developmental nature of society and the dynamism of our social existence and of the role of the Quran in it.

The 20th century, having brought in its wake radical development in every area of our human endeavour, has, as a result of the changes in the social, political and economic realities, left Muslim society behind because of its unwillingness to interpret Islam within the context of this social and economic revolution. Unable to present alternative solutions to the problems of modernity, Muslims propagated a return to classical periods (salaf) with solutions that fitted a bygone era. This was a direct result of a problematic approach to the interpretation of the Quran that further occurred as a consequence of a flawed epistemological framework that undermined the very essence of the eternal values contained in the Quran. The eternity of the Quran was replaced by period-bound human interpretation.

A second problematic element in the traditional approach to exegesis in Cape Town was that it gave meaning to verses of the Quran that was unrelated to human reality. The exegetics of the past interpreted these verses in most instances as related either to belief or to responsibilities and duties. If the sense of the verses did not fall into these categories, they were assessed to be esoteric (mutashabihat) verses and therefore not open to normal interpretation (tafsir) and beyond human comprehension.

According to Raghīb Isfahānī a mutashabih phrase or verse is one whose literal sense is not the same as its real meaning. According to Shaykh Tūsī, ...a mutashabih verse is one whose literal meaning does not disclose its actual meaning without recourse to some external guidance and indication.... the literalists and some extremists among the Ash'arites and Ahl al-Hadith are of the opinion that they are to be taken in their literal sense.

These verses then had to be accepted as signs of the wonders of the Creator. Thus many verses were seen as having either a little practical value in the material world in the sense that they defined and explained our role as active dynamic beings with inherent capacities given to us or as instructions relating to religious belief or practices. They were also represented as moral urgings and warnings with regard to our human conduct given in universal rather than specific terms. The interpretation seldom gave meaning to verses that acknowledged our human genius, our creativity and reflective qualities and our hunger to know and to find out. The overall result of this approach was an interpretation that often left the Quran bereft of any real meaning or practical value. It led to an Islam that was stagnant, frowning on excessive delving into God's creation and placing emphasis on supplication, submission, acceptance and gratitude. While the literal interpretation of the objectives of religion was satisfied, the very purpose of revelation was undermined when these verses were interpreted in such simplistic terms or as the entire truth.

Gamielien's approach to tafsir portrayed the Quran as divine text that is worthy of rational deliberation and as a guide intended to be linked to the world. This meant that in the interpretation of the Quran, he believed that the interpreter had to consider a dynamic and changing world where knowledge and understanding are constantly being reconsidered, modified, replaced and reviewed. The discovery of new knowledge was to him a fundamental feature of the human endeavour directed towards understanding the world in which we live. Gamielien therefore considered it an essential part of being human to search for understanding and then to place that understanding under the spotlight for scrutiny. It was therefore to be assumed that this inherently human existence based on reasoned understanding should be accepted by religious people as originating from the Creator. The message as delivered by the prophet Muhammad (SAW), Gamielien believed, should be reflected on through the centuries in order to give it relevance in relation to the condition pertaining in society at the time. The

epistemological tradition of which Gamieldien clearly was a representative affirms this position as part of a process of research. This is the essence that defines the principle of *ijtihad* as expounded by the modernist movements of the 19th century in Egypt, led by al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh, and a tradition followed by Gamieldien.

In practice the evidence provided by students reflected a methodology that allowed them to pursue a process of re-education. Because the approach did not appear too radical, students felt comfortable with a procedure that they were able to appreciate even though much of it was new. Though it was not always participatory in the sense that students were required to raise issues of concern or contribute to an interactive discussion, it reflected an understanding of the need by students to debate within themselves about the issues under discussion as the lecture proceeded. Gamieldien seemed to understand the students' need for direction and empowerment intuitively as well as their need to acquire intellectual tools that would facilitate a process of inner or self-reflection. This is why, as some of the students remarked in the interviews held with them, Gamieldien used to pose strategic questions to them during the lesson that he knew they did not have to answer but could reflect on while he was teaching or even at a later stage. Most of the questions were meant to stimulate independent thinking and this was understood by the students because he continued teaching almost immediately after posing the question. The questions were also often rooted in the life experience of the students. These questions then became the basis of debates amongst them immediately after the lecture and the subject of the pre-lecture debate the following week. The more experienced students understood this methodology well and they often met during the course of the week to debate the key concepts that the questions wanted them to address.

Two important conclusions may be drawn from the explanation of this process that students often mentioned in the interviews. One was that Gamieldien understood the deep-rooted and often hidden nature of the beliefs held by many of his students, especially those who were new and had come from other Islamic learning traditions that had flowered all over Cape Town at the time. The questions were meant for them to reflect on those beliefs in light of the issues under discussion. Secondly, the process was intellectually emancipatory and empowering. It allowed students to engage critically with one another and with themselves in order to assess their belief

system and to undergo a cathartic process in their transformation, grounded in new understandings and a new approach to knowledge. This method began to liberate students' creative capacities that had long been left dormant or suppressed through fear. However, the values espoused would be essentially the same, even though they were expounded in a radically transformed context.

Gamieldien had clearly accepted the view that it was possible to reinterpret the Quran constantly in light of changing realities, with the advancement of science and technology and our social responses to these changes. The altered needs of communities and societies that he appeared to have had accepted had evoked different responses in order to survive and advance in this world.

Moreover, his belief was that as the understanding of the material world changed and our perception of ourselves and our individual and collective roles was transformed accordingly, so we created new structures and institutions to satisfy these new needs. The values that underpin such new structures, practices and institutions, however, may remain constant if guided by the eternal ethical norms propagated in the Quran. It is in the practice of these values and the conditions within which they function, that changes are perceived. This is the essence of the modern Rationalist project highlighted in Gamieldien's teaching. The story told by his son²⁹ may demonstrate this point;

One of the most senior students in the class who had been attending the tafsir class since its inception in 1953 and had witnessed the shaykh completing an analysis of the entire Quran wanted to know why the interpretation he was giving to certain verses differed in such important ways from the first interpretation. The shaykh had begun a second round of tafsir and he was curious why even the examples used in the explanations and interpretations were so different. The answer was that because of the changes that had occurred in our lives over the last twenty years it cannot be expected that his (the shaykh's) understanding of the verses in question could possibly be the same. The Quran, he said, had to use the knowledge acquired by other sciences to explain the essential message of Allah.

²⁹ B. Gamieldien, interviewed 27 April 2008.

Moosa (2000, p. 15) explains this as an “interaction between divine revelation and history”. What this seems to imply is that often verses in the Quran are responses to specific events in historical time that have to be interpreted contextually, on the one hand, while the underlying universal message may have reference to human nature and therefore carry with it eternal relevance, on the other hand. It is clear here that Gamieldien was using this incident to demonstrate to his students that the Quran was not isolated from the material or social world and that its interpretation carried a fundamental responsibility to reflect the social dynamics of the epoch within which the exegesis occurred. Moreover, the relevance of the Quran resides in its capacity to guide, to provide an ethical foundation and moral boundaries and then to encourage our inherent spirit of *ijtihad* within these parameters. This for Gamieldien was the eternal and universal message of Islam.

The al-Hidayah Adult School had indeed contributed in a dynamic way to the fostering of Rational Islam in the Western Cape. It represented a spirit of intellectual freedom and exchange of understandings within the boundaries of a rational approach to Islam. Its impact within District Six and surrounding areas was indeed considerable.

3.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter attempted to explain the development of Rational Islam in the Western Cape as it evolved under the guidance of Gamieldien, who it is claimed was its primary proponent. The analysis made use of the Egyptian paradigm in order to provide it with the theoretical and historical background within which it developed locally. Further, the research made an attempt to link local events to the international response to Western incursion into Muslim lands while taking into account the specificities of local conditions. Much use was made of oral evidence to provide the content that allowed for critical appraisal of the rationalist project as a means of transforming local understanding of Islam and as a means of responding to the needs of the community.

The chapter also attempted to provide the theoretical framework used by Gamieldien to transform beliefs and practices. This theoretical framework, the research contends, resided as much in the hermeneutic of Islam as in the methodological approach to the teaching and propagation of Rational Islam. The analysis argues that what underpinned this theory was a very specific epistemology that allowed for an interpretation of religion in general that was located in the material world. In other words, it argues that for those who adopted Rational Islam, it was a way of life that provided the tools for the organisation and management of our social order precisely because it was not prescriptive as the dominant interpretation of Islam proposed. Islam for the rationalists had a more open-ended agenda that allowed humanity to construct its social world through its creative practices. The only binding and indeed prescriptive conditions set by the Creator through the Quran and the practices of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH) were the ethical foundations and moral boundaries. Thus the prescriptive requirements of supplication (ibadah) in its various forms had to be seen as a means of maintaining that moral perspective and ethical framework in our human endeavours rather than as an end in itself.

The next chapter will focus on local issues during the 1960s when the implementation of the Nationalist Government policy of apartheid in South Africa began to impact on the different communities. It will examine its effect on the Muslims of the Western Cape and their response to it. It will, importantly, examine the impact of apartheid on Rational Islam.

CHAPTER 4 THE IMPACT OF THE DESTRUCTION OF DISTRICT 6 ON MODERN RATIONAL ISLAM

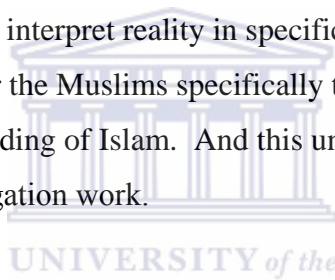
4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 3 attempted to explain the context within which modern Rational Islam was introduced into the Western Cape. By context is meant the establishment of the link between the international or global historicizing exigencies that promoted an interpretation of Islam that accepted ‘secular’ knowledge as an integral component of Islamic knowledge and its local interpretation. Secondly, the chapter explained conditions in the Western Cape that created the need for transformation in its understanding of Islam. Chapter 3 also provided an analysis of the discourses and social practices that constituted modern Rational Islam as it manifested itself in the Cape. Here the role of Shaykh Gamieldien as its foremost protagonist was critically evaluated in order to provide some understanding of the content of the local interpretation of Rational Islam.

Of importance in Chapter 3 was the presentation of the impact that Gamieldien made on the Muslim community in District Six and the focus on the educational institutions that he employed to serve as conduits for teaching this community. The chapter further examined the teaching and pedagogical processes that in effect transformed the thinking and understanding of large sections of the Muslim community.

