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"IT'S A BIT COOL AND AWESOME": USING LIVERPOOL'S MUSLIM HERITAGE TO HELP MUSLIM PUPILS LEARN HOW TO "TRANSLATE" THEIR FAITH IN THE LIVERPOOL OF TODAY

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ABSTRACT

Contrary to the stereotype of conflict between Christians and Muslims, St. Aidans Church of England Primary School in inner-city Liverpool is a place where, as one pupil said, "*we are all united together*," arguably a remarkable achievement for an Anglican school with about 2/3 Muslim pupils. This article is based on fieldwork conducted with Muslim pupils in St. Aidans and it combines fieldwork with theological reflection, modelling a new methodological approach. The article consists of four main sections. First, it briefly describes the context of St. Aidans. Second, it discusses the methodology I developed for my fieldwork, which uses Christian theological reflection on fieldwork insights. Third, the main section, the article reports some aspects of the fieldwork, focusing on a Religious Education (RE) lesson that I taught in St. Aidans outlining the history of Abdullah Quilliam's "Muslim Institute", which operated from 1889 to 1908 and housed the United Kingdom's first mosque. Fourth, the article reflects theologically on insights from the fieldwork. The title for this article is a quote of a Muslim pupil's reaction to learning about the existence of the Muslim Institute and it typifies the positive response and growth in confidence of their identity as Liverpudlian Muslims.

KEYWORDS

Muslim. Christian. Primary School. Abdullah Quilliam. Liverpool.

1. INTRODUCTION

The title of this article is a quote of a child attending the 5th year at St. Aidans Church of England Primary School[1]. She was describing her feelings on learning that Liverpool was the site of the United Kingdom's first mosque, something she discovered during a Religious Education (RE) lesson I taught. Whilst there has been some research into the Muslim community's schooling experience in the UK as a whole (AHMED, 2009; ALI; JONES, 2000; HEWER, 2001; SHAH, 2009) and particularly in Liverpool (ARTHUR, 2003; JONES, 1998), there have been no investigations on the attempts by Anglican schools to welcome pupils and facilitate translation of their faith into the modern context. The article addresses this lacuna, and it is divided into four main sections. First, it briefly describes the context of St. Aidans and, second, the nature of my research there, reflecting on the interface between fieldwork and theological reflection. Third, fieldwork is documented, centred on evaluation of a RE lesson which outlined the history of Liverpool's early mosque and "Muslim Institute." Finally, the article reflects theologically on insights from the fieldwork.

2. ST. AIDANS AND MY RESEARCH THERE

St. Aidans is a Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School in inner-city Liverpool. "Voluntary controlled" means it is State-funded, but the Anglican church has some influence on school management, notably in the presence of local clergy and church members on the governing body of the school; hence, the school celebrates Christian festivals. It has one class per year group, and has around 200 pupils on roll. Numbers vary slightly throughout the year, as there is a high degree of mobility amongst pupils. I have collated pertinent

[1] To preserve anonymity, no individual is named in this article. The name of the school and associated church are pseudonyms.

facts from the Raise Online reports on the school for 2010, 2011, and 2012, providing information on the school from 2008 to 2012 (Table 1).

Table 1 – Raise Online reports on the school (2008 to 2012)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals (%)					
School	58.0	58.1	62.0	65.2	72.8
National	16.6	17.0	18.5	19.2	26.2
Pupils from minority ethnic groups (%)					
School	79.7	83.9	86.3	93.3	96.6
National	23.3	24.5	25.7	26.7	27.7
Stability (%)[2]					
School	57.3	55.6	55.7	56.0	–
National	83.3	84.4	84.6	85.0	–
School deprivation indicator					
School	0.73	0.75	0.74	0.70	0.69
National	0.21	0.24	0.24	0.23	0.24

Source: www.raiseonline.org.

As indicated in Table 1, the school has a far higher than average number of children eligible for free school meals (and the total recorded is perhaps an underestimate, as staff at St. Aidans suggest not all parents claim free school meals). There is a far higher than average number of pupils from minority ethnic groups; the school population is far more mobile than the norm; and the school is in a much more deprived area than the average. Such a mobility is partly due to the presence of a local hostel for women fleeing domestic violence and partly because it is close to several facilities that house asylum seekers and refugees. Thus, many pupils both enter and leave the school within a single academic year; some within a few weeks. Over thirty nationalities are represented in St. Aidans and about 2/3 of pupils are Muslims, predominantly from Somalia and Yemen. Whilst it is unusual for a Church of England

[2] This indicates the percentage of pupils who attend the school from reception (aged 5) to 6th grade (aged 11). No figures were provided for 2012.

school to have this many Muslim pupils, as Thompson (2004) notes, Anglican schools are not an uncommon choice for Muslim parents, as their ethos supports the development of belief in God without enforcing a particular set of beliefs (DEARING, 2001; CHADWICK, 2012).

