Hospitality and Translation

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*An Exploration of How Muslim
Pupils Translate their Faith
in the Context of an Anglican
Primary School*

By

Tom Wilson

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PREFACE

The place of Muslims in the 'West' is still being defined, and Muslims and schools are a perennial hot topic in Britain. Sadly, the focus is all too often on the problems, not the successes. This book critically examines the negotiating strategies employed by Muslim pupils in a Voluntary Controlled Anglican Primary School, arguing that the majority of these pupils manage to achieve a positive educational experience. The twin foci of the book are the two metaphors of translation, which refers to the different negotiating strategies employed by Muslim pupils and hospitality, which refers primarily to the response of the school. Drawing on both ethnographic and theological resources, the study contrasts the 'dynamic equivalence' stance of Tariq Ramadan and the more 'formal equivalence' approach of the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) with fieldwork observations from a particular Anglican primary school.

The experience of Muslims in Anglican primary schools has not yet been investigated in detail, and the purpose and role of such schools is subject to continual scrutiny. This book therefore addresses two areas of current scholarly debate, namely the nature and shape of Christian education in the context of a secular and pluralist society, and appropriate Christian responses to pupils and parents of another faith in an Anglican school setting.

The book begins by elucidating the context of the study, and explaining the methodological approach, which draws on both ethnographic methodologies (notably Grounded Theory) and theological reflection. This chapter includes a discussion of the ethics of the study. The nature and purpose of Christian education in an Anglican school such as St Aidan's is then discussed, together with sustained theological reflection on Christian hospitality in a school context. British Muslim identity is then examined, in particular Islamic views on education and appropriate negotiating strategies for life in a Christian majority context. Strategies for translating Islam into the twenty-first century British context are then explored, focusing on Tariq Ramadan's dynamic equivalence approach and the MCB's formal equivalence stance. These two theoretical Muslim negotiating strategies are then contrasted with fieldwork

observations, and the study concludes with key observations and recommendations on Anglican hospitality in a school context.

The key finding of this research was that the majority of Muslim pupils in St Aidan's adopted a dynamic equivalence negotiating strategy. Several recommendations flow from this: that Anglican schools and their staff are encouraged to be confident in their Christian identity; that Christian teachers should be confident of the contribution their faith can make both in education and in hospitality, and that those who train teachers and clergy for work in Anglican schools where the majority of pupils are Muslim must educate them to engage positively with difference, equipping them to also take a dynamic equivalence stance. I also recommend Anglican schools welcome all those who avail themselves of the schools' services.

It would not have been possible for me to write this book without the support and help of many individuals and institutions, and I would like to thank them for their generosity. I am grateful to the Spalding Trust for their generous grants, and both Liverpool and Gloucester Diocese for allowing me the time to study. My doctoral supervisors, Professor Ron Geaves, Professor John Sullivan and Dr Wendy Bignold have all provided invaluable support, guidance, and challenge. The school community whose life I studied were welcoming and generous in sharing about themselves, and I am very grateful to every individual who took time to talk with me and share about their lives, often in a very personal way. My family and friends have been gracious in allowing me time to think and read and write. It has been a real privilege to study the life of St Aidan's in such depth, and I am sure I have gained far more than I was able to give. I hope that this book will, in some small way, enable Anglican schools to become more hospitable places.

CHAPTER ONE

ENCOUNTERS WITHIN ST AIDAN'S

Muslim children in an Anglican school face the constant challenge of negotiating how to live out the faith they have learnt at home in the very different school context where they spend many hours each day. Their teachers and the other staff who provide their education and care face an equally challenging task as they act as 'hosts' to these very welcome guests. This study reflects critically on the negotiation that takes place between these two on-going tasks of translating faith into everyday life as observed through two years of fieldwork in an Anglican primary school where the majority of pupils were of Muslim heritage.[1] The central argument is that although the translation strategies employed by individual pupils varied and the hospitality of St Aidan's was by no means perfect, nevertheless the negotiation was cooperative in the main and the vast majority of pupils there were being educated for a realistic pluralism and were well equipped for life in twenty-first century Liverpool.[2]

Before defining the terms and methodology in detail, I will begin by outlining some critical incidents that provided the stimulus for my work. As a Church of England vicar who was vice-chair and then chair of governors, I frequently interacted with parents, staff and pupils at St Aidan's School. These encounters, together with my own experience of the school's hospitality, became the primary stimuli for my PhD thesis, on which this book is based. In particular I have been fascinated by the way in

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[1] Although I do not use the term 'Muslim heritage child' much during the study as a whole, I have used it here to indicate that the term 'Muslim,' which is used extensively throughout the study in reference to the subjects of the study, has been chosen primarily for convenience. When I describe a child as 'Muslim' I am not making a value judgment about their level of religious devotion or piety, but am simply using a label they apply to themselves. 'Muslim heritage' may be a more accurate term, allowing for the range of possible expressions of Islam, but it is too cumbersome to use throughout the book.

[2] The name of both the school and church are pseudonyms, and no individual, apart from myself, is named in this study.

which pupils and parents from a Muslim background have engaged positively with Christianity as they have encountered it in the school, and also to an extent in the associated local Anglican Church, St Andrew's (where I served as curate). The school was host to a diverse community, and this necessitated a great deal of translation. This process of hospitality and translation are explored at some depth through this study. In this introduction I will discuss three particularly striking incidents in some detail as they give a flavour of the hospitality and translation I observed in St Aidan's. They are the contrast between assemblies and church services; the discussion regarding *halal* food; and parental reaction to an end of term service.