Chapter 4 will attempt to explore and explain the rise of other trends within Islam in the Western Cape with their contesting interpretations and also assess their relative impact on the local community. The chapter will examine the period between approximately 1965 and 1992, a period that was characterised by events within the Muslim community as well as events outside of its religious ambit but that had a fundamental impact on the direction and development of Islam in Cape Town. In fact, one of the important debates that develop from this analysis has to do with the effect that extraneous factors had on the Muslims in the Western Cape and indeed on the success or failure of Gamieldien’s rational project.

The next section of this chapter will examine the destructive role of the forced removals on the community of District Six from its homes and its resettlement primarily on the Cape Flats. Here much of the emphasis will be located around the undermining of common values, the loss of a shared vision of the future and the alienation felt by the majority of essentially urban dwellers as a direct result of their resettlement in areas far removed from familiar surroundings. This sense of alienation will be linked to the undermining of religious faith, especially amongst the youth, and the consequent abandonment of values that were intrinsically and historically part of the community and morality that was inextricably connected to religion in general and, for the purpose of this study, to Islam in particular. It will therefore be argued that the dispossession of the people of District Six of their homes and the destruction of that community was not only an issue of moving people from one area to another or, as government propagandists described it, cleaning up a slum area. It was in effect a destruction of a way of life, of a communal value system that allowed its members to interpret reality in specific ways and gave meaning to their individual and collective lives. For the Muslims specifically this meaning was, at least in part, conceptually tied to their understanding of Islam. And this understanding was again, at least in part, linked to Gamieldien's propagation work.



The third section will then attempt to address the process of reconstruction and the role of the religious community in this process. An important claim in this section is that religious leaders involved in the process of reconstruction linked their work to specific interpretations of Islam. There will also be an attempt to unpack the reasons for the growing influence of these religious tendencies and then to assess the relative decline in the impact of Rational Islam within the Muslim community.

The chapter will further reflect on this apparent waning influence of Rational Islam on the community and its possible connection to the forced removals that dispersed the community of District Six. But the analysis also aims to show that this explanation does not represent the complete picture. It will argue that the inability of those involved in the propagation of Rational Islam to address the problems created by the mass removals and to provide answers to the plight of the Muslim community of District Six reflected some of its inherent weaknesses. It is for this reason that Rational Islam appeared to have been eclipsed by other interpretive tendencies under

the broad banner of Islamism, Islamic revivalism and fundamentalism. These tendencies in effect gave the Muslim community alternative moral frameworks that had their roots in the religious practices of the great men in Islamic history who surrounded the prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and those who succeeded them. It will further be argued that the rationalist project at this point in the history of the Muslims in the Western Cape did not shape its understanding of modern Islam sufficiently to include an agenda that took into account the political realities in South Africa. Thus a crucial claim will be that the apathy that surrounded the rational project on current social and political issues allowed other progressive movements, especially amongst the youth, to take up the Islamic cause, which they linked to the struggle for human rights.

This did not mean that the rationalists did not adapt at all. A fuller understanding of the role of Rational Islam can only be gained if there is a proper investigation into the direction it took during this period of forced removals. Thus the next section will deal with the work of Majlis Ashura Al Islami (Consultative Council for Muslim Affairs) as a community organisation in response to the crisis within the Muslim community. The focus here will be on the religious direction it chose under the control of the Muslim Judicial Council. This section will particularly look at the creation of the Usuluddin Islamic Seminary, an educational institution to further the objectives of this choice, and will analyse Gamieldien's role in the work of Shura, as Majlis Ashura Al Islami came to be known, and in the Usuluddin Seminary.

This chapter will finally reflect on the way in which these events provided Gamieldien with new opportunities to propagate Rational Islam to a larger audience than he had up to that point been exposed to. This will involve a historical analysis of Usuluddin Seminary between 1969 when it was established until 1987 when was finally closed.

The concluding section will then attempt to analyse and critique these historical events and also establish the relative impact of Rational Islam when measured against other tendencies that provided moral support to a community in crisis during the period of forced removals.

4.2 THE DESTRUCTION OF DISTRICT SIX

District Six in Cape Town was one of the areas identified by the state in terms of the Group Areas Act, Act 41 of 1950 (Maylam, 1995, p.2) for clearance and for the removal of the community from its historic homes. The area was declared a white residential area on 11 February 1966 (Hall, 2009, p.1) by the National Party Government. This set in motion a systematic process of displacement of the community from District Six to the Cape Flats. Up till the 1950's, the Cape Flats were virtually uninhabited. When the Apartheid government's Group Areas Act was enforced, the history of the Cape changed irrevocably and the Cape Flats became the "dumping ground" for the non-Whites in the Cape. (Area Review, 2012, p.1)

The effect of this process of removal and resettlement was immediate and highly visible. The poorer sections of the community of District Six were moved to high-density housing townships such as Manenberg, Bonteheuwel, Heideveld and Hanover Park. The apartheid state then built the vast sub-city of Mitchells Plain, starting in the early 1970s. Those who could afford to purchase houses were provided with opportunities to do so in adjacent suburbs such as Vanguard Estate, Primrose Park, Newfields, Portavue and Greenhaven.

The removal of the Muslims from their historical homes in District Six meant, at the most superficial level, that they were resettled in relatively foreign environments far from the things that they knew and understood. While the total effect of the displacement and the social dislocation of the community of District Six cannot be adequately analysed in this research, attempts will be made to examine the consequences for the Muslim community, with special focus on the impact on Rational Islam.

These townships had a very rudimentary infrastructure that was supposed to support the reconstruction of a viable community life. The minimal outlay on libraries, parks, playing areas for the youth, effective transport and proper roads, health facilities and schools left these communities in a state of desperation, helplessness and despair. Besides describing the physical emptiness, the barrenness that replaced the rich surroundings that were District Six, the people spoke of a sense of bewilderment, of an absence of comprehension as to what had happened and

why it had happened. This is graphically shown by Sean Field (2001, p. 11), who explored the impact of these forced removals through interviews with some of the victims thereof. A former resident of District Six describes her response to the eviction process as follows:

When they chucked us out of Cape Town. My whole life changed! There was change. Not just in me, but in all the people.... I cannot explain how it was when I moved out of Cape Town and came to Manenberg. In those days I didn't know why they chucked us out. What did we do, that they chuck us out like this. We wasn't murderers, we wasn't robbers, like today. Now people are corrupt. They can really be barbarians.... They broke us up. They broke up the community. The day they threw us out of Cape Town, that was my whole life came tumbling down. I don't know how my life continued. I couldn't see my life in the new townships far away from the family. All the neighbours were strangers. That was the hardest part of my life, believe me.

Another victim explains her emotional response as follows:

It made me feel like a second class citizen, defiled, demoralized, you feel depressed, I always [wondered] what is wrong with me? You know, what is different about me...? But I felt...you know...if I had a bomb, or if I had a gun, I'll shoot everybody... (Geschier, 2007, p. 37).

The intensity of the emotions reflected the depth of the despair and emptiness that people felt at the loss of what had provided them with meaning in their lives. Geschier (2007, p. 40) explains this when she quotes Richard Rive who says,

With the destruction of the space and community that was District Six, the inhabitants lost their *place*, one that created and was created by their cosmopolitan identity as individuals and as a community...the actual loss was traumatic because with it they also lost the trust in others and in the safety of the world.

Deborah Hart (1990, p. 128) also explains this trauma:

...its toll upon individual lives and emotions is immeasurable. The inconvenience occasioned by the physical wrenching of people from long-time homes pales in the face of more prolonged and damaging psychological distress. Oral evidence, literary accounts

and almost two decades of newspaper reporting unite in their testimony to the fear, humiliation, bitterness and anger that accompanied the displacement. Not least among the consequences was fragmentation of the identity and heritage of a particular community which had profound implications for its social, political and cultural expression.

District Six had provided a sense of belonging, of shared values and of a common destiny that gave meaning to the collective lives of the community. The bulldozing of the area also meant the destruction of that collective meaning and destiny.

For the Muslim section of the community whose value system, meaning of life and destiny were inextricably woven into its religious beliefs, practices and traditions, the destruction of its common living space further meant the breaking down of the people's shared understanding of the purpose of their existence. The elders in the community were the carriers and transmitters of a way of life that was distinct and uniquely their own. This way of life had meaning precisely because of its social setting. Thus the destruction of this setting fundamentally undermined that very meaning of which the elders were the conduits.

On the Cape Flats where the majority of the District Six community was moved, there was an almost complete absence of any prevailing collective spirit of commonality. In its place were fear, mistrust and suspicion. Geschier (2007, p. 41) quotes an interviewee:

...[P]eople came from a whole wide area, called the Cape Flats where they don't know family. Most of them they live in fear for their lives and the children's lives. So you don't trust people. But in District Six people trusted one another!

With the removals the continued flourishing of Rational Islam came under serious threat. The majority of the congregation of Al-Azhar Mosque were also residents of District Six and victims of apartheid, and these congregants were relocated to the townships. One of the most important consequences of the forced removals of Muslims from District Six was their alienation from al-Azhar Mosque and from the source of rational education. Their inability to travel great distances in order to attend Gamieldien's lectures at the very least interrupted their schooling and in most

instances severed their relationship with the mosque completely. Many of the children of these residents had also attended the Al Hidayah Madrassa housed in the Rahmaneyah Primary School building in District Six. This school for young learners that was the nursery of the rational project was now denied to the children of the former residents of the area. As a result the continued nurturing of this understanding of Islam was also under threat because of the people's collective eviction. Since there was no project in place to create similar learning institutions in the townships, the task of teaching young people the basic understanding of Islam fell on others to fulfil. The Western Cape thus began to experience a simultaneous transformation in the hegemonic discourses from amongst the different Muslim groupings that represented diverse understandings of Islam.

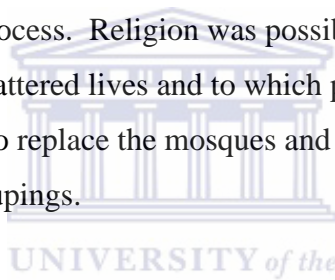
The new townships brought in their wake a range of important consequences for Islam. One of the results of the displacement of the community was that it helped to usher in the different Muslim discursive variants that had distinct leanings towards fundamentalist and revivalist tendencies. These variants provided the religious content that gave meaning to beliefs and practice and at the same time initiated a process of rehabilitation of a diverse group of people who had been struggling to integrate into a viable community since their displacement from urban Cape Town. It is crucial to understand the content of these different discursive traditions in order to assess their impact within the broader Cape Town Muslim community. This is also important for an understanding of the development of Gamieldien's rationalist orientations in the post-District 6 period.