St. Aidans' 2012 Ofsted report noted one description of the school as "a light in the middle of our community," where cultural diversity is celebrated and all faiths and backgrounds are welcomed, included, and accepted. The Ofsted report describes a small school, drawing pupils from a wide variety of backgrounds and circumstances. The focus of the school lies on learning and achievement, with a strong supplementary emphasis on holistic care of pupils and their families, a fact perhaps best summarised by the school's motto, "Learning, caring and sharing together [...] And the main thing is learning." It is by no means a perfect school, and in particular pupils do not always attain national average or higher in standard assessment tests (SATs), conducted in May at the final year in primary school. However, where pupils attend school consistently from reception to year 6, they do normally make significant progress. According to the headteacher, the two main challenges the school faces are the complex needs of children and their mobility.

I was involved with St. Aidans between July 2007 and July 2012, primarily in my capacity as Curate in St. Andrews' Church, which has a long-standing and close relationship with St. Aidans. For 3 years I was vice-chair of governors and became chair in September 2010, as I commenced fieldwork in St. Aidans. I took a weekly assembly in St. Aidans from September 2007, and from September 2010 I had an office in the school, which was my base from which to conduct research. I was in the school at least 3 days a week, and often 5 days. My research was ethnographic in nature (WALFORD, 2009a) and consisted primarily in participant-observation ethnographic fieldwork, which was written up daily in a field journal (EMERSON et al., 1995; WALFORD, 2009b), as well as 31 focus groups with all pupils in school years 4 to 6 (pupils aged from 8 to 11 years) and 10 semi-structured interviews with their teachers (FETTERMAN, 1998; NESBITT, 2001, 2004; POLE; MORRISON, 2003; SWAIN, 2006). Class teachers arranged the makeup of the focus groups, and they

followed a semi-structured group interview format, each group consisting of between 2 and 4 pupils. I also taught 12 RE lessons and analysed relevant official paperwork. The findings were triangulated through further 28 focus groups, a lesson with a whole class and an additional 7 semi-structured interviews with staff.

Since I conducted fieldwork in an institution with which I already had strong ties, I had to be careful in how I positioned myself in my research. As Davis et al. (2008) note, informants will invariably attempt to "resocialise" a researcher; in my case, I had to be alert to both this possibility and also the reality that I was not unbiased in my approach to my fieldwork. I have attempted to be reflexive and self-critical in evaluating my work, avoiding "romancing the field" (COFFEY, 1999) and recognising with Donovan (1999) and Nesbitt (2004) that there is no neutral stance from which to make observations.

3. THE INTERFACE BETWEEN FIELDWORK AND THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

When I began my research I intended to use a grounded theory-based approach to analyse my results, primarily influenced by Charmaz (2006). Six months into my fieldwork, as I began to read more widely, I asked whether I should keep using a standard "*grounded theory ethnographic approach spade*" to dig through the soil at St. Aidans. I decided to use a more specifically Christian spade, developed for this particular task. Such preparation required more initial work, but in the long run it would hopefully result in fewer blisters. I had initially begun my research using a standard spade from the shed, and, now, several months into my fieldwork, I realised I needed a more bespoke tool.

In this section I will provide a few pointers as for the nature of my particular approach as a Christian minister doing fieldwork amongst Muslim pupils in an Anglican school. It has been developed to suit my own circumstances, the project I myself engaged in, my prior experience and purpose in undertaking this fieldwork. Therefore, it may not be possible for

other researchers to replicate it exactly. Nevertheless, this section should provide further detail regarding the way how a Christian theologian can engage in ethnographic fieldwork.

As Scharen and Vigen (2011) note, the boundaries between formerly discrete academic disciplines are now increasingly blurred, meaning that ethnography and theology are now crossing paths more and more; Coleman (2010) lists numerous examples. In a similar vein, Senior (2010) argues that Niebuhr's notion of revelation is in line with the discipline of narrative ethnography. My research is an example of this, as it has used an ethnographic approach, informed by grounded theory, in order to reflect theologically and practically on Muslim negotiation of the Christianity encountered in St. Aidans. I claim that this blurring of disciplinary boundaries leads to a much richer and more fully rounded study, which sheds greater light on the study object, since "theology without concrete access to how believers live can be empty; mere description of behaviors and events can be theologically blind" (SALIERS et al., 2010, p. 2). Although this blurring leads to richer research, it is also important that researchers set out clearly their aims and objectives, as well as the methodology employed, as I do below.

