

ISLAM IN ENGLISH LAW

**Foundation Lecture: The Temple Church
Thursday 7 February 2008, 6.00 – 7.30pm**

**‘Civil and Religious Law in England: a Religious
Perspective’**

**A Lecture By
THE MOST REV. AND RT HON. THE ARCHBISHOP OF
CANTERBURY, DR ROWAN WILLIAMS
Chairman: The Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales,
The Rt Hon. The Lord Phillips of Worth Matravers**

*Organized by the Temple Church and the Centre for Islamic and Middle Eastern Law
(School of Oriental and African Studies)*

**Admission by ticket (free of charge):
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CPD approved (BSB): 1.5 hours

On Thursday 7 February, **The Archbishop of Canterbury** will launch a series of six discussions on the topic of *Islam In English Law*, with a lecture chaired by **The Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales**. The aim of the series is to provide an opportunity to discuss, honestly, openly and courteously, some of the most difficult legal, religious and ethical questions of our time, and to confront the vital questions to which the systems of English Law and Shari'a Law give rise. Following the Archbishop's Foundation Lecture, Temple Church will roll out a series of public discussions in which both sides of this deeply contested debate are aired.

English Law has been shaped in large part by the principles and history of Christian culture, but acknowledges no duty of obedience to any revelation, scripture or doctrine ascribed to God. In current practice, English Law attends closely to the rights and freedoms of the individual and protects them against curtailment from the state or from corporate power.

It is the prime duty of all traditions of Shari'a Law to interpret and apply, loyally and obediently, the teachings imparted by Allah to the Prophet Mohammad. Shari'a law has tended to protect and strengthen the community in which, it is intended, the individual can then live a devout, good and ordered life.

These two systems of law differ in principle and in application. At times they have seemed to be in direct conflict. The European Court of Human Rights in 2001, in relation to the European Convention on Human Rights, declared that Shari'a law "clearly diverges from Convention values, particularly with regard to its criminal law and criminal procedure, its rules on the legal status of women and the way it intervenes in all spheres of private and public life in accordance with religious precepts."

There can be no better place for the discussion of *Islam in English Law* than Temple Church, the Church in the heart of legal London which, since 1608, has been run by the judges and barristers of Inner and Middle Temple. Temple Church was built in 1185 by the Knights Templar, who were charged with the protection of pilgrims during the Crusades and were vital to the viability of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. It is time for this Church, which has in past centuries represented the gulf between Christendom and Islam, to become instead a bridge across that gulf.

Islam in English Law is part of the 2008 Temple Festival, held to mark the 400th anniversary of King James I granting the Inns freehold of their land. After centuries of being under Church then Crown ownership, Inner and Middle Temples gained independence by Royal Charter on 13 August 1608. The Charter made two provisos: that the two Inns, in perpetuity, should maintain the Temple Church and its Master, and should serve "for the accommodation and education of the students and practitioners of laws of the realm."

- **FOUNDATION LECTURE, THURSDAY 7 FEBRUARY 2008, 6.00 p.m.:**
Civil and Religious Law in England: A Religious Perspective – A Lecture by The Archbishop of Canterbury. Chair: The Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales.
- **DISCUSSION 1: Shari'a and Secular Democracy: Are current Traditions of Islamic Law compatible with the European Convention on Human Rights?**
- **DISCUSSION 2: Family Law, Minorities and legal Pluralism: Should English Law give more Recognition to Islamic Law?**
- **DISCUSSION 3: Human Rights in an Age of Terrorism: "The Rules of the Game have changed." Have they?**
- **DISCUSSION 4: Free Speech or Incitement to Religious Hatred: Where should we draw the Line?**
- **DISCUSSION 5: Can Moral or Religious Obligation ever justify the use of Force inadmissible under Secular Law?**