4.3 A PROCESS OF RECONSTRUCTION

The dislocation of these communities from District Six brought with it serious challenges about retaining some connection with their life goals and vision. The isolation on the Cape Flats was accompanied by a shared sense of alienation and a struggle to reconstruct common values. Large sections of these new communities succumbed to the consequences of what to them began to appear as a relatively meaningless life. The effect of the removals on the children was even more devastating. Unlike their parents who had obtained some schooling in the religious culture of Cape Town and had retained much of the moral discipline that had been instilled in them, the

youth was somewhat devoid of religious guidance or a moral compass. They were also less immuned to the type of community censure that a close-knit community would normally provide. Consequently, they became exposed to the dehumanising effect of poverty and displacement in the new context. Even education struggled to be regarded as a viable option for escape from their conditions of existence.

For the Muslim section of the community, as with all other religious sectors, the road to a measure of reconstruction and recovery was slow and painful. It required in the first instance a transition period in which individuals began a process of social interaction with those around them and acceptance of their common distress as an initial binding factor. This was then followed by developing relationships around other common issues such as security and common needs and constructing shared values that focused on survival. Shared religious beliefs also became an important link in this process. Religion was possibly the only moral compass that remained to provide meaning to shattered lives and to which people could cling in their despair. The absence of religious symbols to replace the mosques and churches left behind became the focus of attention for religious groupings.



The rehabilitation of these communities was often predicated on the efforts of a few visionaries working in most instances under the guidance of their religious beliefs. Individuals who began to take on positions of leadership in this new context, as with other religious communities, used their beliefs to restore a measure of stability in their families and in the broader community and as a means of surviving the trauma of dislocation and of starting anew. They began to build new mosques and madrassas and generally took up the struggle to reset the religious compass and rebuild the religious and moral coherence within the community. Over a period of 30 years between 1968 and 1998, the number of mosques built in the townships on the Cape Flats numbered more than 50 (The Companion, pp. 172–180, 2007.). Money was collected from all over South Africa but particularly from the Muslims living in these undeveloped areas themselves who raised funds to build the mosques and madrassas. These developments from within the Muslim communities on the Cape Flats began to shape the new understanding of the role of Islam in their lives. The participation of the Muslim communities in their own

rehabilitation became one of the stabilising factors that allowed them to maintain moral coherence that gave meaning to their individual and collective lives.

A feature of the process of using Islam as the focus of rehabilitation of the Muslim community in the townships was the entry of a wide range of different religious groups, each with their own interpretation of what constitutes key beliefs and practices within Islam. Each of these interpretations challenged the rational heritage that many of the new inhabitants of these townships had brought from District Six. The Tabligh Jama'a with its Deobandi-trained mawlanas and the Wahhabi shaykhs who had been educated in Medina, Saudi Arabia, began to take leadership positions in providing the Muslim community with a sense of moral direction and a new meaning to its collective life while simultaneously propagating an Islam that rejected Western morality, making no distinction between positive and negative values. These leaders sought only to look to the Islamic past for guidance. It was this uncompromising approach that found resonance in a community that considered itself betrayed by value systems such as western modernism.

4.4 THE INFLUENCE OF ALTERNATIVE RELIGIOUS TENDENCIES

4.4.1 The Deobandi movement

The first of these movements were the Deobandi-trained religious leaders generally known in the Western Cape as the Tabligh Jama'a. The group emanated from India and established roots among Indian Muslims of the Western Cape in the 1960s. The group acquired its name from the city of Deoband in India where its first school was established in 1867 (Metcalf, 1982, p. 88). Deobandi theology propagated the return to the essence of Islam, namely the Quran and the example of the prophet Muhammad (SAW) called the Sunnah, and the purification of the religion from innovation. For the Deobandis this meant a return to the example of the original forefathers of Islam. In a sense they became part of a global movement called the salafi revivalist movement. The core of this call was for a literal imitation of many religious practices in their original form, discarding any form of innovation (bid'a').

While the history and development of the Deobandi movement lie beyond the scope of this research, its interpretation of Islam is contrasted with that of the modernists and rationalists. Through the Deobandis' understanding of the plight of the Muslims from District Six following the destruction of their former communities and the simplicity of their teaching, they were able to mobilise large sections of the community and consequently eclipse the rationalist perspective in Cape Town's townships. It could be argued that this had as much to do with the specific needs of a community in turmoil as it had with the relative capacities of the two groupings to provide people with a perspective that would reaffirm their dignity and their inherent humanity as creations of Allah. The relative success of the Deobandi movement has to be assessed on the basis of its involvement in the social reconstruction of these new communities. This assessment also has to take into account the spiritual counsel provided on the one hand and the very nature of the message that the movement propagated on the other.

The Deobandis began to strip the prevailing Islamic belief system of beliefs and practices that they understood as being foreign to the essential beliefs and practices taught by the prophet Muhammad (SAW) and his companions and successors. Barbara Metcalf (1982, p. 139) makes the following point:

The effectiveness of the Deobandis was judged to rest in their synthesis of the two main streams of Islamic tradition, that of intellectual learning and that of spiritual experience. They themselves understood this unity of shari'a (the Law) and tariqat (the Path) to be firmly within the bounds of Islamic orthodoxy, for they took the Law and the Path to be not opposed but complementary.

This meant that whatever practices could not be traced back to the prophet (SAW) were rejected as not part of the religion of Islam. From this the Deobandis developed a system of principles relating to innovative beliefs and practices that were vigorously resisted as foreign to the essential values and traditions of Islam. Such beliefs had to be kept separate from the essential beliefs and practices of Islam and were not to be allowed to contaminate the purity of belief. The Deobandis' rejection of practices not officially sanctioned by the prophet as innovation and their insistence on a return to the examples of the prophet and the righteous caliphs as the sine qua non for true belief reflected the narrowness and conservatism of their theology. With regard to ritual

practices, the Deobandis believed in the principle of taqlid (imitation or following) and adherence to a mathahab (school of law). In general they rejected individual ijthihad (reasoning and research) and insisted on the uncritical and literal acceptance of the four schools of law, namely Shafi', Hanafi, Maliki and Hambali, these being the founders of the Sunni legal system in Islam. Deviations from these procedures were condemned as innovations and thus not Islamic.

It was this simplicity of belief coupled with its directness that gave belief and hope to the local Muslims who were devastated by the effect of the forced removals. They were comforted by a set of beliefs that were linked to practices that they understood and that would provide them with a guaranteed path to paradise. Many of the Muslims in the townships especially turned to spirituality as a safeguard for their very humanity. The beneficence and mercy of the Creator contrasted sharply with the cruelty and inhumanity of the material world. The evangelism of the Deobandis who offered salvation to those who believed and practised what they believed provided comfort to the Muslims in distress. The message focused on the transient nature of the present existence, which was juxtaposed against the eternal bliss of paradise. It was better to strive to attain God's satisfaction than to struggle for the material benefits of our world. The appeal of this message often revived their hope and recovered their lost dignity.

The concern of this research is to attempt to explain the way in which the Deobandi-orientated ulama understood the circumstances of the mass of the Muslims in the Western Cape and responded to their plight. This response provided them with an opportunity to introduce on a wide scale the concept of a literal return to the way of medieval Islam in relation to dress code, learning and teaching methodology, their epistemological theories and their egalitarianism. Indeed, the Tabligh movement provided to a large measure the moral compass for Muslim families and used the salaah (daily prayer) together with the call to return to faith in Allah as the cornerstones of its evangelism. This movement's call for a return to the purity of Islam and to the example of the prophet gave Muslims a goal in life that replaced the shared understandings of their social lives that were destroyed with their homes in District Six. In the absence of any other organised response to the Muslim plight, the Tabligh movement provided the people with religious direction in the process of social reconstruction.



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

4.4.2 The Wahhabi Movement

The second challenge to modern Rational Islam came from the conservative and puritanical Wahhabi-trained ulama. During the early 1980s, a number of young students who had been provided with opportunities to study at Medina University as part of a global propagation strategy by the Saudi Government returned to Cape Town to assume membership of the ulama fraternity. These were the Wahhabi evangelists (dai's) who were determined to reorganise the community in new ways that eliminated practices that were not in conformity with the practices of the prophet Muhammad (SAW). Having been schooled in the literalist interpretation of Islamic theology and law, they were able to expound a variant of Islam that stressed the importance of spiritual rewards for people who are obedient and committed to the fundamentals of Islam.

Discussing the history of the Wahhabi movement, Syed Habibul Haq Nadvi (1987, pp. 77–78) observes that

The movement was initiated by...Muhammad ibn Abd al Wahhab' [who thought that] ...the Muslim world was suffering from such devastating spiritual barrenness...[that it had become necessary]...to revive faith in undiluted *Tawhid*. God alone was the object of worship and no human, dead or alive, deserved human evocation for help.

According to ibn Wahhab (Nadvi, 1987, p. 253), “Revelation and not logic or empiricism, was the sole guide in metaphysical affairs (*‘Ilm al Ilahiyat*).” He therefore adopted a literalist approach to interpretation of belief and law. He followed “the Ahadith to the letter and spirit and attacked the mutakallimin [philosophers] who apparently were ignorant of the evil consequences of *Ilm al Kalam*” (Nadvi, 1987, pp. 253–254).

It was this same message that the local shaykhs, who had studied in Saudi Arabia and who became the evangelists of Wahhabism, were preaching in the apartheid townships in the Western Cape centuries later. As they began to take positions as imams of the mosques in Cape Town and surrounds, they taught the narrow puritanical interpretation of Islam. But this was an interpretation that provided the substance of a set of beliefs that could easily be understood and

could provide comfort to a community that had lost faith in the material world. The Wahhabi shaykhs presented the township community with an understanding founded on the principles of obedience and reward. The attainment of such rewards was simple. It involved having faith in Allah, performing the rituals required by Islam and living a spiritually good life.

With the primary focus on responsibilities and duties in terms of Islamic law, the Wahhabi sheiks rejected the notion of an integration of knowledge. Religious knowledge, narrowly defined, was in essence superior to secular knowledge. An outward sign of the consequences of this phenomenon was the proliferation of hafith schools and madrassas throughout the townships of the Western Cape where young learners were often taken out of 'secular' schools in order to study at one of these madrassas and hafith schools.