I will develop more precise definitions of ethnography in general, and discuss how a Christian might do fieldwork, explaining and advocating for the value it adds to the exercise of theology. Nesbitt (2004, p. 5) suggests the following definition of ethnography:

> The word "ethnography" is used here for an approach to understanding others which relies on a discipline of deep listening and close, reflective observation. Its purpose is to understand human behaviour at ever increasing depth, and to communicate this deepening understanding sensitively to others.

Thus, ethnography is a detailed study of the life experience of individuals and groups that take that experience seriously and invest time and energy in developing a rounded, holistic understanding of it. It is more than simply "hanging around" in the hope something interesting happens, more than "news reporting" and more than "what everyone does in a new situation" (WALFORD, 2009a, p. 273). Scharen and

Vigen's definition of ethnography is one I concur with and provides guidance as for the link to theology. They explain ethnography as a process of attentive study of and learning from people in particular times and places, in order to understand how they make cultural, religious, and ethical meaning, and what they can teach us about reality, truth, beauty, moral responsibility, relationships, and the divine (SCHAREN; VIGEN, 2011, p. 16). That is, a Christian engaged in fieldwork takes individual experience seriously and uses it as a window from which to discover further truth about humanity and about how human beings can relate to God (LASSITER, 2010; MCBRIDE, 2010).

What should an ethnography look like? Pole and Morrison (2003, p. 3) suggest five characteristics of ethnography, namely: a focus on a discrete location, event or setting; concern with the full range of behaviour observed; the use of different research methods (qualitative and quantitative); an emphasis on analysis that moves from description to identification of concepts and theories grounded in the data; and an emphasis on rigorous and thorough research. These are all fully compatible with a Christian approach to understanding particular situations. My research focused on St. Aidans, investigating the behaviour of all those associated with the school, both adults and children. I employed a range of methods, examining reports and other documentation, engaging in observation, participating in the school life, as well as interviewing adults and working on focus groups with children. I triangulated my research by using various approaches. An example will illustrate it: my investigation of attitudes towards food began with a simply survey amongst four classes and some observations of meal times. Then, I designed questions to elucidate my developing theory, and used these in informal interviews with staff and focus groups with children. The findings were analysed in memos. This required a return to the field, for further triangulatory observation and finally evaluatory questions to both staff and pupils, asking them to analyse the accuracy of my own theory. Thus, my research has not simply described what I have found, but also analysed the underlying behaviour, and it developed theories to explain this. I have endeavoured to be as thorough and rigorous as possible. This applies particularly to the power that comes by writing an ethnography.

Ethnographers are people of power, who must exercise their art with care. Atkinson (1992) argues that ethnographers always construct an account of what they observe, thus, indeed, they construct the reality reported. His central thesis is that, in a very real sense, the ethnographer "creates" the field where he works, by which he does not mean there are no social beings or actions independent of observation, but rather that it is only through observation by an ethnographer that a specific boundary is constructed, creating a given field of observation. The following quote summarises his position:

> Like all the textual issues concerned in this book, the metaphor and the narrative necessarily transform social worlds into comprehensible texts. They impose an "as if" quality. They simplify and encapsulate (ATKINSON, 1992, p. 14).

If he is correct in this assumption that ethnographers create not just an account of observed reality, but in a sense create reality itself, and he arguably makes a strong case, then a Christian engaged in fieldwork must think carefully about how to practise his art. Some Christian theologians might challenge Atkinson's account, arguing from a positivist viewpoint that reality exists as a discrete, pre-defined entity, and that all ethnographers can do is describing what they see. I recognise the strength of this point, and I am sympathetic to the concern it encapsulates. From a Christian perspective, a constructivist viewpoint such as that taken by Atkinson (1992) can potentially lead to a post-structuralist account of reality that conforms to the notion of "nothing outside of text" (DERRIDA, 1979), thus it denies the possibility of God existing as a real being independent of any human attempt to articulate his existence. That is, if a position such as Atkinson's is taken to extremes, one must concur with a post-structuralist understanding that denies the existence of objective truth or objective reality, a position that causes some problems for orthodox Christian theology, which is founded on the fundamental assumption of God existing as an objective independent reality.

However, it is also the case that, when writing an ethnographic account, the author must be selective, choosing which points to emphasise and which to minimise, and, therefore, which aspects of a given situation are noted and which are

ignored. In this limited sense, ethnographers simplify and capture on paper the complex fluid interaction of multiple individuals and groups, then ethnography does create a reality, or perhaps it more accurately creates an account of an individual's observations of reality. Thus, although I sympathise with the positivist viewpoint, I also recognise the strength of the constructivist case, particularly the importance of a self-reflexive approach to research that acknowledges the power a researcher has in creating an account of the reality that has been observed.