For five years (2007-2012), I took a weekly assembly in St Aidan's. It was always on a Christian topic. Sometimes the assembly was thematic, tackling forgiveness or friendship; at other times it covered the church season, such as Harvest, Christmas, Epiphany, or Easter. Whatever the type of assembly it always finished with a prayer, which the children were invited to join in with. The prayer was introduced in the following way: first I invited the children to close their eyes to think about the topic of the assembly. After a minute or so, I told them, 'Now I'm going to pray. If you agree with the prayer, say "Amen" at the end.' The prayer then generally followed the 'Sorry, thank you, please' format, in which I said 'Sorry' to God for our failures, thanked him for his forgiveness, and asked for his help please. This format was not inflexible, but was usual. Regular consultation with pupils indicated that they understood, accepted and followed this pattern. The rationale was that it allowed pupils the freedom to choose whether or not to participate in the prayers. At least two-thirds of the pupils were Muslims, and yet the volume of the 'Amen' at the end of most assemblies indicated that many of them did agree with a Christian minister's prayer. Why is this? Does it indicate support for all three Abrahamic faiths or a particular engagement with myself as a Christian minister?

At Harvest, and sometimes at Christmas, the assembly was taken in St Andrew's Church (which is just across the road from St Aidan's School, around 3 or 4 minutes' walk). Personally, I saw little difference between the assemblies in the school and those in the church. Those in the church tend to be slightly longer, including the singing of one or two songs, normally chosen and taught by a member of St Aidan's School staff. What was striking about the different locations was the number of children who attend each. Whilst all pupils attend the assemblies, a much smaller

number attend the church gatherings, as many within the Muslim community regard attending a church for worship as *haram* (forbidden). It was not always clear to me on what basis this choice was made, as it seemed sometimes to be more on the basis of personal choice rather than a carefully thought through decision. Thus on one memorable occasion, a number of Muslim year six girls attended a Harvest assembly in church, and were so struck by what they saw and heard that they organised a fundraising event in the school to respond to the needs of poor children in Uganda. This is one example of the negotiation of Christianity that will be explored in more detail in the study.

A second striking issue is that of *halal* (permitted) food. School food is always a complex and difficult topic, subject to careful policy making and regulation. There are a number of factors that mean this is particularly true of St Aidan's School. The Muslim pupils required *halal* food. But given the demographic of the area, which includes a large number of white working class, some of whom are potentially xenophobic, together with the fact that St Aidan's is a Church of England school, the governing body were reluctant for the kitchen to be designated *halal*. There were a number of reasons for this decision. One was a desire to avoid the possibility of any racist abuse. It was feared that if the kitchen became completely *halal*, the signal this would send to the local community was that St Aidan's was becoming a 'Muslim school,' and that this might encounter a negative response in the form of racist attacks or abuse. Secondly, the governing body were uncertain that a Church of England foundation school should take such a step. These hesitations were counterbalanced by a strong desire to be welcoming and appropriate hosts. Hence the decision was made to serve *halal* food, but not to have a fully *halal* kitchen. This discussion regarding *halal* food raised another issue that this study will investigate, namely what is an appropriate framework for a theology of welcome and hospitality? How should a Christian foundation school welcome and accommodate the needs of parents and pupils of other faiths or no faith?

The third striking encounter arose at an end of term assembly. This was attended by the parents of the year six pupils, who were leaving the school at the end of term. It was held within the school, and was largely devised and carried out by the year six pupils themselves. I was asked to say a few closing words and pray for those attending. I used Deuteronomy 31:8-9 ('Be strong and brave. The Lord himself will go before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forget you. Don't be afraid and don't worry') to reassure all those leaving school that year that God would

always be with them, and then prayed a closing prayer of blessing. This
was the normal Christian blessing. What was particularly striking was that
a number of Muslim parents thanked me for praying for their children,
which is surprising given an overtly Christian prayer ought technically to
be *haram* to a practising Muslim. This raises the issue of doctrinal versus
lived religion. Although each major religion has a set doctrinal framework,
is this actually adhered to in practice? What do people really believe and
how does this impact their interaction with other religions?

    The aim of this study is to demonstrate how a Christian school can
remain authentically Christian, display all the virtues of a hospitable
Christian family and at the same time welcome, include and genuinely
care for Muslim pupils. The strategy adopted was to take a 'real life'
approach and examine how Muslim pupils negotiate the Christianity they
encounter in a Church of England Voluntary Controlled primary school.
To this end, I spent two years conducting fieldwork in the school before
documenting and recording my findings. This chapter introduces the
research as a whole, and the rest of the study falls broadly into two
sections. The first section outlines the context of the study, the method
adopted in the research and my understanding of Anglican schools in
general and St Aidan's in particular. The second section then elucidates
my observations of how Muslims negotiated the Christianity they
encountered, initially outlining theoretical strategies before contrasting
these with the observed reality. The book then concludes with a discussion
of how Muslim pupils negotiated a welcome in St Aidan's and what this
has to teach us about the makeup and conduct of Anglican schools which
serve a multi-faith community. The chapters are structured as follows:

    2. The context of the study.
    This chapter establishes the context of the study in four ways. First I
argue against Huntington's model of a clash of civilisations, and explain
how cooperation is the dominant paradigm in St Aidan's. Secondly, I
establish the context of the school, explaining why this school in particular
was a suitable one to study. Thirdly I discuss the context of Muslims in the
UK in general and Liverpool in particular, concentrating on Somali and
Yemeni Muslims, who together constitute the majority of Muslim pupils
within St Aidan's. Finally I set out the academic context of my work.

    3. Methodology
    This chapter sets out the research method used, with concrete examples
as illustrations throughout. First, I set out the nature of my involvement
with the school, before outlining three advantages and three challenges

stemming from my position as vicar and chair of governors. Second I outline the methodology adopted, including discussing the interface between religious studies, theology and ethnography and introducing the two representative Muslim translation strategies which have facilitated my analysis: that of the scholar Tariq Ramadan and the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB). Thirdly I turn to the ethical issues raised by my research, focusing on issues of power, research with children and informed consent. Finally I make a few comments regarding my personal experience of the research process.