Of particular significance was the fact that during this period of social dislocation, the rationalist tendency had no coherently structured or organised policy that could have addressed the spiritual or material needs of the poorest sections of the community of District Six. In general the community was left to develop its own strategies to counteract the worst effects of the forced removals. Both the Tabligh Jama'a and the Wahhabi shaykhs were far more able than the rationalists to address the immediate spiritual needs of an unstable community that required a counterbalance to bring about some semblance of social equilibrium. The mosques of District Six, and specifically al-Azhar Mosque whose community carried the essence of the Rational Islamic tendency, found their congregants scattered all over the Cape Flats and were helpless in providing the required support structures. These congregants were unable to attend their historic spiritual homes on any regular basis and thus drifted into alternative and newly constructed religious institutions or abandoned their religious and spiritual compass almost completely. It therefore appeared that apartheid and the inability of the rational grouping in the Western Cape to address the spiritual effects of the destruction of the community of District Six played a major part in the seemingly waning influence of Rational Islam.

4.4.3 Fundamentalist Revivalism

The Muslim response to the impact of apartheid on the lives of the former community of District Six in the Western Cape did not only come from the Deobandis and the Wahhabis. Indeed, these movements with their call for a return to the purity of religious faith struck a chord with the community that was struggling to adapt to difficult material conditions. But these movements were not led by overtly political activists and thus did not perceive of their role as leading organised resistance to state policies. On the contrary, their call for a return to Islam and its way of life was perceived as an alternative to the existential contexts of their adherents. Their focus was on spirituality and a return to the fundamentals of Islam. It was therefore left to other discursive traditions within the house of Islam to address the people's political and social needs.

But Muslims in the townships were also in search of political direction and social organisation that had some connection with an Islamic tradition to address their immediate concerns in their new environments. The rise of patently political-religious movements could be attributed to the search for solutions to the immediate material problems that faced the community. It would appear that political-religious groupings such as the Qibla Mass Movement and later the anti-drug group People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (PAGAD) owed their influence within the township communities to their ability to interpret these immediate needs. Their emergence as revivalist movements in the Western Cape after 1980 could be attributed to two crucial factors, one global and the other local.

The global factor was the international Muslim response to the encroachment of rampant exploitative international capitalism by Western powers. This response was founded on a call for a return to Islamic values and practices and for Muslim countries to reconstruct themselves along Islamic lines. The call was for a return to the example provided by the righteous forefathers or pioneers of Islam, called the salaf. Fazlur Rahman (1979, p. 213) explains this response to what he calls "the Western impact on Islam". He argues that the reforms were a response to

...the internal degeneration of Muslim society and the nature of positive lines of reconstruction. The elimination of obscurantism, the reform of Sufism and the raising of

moral standards is a salient common characteristic of all these movements.... It is true that the positive line of a reconstitution of society universally proclaimed by these movements was in terms of a return to the pristine Islam, to ‘Quran and the Sunnah’, and ...a general resurgence of fundamentalism.

This call was given renewed impetus after 1979 with the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which set the paradigm for resistance against Western encroachment. In South Africa, revivalism under the direction of groupings such as Qibla and later PAGAD initiated a process of restoration of faith in Islam as possessing the capacity for addressing the spiritual needs of the Muslim community as well as providing solutions to social problems. These organisations could broadly be described as revivalist in the sense that they propagated a religious philosophy that focused on political activism and social and spiritual transformation. The global revivalist impulse is defined quite broadly and often linked to Islamism and even Islamic fundamentalism. This research has attempted to delineate the definitions so as to describe with as much academic accuracy as possible the directions of different tendencies and their relative impact on the Cape Town Muslims. Rosyad (1995, p.9) in “A Quest for True Islam” uses Muzaffar’s definition of Islamic resurgence as a synonym for Islamic revivalism:

Islamic resurgence is a description of the endeavour to re-establish Islamic values, Islamic practices, Islamic institutions, Islamic laws, indeed Islam in its entirety in the lives of Muslims everywhere. It is an attempt to create an Islamic ethos, an Islamic social order, at the vortex is the Islamic human being, guided by the Quran and Sunnah.

This concept is extended by Lapidus (1997, p.444.) who states that;

The contemporary Islamic Movements are both a response to the conditions of modernity – to the centralization of state power and the development of capitalist economies – and a cultural expression of modernity. The emphasis upon Islamic values is not intended as a return to some past era but represents an effort to cope with contemporary problems by renewed commitment to the basic principles, though not the details of Islam.

In both descriptions of revivalism, Islamic values are emphasised as a crucial component for the creation of a just society. Also, contrary to some current interpretations it is not a call for a return to the conditions of social living of the past. It is an attempt to come to terms with the impact that modernity has been perceived to make on western society in relation to its moral system. The effort to maintain the 'basic principles...of Islam' reflects the 'angst' that Muslim societies felt as they anticipated a similar impact on their own societies. Their trepidation appears to be compounded by the iniquities in their own countries and the willingness of the political leadership to succumb to the allure of financial benefits. The calls for justice and democratic representation throughout the Muslim world under banner of revivalism and Islamic resurgence have to be contextualized within the parameters of Muslim fears of a loss of Islamic identity under the economic weight of western financial imperialism.

The Qibla Mass Movement strove for justice founded on such an Islamic paradigm. These organisations therefore pronounced on the legality of social practices from within such a framework. As a result they often clashed with the legal authorities of the country. Their popularity with specific sectors of society could be said to have been a consequence of their willingness to address critical problems in the community and attempting to find solutions in Islam.

The second impulse that provided the *raison d'être* for the rise of the revivalist movements in the Western Cape was the actual social conditions left by the policy of apartheid within these communities. These conditions, described earlier in the chapter, gave rise to a flood of gangster and drug activity. The lawlessness and absence of social control together with the extreme poverty and struggle for survival deprived the community of any vision of a future in which its children could exist and prosper. Thousands of young adults were driven to crime in general and specifically to the illegal drug trade, either as users or as dealers and often as both.

These local conditions thus created the opportunity for activist movements to provide Islamic guidance while simultaneously addressing the ills of the day. Using specifically targeted mosques as sites of organisation and planning, they mobilised the community to respond to its plight in a range of different ways. The groupings urged an adoption of strict Islamic values

based on the instruction of the Quran and the example of the prophet Muhammad (SAW) and to identify those social practices that were not in conformity with Islamic ideals. They further urged community pressure on practices not considered to be Islamic and put pressure on government agencies and institutions to confront activities that were also illegal in terms of state law. They simultaneously propagated the adoption of the global paradigms of contemporary Islamic policies and practices, especially those that had with some success thrown off the yoke of Western domination, around which to shape their community practices and religious beliefs. Even though the more radical groupings did not find a ready response from the majority of the community, they were vociferous in articulating specific legitimate grievances and thus found support from the youth in the townships or from students at schools, colleges and universities. In their opposition to the illegal liquor outlets and the growing drug trade in the townships, they attracted a great deal of support for their cause and programmes of action.

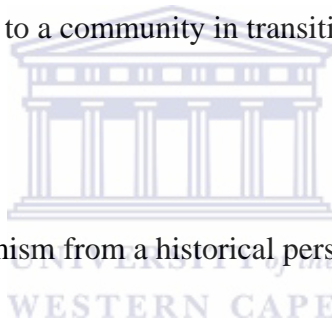
The impact of these revivalist organisations further undermined the rationalist movement, which was largely inactive both politically and socially during this period. The issues addressed by the revivalist movements became part of a broader struggle for human rights that went beyond the franchise and political freedom. It had to do with the affirmation of people's humanity and the recognition of their right to live in conditions of peace and security. It was to the revivalist movements a struggle for human emancipation from the conditions of their society. Jurgen Habermas defines this concept of emancipation as being different from freedom or liberation:

The Emancipatory domain identifies 'self-knowledge' or self-reflection.... 'Emancipation is from libidinal, institutional or environmental forces which limit our options and rational control over our lives but have been taken for granted as beyond human control (a.k.a. 'reification'). Insights gained through critical self-awareness are her problems.' Knowledge is gained by self-emancipation through reflection leading to a transformed consciousness or '*perspective transformation*' (MacIsaac, 1996, p.4, my italics)

Following Habermas, it could be argued that the conditions brought about by the mass removals had restricted the internal growth of the people who had been relocated. The Islamic revivalist movements subsequently sought to expose the problems that obstructed the reconstruction of

the communities on the Cape Flats and then provide solutions to these problems. They even extended their concern to the restrictions that the new environment placed on the people and that affected their growth as human beings. These solutions were sought from within the Islamic paradigm. It was claimed that emancipation lay within the realm of religion. Thus to be truly free, Muslims needed to return to the ways and the practices of the prophet Muhammad (SAW) and his companions and successors. The failure of society to protect the people from the injustice of apartheid made this message both plausible and attractive.

The immediacy of the relevance of this struggle promoted the status of these movements and of their framework of thinking on the essentials of Islam within the community of Cape Town. The convictions of these movements transcended the legalistic and abstract theories of the Creator presented by the rationalists. Islam itself was transformed into a religion of action and alternatives that provided solutions to a community in transition.



4.4.4 Islamism

Tayob (1995, p. 25) describes Islamism from a historical perspective:

With the birth of Muslim nation states, a new Islamic vision, Islamism, has emerged to compete for ideological supremacy in the Muslim world. This new form of Islam has incorporated some of the central themes of revivalism, including its emphasis upon the uniqueness of Islam and the emulation of the prophet, while it has also adopted elements of reformism.... Islamism has been the ideological force that has animated the Islamic paradigm of religious knowledge in the twentieth century.

Stanley (2005, p.1.) defines Islamism theoretically as follows:

Islamism is an umbrella term commonly applied to a variety of Islamic movements that are actually quite diverse.... Islamism is encapsulated in the synonym 'Political Islam', which refers to those political movements that treat Islam as their political ideology.

In the Western Cape, the theme of Islamism, which included the eclectic approach of combining the revivalist programme of Qutb and Mawdudi with the modernist interpretation of Islam of al-Afghani and Abduh attracted the attention of young educated Muslims. Qutb's programme is described by Choueiri, (1998) when he explains that, "Qutb's philosophical system postulated ... (in) its most original contribution ... the concept of God's sovereignty or lordship. Similarly, Moududi (Isseroff, 2008), "asserted the sovereignty of God". These views appealed to the youth, especially those who had become disillusioned with the legalistic and often supernatural interpretations given by the traditional ulama. More fundamentally, these disillusioned and Islamist orientated youth sought to find in Islam the solutions to modern social and political problems that confronted the world community and that shaped the nature of our world. They wanted to understand whether Islam provided real and practical solutions to local as well as global issues that confronted Muslims, ones that moved beyond a one-dimensional focus on solutions such as patient struggle, (sabr), faith (iman), ritual worship, (ibadah) and fatalism. Moreover, these young Islamists were eager to establish whether Muslims could actively engage on the global and local stage in the struggle for justice, in the eradication of inequality, poverty and oppression, in providing answers to such issues as democracy and political participation, and in reflecting on the issue of gender equality and on a range of other problems that were not generally addressed by the religious leadership.