Recognising this fact requires discipline on the part of a researcher. Atkinson (1992, p. 52) recommends that the researcher should "attempt to produce disciplined accounts of the world that are coherent, methodical and sensible." In addition to this, I suggest that a Christian engaged in fieldwork must recognise that he is dealing with individuals made in the image of God, who have an intrinsic worth and, this way, must be treated with care and respect. That is, as Tribble (2011, p. 78) correctly states, Christian belief in the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ forms a theological cornerstone for the conviction that ethnographic work is, in fact, theological work. Ultimately, fieldwork may be a pastoral practice for a Christian (MOSCHELLA, 2008): since God took on flesh in Christ, human beings are important and their experiences are valuable and deserve careful and patient study.

4. LEARNING ABOUT LIVERPOOL'S MUSLIM HERITAGE

A central aspect of my fieldwork was conducting 59 focus groups with all pupils at school years 4 to 6 (pupils aged from 8 to 11 years) and 17 semi-structured interviews with school staff. One observation I made by means of these focus groups and interviews was that a significant number of Muslim pupils were uncertain about their own identity. Although a number of pupils were self-identified as Yemeni or Somali, when I asked them further it seemed that this identity was not entirely secure. A conversation with 4 girls at year 6 was especially enlightening. Out of the 4, 1 was born in Holland, but

self-identified as Somali (where her parents were born); 2 were born in the UK, but were self-identified as Yemeni; and 1 was born in Yemen and was self-identified as Yemeni. Although these 3 girls stated they were Yemeni, none of them spoke Arabic at home; all said they answered to their parents in English, even when they were addressed in Arabic. They also had mixed views on Yemen as a place, partly describing it as "*boring*", but also noting certain freedoms they enjoyed there – at least 2 of them had driven a car, even if only for a "*a few seconds*", and they knew that one of their classmates (also female) had fired a gun.

Although they were self-identified as Yemeni, and even talked positively about Yemen, I was unconvinced about how secure this Yemeni identity really was. A teacher, without any prompting on my part, made the following observation about the 3 Yemeni girls I have been discussing here:

> [They] are very into Hannah Montana this and that; they're very into our local things [...] It's not Islamic at all, about as far away from Islam as you can get – crass, American, lots of pink and fluffy, and you can get t-shirts and shoes, but they're into having all that kind of stuff, they're very western; they're children, growing up, this is their life, this is where they live, they're growing up in this community.

Teacher's comments support my own position: these girls were self-identify as Yemeni, but according to adults observing them, they just behave as any other Liverpudlian girl. They are engaged in the process of negotiating their identity, perhaps developing a "hybrid" mix of Yemeni and Liverpudlian identity, a process Dwyer (2000) identified in relation to school girls of Pakistani heritage. They may be caught between two worlds, thought of as "English" by people in Yemen and as "Yemeni" by others in England, a phenomenon identified by Seddon (2010) in relation to the Yemeni community in Eccles – similar issues are discussed by Sarroub (2005). Their behaviour may, of course, be entirely contextual. Ahmed (2007, p. 83-84) recalls being on a flight from London to Doha (Qatar), and his surprise at how all the women on the plane changed from Western clothing into an abiya as they neared Doha. The children may simply be displaying behaviour

appropriate to their context, and at home adopt behaviour more in keeping with parental expectations. Ramadan (2004, p. 127-132) notes this phenomena, suggesting Muslim pupils may develop an unhealthy "split personality," just as Lewis (2007) did.

As well as a variation in ethnic identity, I also observed confusion over ethnic and religious identity. This was especially clear in focus groups with children at year 4 (aged 8 or 9 years). A Yemeni girl described the different food available in the kitchens as "English" and "Arabic", conflating halal food with Arabic food. When I asked another English born Yemeni girl if she was allowed to go on educational visits to a church building, she stated "*I can go to church just as English people can go to a mosque*," arguably conflating religious and ethnic identity. Finally, an English non-Muslim girl, discussing the subject of food, stated that "*If you're Muslim you'd eat different food from what English people eat*," again conflating religious and ethnic identity.