4. Anglican Schools: 'Jewels in the Ecclesiastical Crown'

In this chapter I set out the role and function of St Aidan's as an Anglican voluntary controlled school. I discuss two main areas. First, I argue for the value of faith schools. Secondly, I examine the distinctive features of St Aidan's as a Christian school, utilising the twin metaphors of hospitality and translation.

5. St Aidan's as an Anglican voluntary controlled school

The chapter focuses initially on school leadership. First I discuss two guiding doctrines (the Trinitarian *imago Dei* and the incarnation) and two Christian corporate images (of the body and the family). Secondly I elucidate the character of St Aidan's Christian head teacher, and reflect on my role as a Christian chair of governors. Finally I discuss how Christians should operate in a multi-faith context, examining varying Christian attitudes to other religions and proposals for a Christian multiculturalism.

6. Muslim negotiating strategies

Having examined the nature of the 'host' in chapters two to five, I then turn to the translation strategies the 'guests' might adopt. This chapter is largely theoretical. First, I examine Muslim identity, including a discussion of religiously motivated behaviour and the distinction between doctrinal and lived religion. Secondly I set out Muslim aspirations regarding education. Thirdly, I give details of how Muslims ask to be treated in a Christian context, starting with the experience of some of the first converts to Islam in Abyssinia. Fourthly, I outline the contrast between two key translation strategies: the 'dynamic equivalence' stance taken by Tariq Ramadan and the more 'formal equivalence' approach of the MCB. Finally, I discuss negotiating strategies in a school context.

7. A first look at Muslim negotiation: Areas of explicit contrast

For pragmatic reasons, the fieldwork is analysed into two chapters. This chapter concentrates on areas which are explicitly commented upon

by both Tariq Ramadan and the MCB, and focuses on five areas: religious education; the creative curriculum; food; clothing; and Muslim religious observance. I contrast the recommendations of Ramadan and the MCB with my fieldwork observations, arguing that in St Aidan's I have observed more evidence of Ramadan's dynamic equivalence stance than of the literal equivalence approach of the MCB.

8. A second look at Muslim negotiation: Areas of implicit contrast

The chapter begins by examining the distinction between confessional and cultural celebration of events of religious significance and then discusses two main areas: Christian religious observance and collective worship. The comparison with Ramadan's writing becomes less explicit, as these are not subjects he has commented on specifically. However I draw inferences from his writing, contrasting these with the explicit statements of the MCB, and comparing them with the observed reality of my fieldwork in St Aidan's. I report evidence of both dynamic equivalence and literal equivalence attitudes amongst pupils I have engaged with.

9. Negotiating a Welcome

This concluding chapter engages in theological reflection as to how St Aidan's can, as a Christian school, best facilitate the negotiation of Christianity by Muslim pupils. In this chapter I draw together the threads of the previous chapters and elucidate how Muslim pupils negotiate the Christianity they encounter in St Aidan's. After highlighting some of the limitations of the study, I discuss Anglican hospitality in a school context, review the main arguments and key findings, and finally outline recommendations for how a school such as St Aidan's can serve as a model for a multicultural society.

This book is very much a product of my particular circumstances. It is a Christian minister's account of and theological reflection on fieldwork in an Anglican primary school where the majority of pupils are Muslims. It is written to contribute to the ongoing discussion of the role of the Anglican Church in a post-Christian, multicultural society, with a specific emphasis on the care of Muslim children. We live in an age where we need to break down, not build up, the walls that divide us, and this book contributes to breaking down the barrier that exists between Christians and Muslims.

CHAPTER TWO

CONFLICT OR COOPERATION?
THE CONTEXT OF THIS STUDY

'We have no choice but to learn more about each other if we intend to protect our shared values' (Jahanbegloo 2012, 134).

This study elucidates the negotiating strategies employed by the Muslim pupils attending St Aidan's Church of England Primary School. One primary motivation for the research was the desire to learn about and from others that is encapsulated in the quote above. The pupils who are the focus of this study originate from a wide variety of backgrounds and sometimes only attended the school for a very short period of time. During my fieldwork in the school, I observed a small amount of conflictual negotiation, but cooperative negotiation was the predominant paradigm. This chapter builds on this observation to establish the context of the study in four ways. First, I argue against Huntington's model of a clash of civilisations, and explain how cooperation is the dominant paradigm in St Aidan's. Secondly, I establish the context of the school and its suitability for this research. Thirdly, I discuss the context of the Muslim presence in the UK in general and Liverpool in particular. Finally I set out the position of my study within current academic research, and explain why I chose Tariq Ramadan and the Muslim Council of Britain to facilitate the fieldwork analysis.

2.1 A Clash of Civilisations or Cooperation between People?

This first section elucidates the context of St Aidan's as one of cooperation rather than conflict. It is uncontroversial to suggest that there has been a heightened interest in Islam over the past few years, and it is probably equally uncontroversial to state that the cause of this interest has been a perception of an inevitable conflict between 'the West' and 'Islam', typified by the attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York in

September 2001 and the London bombings of July 2005, as well as a fear of a 'Muslim tide' engulfing Europe (Saunders 2012). Although there is a perception of conflict, I propose, together with Ramadan (2004, 4-5; 2010b, 46-47), that whilst there are still issues to be overcome, the vast majority of Muslims who live in the UK do so peacefully and harmoniously with their neighbours. Successive governments have been keen to foster such good relations. To give two examples: *Faith in the System* (DCSF 2007) indicates the importance of all schools in promoting cooperation between different communities. The Department for Communities and Local Government has recommended the development of suitable curricula to further the study of Islamic sciences in secondary schools (DCLG 2010). But given media perceptions to the contrary, how can I claim that cooperation, not conflict, is the dominant model?