A critical evaluation of Islamism as it manifested itself in the Western Cape reflected some key characteristic features of Islamism globally. One of these features was the evaluation of socio-political conditions of the Muslims in the townships through Islamic lenses and looking for solutions within the Islamic paradigm. This resulted in a process of continuous involvement in the struggle within the Muslim community in the townships.

The local Islamist movement was embodied in the Muslim Youth Movement, which ideologically positioned itself as an activist Islamist movement dedicated to the struggle against apartheid on the one hand and to constructing a coherent Islamic ideology that would address the issues that confronted Islam globally on the other hand. Tayob (1995, p. 139) explains this position as promoting "Islam as 'way of life...' [and an] 'Islamic value system'", as understood through its history and tradition.

Tayob (1995, p. 140) further explains that the Muslim Youth Movement regarded

the term 'religion' [as] 'too narrow to describe the many facets of Islam' ...the 'Islamic system' stood for comprehensiveness. The latter included spirituality, but only as one among the many human dimensions addressed by Islam.

It would appear therefore that Islamism as understood by the Muslim Youth Movement was an attempt to broaden the range of Islamic practices to include economic and political participation both in the local and global arenas but more accurately to engage in these practices on Islamic terms. Islamism wanted to place Islamic theories on the world market to compete with other ideologies for global hegemony. Also, at the local level it wanted to present an Islamic perception of justice and freedom, of social and community relations, of exploitation and oppression and of solutions to the problems that were peculiar to this country.

The very nature of the approach to the theory of Islamism reflected an intellectualism that appealed to students and the intelligentsia. In its programmes and practices the Muslim Youth Movement, as the primary representative organisation of this discursive tradition, drew its support from young people at universities and schools, the professional classes and academics. The attraction of the Islamist movement for the educated classes clearly impacted negatively on Gamielien's Rational Islam. As the only other possible intellectual and political home for the intellectuals and the youth, the rationalists again struggled to draw support from these groups. Islamism provided a spiritual home for tertiary educated students and growing middle-class Muslims who found the activism of the revivalists too crude and the understanding of Islam of the salafis, especially as reflected in the Deobandi and Wahhabi movements, too backward looking.

The position of the rationalists in relation to the critical social and political problems facing the Muslims in the Western Cape probably represented the primary obstacle to attracting Muslims either from the intelligentsia or from the youth at universities, colleges and schools. As an ideological grouping, the rationalists had been undermined, not only by their own inactivity and

inability to present the community with an interpretation of Islam that explained its situation but also by their inability to formulate strategies that would address the issues that faced the Muslims. Possibly also, their preoccupation with abstract and theosophical explanations of belief and rituals and with religious training coupled with their disdain for the practical issues of the day distracted them from recognising the needs of the community.

But there were also attempts from within the dominant religious leadership represented by the Muslim Judicial Council and from business leaders to respond to the fragmentation of the Muslim community and to create structures that would give an authentic voice to this community. The creation of Majlish Ashura Al Islami under the direction of the Muslim Judicial Council was an attempt to develop an administrative and management structure that would address the prevailing socio-economic and religious problems within the community.

For those involved in the field of Islamic education and in the development of organisational structures to give legitimacy to the voice of the community, however, it became an important goal to create a representative body. The Muslim Judicial Council, which had always been recognised as the religious leadership of the Muslim community, used the mosques as sources of recruitment for the establishment of such a representative body. Gamieldien, who at this time was the president of the Muslim Judicial Council, looked at Shura as a further conduit for the propagation of Rational Islam. It is therefore important to explain the educational structures created by Shura to understand its role in furthering Gamieldien's objectives.

4.5 MAJLISUSH SHURA AL ISLAMI and the USULUDDIN COLLEGE

The Muslim Judicial Council had responded to the nascent crisis threatening the unity, coherence and religious and spiritual needs of the Muslims by initiating a process leading to the establishment of a broadly representative community body. Majlisush Shura Al Islami was founded in 1968 to address Muslim aspirations in the Western Cape. The process of its creation was significant in that for the first time in the history of the Muslims of the Western Cape, a measure of democratic practice was employed to achieve this objective. The Muslim Judicial Council used the mosques, which it viewed as the basic unit of Muslim organisation, to develop

this broader consensus within the community. These mosques were requested to elect delegates to represent their jama'a (congregation) at an inaugural conference. Virtually all mosques in the Western Cape responded positively, making this conference, which was held at Azzavia Mosque, the most representative one in the history of the Muslims locally.³⁰ From the general conference, committees were established to work on a constitution to be adopted at the plenary session. The constitution created an organisation that appeared to be broadly representative, incorporating different sectors of the community while using the mosques as the basic unit of a democratic process of representation. At the same time the leadership recognised the need to include individuals with expertise and skills to manage and administer the organisation, and it therefore accepted the concept of co-opted members. It also appears that the Muslim Judicial Council had envisaged the creation of a governing body that would eventually officially represent and administer the affairs of the Muslims at all levels.

The constitution describes the process thus:³¹

The representative body of the Muslims shall be MAJLIS ASHURA AL ISLAMI and hereinafter shall be termed SHURA.

Members shall be afforded to;

- i. All mosque Jamaa'at
- ii. All Muslim organizations whose constitutions are not in conflict with SHURA'S constitution.
- iii. Individual Muslims

While the aims of the body did not appear to contain any direct reference to political leadership, this might be inferred from specific clauses contained in the section on its aims and objects. In Clause 2(e) it commits itself to "The upholding of the dignity of all men (sic) and identification of itself with social endeavour, within the framework of the Shari'ah to realize this basic tenet of Islam"³². Given the human rights record of the apartheid regime, it would appear that the newly

³⁰ Interview with Y. Abrahams, 24 October 2010.

³¹ Majlish AshuraAl Islami Constitution 1968, p.1

³² Majlish Ashura Al Islami Constitution, 1968, p.2.

established organisation had committed itself to a position in opposition to the political direction of the regime.

Other clauses also appear to point, albeit indirectly, to the Muslim Judicial Council's commitment to the social reconstruction of the community given the disintegration of large sections of this community following the removals from District Six and other areas. Clause 2(b) refers to the "assistance, establishment and maintenance of Islamic Institutions", while Clause 2(c) speaks of "The re-establishment of Islamic values and standards amongst all Muslims."³³ Of importance to this research was the commitment by the delegates to the propagation of Islam. It appeared from the interviews with members of the founding committee³⁴ that Islamic education was high on the agenda of the organisation. Thus the recruitment of academics and individuals with special managerial and administrative skills seems to have been a high priority.

One of Shura's first projects was the creation of a school of higher learning called Usuluddin College. In an interview with one of the members³⁵ charged with the creation of this school, he stated that Shaykh Gamiieldien was the most enthusiastic of all the alims of the MJC. He wanted to create a college that was patterned along the lines of the one that he attended in Egypt. He even wanted the same name, the Usuluddin which was a college of the University of Al-Azhar where he had studied. The college opened its doors for the first time in 1969 at the Azzavia Mosque in Cape Town with approximately 50 students.

The college represented a major step in the development of Islamic education. Its establishment at Azzavia Mosque was a major achievement by the education department of Shura. This department managed the development of a coherent curriculum for the college with syllabi for each of the courses, created the necessary administrative infrastructure to manage the college and had attained funding for effective management. There was also considerable enthusiasm in the community for the project, and within the first three years of its establishment the college had attracted more than 300 students from all over Cape Town. The fact that Usuluddin was a part-

³³ Majlish Ashura Al Islami Constitution, 1968, p.2.

³⁴ Interview with Y. Abrahams, 24 October 2010.

³⁵ Interview with Y. Abrahams, 24 October 2010.

time college with classes were held at night did not deter students from attending the institution. Many of these students had for years been attending adult education classes conducted by imams, mawlanas and shaykhs. In general, these classes had been intellectually unsatisfactory for a number of reasons. In almost all cases they were unstructured in that they did not follow a specific course of work, did not have a syllabus and the material taught was subject to the personal choice of the teachers. These decisions were often based on the teacher's depth of knowledge in a particular area of learning or on his bias and on the influence of his closest students. The lack of continuity and coherence left many students, especially young people, unfulfilled and bored. The teacher's own understanding of the content was often uncoordinated and his teaching methods incoherent. Notes were seldom supplied to students and their understanding of the work was never assessed in any consistent way. Often these classes were merely a means for the ustadt (teacher) to earn extra money to supplement the meagre salary that he was receiving from his duties as the imam of a mosque.

Against this background Usuluddin College was both unique and innovative. It was created to provide a community-based form of higher education to students who had an adequate background in Islamic studies. For the first time in the history of Islamic education in the Western Cape, students were required to have a minimum secular education qualifications and reading skills in the Arabic language for entry into the college. In 1969 the college started its first academic year, offering courses in fiqh (jurisprudence), tawhid (theology), Arabic history and Quranic recital. This was the first time in the Cape that Islamic education was being provided to young Muslim students who were interested in advanced studies in the Islamic sciences. They were in effect given an opportunity to pursue their educational interest within structures that were similar to the kind of institution that they understood from the secular education world. The courses offered were structured and clearly defined. Students who registered at Usuluddin needed to complete the Diploma in Islamic Studies over a period of three years. The courses that comprised this diploma were Fiqh III, Tawhid III, Legislative History II, Arabic III, Quranic Recital II and Narrative History II. Once the academic course had been completed, students had the option of doing a professional teaching course over a period of six months. Compulsory annual examinations with minimum requirements for passing were standardised, and the administrators, who in most cases were themselves educators, were able to

monitor the work at the college very effectively. While the content of the courses was designed by a group of alims (people schooled in the Islamic sciences) led by Gamieldien, who patterned these courses along the lines of al-Azhar University in Cairo, the absence of texts in the English language compelled lecturers to provide the requisite notes. These were generally extracted from classical works in each of the disciplines.

