

The Shroud and Islam

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The BSTS is totally independent and receives no support other than from our subscribers and contributors. Perhaps that is as it should be but there is much more we could do. For the last few years we have had an annual gathering courtesy of a branch of Islam, the Ahmadiyya community. They are reviled, literally, by both Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims because of their willingness to condemn certain parts of the Koran and, in particular, the call to Jihad with its promise of eternal luxury and sexual bliss that motivates many of the suicide bombers and stabbers. "Love for All and Hatred for None" is their mantra.

As I have discovered, it is taboo to even mention the Koran's seductive call to Jihad within our own politically correct and sensitive culture for fear of betraying prejudice. Neither will you hear this belief condemned from a Sunni or Shi'ite leader. Why? Well, one being that there is no equivalent among them to a figure like the Pope who may speak for all Catholics or the Archbishops who can speak for other Christian denominations.

The Ahmadiyya community do have a leader and he is brave enough to condemn such things, but he pays a heavy price in terms of his own security as, by extension, all Ahmadiyyas do. You may remember the Glaswegian newsagent murdered a few years ago in his own shop, for example. Security at the Jalsa Salana, their annual gathering, is equivalent to anything you will find at an airport and the perimeter of the multi-acre site near Alton in Hampshire is guarded every 100 feet or so feet by volunteers.



8Hazrat Mirza Masroor Amed

It remains the only place, on British soil anyway, I may easily meet up with such Shroud luminaries as Bruno Barberis and Emmanuella Marinelli from Italy, Peter Wadhams, from Cambridge, Hugh Duncan from France, Barrie Schwartz from USA, and members of our own team like Brenda and Stuart Benton from Staffordshire. Likewise, Pam Moon who provides the centrepiece which comprises sections of her impressive Shroud Exhibit. The Ahmadiyyas pay all our travel and accommodation expenses for the whole 3 to 4-day period of the Jalsa.



9L-R Bruno Barberis, Hugh Farey, David Rolfe, Brenda Benton, Emanuella Marinelli and Stuart Benton at the Jalsa Salana 2019.

What is in this for the Ahmadiyya Community? Well, they are a naturally hospitable and friendly people as their mantra suggests but they also share a very specific interest in the Shroud. Although it is complex, essentially, mainstream Islam rejects any notion that Jesus, himself, was crucified. Allah spirited him away to heaven and another look-alike was substituted to be crucified. The Ahmadiyya belief is that Jesus *was* crucified but survived thanks, in part, to special ointments and was “revived” in the tomb. These ointments, along with natural bodily secretions, transferred themselves onto his Shroud and created the image. He then escaped Palestine and eventually arrived and lived out His life in India. (<http://bitly.ws/8UMS>).

Debates between we Christian Shroudie and the Islamic Ahmadiyyas are very cordial and non-threatening as befits two such peace-loving traditions. However, that is not the only reason we are invited. The Jalsas are, as much as anything else, exercises in mass conversion to Ahmadiyyism around the world. They run extremely sophisticated TV networks in almost every known language and broadcast 24 hours a day with the Jalsas held in most western countries being highlights. Cameras are everywhere. The presence of English participants at the Jalsas act as “endorsements” for many of their potential recruits in the third world.

Like Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses, young Ahmadiyya men are expected to spend time travelling and proselytising. In the UK this is not so easy, and much encouragement is required. To do so Hazrat Mirza Masroor Amed is on record as telling them that each hard-won English convert they make translates into around forty in the third world simply by association. Likewise, the presence of we Shroudie and the other political and public personages and dignitaries who are invited contribute to this “endorsement”. There is nothing wrong with this, of course, as long as everyone realises that there is no such thing as a totally free lunch. It is good PR. I only look forward to the day when our Society can afford to return such hospitality and hold our own events.