One argument for conflict is set out in Huntington's (1996) thesis of a clash of civilisations. The core of his argument is that the world can be divided up into seven or eight key civilisations (namely Sinic, (that is Chinese), Japanese, Hindu, Islamic, Orthodox, Western, Latin American, and possibly African) and that these will inevitably come into conflict with each other. Whilst I agree with those more nuanced critics of Huntington, such as Betts (2010) and Perry (2002), who suggest that his argument is not as deterministic or simplistic as many have suggested, I also concur with Marranci (2004) in arguing that even if Huntington has been misinterpreted, nevertheless, the notion of an inevitable clash of civilisations has taken root in the psyche of many Westerners, and so as Carey (2005, 9) states we face 'an urgent need to tear down walls of separation and the myths that give rise to conflict.'

Ramadan (2004, 211) accurately observes that 'in the West, there are many shared challenges, first among them being education.' If Muslims and Christians are to coexist peacefully, they need activities to share, rather than simply common concerns to talk about. What better common activity could there be than bringing up children to be people of faith in a society that marginalises and dismisses religious faith? This is a key concern for both Tariq Ramadan and the Muslim Council of Britain, thus they provide suitable theoretical perspectives for this analysis.

A school such as St Aidan's is well placed to help Muslim children develop their own identity and learn how to negotiate the complex world in which they live, and this is best done through individuals of different perspectives working together for the common goal of equipping children

for life in twenty-first century Liverpool. Contrary to Huntington's thesis and popular notions of Islam as an 'invading' force to be fought against, I observed St Aidan's to be a place of cooperation, not of conflict. How this was accomplished is analysed in detail in later chapters, but the context of the school itself needs to be considered first.

2.2 The School Context

This section introduces St Aidan's School, explaining why it was particularly relevant to this research, utilising the external perspective of a 2012 Ofsted report. Extensive referencing is avoided in this section, to preserve the anonymity of the school. I begin with the introduction to the report:

> The school is smaller in size than most other primary schools. … The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus and those with a statement of special educational needs, is also well above average. The school serves a culturally diverse community and most pupils are from minority-ethnic backgrounds, with 38 different home languages currently represented in school. … A considerably higher than average proportion of pupils join or leave the school at times other than the usual transition points. Some of these pupils are newly arrived in the country and some have not previously attended school.

The overall assessment of the school in this report was that it was a good school with outstanding features, an assessment which matched the school's self-evaluation, and maintained the grading from the 2009 inspection. The staff and pupils were both praised:

> Pupils' behaviour is exemplary and they show extremely positive attitudes to learning. They feel very safe in school. They show consideration for others, with older pupils often acting as buddies to younger ones, enhancing the school's family ethos. … Good teaching contributes well to pupils' good achievement. A range of carefully planned strategies to support effective learning are implemented well and consistently across the school (2012 Ofsted report).

In agreement with the inspectors, I have observed behaviour and care of pupils to be one of, if not the, strongest aspect of the school. From what I have seen, the care and attention provided to individual pupils within the school is truly remarkable, and a key factor in ensuring all are able to enjoy and achieve. This judgement was supported by an informal audit

carried out by Ofsted inspectors in May 2011. They judged the school to be working to an overall 'outstanding' standard, and highlighted the care of pupils as an item to be praised particularly. In a subsequent chapter, I will explore the extent to which this holistic care is due to the Christian foundation of the school and place it within the context of hospitality theology. A few statistics will add further orientating detail to the picture of the school.

I have collated pertinent facts from the Raise Online reports for the school for 2010, 2011 and 2012, giving information on the school for the years 2008 to 2012:

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
% of 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
% of 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 (the number of children who remain in the school from Reception (age 4) till Year 6 (aged 11). No figures were given for 2012).					
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

As the above table indicates, the school has a far higher than average number of children eligible for free school meals (and the total recorded above may well be an under-estimate, as staff at St Aidan's 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.

This brief sketch describes a school that is centred on learning, and also creates a welcoming and supportive environment within which children can flourish. The 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 (with approximately 200 pupils on roll in September 2011), drawing pupils from a wide variety of backgrounds and circumstances. The focus of the school is 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 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 SATs. But where pupils are in school consistently from Reception to Year 6, they do normally make significant progress. The two main challenges the school faces are the complex needs of the children and their mobility.

One particular area of need is that of language. In October 2010, 73 per cent of pupils had English as an additional language (EAL), and spoke 29 first languages (including English). Of the EAL pupils, 23 per cent were Arabic speaking (predominantly from the Yemen) and 22 per cent were from Somalia. In September 2011 the figure was 71 per cent of pupils had EAL, with 31 first languages, including 35 per cent Arabic speaking and 34 per cent Somali speakers. Thus the two main groups represented in the school are Yemeni and Somali, and EAL is one of the significant challenges faced by the staff. The school also has a rigorous programme for identifying other special education needs, including dyslexia, working on 'reading recovery' (a nationally recognised programme focused on boosting those with a reading age below that expected of them) and providing good boundaries to assist in meeting the complex behavioural and social needs that many of the pupils also have.

The second challenge is that of pupil mobility. The head teacher did some rough calculations regarding the number of children who had passed through a particular cohort from the time it was constituted to October 4th 2011. His figures were:

Year group	R	1	2	3	4	5	6
Children through the cohort	6	4	10	22	25	16	10

Thus the reception class (R in the chart above) have had six children leave since the cohort was formed in nursery in the previous year. The highest mobility is in the year 3 and 4 classes, who have had twenty-two and twenty-five children enter and leave their cohort since it was constituted in the reception class (the nursery is only a recent addition to the school). This further exemplifies the incredibly high mobility of children associated with the school.

Further detail to this general picture is provided in my analysis of figures from the 'migration report' for 1st September 2009 to 9th September 2010. A large number of pupils left in the 'Junior/Primary to Secondary Phase Transfer', that is, year six pupils leaving to go to secondary school. Apart from this, there were thirty-four who left school, in a school population of around one hundred and eighty. Two left because of behaviour related issues. Eight left because they were moving with their mothers (a women's refuge is close to the school, and so it is quite common for pupils to attend the school for a few weeks before moving on as they are relocated as a family to a new safe location), and a further nine left because they had relocated elsewhere in the UK for family reasons. Four emigrated overseas, one to Nigeria and a family of three to the US. All were Muslim families. Similarly, eight children moved within the UK for asylum/refugee reasons. It is fairly common practice for the UK Border Agency to move asylum seekers and refugees around the country, and so this cannot be in any way linked to the school.

This leaves three pupils, all of whom left to be home schooled. The three pupils reflect two families. One family was an ultra-conservative Muslim family. The father had particularly strong views; his son was not to be allowed to hear any music, be involved in any kind of dance or movement or draw anything that is alive. This proved to be impractical for participation in the National Curriculum, and so he was withdrawn to be home schooled. The other family was ultra-conservative Christian. The parents, especially the mother, were felt by the school to be particularly difficult to cope with, and she regularly came to school with problems or complaints. Parental uncertainty about the school mounted up, culminating when one of their sons brought home an Eid card he had made in school. The parents felt this was incompatible with their Christian faith, and so they decided to withdraw their children for home schooling. These two decisions reflect the fact that although the school is welcoming and tries to accommodate the wishes of all who come, these are not always met, both for Christians and for Muslim parents.

This is a snapshot of a single year within the life of the school, but I suggest this year was a typical one, at least in terms of pupil mobility. The migration report for the academic year 2010/2011 shows similar mobility. There were twenty-seven new arrivals during the year, and twenty-six who left, of whom nine were connected with the local hostel, and left within a few weeks (some on the day of arrival). Six other pupils emigrated; one was permanently excluded for behavioural reasons and the remaining ten moved within the UK. No pupils were removed for religious reasons. In the academic year 2011/2012 there were forty-four new arrivals and thirty-seven who left, of whom fifteen left the country, four were connected with the hostel and the rest moved within the country.

The above discussion has indicated the high turnover of pupils throughout the school, indicating the difficulty teachers face in establishing routines for their classes, thus providing a further barrier to learning. I have indicated the two largest Muslim groups in the school, namely Yemeni and Somali, but these were not the only Muslims in St Aidan's. There were also Muslims from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Sierra Leone and Turkey, meaning that a variety of interpretations of Islam were represented within the school.

St Aidan's is therefore a place of constant negotiation. As the examples of the pupils who were withdrawn for home schooling show, the Christianity found in St Aidan's is not always successfully negotiated, although these were exceptions that proved the rule. Having given an overview of the school, I turn next to the presence of Muslims in Liverpool.

2.3 Muslims in Liverpool and in the UK

This section first briefly addresses the situation of Muslims in the UK as a whole before focusing on the Somali and Yemeni communities in Liverpool. I concur with Gest (2010) that the term 'European Muslim' is of limited value, as the diversity within European Islam is too great to be adequately described as a single group. On this point Górak-Sosnowska (2011) stresses the distinctive nature of Islam within Eastern Europe, as well as outlining the different possible relationships between Europe and Islam. Although I initially describe the status of 'British Muslims' my study is concentrated on the experience of Muslims in Liverpool, which I would argue is distinct from that of, say, Muslims in Bradford, as

described by Lewis (2007), since as Lewis (2012, 40) notes, 'no one is a Muslim-in-general.'

According to the 2011 Census, there are 2.7 million Muslims in the UK, constituting 4.8 per cent of the total population.[1] The figure for Liverpool is slightly lower: 15, 209 people or 3.3 per cent. They are not a homogeneous group, but a diverse mix of nationalities and ages, with widely varying outlooks on life (the 2011 Census records 4 per cent of the population of Liverpool in the broad category 'Middle East and Asia' and 1.9 per cent from Africa, categories that will encompass Somalia and the Yemen).[2] This diverse range of people do have at least one thing in common: as Glaser (2000, 26) correctly observes, the vast majority of British Muslims are mainly concerned with the challenges of day-to-day life, and wish to live in harmony with their neighbours. Life is not always easy for the Muslim communities, many of whom face pressures in relation to poor quality, overcrowded housing, relatively high unemployment, low educational achievement, poor health, racial and religious harassment, all of which have been well documented (Gilliat-Ray 2010, 121-129; Nielsen 2004, 40-61; Suleiman 2009).

The first Muslim contact with the UK was probably in the eighth century. The British Museum holds a coin made for King Offa in 774 CE with the *shahada* (Muslim declaration of faith) inscribed on it. This indicates trade and thus earlier interaction of some sort (Gilliat-Ray 2010). Contact was sporadic, and there was no significant Muslim population for many centuries. There is some uncertainty as to exactly when and where groups settled initially. Baxter (2006) notes the presence of small numbers of Yemeni and Bengali Muslims in the UK since the 1880s, while Mortimer (2005, 13) suggests that 'South Shields can boast the oldest Muslim community in the UK, its first members arriving as long ago as 1860.' Geaves (2010a) notes Abdullah Quilliam as founder of the Liverpool Muslim Institute and British Muslim Institution in September 1887, two years before a mosque was opened in Woking. Liverpool has thus been host to Muslim communities for over one hundred and twenty years.

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[1] http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census/key-statistics-for-local-authorities-in-england-and-wales/rpt-religion.html#tab-conclusions (accessed 14th December 2012)

[2] Data tables downloaded from http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-reference-tables.html?newquery=*&newoffset=25&pageSize=25&edition=tcm%3A77-286262 (accessed 14th December 2012).

2.3.1 The Somali and Yemeni communities in Liverpool

Whatever the precise sequence of events, by the late nineteenth century, Somali and Yemeni lascars (sailors) were to be found in Liverpool, London, Cardiff and Tyneside (Halliday 2010, 17-57). Initially the larger communities were in Cardiff, South Shields and the East End of London, although the Yemeni community in Liverpool was not insignificant (Halliday 2010, 50-57). The populations were fairly transient and quite isolated from the surrounding community, and fluctuated in size depending on the state of the global economy. Thus for example, during the First World War, numbers of Yemeni and Somali lascars increased as the majority of British sailors were on naval vessels, leaving merchant ships short of crews. Ansari (2004, 41) states that within 48 hours of war being declared, eight thousand British merchant seamen had joined the armed forces and a further nine thousand enemy seamen serving on British ships had lost their jobs. This vacuum was filled primarily by lascars. But in the 1930s, during the Depression era, numbers dropped as demand for shipping also dropped.

The total Muslim population in Britain remained relatively small until the 1950s, when successive waves of immigration, especially from the Indian subcontinent, greatly increased the presence of Muslims in the UK, a development traced by Baxter (2006). These new arrivals did not spread evenly throughout the UK: Garbaye (2003, 301) estimates that 44.6% of all ethnic minority migrants live in Greater London, and a further 36.8% live in Central and Northern England, in Birmingham, Bradford, Leeds, Manchester and Leicester. It is notable that Liverpool is not included in his list.

This does not mean Liverpool had no Muslim community from the 1950s onwards, simply that the numbers remained very small. Halliday (2010, 54-57) documents how Liverpool became an important centre for the Yemeni community throughout the mid-twentieth century. As demand for Yemeni sailors decreased, those who wished to stay in the UK gravitated initially towards industrial areas, especially Birmingham and Sheffield, but even there employment was not always guaranteed. There was a notable trend towards settlement in Liverpool, as migrants established themselves as shopkeepers serving both the local Yemeni population and also the wider community in Liverpool. Thus by the 1990s, Liverpool's Yemeni community was flourishing, with an estimated 3 500 members (Ansari 2004, 156). The link with the earlier seafaring

community was limited, but nevertheless it could be argued there has been a continuous Yemeni presence in Liverpool for over one hundred years.[3] As with other migrant communities, initially men were over represented in the Yemeni population. Indeed Ansari (2004, 157) suggests that the Yemeni population was more transitory than the South Asian Muslim population. Nevertheless those who gravitated towards Liverpool did tend to become more settled, marry and begin to raise families.

The experience of the Somali community in Liverpool is somewhat different from that of the Yemeni population. A Foundation for Civil Society Report (Stokes 2000, 3) details one estimate that there were perhaps 500 Somali seamen in Liverpool in the 1950s, but that the Somali population had increased to 5000 by the year 2000, primarily asylum seekers. This flight from a chaotic home situation began with resistance to the regime of Siyad Barre in the 1980s and has continued to the present day, as both Somalia and Somaliland are chaotic nation states (if they can even be described as states at all). Most of the Somalis who manage to reach the UK come from more middle class or professional backgrounds; the vast majority of Somali refugees are found in huge refugee camps in Kenya, Ethiopia and the Yemen (Ansari 2004, 160-162).

The history of the region is the subject of numerous studies, and will not be treated at length here.[4] The basic shape of the region's problems comes from failure to prepare adequately for independence, especially the failure to plan for the integration of the former Italian and British colonies, and issues of tribalism and radical Islam (see Lewis 2002). Modern Somalia has no real government (although the situation is slowly stabilising), and children in particular are at significant ongoing risk. The education system has largely collapsed, (Abdi 1998; Jhazbhay 2008; Lindley 2008), and a report by Amnesty International (AI 2011) suggests children are at significant risk of capture, forced employment as child

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[3] Work on recording oral history amongst the Yemeni community in Liverpool, carried out by Liverpool Museum in conjunction with Professor Geaves of Liverpool Hope University, indicates that the history of the seafaring community is present in the consciousness of later migrants to the city.

[4] The standard texts for a western audience are Lewis (1993; 1998; 2002), although voices critical of Lewis' earlier work are found in Ahmed (1995). The situation is constantly changing, and recent articles include Halim (1996); Menkhaus (2007); and Stevenson (2010). IRIN news is perhaps the best source of regular updates (www.irinnews.org). They have a RSS feed for Yemen and Somalia, which I followed regularly throughout my research.

soldiers or prostitutes, or even death. The low quality of life in Somalia means that a vast number of the Somali population are refugees and so migration overseas is a very common phenomenon. Lewis (2002, 300) estimates a million people, about a sixth of the total population. In the UK, the largest Somali population is found in Tower Hamlets in London, but there are also significant communities in Manchester, Birmingham and Sheffield. The wider Somali diaspora has spread as far as Germany, Norway and Sweden in Europe, and even to Canada. As well as these diverse places, Liverpool has also become a centre of the Somali diaspora. Arthur (2003, 255) describes the Liverpool context as follows:

> There are no reliable statistics on the present-day size of the Liverpool Somali community. Estimates range widely: from 3000 to 5000 individuals, living in some 300 to 600 households. Even in the absence of exact figures it is clear that the proportion of young people in the community is very high: an unpublished 1991 survey puts this at 42% in the 0 to 19 year age group.