These examples illustrate the process of translation that takes place over identity, as children attempt to translate their experience of home life into the school context. I observed music to be a further area in which such translation took place. When I discussed musical tastes with classes at year 6 (aged 10 or 11 years), the Muslims were divided as for what was suitable, some arguing that only nasheeds (Islamic chants) were allowed, whilst others suggested rap music was allowed, provided there was no swearing. Others were more relaxed in their personal approach, explaining that they listened to pop music in their room, although they switched to nasheeds if their parents entered it. Two Muslim girls (one Somali the other Sri Lankan) at year 5 (aged 9 or 10 years) debated the permissibility of learning how to play the guitar; the Somali girl claimed is was halal (permitted) whilst she was a child, but once she was 14 years old, it would become haram (forbidden). Her Sri Lankan colleague could not understand this, and asked her on the rationale of her position, leading the Somali girl to become quite frustrated, asking me to stop the conversation, as "*she's annoying me now*."

Muslim pupils at St. Aidans are, thus, daily engaged in the task of translating cultural and religious expectations received at home into the new context of school life. As an

attempt to facilitate this translation process, as part of my fieldwork I taught a RE lesson with children at the upper three classes of the school (years 4, 5, and 6, with children aged from 8 to 11 years), to discuss with them the Muslim heritage of the UK as a whole and Liverpool in particular. My aims in teaching this lesson were, first, to impart the relevant facts and, second, to establish a much stronger connection between Islam and the UK in the minds of both Muslim and non-Muslim pupils. Furthermore, recent Muslim activism and apologetics in favour of Muslim participation in British society advocates education for mutual respect and active participation in society, for instance, Ramadan (1999, 2001, 2004, 2009). My lesson also responded to this agenda. Finally, I hoped to rectify the ignorance amongst both the Muslim and the non-Muslim population of St. Aidans regarding their common heritage, and so to promote community cohesion.

The lesson itself began with a few questions to elicit their knowledge level regarding early contact between Islam and the UK. We discussed Offa's Dinar (a coin from an English king dated to around 773 CE, which bears the shahadah on one side), the presence of Arabic loan words in Chaucer and 17th century suspicion about the possible side-effects of drinking coffee. According to Gilliat-Ray (2010, p. 5-18), Muslim migrants brought coffee with them, and the drink proved popular, but it was also the source of anti-Islamic polemic: some writers termed it "Mahometan gruel" and feared that there was only a short step between drinking coffee and converting to Islam. This last observation was greeted with widespread mirth by each class, allowing me to remark that people today still hold misguided ideas about other religions, and warn of the dangers of ill-informed prejudice. Then, I invited pupils to guess the location of Britain's first mosque. Each class suggested some or all of: Birmingham, Cardiff, Liverpool, London, and Manchester.

Having informed the class that the correct answer was Liverpool, I then gave a brief outline of the history of Abdullah Quilliam and Liverpool's Muslim Institute. Born William Henry Quilliam, he visited Morocco, where he first learnt about Islam. He subsequently converted, changed his name, and founded a "Muslim Institute" in Liverpool, which included a mosque, as well as a boarding school for boys, a day school

for girls, a library, a reading room, a museum; it provided evening classes and an orphanage. The Institute operated from 1889 to 1908 and at its height there was the base for a community that included around 250 English converts to Islam, as well as lascars from Somalia, Yemen, and the Indian subcontinent (GEAVES, 2010).

Once I had outlined this history, I showed a few pictures of the present day dilapidated state of the buildings that used to house the Muslim Institute. Then, we engaged in written work, first some reading comprehension to ensure they had grasped the primary facts, and then three questions, first, how they felt on learning about the Muslim Institute; second, what example the Muslim Institute set for us to follow, and third, how much (if any) of this history they already knew. In the next section, I analyse the answers to these questions.

5. HOW MUCH OF THIS HISTORY DID YOU KNOW ALREADY?

I begin by analysing the answers to the final question, which was designed to assess their knowledge level concerning contact between the UK and Islam. Since children wrote their names on their paper, I could divide their answers into Muslim and non-Muslim for the purpose of this analysis.

A few Muslim children claimed some prior knowledge of the lesson, mainly related to my introductory remarks. Two claimed to know it all, one at year 4 and 1 at year 6, and 10 claimed to have some limited knowledge. Two other children claimed to know about Offa's Dinar. One child at year 5 simply wrote "*about the coins*," and one child at year 4 wrote "*coins and what the Arabic means I can read it*" (a reference to his ability to read the shahada on Offa's Dinar). I am uncertain as to whether this second answer indicates the child was able to read the Arabic once it was pointed out or whether it indicates prior knowledge about the coin itself. But either way, out of 55 respondents, 35 were Muslims, at most 14 had some knowledge on the topic before I introduced it to them, indicating there is a significant gap in St. Aidans pupils' knowledge of Muslim cultural heritage in the UK. Arguably, they are

relatively ill-equipped to engage in the process of translating their faith into their current context.

6. HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT KNOWING THAT LIVERPOOL HAD BRITAIN'S FIRST MOSQUE?

This question was designed to gauge emotional rather than cognitive responses. Young children sometimes struggle to articulate both feelings and thoughts, but generally they find it easier to describe their own feelings than articulate abstract thoughts (CHRISTENSEN; JAMES, 2008). This was not always what I had initially expected, sometimes further questions were needed in order to elucidate their reasoning. Thus, the discussion that follows analyses a combination of written answers and my own fieldnotes from the lessons.

The most common word used by children at year 4 to describe their feelings was "amazed"; one written answer summarises the expressed feeling of many: "shocked in an amazing way because it [is] present [in] Liverpool." The information was both new and surprising to everyone, whether Muslim or not, and their response was largely positive, with a few children also expressing a wish to visit the site for themselves. A few negative reactions were also expressed: a Muslim child was "Sad because it is all dirty", a reference to the current dilapidated state of the buildings, and a non-Muslim child said "I feel sorry for the poor ones", a reference to the orphans who were taken in and cared for by the Muslim Institute.

I would suggest these children exhibit shock and nascent civic pride (exemplified most clearly in the answer "excellent because I am here"), coupled with curiosity to see for themselves (the answer continues "and I am going to try and see it") and in a few individuals a moral outrage at the failure of their parents' generation to care properly for their Muslim heritage.

These responses also typify the reactions of children at years 5 and 6. Being slightly older, these children were more able articulate these feelings, as shown by the following typical responses:

> *It's a bit cool and awesome*. (Year 5 Muslim)
> *I feel proud and shocked and lucky because I live in Liverpool*. (Year 6 Muslim)
> *I feel proud and surprised*. (Year 5 non-Muslim)
> *I feel pleased that the city I live in had Britain's first mosque*. (Year 6 non-Muslim)

I note that both the shock and the civic pride were not exclusively Muslim reactions. The shock was expressed by virtually every respondent, and civic pride by many. These responses suggest that, perhaps as a result of this lesson, Muslim children had a greater sense of belonging in Liverpool, and non-Muslim children had a clearer understanding that their Muslim friends belonged in Liverpool, and thus the process of community cohesion was facilitated. Furthermore, Muslim pupils were given a good example of how Islam was translated into the context of Liverpool, so they were potentially more able to engage in the process for themselves.

The easier translation process was indicated by the fact that some Muslim children in these classes articulated not simply civic pride, but pride in their Muslim heritage and affirmation of their identity as Muslims living in Liverpool, as shown by these responses:

> *Makes me feel good, because we have a good place to pray*. (Year 5 child)
> *Happy, because I'm in Liverpool and I'm a Muslim*. (Year 5 child)
> *It makes me happy, because then if you're not a Muslim it can make you a Muslim*. (Year 5 child)
> *I feel amazing, because I am a Muslim and I learned a lot today. Thank you Tom!* (Year 6 child)

For these pupils, at least, their Muslim heritage was affirmed and connected to Liverpool, thus they understood more clearly that Muslims have a rich heritage in the UK, instead of constituting recent arrivals (ANSARI, 2004). Therefore, although they may have been relatively recent arrivals to the UK, they realised that they were by no means the first Muslims to come to the UK, and the ability to translate their faith into the contemporary context was encouraged.

What example does the Muslim Institute set for us to follow?

This question was by far the hardest for the children to engage in. This is unsurprising as it is quite abstract, requiring children to understand and articulate the ethos behind the Muslim Institute and, then, extrapolate how they might imitate these actions. The ability to engage in such abstract thought is, however, crucial to the process of translating faith into a new context, so it was important for children to start mastering the art. I attempted to get children to articulate their own understanding rather than simply spoon feed them my (or any other adult's) understanding, and this was only partially successful.

At year 4, the main discourse, amongst both Muslims and non-Muslims, concerned "respect" and "kindness". The following answers are typical:

> *Respect the Muslim and Christians and everyone else.*
> *To be kind to others = respect.*
> *Respect Muslims and Christians and all religions.*
> *We should respect. Be honest. Nice to other people.*

As well as these 2 dominant threads, there was also a strongly sounded note in 4 answers against any form of racism:

> *To respect other Muslims and to be honest. Not to be racist.*
> *To respect the other Muslims, even if we're not and there not racist and good people* [sic].
> *Be kind to everyone and don't be racist.*
> *Kind. Don't be racist.*

I would suggest two possible stimuli for these ideas. First, in my presentation about the Muslim Institute, I mentioned the fact that it was a gathering point for Muslims from many different races (namely, local converts, as well as lascars, primarily from Somali, Yemen, and the Indian sub-continent). Second, the discussion of the convert community majored on the fact that they were local Liverpudlians, so, white British people. The first two answers quoted above are explicit in their mention of "other Muslims", indicating these are the answers

of Muslim children recognising their religion is not limited by racial boundaries. The remaining two, which are in essence identical, are from a Muslim and a non-Muslim, and they are rather generic. I did not intend to provide a message against racism, so I would regard these feelings as an additional benefit of the lesson, rather than as fulfilment of the central aim. Nevertheless, it is an important indication that, as noted above, some children at least closely associate religion with race. I took these answers as indicating that these children were starting to grasp some rudimentary principles of translation. There is still much for them to learn, but the foundations seem to be being laid.

The year 5 class showed a high degree of competence in translation, elucidating underlying principles which they then applied to their own context. My analysis of their answers suggests that the children are articulating their ability to perform 6 quite sophisticated tasks, listed below with a typical response in parentheses:

a) Distinguishing between Islam and race ("*if you are Muslim or not you don't have to be born in Somalia or in other Muslim countries*").
b) Distinguishing between religion and local identity ("*if you're a Muslim or not you're still Liverpoolian* [sic]").
c) Making Islam and Islamic practices accessible to the general public ("*don't have to be a Muslim to go in the mosque. You don't have to be a Muslim if you were born in a Muslim place*").
d) Distinguishing between religion and ability ("*It doesn't matter from what religion you are, you can still achieve things*").
e) Promoting learning and new experiences ("*they give children better education*").
f) Encouraging indiscriminate care of all ("*help people's education whether Muslim or not. Just because you're another religion you can still be a sqouser* [sic]").

Out of these, the first 3 are almost exclusively Muslim concerns, whilst the last 2 were common to both Muslims and non-Muslims. All are part of Tariq Ramadan's wider agenda for encouraging European Muslims to respect others and to engage constructively with the wider society of which

they are already a part (RAMADAN, 2004). I take these answers as indicating pupils who are able to successfully translate their faith into their current context; they have been critically faithful both to the teachings of Islam and their 21st century context.

The process of translation was much less successful with the class at year 6. Out of the 17 pupils who were present during the lesson, 5 pupils did not even answer the question. The remaining 12 answers were variations of these 3 generic comments: "*to be educated, to learn, to teach, to read*"; "*they did it for everyone*"; and "they want us to learn and introduced us to technology." In contrast with those at year 5, these year 6 pupils do not seem to be engaging in the process of translation to any meaningful degree, although I would argue that the answers from year 6 reflected adults' input rather than pupils' views. This is reflected in the difference between the groups and also in the way how the lesson was structured. For the year 5 lesson, I was left to teach the pupils by myself. The teacher sat in the back of the room, marking another work. If his input was needed to maintain discipline, then he gave it, but otherwise he allowed me to teach, and so I was able to encourage the children to think for themselves. Furthermore, the children were sitting in pairs, so they were unable to engage in much "group thinking." Finally, this group was very articulated, liked engaging with problems and challenges, and expressed their own opinions. By contrast, the year 6 pupils sat in small groups around tables. Second, the teacher and learning support assistant each sat with a group, and provided input to their discussion. Third, as a group, they were somewhat apathetic and disinclined to engage in critical thinking. Their apathy is reflected in those who failed to write any answer, and adults' current influence was reflected in the fact that the 3 answers noted above were reproduced almost verbatim amongst all 12 answers. My fieldnotes on the lesson recorded that the discussion at the tables was entirely led by the adults present, with only minimal children participation.

This much more unthinking, literalist, conditioned response from year 6 pupils indicates the importance of individual wish to actively participate in society. Translation cannot be provided to you: it is always a personal choice (GEST,

2010). If individuals do not think critically about their own position within society and the need to reach out beyond their immediate comfort zone, then we will remain isolated. Although a school can work hard to facilitate developing identity as a Muslim, if there is no desire to practise respect, to distinguish between race and religion, to show indiscriminate kindness, then we cannot live in a truly pluralistic society (RAMADAN, 2012).

7. THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

This is not a theological journal, but I conclude the article with a few brief theological reflections, in order to fully illustrate the methodology employed. At its heart, fieldwork assumes the intrinsic value of all pupils as individuals created in the image of God (JENSEN, 2009). Furthermore, the Christian doctrine of incarnation, which values the concrete and the particular (O'COLLINS, 2002) is a reminder of the importance of a firm grasp of history and of enabling individuals to feel comfortable and welcome in the particular setting where they find themselves. Two other themes emerged from fieldwork: the importance of translation and the importance of education for dealing with differences and respecting the others. Both have a long pedigree in Christian theology.

Protestant Christianity has always favoured translation, and this is subject of regular discussion and debate (PORTER, 2009). Translation does not just have to be linguistic (BELLOS, 2011; GROSMAN, 2010), but it also includes developing appropriate strategies for "speaking Christian," i.e. living out Christian faith in the contemporary world (HAUERWAS, 2011). In this sense, i.e. translating faith into the contemporary context, translation is also favoured by some Islamic scholars (HABIB, 2010; MOOSA, 2006). Muslim pupils in St. Aidans are engaged in the process of developing their ability as translators, and the role of the school should be to facilitate, not hinder that process.

An important part of this process is education for respect. This is more than mere toleration, it consists of a deliberate active search for and welcome of those who are markedly

different from oneself (SMITH; CARVILL, 2000). It involves leaving one's comfort zone behind (AMJAD-ALI, 2009) and seeking to be present and engaged with those who are unfamiliar (CHURCH OF ENGLAND'S MISSION AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS COUNCIL, 2005; ACC, 2008). Also, this is not a uniquely Christian theme (KEARNEY; TAYLOR, 2011; RAMADAN, 2004, 2010), but Christians are called to be authentic regarding their faith (COOLING, 2012) and facilitate this process; those who train teachers and clergy should recognise the importance of equipping such professionals to engage with those who are different and to respect differences as they are encountered.

This is not to argue for a conflation of religions. Christians should be confident in their own identity as Christians, and they do not need to compromise this in order to welcome those from other faiths. The example of the Negus welcoming some of the first Muslims to Ethiopia is a helpful paradigm used by Muslim scholars, including Hussain (2003); Ramadan (2007) and Seddon (2011). St. Aidans is a good place to equip children to engage in the process of translating their faith into the contemporary context. The example of the lesson focused on Abdullah Quilliam is one of many taught in the school that equips pupils to: 1. distinguish between religion and race; 2. distinguish between religion and local identity; 3. distinguish between religion and ability; 4. promote learning and new experiences; and 5. encourage indiscriminate care of all. These values are important for forming identity as a Liverpudlian Muslim. Furthermore, since it has a majority of Muslim pupils, St. Aidans also works hard to make Islam and Islamic practices accessible to all those involved in the school. This may be through the headteacher taking an assembly after Ramadan in which pupils who have fasted describe the experience; or having a uniform headscarf and providing halal school meals, to give two simple examples. In St. Aidans, being a Muslim is not controversial or unusual, but rather an accepted norm. Muslims born in Liverpool, educated in Liverpudlian schools, are growing up as Liverpudlian citizens. It is the duty of all those involved in education to help them in this task as best as we can.

Tom Wilson

"É UM POUCO LEGAL E FANTÁSTICO": USANDO A HERANÇA MUÇULMANA DE LIVERPOOL PARA AJUDAR ALUNOS MUÇULMANOS A "TRADUZIR" SUA FÉ NA LIVERPOOL DE HOJE

RESUMO

Ao contrário dos estereótipos de conflito entre cristãos e muçulmanos, a escola primária St. Aidans Church of England, no interior de Liverpool, é um lugar onde como um aluno disse: "estamos todos unidos juntos" – sem dúvida um feito notável para uma escola anglicana com cerca de 2/3 dos seus alunos de fé muçulmana. Este artigo é baseado no trabalho de campo realizado com alunos muçulmanos na escola de St. Aidans e combina o trabalho de campo com a reflexão teológica, modelando uma nova abordagem metodológica. O artigo consiste em quatro seções principais. Primeiro, descreve resumidamente o contexto de St. Aidans. Segundo, discute a metodologia desenvolvida para o meu trabalho de campo, que articula a reflexão teológica cristã na relação com as percepções do trabalho de campo. Na terceira parte do artigo, a seção principal, são relatados alguns aspectos do trabalho de campo, com foco em uma aula de Educação Religiosa (RE) ministrada em St. Aidans, delineando a história do "Instituto muçulmano" de Abdullah Quilliam, que operava entre 1889 e 1908 e abrigou a primeira mesquita do Reino Unido. Quarto, o artigo reflete teologicamente percepções do trabalho de campo. O título deste artigo é uma citação de reação de um aluno muçulmano ao saber da existência do Instituto muçulmano e tipifica a resposta positiva e de crescimento na confiança de sua identidade como um muçulmano morador de Liverpool.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Muçulmano. Cristão. Escola primária. Abdullah Quilliam. Liverpool.

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