The administrative and management structures paralleled those of secular educational institutions. The different subjects were organised in courses over a period of three years. The name of the college reflected the early influence on the college by the rationalist tendency as it adopted the same name as the college attended by Gamieldien. The students³⁶ who attended Usuluddin College in the initial phase of its existence described their experience as new and stimulating, both in terms of content and method of teaching. They were surprised by the level of educational and organisational sophistication. Gamieldien, who was recognised as the most senior lecturer, taught those courses that were considered crucial for the development of the intellect (aql). It was in these disciplines that the understandings and beliefs of the students were essentially challenged and often reshaped. Virtually all students referred to him as the inspiration in their re-education. One of them³⁷ related the following:

I did not know Shaykh Shakier before I came to this college even though I had heard of him. In his lectures on tawhid he allowed us to challenge our dominant beliefs, our understanding of Islam and our perception of Allah. We had always been afraid to do this because we had been told that it was the road to unbelief (kufr). He also examined the foundations of our beliefs especially so that we could establish whether these had any basis in the Quran. Even those of us who related verses from the Quran to support our interpretations had to explain how they were connected to our beliefs. To our surprise we could not do this. This was the first phase of our re-education.

During the first three years of its establishment, Usuluddin College was able to develop a culture of learning that had never been achieved within the Muslim community in the Western Cape.

³⁶ Interview with S. Bardien, 12 August 2010.

³⁷ Interview with S. Bardien, 12 August 2010

The college represented a dynamic forum for learning and teaching, both in relation to the content of the courses offered and the methodology employed by the lecturers. Both students and lecturers were compelled to do research and master the course material if they were to continue at the college. Of great significance was the number of young women who attended the college. They represented up to 40%³⁸ of the total number of students and they participated actively in the discussions in class. This was a major achievement in a religious milieu that had largely excluded women as active participants in the practice of learning and teaching. Certainly they had been excluded from more advanced religious structures and educational opportunities. At Usuluddin their inclusion happened as a matter of course, and in the classroom situation women insisted on their right as students to participation.

A second significant issue was the right of students to challenge the content and underlying ideology that informed the selection of content. This was a major departure from traditional teaching methodologies and styles in which the ustadh (lecturer) had total control over content and presentation and the role of students was to absorb, accept, memorise and represent the material without question or reflection. In the traditional Muslim lecturer-student relationship, the acceptance of the presented materials was linked to issues of faith (iman) and thus of the student's religiosity. This relationship gave the lecturer great powers of manipulation and control. Lecturers were thus able to reproduce religious beliefs and dominant frameworks of thinking and excluded the enhancement of the student's critical reflective abilities with regard to beliefs in all areas of the Islamic sciences. Issues of gender equality, marital relationships, rights and obligations were usually avoided in traditional religious education classes. More controversial issues that had to do with organ donations and homosexuality were seldom addressed. In general the teacher remained with 'safe' topics of religious obligations such as salaah (prayer), haj (pilgrimage) and siyaam (fasting), reward and punishment, and general issues of belief. Other subjects such as hadith and tafsir (Quranic exegesis) were also taught at a superficial level. The total control exercised by the teacher over the material and presentation allowed for very limited participation from students who were generally confined to asking questions with the view of clarifying specific initial explanations.

³⁸ Interview with S. Christians, registrar of Usuluddin, 1969–72. 31 October 2010.

The presentation, teaching methodology and content at Usuluddin College, however, marked a turning point in the teaching of the Islamic sciences. Lecturers were compelled to address issues no matter how tenuously they were related to the topics under discussion. Students insisted on their right of participation and of presenting their own views. This was particularly striking because students came from different educational backgrounds and often had to defend views and beliefs that they had held as sacrosanct and beyond interrogation. These were also often the same beliefs that were undermined and replaced. It was a new experience in critical education that led to vigorous and in some cases vitriolic exchange of views. Lecturers themselves were at times compelled to defend their own positions and to support these with primary sources or interpretations from authoritative origins. A student³⁹ recalls one such issue:

During a fiqh lecture on the issue a taharah (cleanliness) the lecturer discussed the different ways in which clothes could be rendered unclean and therefore unfit for the purpose of salaah (ritual prayer). He explained that for such clothes to be regarded as clean water has to be used for such a purpose. A student wanted to know whether dry cleaning methods are acceptable under the laws of cleanliness since no water was being used. The lecturer was in a dilemma on how to address such a question and one suggestion was that in the process of ironing the steam would provide the water required by the shari'a. Other suggestions included the fact that whatever is used in dry cleaning consisted primarily of water and therefore satisfied the conditions for cleanliness.

Discussions such as this on a wide range of issues in terms of law and belief were commonplace in the lecture rooms of Usuluddin. The participatory nature of the class lectures allowed students to express their views without fear of sanction or recrimination. It often led to heated debates on conflicting understandings and preconceptions brought to the class as a consequence of prior learning and conflicting interpretations of law, belief and history.

Two examples from a student⁴⁰ who had attended the history and tawhid courses demonstrate the participatory nature of these classes and the expression of wide-ranging views:

³⁹ Interview with S. Bardien, 24 October 2010.

⁴⁰ Interview with I. Williams, 14 January 2010.

Shaykh Abubakar Najaar was the supervising lecturer of the Islamic history course. In his description of a battle between the forces opposed to Islam and the Muslims he explained that on one occasion Ali, the cousin of the prophet (SAW), lost his shield and then grabbed a gate twice his size to defend himself. There was an immediate outcry from students who protested that he should not embellish history in this fashion. Najaar's retort was that these were men of great character and faith to which the students replied that this did not make them physical superman. One student said that Islamic history should be rendered plausible and that situations that could not have occurred should be removed from texts.

In the tawhid class similar interaction was displayed:

Shaykh Gamielien who taught us tawhid addressed the question of determinism and free will with the class. After explaining the different and differing views of Muslim theorists, philosophers and religious leaders, the shaykh opened the issue for class discussion. One student argued that God in His creation of all human beings determined the passage of their lives in the same way as with other creations. Another student felt that this position relieved humanity of all responsibility. A third student said that if human beings created their own future then God was not all powerful. This debate became quite heated as students drew on the knowledge they had obtained with their previous teachers.

In both examples, the students were given an opportunity to participate freely in the construction of the lesson and to reflect on its content. A diverse set of opinions and interpretations of Islamic knowledge provided a platform for further reflection and indeed reconstruction of the Islamic sciences. Thus Usuluddin College provided Gamielien with new opportunities to present students with the tools for critical reflection on issues that had been deemed as settled through the ages by medieval authorities and presented as such by religious teachers and leaders in Cape Town.

This critical and analytical approach to learning and teaching was a new feature within Islamic educational tradition, certainly in the Western Cape where the word of the teacher had always been sacrosanct. The new approach gave students a voice and a responsibility to assess existing understandings and interpretations. It thus also changed the relationship between teacher and students and between students and religious knowledge. In this sense the college had introduced a critical dimension in the acquisition of religious knowledge and, more importantly, had seemingly rendered many categories of historical interpretation open to question. Moreover, it appeared to have widened the scope of religious enquiry into issues beyond the classical domains. These were fundamental areas of propagation for the rationalists whose primary goal was to challenge a hermeneutical framework that had dominated religious understanding and debate for centuries. Gamieldien, according to students in these classes, was the inspiration in this new approach to understanding Islam.

But thinking of Gamieldien as a radical reformer would be inaccurate. What became clear during this phase of his life as an educator was that he wanted to eliminate those aspects of Islamic belief that appeared irrational or bordered on superstition. It seemed that he strove to counter the obscurantist interpretation of the Quran and the practices of the prophet Muhammad (SAW). In this sense he wanted to reclaim rationality as a legitimate approach to religious understanding, an approach that made sense and that could be integrated into the daily lives of Muslims without it seeming to be beyond belief when measured against ordinary logic.

But he also wanted to maintain the morality that Islam through Quranic injunctions in the form of halaal (permissible) and haraam (prohibited) presented to the world. The difference between Gamieldien and the more conservative and traditionally minded religious leaders was on the question of interpretation. Whereas Gamieldien believed in evaluating interpretations that had historically been presented as indisputable facts, the traditionalists accepted these interpretations uncritically on the basis of the religious standing of the presenters. Gamieldien accepted that many verses of the Quran were in constant need of reinterpretation. For the conservative traditionalists, any such innovation (bid'a) was haraam. Thus during the fiqh classes at Usuluddin, much time was spent in debates of interpretation of Islamic law. An example of such

a discussion on the issue of the geographical boundaries for entry to Mecca, called the miqaat, for the performance of the haj is provided by one student⁴¹:

The shaykh explained that the miqaat was historically determined by the prophet Muhammad (SAW) as the points of entry into Mecca in preparation for the service of Haj (pilgrimage). If one intended to do the haj then the intention (niyah) should be made before or at these points and it was accompanied by the donning of a special covering called the clothes of ihram. The question was whether it was compulsory (wajib) to enter into the service of haj at this point. Virtually all teachers of this section of the law on haj taught that it was in fact compulsory to enter into ihram (the service of haj) and to don the clothes of ihram. The shaykh on the other hand argued that it was only compulsory for those who wished to enter into the service of haj at that point. Other travellers do not have to do this and neither do those who only intend to enter into the service of haj at a later stage. This issue caused a major furore as it clashed with traditional prior learning and with the dominant view. In reply to the objections from a large section of the students, the shaykh quoted from the legal texts saying that the clause on the donning of the clothes of ihram are **“for those who wish to enter into the service of Haj”**, and he asked students the question, **“and for those who do not wish to?”**

Such debates on issues of law were apparently very common where words and concepts needed interpretation and exposition in order to provide greater clarity and consequently to give more flexibility to the laws. On the issue of sexual sanction, for example, students were again in uproar as their perceptions of legal application were challenged. In the lecture on the punishment for fornication, the explanation on the requirements of proof was discussed. A student⁴² explained Gamieldien’s lecture:

The shaykh explained that there were two overall rulings for proving fornication, each requiring different forms of sanction. In the first instance it was when a person who was married became guilty of having sexual relations with another woman or man. Secondly,

⁴¹ Interview with I. Williams, 14 January 2010.

⁴² Interview with I. Williams, 14 January 2010.

it was when unmarried couples have been found to have had sexual relations. But it was in the proof of the allegations of these sexual offences that the problem for the state occurred. The law required as a matter of necessity from the accuser i.e. the state, to prove their case by providing four witnesses who had actually seen the sexual act to the point that they had witnessed sexual penetration. Should an accuser not have such proof then he/she may not utter an accusation even if the couple was apparently guilty. Should this be done without the required proof the state would be obliged to sanction the accuser. The ultimate aim of this law, the shaykh explained, was in effect to protect people's honour and dignity. Slander was regarded in Islam as one of the most heinous sins. Students were in uproar saying that fornicators would escape punishment. He replied that nobody who believed in Allah would think that punishment could be avoided.