The Somali experience in the UK has been a difficult one. ICAR (2007) detailed a number of challenges the refugee community faces, including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety disorders.[5] Of particular significance is that although there are high incidents of need, take-up of support services is relatively low. Other problems include very low employment rates, poor housing, with large families crammed into inadequate small inner-city houses and poor relationships with the wider community, with high incidents of racial abuse and harassment (Aden, Rivers et al. 2007, Olden 1999). Of particular relevance to this study is the Somali struggle with education, not least because pupils may arrive in the UK after the start of compulsory schooling, and find themselves in a class with children who are the same age as them, but who are educationally much more experienced, a phenomenon I witnessed a number of times at St Aidan's (Ali and Jones 2000, Kahin 1997).

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[5] The following paragraph is based on this report. The ICAR report quotes the 2001 census as recording 43,515 Somalis in the UK, with 78% (33,831) living in London. Other cities and regions with notable Somali populations include 1,306 Somalis in Sheffield, 872 in Leicester, 819 in Birmingham, 788 in Cardiff and 678 in Liverpool. It does note that other estimates put the figures as much higher. Emerson (2011, 109) suggests a figure of over one hundred thousand Somalis in the UK in 2009.

There is no reason to suppose that the experience of the Somali community associated with St Aidan's is any different from the general picture outlined in the ICAR report. Parents, especially mothers, who speak little or no English, struggle to engage with the school authorities. This difficulty is intensified by expectations as to how Somali women will behave, in particular the understanding that a Somali woman will not converse or associate with unrelated males, a point that will be explored in greater detail in a subsequent chapter. Children, especially recent arrivals to the UK with little previous experience of schooling, find settling in to school life difficult (Ali and Jones 2000, 11-12; Olden 1999, 218-219). Overall, the picture is of a community under enormous pressure, where individuals have multiple, complex needs and providing even a basic education consitutes a real challenge.

The picture is, however, not an entirely negative one. Ansari (2004, 275) details a comparison between Somali and Bangladeshi women in London, which found that the Somalis were more able to attain financial independence from their husbands than the Bangladeshis, whether this was older women working as hospital cleaners or factory workers, or younger women developing their own careers. I have not engaged with the experience of females apart from pupils in St Aidan's, and so cannot comment on the accuracy of this observation in relation to the specific situation in Liverpool. Nevertheless I take Ansari's observation to indicate that the experience of the Somali community associated with St Aidan's is not necessarily entirely negative.

2.3.2 The process of settling in and acquiring an education

Whilst there have been many positive experiences of life in the UK, it is also true that the early experience of the Somali and Yemeni communities in the UK was a somewhat negative one. Although many were able to find work, there were also periods of unemployment and racial tension, typified by the riots in Liverpool, South Shields and Cardiff in 1919, which targeted Yemeni lascars in particular (Ansari 2004, 96). Ansari suggests a mix of motivating factors for the disturbances, identifying racism and fear of unemployment as the two key factors. The challenge of educating children only became relevant in later years, as numbers of Muslims in the UK increased.

Nevertheless, the challenge was a major one, as 'Education represents for British Muslims a major area of struggle for equality of opportunity

and the assertion of a distinct identity' (Ansari 2004, 298). The history of this struggle has been well documented, and so I will not repeat all the details here (Ansari 2004, 298-339; Hewer 2001; Meer 2007; Parker-Jenkins 2002). Suffice to say the Muslim community faced a number of key challenges, both in superficial policy, such as permission to wear appropriate clothing or provision of *halal* food, and also in more substantive ideology behind general education policy, in particular the provision of a Euro-centric curriculum that assumed all those educated in the UK would wish to assimilate into a common 'British' mould (however 'British' is defined). The purpose of this study is not to retell the history of this struggle to date, but rather to elucidate how negotiations related to this struggle are carried out in a particular local context. The next stage in preparing the ground for this discussion is to situate this present study in the wider academic context.

2.4 The Academic Context

This section places this research within its academic context. First, a study that has a similar methodological approach is noted and secondly, the lacuna this study begins to fill is elucidated through a survey of relevant literature, including a publication by the Muslim Council of Britain. Thirdly, points of contact with Tariq Ramadan's writing are raised for more detailed exploration in later chapters.

Berglund's 2010 study of Islamic religious education at three schools in Sweden has a similar method to my own, although the subject matter is distinct. She adopted an ethnographic approach focussing on aspects of particular relevance, rather than 'doing an ethnography' which would study every detailed aspect of the participants' lives. Likewise I have used tools from both ethnography and theology in examining Muslim negotiation of the Christianity encountered in St Aidan's.

To date there has been very little academic study of the experience of Somali and Yemeni pupils in Christian schools. In the American context, Sarroub (2005) has carried out ethnographic fieldwork with Yemeni girls attending state schools. The focus of her research was on identity formation, asking whether it was possible for students to remain Yemeni while becoming American. She found that pupils had dynamic identities, which shifted with the context (whether home, school, or in the presence of Muslim peers), although expectations of Yemeni culture remained dominant in all settings. Identity formation is not a direct concern of this

study, but my observations suggest that Sarroub is correct in her finding that their parent culture remains a dominant force in the life of young people. In my fieldwork, one related example I have observed is the switch in language usage: some EAL pupils will often use their mother tongue in informal contexts such as the school yard, whilst talking in English in a formal classroom context.

In the UK, there have been studies on the experience of Muslim young people in general, but little work focused specifically on the Yemen and Somalia. One general study is Sughra Ahmed's fieldwork with young Muslims in Leicestershire, which led to the report *Seen and Not Heard* (Ahmed 2009). The section dealing with education is of some relevance to my study. The key recommendations, which my own research would also support, are: that Muslim heritage and achievement be incorporated in the curriculum; that direct intervention focused on assisting Muslim boys achieve greater academic success be put in place; that schools become 'safe and neutral places for local communities to come together and interact with each other'; and that older Muslims be given opportunities to speak to younger Muslims. These are some of the strategies that could be used to further facilitate active participation by Muslims in modern British society.

There has been no shortage of guidance specifically for Muslims in state schools. Individuals such as Coles or organisations such as the Muslim Council of Britain have also published recommendations on how Muslims should be treated in schools (Coles 2008; MCB 2007). Coles responds specifically to the now defunct *Every Child Matters* agenda, while the MCB recommendations are more generic. Both of these, and many others like them, remain at a general level. I utilise the MCB guidance to provide a theoretical perspective for how Muslims might expect to be treated in a school context, but their recommendations differ from my research in that they present a religious ideal rather than an ethnographic observation.

The MCB guidelines are to be commended as they have been produced to help Muslims articulate the importance of their faith to their daily life and to tackle Islamophobia, a real and dangerous phenomenon (documented lucidly in Allen 2010. Bigelow 2008 examines the issues in relation to Somali adolescents in US schools). As subsequent chapters will argue, however, at times the demands are also unrealistic for a Christian foundation primary school, in particular the expectation that *salat* prayers

can be organised on-site, or that school holidays can be scheduled around the two Eids, or that RE will be predominantly about Islam. There are other areas where I have observed discord between MCB aspiration and reality in St Aidan's, notably in PE lessons and creative arts. The MCB guidance requests single-gender swimming (and other PE lessons), and suggests Muslims will be reluctant to participate in drama, art and music lessons. Yet this is not the situation observed in St Aidan's; as noted above the only pupil to adhere to this strict interpretation of Islamic teaching was withdrawn to be home schooled. The MCB guidance thus differs in places from the reality experienced, differences that are explored below. This conflict between the expectations encapsulated in the MCB guidance and the norms of an Anglican school are at the heart of this study. The analysis interacts mainly with the guidance document for schools, *Towards Greater Understanding* (MCB 2007), but I also refer to other MCB publications.

Examples from general studies have been noted above. Where specific ethnic groups are targeted, they do not examine the Yemen or Somalia but tend to be from the Indian sub-continent, for example Shah (2009). She investigated identity formation in state secondary schools, observing that being Muslim is not simply a religious identity marker; some of her respondents self-identified as Muslim without being overly religious. As in Shah's findings, the majority of pupils in St Aidan's who described themselves as Muslims are not especially pious (Ramadan (2010b, 46) estimates that over two-thirds of those who identify as Muslims would fall into this category). This may not be specific to the UK: Östberg (2000), who documents work with Pakistani children in Norway, suggested a dichotomy between strong piety and virtual absence of religious observance, something that I suggest is equally true in the UK context.

Muslim schools, whether private or state-funded, have been investigated in some detail. Lawson (2005) discusses how they are led, Hewer (2001); Meer (2007); and Parker-Jenkins (2002) all describe their history, and Castelli and Trevathan (2005) investigate the challenges they face. These schools are an entirely separate topic from my study, since although the majority of pupils in St Aidan's are Muslim, the school was not founded as a Muslim religious school.

There has been some specific work on the Somali diaspora. Langellier (2010) investigated how a Somali woman in Maine constructed her identity, and Sadouni (2009) researched the experience of Somali refugees in Johannesburg. Langellier's work provides some important insights. She

argues that although they are under pressure to assimilate to their host culture, Somalis refuse to do so. Instead they cling to a nationalistic position, constructing their identity on the basis of tribal membership and adherence to Islam. Of these two, Islam is dominant, providing 'the single most stable source of strength and public communal identity.' I concur with Langellier, noting that, for the Somali pupils at St Aidan's, Islam is as much a cultural boundary marker as source of personal piety. Sadouni investigated adult experiences, but her central claim regarding the importance of Islam to constructing Somali identity also applies to this research. Similarly, Jacobson (1997, 1998) investigated the experiences of Pakistani youth, and noted how they used their religious identity as a source of certainty to construct clear boundaries within which they could build a sense of personal identity (See also Archer (2003); Michael (2011)). All the Somali children I spoke with equated being Muslim with being Somali, to the extent that some blurred the distinction between racial and religious identity, a phenomenon I will discuss subsequently.

A significant portion of research on Somalis in the UK has concentrated on women, examining their experience of healthcare and the issues surrounding female circumcision (Bulman and McCourt 2002; Cameron and Anderson 1998; Johnsdotter 2003). None of these studies have any direct bearing on my research. All my attempts at establishing contact with Somali adults linked to St Aidan's were largely unsuccessful; hence my research focused on the experience of the children within the school itself. This was partly for pragmatic reasons related to my difficulty in establishing suitable relationships with appropriate adults, and partly because it ensured my research remained clearly focused on the experiences of the children.

A few studies have investigated the experiences of Somalis in secondary schools. Collet (2007) reports on work based in secondary schools in Canada, Alitolppa-Niitamo (2002) on a study in Helsinki, Jones (1998) on research in the UK and Arthur (2003) is specific to Liverpool. Collet's interviews with Somalis attending state secondary schools confirm my observation that Somali identity is intrinsically linked to Islam; further clarifying the potential problem for Somali pupils in St Aidan's, as they negotiate their own identity formation and encounters with an alien religion (namely Christianity). Alitolppa-Niitamo explicates the dilemma faced by Somali parents in Helsinki: parents simultaneously want their children to maintain their Somali heritage and culture and to learn how to live in their new host country. Children thus become the