It was this kind of methodology that provided space at Usuluddin for interactive learning and teaching and was for the lecturers, who were accustomed to transmission teaching, and for the traditionally passive students, whose only purpose was to absorb the 'facts' provided by the teacher, both novel, challenging and enlightening. It was also a new experience for the students to be exposed to a process of putting the myths and legends that had found their way into the religious lexicon of the believers under scrutiny and opening them up for critique and dialogue. Most of the lecturers were very apprehensive about the new role they had to play as facilitators and mediators of interpretations and beliefs that they themselves had unquestioningly accepted and about the texts that had to be re-examined and possibly subjected to reinterpretations. Similarly, many students were apprehensive about approaching certain topics or confronting sensitive areas of belief.

This educational space in its original form lasted about four years before internal differences within the controlling body, Majlisush Shura Al Islami, resulted in the suspension of the college in 1973.⁴³ The relationship between the non-ulama leadership within Shura and the Muslim Judicial Council had broken down completely over the question of final control. This issue came to a head in 1976 when the two organisations finally separated.

⁴³ Interview with Y. Abrahams 24 October 2010].

Gamieldien, who had resigned from the Muslim Judicial Council in 1976, sided with the secular leadership within Shura. The decision of the executive committee of this organisation to investigate the slaughtering methods employed at the Maitland abattoir and to pronounce on the legality of these methods led to a final split between the two bodies. It also led to the expulsion of Usuluddin College from Azzavia Mosque.

Usuluddin was then resuscitated at an alternative venue in the Cape Flats suburb of Athlone where its original format was largely retained, as was much of its structure and dynamism. Most of the educationists who had managed and administered the original college retained their positions, and many students who had attended the original school continued their education at the new premises. The course content and material generally remained the same, and Gamieldien, who was the primary initiator of the reformed Usuluddin, was again appointed as the head teacher. With the loss of support from the Muslim Judicial Council, much of the financial support was now withdrawn from the project. In spite of this the college continued for a further three years before it was evicted in 1979 from the Athlone premises by the Muslim Judicial Council who was the legal owner of the property in which the college was housed.

When the college was relocated to a newly built premises in Surrey Estate, the college resumed its work, albeit on a smaller scale. Gamieldien together with his brother Shaykh Ehsaan Gamieldien remained as the only lecturers from the original staff of 1969. The premises acquired by Majlisush Shura Al Islami in Surrey Estate gave Gamieldien greater independence to pursue a set of objectives in his quest to locate modern Rational Islam firmly as a legitimate interpretation in the post-District 6 period. A number of students who had started at the Athlone campus completed their diploma here.

The work at Usuluddin College then became the responsibility of many of those students who had graduated at the original Usuluddin College at the Azzavia Mosque or at the subsequent Athlone premises. By 1981 a number of the original management and administration officials had resigned because of the schism between the Muslim Judicial Council and Shura while others had ventured into other Shura projects. These graduates also began to teach some of the courses offered at the college, leaving Gamieldien to teach only the tawhid course, which was considered

by rationalists as fundamental for the propagation of Rational Islam. By 1985 the first of a number of students graduated, having satisfied all the requirements to be awarded diplomas in Islamic studies at the Surrey Estate campus. After many years of study and critical reflection, these newly graduated students became the new generation of teachers in the Rational tradition, securing it some longevity during the 1980s and beyond.

4.6 TRAINING FOR RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP

Another important project initiated by Gamieldien after 1984⁴⁴ and integrated into the overall teaching system was the intensive training programme for potential imams. Those students who had shown an interest in developing careers in Islamic propagation were selected to participate in a course of training that encompassed the development of skills as religious leaders. This included leading the Friday congregational service with specific emphasis on the rendition of the sermon, providing a range of community services such as marriage (nikah), burials (janazah) and family counselling, and presenting adult classes and madrassa for young children at the mosques where these potential imams might be presiding. The impact of this programme could not be overstated. While Usuluddin was indispensable in the provision of the intellectual tools that formed the foundation of students' understanding of Islam, the training programme provided the actual skills for these students to become imams at the different mosques. This programme could be said to have satisfied a community need for leaders from within the rational tradition in the townships where many of the former residents had begun to challenge the theological positions of the presiding imams.

The dispersal of the former congregants of al-Azhar Mosque in District Six into the townships of the Cape Flats had as one of its results seen the construction of many new mosques. The initial drive of other interpretive tendencies had slowly been countered in some areas by Gamieldien's followers and former students. It appeared therefore that the rationalist movement had initiated a revised strategy and had begun to train individuals who themselves wanted to become imams or teachers. Their initial education had been obtained at Usuluddin College, and this was followed by a training programme at Gamieldien's home. By 1985 some of these students began taking

⁴⁴ Interview with B. Gamieldien, 27 April 2008.

up positions of religious leadership, becoming imams at mosques in Heideveld, Manenberg, Hanover Park, Retreat, Mitchells Plain and the Bo-Kaap and even at al-Azhar Mosque in District Six when Gamieldien retired in 1992. These leaders became the new thrust of the rational project. As imams in the townships they were able to resuscitate Rational Islam amongst the former District Six residents and their families. After a period of almost 10 years, a number of mosques began reintroducing conceptual frameworks that challenged traditionalism. These imams continued to use the methodology and content they had learnt. In the tradition of their teacher, they propagated an interpretation of Islam based on the intellect (aql). The process appeared to have been fundamental in the attempts to further Rational Islam's influence and therefore Rational Islam began to recover some of its force through the teachings and propagation of Gamieldien's students. This theme will be investigated more thoroughly in the next chapter.

Usuluddin College was eventually closed in December 1987⁴⁵ following a further eviction from the Surrey Estate building. It was replaced by an informal educational programme at Heideveld Mosque where Gamieldien continued to teach for a further five years until illness prevented him from leaving his house at night. In the final years of his life he continued to teach his closest students from his house during the day until his death in 1997 at the age of 86.

4.7 INTERPRETIVE DIFFERENCES

The evangelical pursuit of other groupings, however, brought Gamieldien into direct conflict with these orientations. While many of the issues that created conflict lie outside the scope of this study, the underlying differences in the interpretation of Islamic belief and practice need to be examined. These conflicting understandings had their genesis in the history of Islamic theology and found expression in a range of diverse practices and explanations of these practices. Many of the students who had attended classes at Usuluddin and at the other centres of study, namely the schools at Rahmaneyah and at al-Azhar Mosque discussed earlier, were also religious activists in the sense that they often challenged what they considered irrational interpretations expounded in the name of Islam by many of the imams and shaykhs at mosques throughout Cape

⁴⁵ Interview with I. Williams, 14 January 2010.

Town. It is thus necessary to provide some insight into the religious environment that spawned these conflicting understandings of Islam within the Cape community. The arguments of the Usuluddin students that the irrational interpretations belittled the Creator and undermined the message that had been brought by the prophet Muhammad (SAW) and conveyed by the Quran were in essence the driving force behind their opposition. They set themselves the goal of purifying Islam by challenging dominant belief and practices. A student⁴⁶ explains one set of belief held by members of the ulama fraternity that they challenged:

We had for years been taught by imams and shaykhs that on the night of Laylatul Qadr, (called the night of power), the 27th Night of Ramadan, Allah would set out all things that were to happen in the coming year. Each individual's fate would be determined on this night. This was the night of power and Allah would also forgive those whom Allah wills. After being taught about the oneness of Allah together with His Attributes, we challenged this understanding. We said that it is not necessary for Allah to do this annually as the world follows a natural path and whatever happens in the world, whether it relates to human beings or anything else, the natural laws, also created by Allah, will prevail. **That**, we argued, represented the will of Allah and Allah's determination. Since these dominant beliefs were so ingrained in the culture of Muslims, we became suspect as heterodox believers.

This example of the kind of debate between the traditionalists and the rational thinkers often also evoked strong criticism from the dominant ulama in Cape Town. Gamieldien's followers were often labelled in condemnatory terms that placed them on the fringes of orthodoxy. It was generally only the widespread respect that even the opponents of Rational Islam had for Gamieldien that prevented greater censure.

From 1980 the Usuluddin College in Surrey Estate became the centre of rational thought and together with the Cape Town School at Rahmaneyah Primary School and the tafsir class at al-Azhar Mosque, it formed, up to approximately 1992, a formidable opponent of literalist interpretation of Islam as expounded by the other formations. Indeed, from the perspective of

⁴⁶ Interview with I. Williams, 14 January 2010.

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.

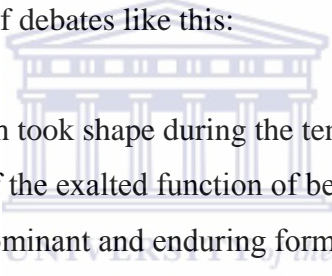
The debate of the issue of Eid-ul-Adha reflected the crucial difference between a rational interpretation of law that provided a logical explanation for religious practice and made intellectual sense as opposed to an atomistic view that failed to integrate such religious practice. Those who argued for 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 madrassa 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 Gamieldien 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 Gamieldien 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.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abdullah, M. (2001) *Shari'a and tariqah*, Delhi: Adam Publishers and Distributers.

Afifi, M.S. (1988) *Al-Mar'ah wa huququha fil-Islam* [Online], Available:
<http://www.fropper.com/post> [Accessed 24 October 2010].

African History, (n.d.) *Apartheid history in South Africa* [Online] Available:
<http://www.about.com/library/bl/blsalaws.htm> [Accessed 12 January 2010].

Ajam, M. (1986) '*The Raison D'etre of the Muslim mission primary school in Cape Town and environs from 1860-1980 with special reference to the role of Dr. A. Abdurahman in the modernisation of Islam-oriented schools*', PhD Thesis, University of Cape Town.

Al Faruqi, I. R. (1982) *Tawhid: Its implications for thought and life*, Indianapolis: American Trust Publication.

Ali, Y. (1934) *The Holy Quran, translation and commentary*, Lahore: Shaik Muhammad Ashraf Publishers.

Ansari, F.R. (1999) *Islam to the modern mind*: Paarl: Hidden Treasure Press.

Azami, M.M. (1977) *Studies in hadith methodology and literature*. Indiana: American Trust Publication.

Badari, M.A. Z. (1980) *Reforms in Egypt: A critique of Al Afghani, Abduh and Ridha*, London: Routledge.

Bak, N. (2004) *Completing your thesis-A practical guide*: Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Bassier, M. (ed.) (2003) *The companion*. Cape Town: Formset.

- Bayhaqi, A. (2008) Manâqib al-Shafi'i, vol.1 no.462, [Online], in Abdullah, A. *Saheefah, censure of kalam: A consensus of the age* [Online] Available: <http://www.saheefa.org/2008/.../censure-of-kalam-a-consensus-of-the-ages/> [Accessed 24 March 2011].
- Bukhari, A.A. (2005) al Adab al mufrad imam Bukhari: Manners in Islam, in Azmi,I.A.(ed.) al Adab al mufrad imam Bukhari, [Online] Available: <http://islamic-books.store.com> [Accessed 14 April 2011].
- Chichester, D (1994) *Religion in public education: Option for a new South Africa*, Cape Town: UCT Press.
- Choueiri, Y. (1998) *Islamic fundamentalism*. [Online] Available: www.philosophy.com/ip/rep/H007.htm [Accessed 20 November 2011].
- Dauids, A. (1980) *The mosques of the Bokaap*, Cape: Cape and Transvaal Printers.
- Dauids, A. (1985) *The history of the Tana Baru*, Cape Town: Intergrafis.
- Ebrahim, M.H. (2004) *Shaykh Ismail Hanif Edwards*, Paarl: Paarl Print.
- Effendi, A.W. (1998) *Islamic Theology* from Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, E. Craig, Routledge (Ed.), Cambridge.
- El Shamsy, A. (2008) Rethinking Taqlid in the Early Shafi'i School. *The Journal of the American Oriental Society* 128(1), pp. 1-23.
- Enayat, H. (1982) *Modern Islamic Political Thought*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Esposito, J. ed. (2009) Mustafa al Maraghi *The encyclopedia of the Islamic World* [Online] Available: <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/> (Accessed 14 October 2011).
- Fakhry, M. (2009) *Islamic Philosophy*, Oxford: Oneworld Publications.
- Farah, C.E. (1987) *Islam*, New York: Barrons.

Fay, B. (1975) *Social theory and political practice*. London: Allen and Unwin.

Field, S. (2001) *Lost communities, living memories: Remembering forced removals in Cape Town*. Cape Town: New Africa Books.

Geschier, S.M.M.A. (2007) 'So there I sit in a catch 22 situation: remembering and imagining trauma in the District Six museum', in Field S., Meyer R. and Swanson F. (eds.) *Imagining The City*, Cape Town: HSRC Press.

Gesink, I.F. (2006) 'Islamic Reformation: A History of Madrasa Reform and Legal Change in Egypt', *Comparative Education Review*. 50(3), pp. 325-345.

Gibb, H.A.R. et al, (eds.) (1979) *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Vol. 1*, Leiden: E.J. Brill.

Giroux H.A. (2001) Culture, Power and Transformation in the Work of Paulo Freire. In F. Schultz (ed.), *Sources: Notable selections in education*, 3 rd. edition, New York: McGraw Hill Dushkin.



Hafiz Ibn-e-Hazam, (2007) *Islamic Belief in the Finality of Prophethood* [Online] Available: <http://www.irshad.org/brochures/finality.php> [Accessed 2 July 2011]

Hall, M. (2009) *Proclamation 43: Studies in contemporary and historical archaeology: Defining moments: Dramatic archaeologies of the twentieth century*. Oxford: Archaeopress.

Haron, M. (1986) *Imam Abdullah Haron, Life Ideas and Impact*. Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Cape Town.

Hart, D. (1990) 'Political Manipulation of Urban Space: The Razing of District Six, Cape Town', in Jeppie, S. and Soudien, C. (eds.) *The Struggle for District Six: Past and Present*, Cape Town: Buchu Press.

Ibn Battah, (n.d.) al-Ibanah, vol. 2, No.54. [Online], In Abdullah, A. (Posted 17 February, 2008), *Saheefah, Censure of Kalam: A Consensus of the Age* [Online] Available: <http://www.saheefa.org/2008/02/17/censure-of-kalam-a-consensus-of-the-ages/> [Accessed 19 May 2011]

Isseroff, A. (2008) *Encyclopedia of the Middle East: Abul Ala Maududi*. [Online] Available: <http://mideastweb.org/Middle-East-Encycloped> [Accessed 20 November 2011]

Jameelah, M. (1975) *Islam and Modernism*, Lahore: Ripon Printing Press.

Jonathan, R.M. (2003) The Role of Schooling in Social Transformation: High Hopes and Reasonable Expectations, in Fataar A. Fuglestad, OL. Lillejord, S. and Meerkotter, D. (eds.) *Learning From Each Other: School Development and Social Transformation in South Africa*, Cape Town: Wyvern.

Kasule, O. (1998) The Islamic view of ibadat. Paper presented at the 15th International Leadership Training programme Islamabad Pakistan by Prof Dr Omar Hasan Kasule, *International Islamic University, Malaysia*, 01-31st October 1998 [Online] Available: <http://omarkasule-01.tripod.com/id328.html> [Accessed 29 May 2011]

Kedourie, E. (1966) *Afghani and Abduh: An Essay on Religious Unbelief and Political Activism in Modern Islam*, London: Frank Cass & Co.

Kemal, L. (2009) *History, Philosophy, Politics, Religion* [Online] Available: <http://kali-yuga.org> [Accessed 4 May 2011].

Khorramshahi, B. (1997) Is the Ta 'wil of the Qur'an Known Only to God? *In The Message of Thaqaalayn - Vol. 3, No.3* [Online] Available: www.quran.org.uk/articles/ieb_quran_tawil.htm

Lapidus IRA, M. (1997) 'Islamic Revival and Modernity: The Contemporary Movements and the Histories', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 40(4), pp. 444-460.

Maalik, I. (n.d.) *Al Muwatta: Book of Good Character* [Online] Available: <http://ahadith.co.uk/chapter.php?cid=97> [Accessed 22 February 2011]

MacIsaac, D. (1996) *The critical theory of Jurgen Habermas* [Online] Available: <http://www.physics.nau.edu/~danmac> [. Accessed June 21, 2011].

Maylam, P. (1995) 'Explaining the apartheid City: 20 years of South African urban Historiography', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 21(1), pp.19-38.

Mernissi, F. (1992) *Islam and Democracy, Fear of the Modern World*, Reading: Perseus Books.

Metcalf, B.D. (1982) *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900*, Princeton-Princeton University Press.

Mneimneh, H. (n.d.) *Reflections on "Ijtihad"* [Online] Available: www.ijtihadreason.org/articles [Accessed 14 April 2011].

Mohamed, Y. (1996) 'The Educational Life and Thought of Muhammad Abduh', *Muslim Education Quarterly*, 13(4), pp.18-31.

Moosa, E. (ed.), (2000) Introduction – A Study of Islamic Fundamentalism, *Revival and Reform in Islam*, Rahman, Oxford: One World Publications.

Nadvi. S.H.H. (1987) *Islamic Resurgent Movements In The Indo-Pak Subcontinent*. Durban-Academia.

Newman, D. (2002) *An Imam in Paris*, London: Saqi Books.

Patterson, S. (1953) *Colour and Culture in South Africa: A Study of the Status of the Cape Coloured People within the social structure of the Union of South Africa*. London: Routledge and Keegan.

Property in Cape Town, (2012), *What are the Cape Flats?* Available: <http://capetown-property.org.za> [Accessed 24 October 2012].

- Rahim, A. (1994) *The Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*, Delhi: Afif Printers.
- Rahman, F. (1979) *Islam*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Rahman, F. (1980) *Major themes of the Quran*, Minneapolis Bibliotheca Islamica, Inc.
- Rahman, F. (1984) *Islam and Modernity*, Chicago The University of Chicago Press.
- Rahman, F. (1979) *Prophecy in Islam: Philosophy and Orthodoxy*, Chicago Midway Reprint.
- Rahman, F. (1976) *Islamic Methodology*, Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute Press.
- Ramadan, T. (2010) *The Quest for Meaning*, London: Penguin Books.
- Razi, F.M. (1986) *Manaqib Al-Imam Al-Shafi'i*, Cairo: Ipsr Publication.
- Rosyad, R. (1995) *A Quest for True Islam*, Canberra: ANU epress.
- Sachedina A. (2004) Muslim Intellectuals and the Struggle for Democracy. *Islam and Democracy*, 6(1-2) [Online] Available: www.worlddialogue.org/content.php?id=301 [Accessed 12 September 2011].
- Sajaad, M. (2009) *Taqlid & the falsification of Islamic History* [Online], Available: www.assuffa.org [Accessed 1 January 2009].
- Sallie, A.H. (2011) *The Evolution of Islamic Legislation*, Cape Town: Imvakalelo Digital.
- Siddiqi, M. (2007) IJTIHAD–*Interpreting Islamic Principles* [Online] Available: <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml> [Accessed 29 April 2007].
- Soroush, A.K. (2000) *Reason, freedom, and democracy in Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Stanley, T. (2005) *Perspectives on World History and Current Events* [Online] Available: <http://www.pwhce.org/islamism.html> [Accessed 14 June 2011].

Thompson, J.B. (1984) *Studies in the Theories of Ideology*, Oxford: Polity Press.

Tayob, A. (1995) *Islamic Resurgence in South Africa*, Epping: Creda Press.

Tayob, A. & Dumba, Y. (2011) *Salafis in Cape Town in Search of Purity, Certainty and Social Impact* (online) Available: <http://www.academia.edu/799941/salafi> [Accessed 2 November 2012]

Tayob, A. (1999) *Islam in South Africa: Mosques, Imams and Sermons*, University Press of Florida: Gainesville.

Vadilla, U. I. (2003) *The Esoteric Deviation in Islam*, Madina: Madinah Press.

van Sicard, S. (1989) 'Muslims and Apartheid. The Theory and Practice of Muslim Resistance to Apartheid', *Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 10 (1), pp.199-222.

Wagemakers, J. (2008) Framing the "threat to Islam": al-wala' wa al-bara' in Salafi discourse, *Arab Studies Quarterly*, xxx(no.4), pp.1-22.

Waghid, Y. (1995) *Are Problems in South African Madaris Due to an Inadequate Concept of Madrassa Schooling?* Ph.D. Thesis, University of the Western Cape.

Watt, M. (1988) *Islamic Fundamentalism and Modernity*, London: Routledge.

Western, J. (1996) *Outcast in the Western Cape*, Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Wolfson, H.A. (1976) *Philosophy of the Kalam*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE