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Ireland and Islam; James O’Kinealy and Wahhabism in India

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to explore James O’Kinealy’s (1838-1903) contribution to scholarship around Islamic movements in India, while a functionary of the Indian Civil Service (ICS) from 1862 to 1899. It seeks to recover from obscurity a little-known personage and his involvement in significant episodes in the history of Islam and British colonialism in India. O’Kinealy’s situatedness as an Irish Catholic in the ICS, and how this influenced his approach to Islam and his study of Wahhabism, will be closely examined. Serving the same imperial system in India that prevailed in Ireland presents a complex and entangled history. O’Kinealy’s background, it will be argued, influenced his activities as a senior official in the colonial administration. His writings (and translations), directed towards preserving the status quo against the fear of Muslim revolt, evidence a nuanced perspective when set against that of his ‘Anglicist’ contemporaries. Juxtaposing his approach and attitudes against that of the influential colonialist and scholar, W.W. Hunter (d.1900), will highlight his discreet approach and serve to foreground the intricate nature of this history. Though his publications are few, O’Kinealy’s work is unique, and represents one of the earliest engagements with the Wahhabi movement in the English language.

Keywords: O’Kinealy; Ireland; Islam; India; Wahhabi Ireland and Islam; James O’Kinealy and Wahhabism in India

Introduction

From the mid-1850s, young men from all corners of Ireland swelled the ranks of the Indian Civil Service (ICS) seeking promising careers and fortune. Though Ireland was itself a victim

of the 'imperial state',¹ it was engaged in a multifaceted paradigm of relationships with the colonizer. Many Irish people, both Protestant and Catholic (from northern and southern Ireland), were significant beneficiaries of British colonialism, especially when it came to India.² Actualizing their support for 'British imperialist endeavours',³ many occupied senior positions within the colonial administration.⁴ Some developed a variety of scholarly skills and became closely connected to the local religious milieu. They contributed notably to the production of knowledge as religions became an important focal point for research. This was not of course a neutral endeavour. Knowledge was generated around religions to be utilized in what Nicholas Dirks has described as the 'coding of India',⁵ towards more effective control and command. Still, attention to the study of religions became (in some instances) a lifelong interest, a scholarly endeavour, pursued in service to the apparatus of power by sometimes extremely able scholar/administrators.⁶ In many instances, this work centred around translating texts and making important documents on custom, law and religions available to various levels of the administrative apparatus on the sub-continent. From the 1770s, an increasing number of government officials were mastering the languages of India: Persian, Arabic,⁷ classical Sanskrit and local languages. Creating dictionaries, readers, class books and guides, Bernard Cohn argues, was a project designed to convert 'Indian forms of knowledge into European objects'.⁸ That many scholars so engaged had 'Orientalist' leanings and were not promoting a more blatant 'Anglicist' approach is worthy of note. By the mid-

¹ Bayly, 'Ireland, India and the Empire', 388.

² Ibid.; Crosbie, *Irish Imperial Networks*.

³ Scharbrodt, 'From Irish Exceptionalism?', 153

⁴ Cook, *Imperial Affinities*.

⁵ Dirks, 'Introduction', xv.

⁶ Mansoor, *Story of Irish Orientalism*; Inden, *Imagining India*; Foley, 'Dining Alone in Rawalpindi?'.

⁷ Languages commonly used by Indian Muslims during the period in question.

⁸ Cohn, *Colonialism*, 21.

1830s, the dominant influence in the ICS argument favoured the use of English over that of Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian, as the language of education in India,⁹ though there was still, in the latter half of the century, a debate ongoing around language and the education of Muslims.

The purpose of this article is to explore James O’Kinealy’s (1838–1903) now forgotten contribution to scholarship around Islamic movements in India during his career as a functionary of the ICS. My intention is to recover from obscurity a fuller measure of the interplay between a prominent, but largely unstudied, figure in the ICS at a seminal moment in colonial history. The article will examine O’Kinealy’s situatedness as an Irish Catholic in the ICS, and how this influenced his work as an agent of empire. Many young Irishmen in this period regarded service in colonial India as a legitimate path to social progress. The lack of opportunity at home, the very real ‘life and death’ challenges of surviving in famine-ridden Ireland, contemporary attitudes around race – all surely contributed to inspiring a great number of Irish volunteers for service in India. Though many of these officials and soldiers were well versed in the experience of discrimination and second-class citizenship, their families having lived under British rule for generations, they saw no problem in visiting a similar arrangement on others. If many had nationalist leanings and may have harboured a desire for Home Rule or some arrangement free of British over-lordship at home, they were still able to resolve that contradiction to become loyal servants of the Crown, integral to the apparatus ruling over vast numbers of non-white peoples. Still, as Barry Crosbie¹⁰ implies, the motivations of this Irish cadre of colonizers were not necessarily the same as those of others in the ICS drawn from across the British Isles. Juxtaposing O’Kinealy’s work against that of his contemporary and colleague, the influential W.W. Hunter, will point up aspects of

⁹ Kopf, ‘Hermeneutics versus History’.

¹⁰ Crosbie, ‘Curious Case’.

this discreet approach. Overall, O’Kinealy’s activities present as a complex of conflicting positions and orientations.

Various other contextual dimensions will be considered, including how O’Kinealy purposefully engaged with Islamic jurisprudence and doctrine and sought to influence both government and Islamic leadership attitudes to Islamic reform movements. O’Kinealy, adept in both Persian and Arabic, focussed much of his attention on what he considered was a rising Indian expression of Wahhabism, ‘arguably the most influential revivalist movement in the world of Islam in the last three centuries’.¹¹ Founded in the Arabian Peninsula in the eighteenth century, Wahhabism has become the subject of much interest in contemporary scholarship.¹² O’Kinealy’s contribution presents fascinating insights into early understandings and responses to Islamic reform movements in India and argues for a direct link with Wahhabi thought and doctrine. His work represents one of the earliest engagements with Wahhabism in the English language and continues to be cited in contemporary scholarship. O’Kinealy’s translation from the Arabic of an early Wahhabi tract, detailing the movement’s history and doctrines, is regarded as a significant contribution; his activities have not attracted an academic focus until now.

This is not an attempt at an in-depth review of Irish involvement in empire and the subtleties of ‘Irish Orientalism’ (as per the title of Joseph Lennon’s excellent monograph). This has previously been expertly and cogently addressed.¹³ Still, it is important to be aware of the complicated context of ‘colonized Ireland’ as background while attempting to recover and assess the scholarly work of an Irish Catholic official in the ICS during the Raj. In

¹¹ Mishra, ‘Islam in India’, 13.

¹² For example, Bunzel, *Wahhābism*; Meijer, *Global Salafism*; Farquhar, *Circuits of Faith*; and DeLong-Bas, *Wahhabi Islam*.

¹³ Cook, ‘Irish Raj’; idem, *Imperial Affinities*; Bayly, ‘India and the Empire’; Lennon, *Irish Orientalism*; Crosbie, *Irish Imperial Networks*.

general, Irish historiography has found it challenging to evaluate the contribution of Irish people to the maintenance of empire. There is an extensive body of material bearing on Ireland's impact in support of the colonies, and conversely the impact on Ireland of such involvement.¹⁴ While much (though certainly not all) of the historical analysis around 'entanglements' of Ireland and empire is from the perspective of the rise of Irish nationalism, my focus here is on the production of knowledge around Islamic reform movements by a senior Irish official of Catholic background in British India. Challenges connected to colonialist and Orientalist modes of thinking in writing about India require some (if only brief) consideration, understanding that the production of knowledge around religions in India, and the complexities associated with its utility in support of empire, are not a straightforward prospect for study.

James O'Kinealy of Cavan

James O'Kinealy hailed from a lower-middle-class background, whose family lore was that it had been dispossessed of its land some generations before he was born because of its Catholic affiliation.¹⁵ His father (also James) was from Co. Limerick and migrated in 1830 to take up work as a surveyor in Cavan, where he married locally. He was not well off, spending a good deal of time seeking preferment from well-established distant relatives. In his petitions to wealthy cousins, he complained that the family's land had been unjustly confiscated under British rule as an outcome of religious discrimination and expressed the desire to have his

¹⁴ Cook, *Imperial Affinities*; Lloyd, *Ireland after History*; Fraser, 'Ireland and India'; Bayly, 'India and the Empire'; Howe, *Ireland and Empire*; McDonough, *Was Ireland a Colony?*; Cleary, *Outrageous Fortune*; Crosbie, 'Networks of Empire'; idem, 'Imperial Greenhorns'; idem, *Irish Imperial Networks*; Ohlmeyer, *Making Empire*.

¹⁵ I can find no record of the O'Kinealy family having been 'dispossessed'. Morton (*Family of the Raj*) does not provide any further detail.

family's position in the higher echelons of society restored.¹⁶ Though these efforts met with little or no response, the O'Kinealys were still relatively comfortable and easily able to survive the catastrophic famine in Ireland in the mid-1800s. James's desire to see his family progress found a different mode of expression when his three sons were successful in winning scholarships to the newly established Queens College, Galway, in the mid-1850s. For the O'Kinealys, taking up these scholarships was not straightforward. The university in Galway was one of three new Queens Colleges (Belfast, Cork and Galway) incorporated in 1845 and opened in 1849. Intended to extend tertiary education more widely, they were in fact quite controversial, being roundly criticized because of their proposed non-denominational remit. Religious and political leaders on all sides – amongst them the great Catholic emancipator, Daniel O'Connell (d.1847) – found reason to be unhappy with the 'infidel colleges', as described by Catholic Archbishop McHale of Tuam (d.1881).¹⁷ With less than 100 students attending at Galway, including a 'regular supply of northern Presbyterians',¹⁸ the O'Kinealys were amongst a small Catholic student population in the newly established University.¹⁹ Following graduation, two of the three O'Kinealy brothers joined the ICS, and both became prominent figures in the colonial administration.²⁰

The younger, James O'Kinealy, was an accomplished engineering student at Galway. He produced papers on mathematics in the *London, Edinburgh, and Dublin Philosophical Magazine and Journal of Science* in the 1870s including a suggested proof of Fourier's Theorem.²¹ His undergraduate career predated the inception of courses in classical languages

¹⁶ Morton, *Family of the Raj*.

¹⁷ Ó'Tuathaigh, 'Establishment of the Queen's Colleges, 13.

¹⁸ Ibid., 14.

¹⁹ Foley, *From Queen's College*.

²⁰ Morton, *Family of the Raj*, xxiii, 62–3.

²¹ O'Kinealy, 'XIV. Fourier's Theorem', 95–7.

and programmes at Queens Colleges, designed to prepare students to take the ICS entrance exam. Open examinations for entrance to the ICS were first held in the mid-1850s²² and O’Kinealy took and passed the examination in 1860, joining an ever increasing number of young Catholic Irishmen seeking to develop careers in India.²³ Given that he is recorded as arriving in Calcutta (Kolkata), then the seat of British government, in February of 1862, it is probable he spent the customary probationary period for new entrants in Oxford, Cambridge or London. Studies during this preparation typically included law and administration, as well as the history of India and its languages. John Morton considers that O’Kinealy became ‘a considerable scholar’²⁴ in both Arabic and Persian even though, given his undergraduate background in engineering, it is likely his probation period was his first introduction to these languages. In time, he became an ardent student of Islam and developed an interest in Islamic reform movements with a particular focus on Wahhabism. Rising through the ranks of the ICS, he became an influential supporter of imperial over-lordship and an able prosecutor and judge in British India.²⁵ Aged just 33, he was named officer in charge of the most famous Wahhabi show trial of the period. In his later years, he was much in demand for translation work, from both Arabic and Persian, and accumulated a substantial collection of Persian and Arabic manuscripts. He also presided over the Board of Examiners at Fort William College in Calcutta – a well-known centre for ‘Oriental’ studies and for training European civil servants associated with the Bengal renaissance and the codification of Bengali as a language. It was

²² Cook, *Imperial Affinities*, 508.

²³ Morton, *Family of the Raj*, 73.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 75.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

renowned for its linguistic scholars across different Indian languages as well as Arabic and Persian.²⁶

In pursuing his work, O’Kinealy applied a number of distinct filters in how he viewed the world, including those connected to his Irish and Catholic self-identification. Given his family lore, and the controversy surrounding access to university education, religion was clearly a key factor in his formation. Though the religious landscape in Ireland was dominated by Christian denominations, it is also the case that awareness around other religions in O’Kinealy’s time was of a different order than it was 100 years later, even for someone living in a rural setting. Brian Bocking and Christopher Schackle describe the range and scope of academic writing on religious topics in Ireland during the twentieth century as ‘resolutely inward looking’²⁷ and focussed mainly on Catholic or Protestant concerns within Ireland from a confessional viewpoint. In support of a different perspective with respect to familiarity with religions in Ireland from the mid-1800s (before independence), they list several Irish figures who made significant contributions in Asia in the area of religious studies or activism. The official and social memory of what it meant to be Irish in the new-born state after independence elided the wider experience of earlier generations and their connection to other religions. Catholicism was equated with ‘Irishness’, afforded the retrospective status of having always been a fundamental characteristic *sine qua non*. Catholics automatically qualified to be Irish; Protestants would have to work hard to be accepted as such.²⁸ Outside this binary, there was no room to consider the existence of other

²⁶ Stephens, ‘Phantom Wahhabi’; Kopf, ‘Fort William College’; Morton, *Family of the Raj*, 75.

Information on his book collection from a catalogue prepared for the sale of O’Kinealy’s library at Sotheby’s in London in 1906, contained in the archive (Box 1) at the University of Galway.

²⁷ Bocking and Schackle, ‘Representing Sikhism’, 3.

²⁸ Walsh, ‘Learning from Minority’; Milne and D’Alton, *Protestant and Irish*.

belief systems and those who had engaged in exploration outside of Christianity received little attention.

At the time O’Kinealy was pursuing his university education, Irish universities were fast becoming the locus for a scholarly expertise around various religions of the world, a proficiency only now being replicated in the twenty-first century.²⁹ Amongst students, practitioners and seekers, many notable artists were attracted to new religious ideas and were connected to movements such as Theosophy, or drawn to ideas newly circulated relating to Hinduism and Buddhism. Sufficient to highlight here is that, whereas O’Kinealy emerged from a Catholic milieu (strong in its own identity with a lived experience of discrimination), awareness of other religions was at a different level than later prevailed in Ireland. It was not that he was more likely to be more sympathetic to religions other than his own, but perhaps simply more religiously literate.

India, Islam and Wahhabism

A fundamental concern in approaching the study of India is awareness of the lure of colonialist and Orientalist modes of thinking – particularly in this case when the main protagonist of this study was an agent of the state-occupier, an Orientalist scholar/administrator. Just how challenging this might prove can be gleaned from S.N. Balagangadhara’s exposition on colonial consciousness. Pertinent to our discussion is his trenchant critique of Orientalist scholarship which, he contends, is incapable of moving outside its own constraints of thinking about India.

The difference between the colonial and the post-colonial intellectual would have to lie in the types of questions asked and the kind of answers sought. When the post-colonial

²⁹ Mansoor, *Story of Irish Orientalism*; Cox, *Buddhism and Ireland*; Scharbrodt et al., *Muslims in Ireland*; Duggan, ‘Theosophical Society’; Lennon, *Irish Orientalism*.

intellectual engages himself with Orientalist writings... he has to look at Orientalism in a way that his predecessors did not.³⁰

It is not clear how we might untangle our situatedness within this paradigm – to address the usefulness of O’Kinealy’s work given its quiddity. One avenue of approach is to acknowledge (alongside Balagangadhara’s insightful critique) the imbricated nature of the history under review and the often-times rhizoid like interactions between cultures.³¹ Ricardo Roque and Kim Wagner argue that it is not the case that all we can derive from researching documents associated with the colonial enterprise is ‘*European* discourse’; that however ‘we engage colonial knowledge, we can never leave Europe’.³² While acknowledging that scholarship has often slavishly served to perpetuate the gravest injustices, we can also see that the production of colonial knowledge was (at times) an outcome of cross-cultural interactions and not simply a misrepresentation of indigenous cultures. Colonized societies already possessed ‘sophisticated forms of knowledge and systems of information’³³ and outcomes of interaction cannot be understood without reference to local input. It is difficult to land upon neat definitions – Orientalist pursuits engaged multiple logics. We might better approach this as an ‘intertwined and entangled history ... that takes several sides as one complex unit’.³⁴

Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst asserts that the rebellion of 1857 ‘produced’ Muslims in India as a distinct constituency.³⁵ If the indigenous population was regarded as essentially religious, and religion seen as a fundamental element of Indian society, Muslims came to be regarded, she concludes, as particularly legalistic and tending towards the fanatic – in the

³⁰ Balagangadhara, *Reconceptualizing India Studies*, 44.

³¹ Deleuze and Guatarri, *Thousand Plateaus*.

³² Roque and Wagner, *Engaging Colonial Knowledge*, 8.

³³ Ibid., 16.

³⁴ Epple, Kaltmeier, and Lindner, *Entangled Histories*, 9.

³⁵ Morgenstein Fuerst, *Indian Muslim Minorities*, 49.

main responsible for the rebellion, inclined towards violence and an ever present threat to the status quo. Whether India could be so regarded, when measured against Islamic jurisprudence, as *dar-ul-Islam* (country of peace) or *dar-ul-harb* (country of war), and therefore the Muslim population could be said to be religiously justified in supporting or opposing colonial rule, became a hotly contested issue within the colonial government as well as amongst Muslims, and, indeed, between both. This attempt at categorization, which it was contended would bind the followers of Islam to either support or oppose colonial rule, became the locus for much of O’Kinealy’s efforts in service to the state. On the one hand, he considered that the stability of the colonial project was precariously poised and closely linked to how the Muslim population could be pacified and made to support British rule. On the other, O’Kinealy displayed empathy for Muslims, whom he considered were the subject of particular discrimination.³⁶ From his earliest days in India, he developed a keen interest in Islam, its history and legal frameworks. As his interest in legal structures deepened, he pursued formal legal training, qualifying as a barrister in 1871; in 1872, he was further certified as proficient in ‘Hindu and Mohammadan Law, the Indian Penal Code of Criminal Procedure, the Code of Civil Procedure of the Indian Succession Act’, and called as a barrister within Lincoln’s Inn, London in the 1873.³⁷ Thereafter, he advanced in the legal ranks of the ICS, concluding his career as a judge of the High Court.

During the 1860s the term ‘Wahhabi’ was liberally ascribed to Islamic reform movements in India as a means of labelling them as seditious. Various views were held as to whether there was an actual Indian Wahhabi movement, directly connected to the Arabian followers of Muhammad Ibn ‘Abd-al Wahhab (d.1792) or whether it was simply the case that

³⁶ Morton, *Family of the Raj*.

³⁷ O’Kinealy’s certificates from Lincoln’s Inn, London are contained in Box 1 of the O’Kinealy archive at the University of Galway.

any heterodox movement could be so described so as to diminish its reputation. After the rebellion of 1857, the term Wahhabi was attached to those Islamic factions in India who favoured ‘direct consultation of the Qur’an and hadith and who questioned the binding authority of the judgements of the four schools of Islamic jurisprudence’.³⁸ Julia Stephens professes some doubt that there actually was a rise in the influence of militant movements within Muslim communities at this time, or whether those commentators who were writing and warning about it were engaged in creating a ‘Phantom Wahhabi’,³⁹ a ‘straw man’ as it were. In any event, the descriptor became something of a prop to incite fear amongst Muslims and within the administrative apparatus alike. Its use in propaganda sought to stir a reaction such that Muslims in British India would not countenance a violent response to the administration. This played to the majority Muslim view, which was generally not favourable to Wahhabism.⁴⁰ Indeed, many Muslims were deeply offended by the actions of Wahhabis in Arabia who, on conquering the holy cities of Mecca and Medina in 1803–1804, destroyed religious shrines they considered (in their reading of Islam) idolatrous, and even despoiling the tomb of the Prophet Muhammad. Likewise, as Ravi Mishra contends, there was no monolithic community of Muslims in India – many of the subsequent skirmishes involving so-called Indian Wahhabis had both Muslims and non-Muslims on both sides.⁴¹ Indian Islamic scholars may have admired how Wahhabi beliefs sought to inspire individual piety but railed against aspects of the ideology they considered was based predominantly on hatred of the ‘other’ and which sought to force Muslims to take a militant stand against

³⁸ Stephens, ‘Phantom Wahhabi’, 26.

³⁹ Stephens, ‘Phantom Wahhabi’. See, also, Ali, ‘Hunter’s “*Indian Musalmans*”’.

⁴⁰ Hardy, *Muslims of British India*; Jalal, *Partisans of Allah*; Stephens, ‘Phantom Wahhabi’.

⁴¹ Mishra, ‘Islam in India’, 21.

discrimination.⁴² Qeyamuddin Ahmad describes the word Wahhabi as a misnomer, though adopting it in the title of his book, *The Wahhabi Movement in India*, as ‘unavoidable on account of its wide prevalence’.⁴³ He outlines the often contentious debate within Islamic circles around the use of the term and the subsequent representations for its discontinuance in official documents. This campaign did in fact lead to instructions being issued by government in 1886 banning its use in official correspondence. Regardless, Ahmad reports, the designation ‘retained popular currency’.⁴⁴

O’Kinealy was constant in his efforts⁴⁵ to keep his superiors abreast of developments around Islamic reform and revivalist movements, concerned that not enough attention was being paid to the dangers posed to the state by the rise of Islamic militancy. He held the strong conviction that Wahhabism had infiltrated Indian Muslim communities. It was, he considered, crucial to the maintenance of the status quo to win over ‘moderate’ Islamic constituencies to the benefit of empire, while accentuating in his arguments his conviction of the grave danger posed to Islam itself by the rise of militant movements. Along with an influential cadre within the colonizing authorities, he sought to reinforce that aversion while advocating for the opening of bona fide educational and career opportunities for Muslims. For O’Kinealy, Muslims were not antagonistic towards the Raj because they had been ousted as original rulers in India, but rather because of the rise of a puritanical and militant strain within Islam. It followed, he considered, that the solution to the conundrum was a theological

⁴² The renowned Islamic scholar, Sayyid Ahmad Khan, was a prominent opponent of Wahhabism. See, Belmekki, *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan*; Jalal, *Partisans of Allah*; Allen, ‘Hidden Roots’.

⁴³ Ahmad, *Wahhabi Movement*, xii.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 263.

⁴⁵ A number of O’Kinealy’s reports (probably prepared for his superiors) are contained in Box 1 of the O’Kinealy archive at the University of Galway.

or doctrinal one. If Muslim theologians could be persuaded to declare India *dar-ul-Islam*, Muslims would be robbed of a rationale for engaging in armed resistance.⁴⁶

Just how much his background became a factor in how his arguments were viewed can be seen from the significant role he played in land reform in Bengal in the mid-1880s.⁴⁷ His Irish background was often cited as influencing liberal tendencies in his contribution to the creation of new land tenancy regulations, which were roundly criticised as favouring the indigenous population. There is evidence that he fought hard in the face of opposition from his superiors to include ‘revolutionary provisions’⁴⁸ allowing for the extension of tenant occupancy rights and curbs on rent rises, in the drafting of a new Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885. According to one criticism, new regulations he and others proposed were ‘full of Irish poison’, the work of a group of ‘thinly veiled’ Irish ‘Fenians’.⁴⁹ Though there is no evidence that O’Kinealy espoused Irish nationalist political leanings, we can see in his agrarian policies some connection to his own background and experience. ‘Clearly’, Crosbie has observed, ‘Irish people (of various religious denominations) in the service of empire viewed themselves as being both part of, yet separate from, the British imperial system’.⁵⁰ Becoming increasingly proficient in Arabic and Persian, and moving through senior administrative positions, O’Kinealy exhibited an approach that was ‘both part of and yet separate’ from the apparatus of state.

⁴⁶ Ali, ‘Hunter’s *Indian Musalmans*’; O’Kinealy, ‘Sketch of the Wahhabis’; idem, ‘Wahhabis in India’.

⁴⁷ Robb, *Ancient Rights*.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 138.

⁴⁹ Sartori, *Liberalism in Empire*, 89.

⁵⁰ Crosbie, ‘Curious Case’, 109.

Hunter's 'Indian Musalmans'

How O’Kinealy differed in his approach from his colleagues in the administration is exemplified by his attitude to W.W. Hunter’s controversial yet influential contribution to the contemporary discursive ferment, his ‘demi-official’ *The Indian Musalmans: Are They Bound in Conscience to Rebel against the Queen?*. Hunter was a prominent and highly respected agent of the ICS, a statistician and compiler of data, a widely read author and historian. He was one of the main movers behind the compilation of the *Imperial Gazetteer of India* (a repository for the collation of imperial knowledge), the first edition of which ran to nine volumes and was published in 1881. Hunter’s *Indian Musalmans* was widely read and went through a number of reprints, reappearing frequently either in full or in part. It was claimed that the Viceroy himself had tasked Hunter to pen the volume, which was hurriedly prepared.⁵¹ Whatever the circumstances, the publication formed part of a propaganda campaign, on the one hand directed to English speaking Muslim elites and designed to promote the view that disloyalty to British Rule was un-Islamic, and on the other an effort to influence decision makers in government. Regarded in some quarters as a seminal publication, Hunter presented a close examination of Islamic law and practice, similar to that set out by O’Kinealy in lengthy articles he penned for the *Calcutta Review* in 1870 (and from which Hunter borrowed liberally), suggesting Muslims could have no religious basis for opposition to British governance. But he went further, controversially suggesting a short hand where ‘Muslim’ and ‘Wahhabi’ were interchangeable. He was critical of colonial decision makers around Muslim grievances in the area of education,⁵² though his argument that education was the solution to fanaticism was tempered by his bias towards the view that what was necessary was an ‘English’ education. Islam required reform, he contended, ‘by the

⁵¹ Ali, ‘Hunter’s *Indian Musalmans*’; Morgenstein Fuerst, *Indian Muslim Minorities*.

⁵² Ali, ‘Hunter’s *Indian Musalmans*’.

virtues and values of the West'.⁵³ If unquestioned loyalty was never going to be forthcoming from subject Muslims, they could be expected, if the administration discharged its obligations to them, to fulfil 'their duties in the position in which God has placed them to us'.⁵⁴

It is probable that Hunter regarded himself as a friend to Islam, though the last quotation makes plain how he understood the parameters of that relationship. In his response to Hunter's polemic, the leading Indian Islamic scholar, Sayyid Ahmad Khan, was moved to comment 'God save us from our friends'.⁵⁵ For his part, O'Kinealy was certainly not advocating for this Anglicist approach. Though he supported the overall strategy, as articulated by Hunter, he favoured more consultation as to how educational programmes should be fashioned, suggesting a more collaborative approach to nurture advancement by Muslims at all levels of society.⁵⁶ This difference in orientation – which set him at odds with influential figures in the administration – chimes with his work on land reform as referred to earlier. Harking back once more to his own background, in his articles O'Kinealy questions how Europeans – such as the Irish, he posits – would react to various restrictions like those placed on Muslims in India. Another crucial point on which O'Kinealy differed from Hunter was around language as it pertained to educational curricula for Muslims. O'Kinealy argued against making English compulsory in Muslim schools; Muslims do not want to learn English, he declared, and it would be unwise to make knowledge of English 'a test of loyalty'

⁵³ Morgenstein Fuerst, *Indian Muslim Minorities*, 83.

⁵⁴ Hunter, *Indian Musalmans*, 141.

⁵⁵ Ahmad Khan, *Review*, 6.

⁵⁶ O'Kinealy, 'Wahhabis in India', 381–99.

for followers of Islam.⁵⁷ In his view, Muslims were prejudiced and even bigoted – but they had reason to be so.⁵⁸

The reception of Hunter's monograph exemplifies how this discourse was approached and the nature of the arguments constructed. O'Kinealy's and Hunter's engagement with fundamental questions of Islamic belief and structures of authority were pursued within now archaic discursive frameworks where metaphysics and legalities were central themes. This is understandable given the regime's emphasis on legalities in dealing with issues such as militancy. Concomitantly, the imperial authorities' focus on categories such as demography and the comparative statistical analyses of the colonized conceivably 'produced' (to use Morgenstein-Fuerst's descriptor) a different paradigm within which Muslims contemplated their relationship to the Raj. Embedding the discussion of the role of Islam in India in juridical terms, and in the realm of 'moral ideas rather than of political or economic interests',⁵⁹ Hunter, O'Kinealy and others were, in fact, out of step with processes evolving amongst Muslims in India in response to their treatment and predicament. They were wedded to 'the proselytizing project of the civilizing mission',⁶⁰ endeavouring to cajole or persuade 'moderate Muslims' to forswear the extreme.

If O'Kinealy's position was more nuanced than Hunter's, both reflect aspects of Mahmood Mamdani's paradigm describing how different strategies evolved with respect to colonial administration in British India. At the outset, he postulates, there was a desire to implement a type of cultural replacement under the guise of spreading 'civilization' and what he describes as 'direct rule'. When that proved problematic, it was replaced by a type of

⁵⁷ Untitled Memorandum, O'Kinealy Archive, Box 1, of the O'Kinealy archive at the University of Galway.

⁵⁸ O'Kinealy, 'Wahhabis in India', 385–6.

⁵⁹ Devji, *Landscapes of the Jihad*, 37.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 39.

‘indirect rule’ where ‘the British put aside the torch of civilization in order to maintain order’.⁶¹ This employed a strategy of creating permanent majorities and minorities, taking the Roman Empire’s dictum of divide and rule to another level in order to ‘define and rule’.⁶² However different his sympathies from Hunter’s (and however coloured these were as an outcome of his Irish Catholic background), O’Kinealy was consciously or unconsciously contributing to the beginnings of a discourse that would evolve to have tremendous implications in our present time; in these discursive encounters we see the embryonic elaboration of the ‘good Muslim/bad Muslim’ debate. Those who forswore violent resistance should be encouraged and assisted, but they also had a responsibility as good citizens to persuade those deemed to be ‘bad Muslims’ against militancy. The implication, which has become clearer in recent times with the intense politicization of this discourse, is that ‘unless proved to be “good”, every Muslim was presumed to be “bad”’.⁶³ Further, they were obliged to verify their bona fides by joining in the contest against the ‘bad’. In Hunter’s view, unless otherwise declared, every Muslim was a Wahhabi.

However these arguments mirror aspects of contemporary discussions around Islamic militancy, they present, with hindsight, as naïve with respect to developing Islamic political and economic interests. In effect, the prospect of militant resistance was being countered from a starkly distorted moral and religious perspective – for Hunter, God had placed Muslims under the care of benevolent colonizers and they should happily accept the position into which they had been placed. If O’Kinealy’s approach (influenced by his Irish Catholic experience) was more nuanced, he did subscribe to the view that ‘moderate Muslims’ should, through the force of theology and religious teaching, dissuade reformist movements away

⁶¹ Mamdani, *Neither Settler Nor Native*, 3.

⁶² Ibid., 13.

⁶³ Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim*, 15.

from militant jihad. They would then win the protection and largesse of the British authorities. Constructing arguments on this basis was rapidly becoming moot. By the end of the century, Devji comments,

[T]he word Islam itself [was] losing its once common adverbial form as a kind of action to become a proper name for a set of beliefs and practices that also included novel and non-theological attributes such as population and territory.⁶⁴

Barelvi's Wahhabism

Over time, O'Kinealy harnessed his linguistic ability and familiarity with Islamic legal precepts to argue against reactionary and repressive government measures in response to a perceived growing threat of Muslim rebellion. His writings and reports began to focus on a variety of movements (including the Feraizis and the uprising of Titu Muir [d.1831]), but his main focus was clearly on how Wahhabism had been a significant influence on the militant movement of Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi (d.1831).⁶⁵ Barelvi led his followers in an armed offensive against the Sikhs in Peshawar and died in the fighting that ensued; according to Ayesha Jalal, the only 'real *jihad* ever fought in the subcontinent to establish the supremacy of the Islamic faith'.⁶⁶ His campaign against the Punjabi based Sikh Empire of Ranjit Singh (in response to perceived official pressure on Islamic practice in the Sikh kingdom) is sometimes regarded as the 'point of entry into the history of jihad'⁶⁷ in South Asia. More a warrior and a mystic than a traditional scholar, Barelvi was a controversial figure. In a recent exposition, SherAli Tareen presents a new, critical examination of Barelvi's faction, based on Arabic and Persian sources. He reproves Jalal's exposition which, he contends, embraces

⁶⁴ Devji, *Landscapes of the Jihad*, xxvi.

⁶⁵ O'Kinealy, 'Sketch of the Wahhabis', 79; idem, 'Wahhabis in India', 184. For commentary on Abul Hasan Ali Nadwī's work in Arabic and Urdu on Sayyid Ahmad, see Bhat, 'Life and Works of Abul Hasan 'Ali Nadwi'.

⁶⁶ Jalal, *Partisans of Allah*, 1.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

binaries such as ‘good jihad/bad jihad’ or ‘good Muslim/bad Muslim’, and instead argues for new modes of analysis of the period.⁶⁸ Leaving this fascinating contemporary discussion to one side, the intention here is to explore further O’Kinealy’s assessment of Barelvi and his influence, and to examine his increasing engagement with Wahhabism.

In his articles for *Calcutta Review* (1870), O’Kinealy set out a comprehensive study of Barelvi’s movement and its putative links to Wahhabism.⁶⁹ According to Ahmad,⁷⁰ these articles represent the first detailed accounts of Wahhabi literature and activities in India in the English language. In his writings, O’Kinealy argues, Barelvi was greatly influenced by Wahhabism, even if various aspects of his worldview indicate that he was not completely wedded to Wahhabi ideals. For example, he avers, Barelvi retained a strong connection to Sufi beliefs, while he also considered himself to be the Imam Mahdi. When he was killed at Balakot, his followers believed he had gone into occultation.⁷¹ O’Kinealy was convinced a direct connection could still be made, citing in particular an inclination towards militancy. It was obvious, at least to O’Kinealy, that it was during Barelvi’s sojourn in Mecca from 1822 to 1823 that this relationship was fomented, though this period did not coincide with Wahhabi ascendancy in Mecca. Barelvi’s focus on a strict interpretation of *tawhīd* (unity of God), his trenchant criticism of *bid‘a* (religious innovation) and *shirk* (idolatry), allied to his waging an (unsuccessful) militant jihad, O’Kinealy considers, should have alerted the authorities to the possibility that Wahhabi ideology had infiltrated his movement – indeed, in

⁶⁸ Tareen, *Defending Muhammad*, 79-82. See also Pearson, *Islamic Reform*. Sayyid Ahmad has no connection to the Barelvi Sunni movement.

⁶⁹ The newspaper, as per usual, did not attribute the articles but O’Kinealy’s authorship was confirmed by Hunter (*Indian Musalmans*, 147). See, also, Ali, ‘Hunter’s *Indian Musalmans*’, 49.

⁷⁰ Ahmad, *Wahhabi Movement*, 36.

⁷¹ O’Kinealy, ‘Sketch of the Wahhabis’; Stephens, ‘Phantom Wahhabi’.

his view, had begun to permeate a growing number of Islamic reform movements in India.⁷² ‘Crescentaders’ (as he described them), were now set on throwing off the yoke of British Christian rule.⁷³ Engaging with the question of whether India could be regarded as *dar-ul-harb*, thereby justifying Muslims in resisting British rule or being required to seek a safe haven elsewhere, O’Kinealy characterizes Muslims as Israelites, susceptible to the appeal of a strong Moses-like figure, who would lead an Islamic exodus from under the rule of the British Pharaohs.⁷⁴ O’Kinealy also pointed to the work of respected Islamic reforming figures who were anti-Wahhabi and who could, in his opinion, be strategically supported by officialdom towards countering the spread of Wahhabism. He cites in particular the writings of Karamat Ali (d.1873), whose pronouncements he describes as ‘extremely moderate’ and concludes are ‘the most advanced opinions on the subject’.⁷⁵

In support of this contention, he includes his own translation of passages from the *Katu-al-Imam*, dating from 1838, in which Ali gives a nuanced explanation as to why Muslims could continue to live peacefully in India even if it is *dar-ul-harb*. It is clear that Ali is no lover of Wahhabism, though neither is he enamoured of British policies around opportunities for advancement and education for Muslims. O’Kinealy further argued that the ‘greatest Musulman that India had ever seen’, the celebrated scholar Shah ‘Abdul ‘Aziz (d. 1824), a renowned traditionalist, had not fled ‘the kafir country’.⁷⁶ Though he had issued a decree characterizing India as *dar-ul harb*, he had not called for armed jihad. O’Kinealy’s use of this example evidences the complexity of the argument he was making. ‘Abdul ‘Aziz’s opinion was influential and nuanced, less militant than that of Bareilvi, who had been his

⁷² O’Kinealy, ‘Sketch of the Wahhabis’, 79.

⁷³ O’Kinealy, ‘Wahhabis in India’, 396.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 386.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 390–1.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 392.

disciple.⁷⁷ In juxtaposing these two examples, O’Kinealy was rehearsing a debate ongoing amongst Indian Islamic scholars that valorized ‘Abdul ‘Aziz as a serious theoretician and characterized Bareilvi as not well grounded in Islamic jurisprudence, and whose actions were therefore suspect according to Islamic law. Fashioning a close collaboration with this constituency within Islamic leadership afforded, in O’Kinealy’s view, the most plausible antidote to the expansion of Wahhabi ideology. Bringing his commentary to a close, O’Kinealy reverts once more to scare tactics by citing in full his translation of the popular war-song, the *Risala Jihad*, well known to British soldiers engaged in skirmishes with militants and characterized by W.W. Hunter as a ‘Psalm of the Holy War’.⁷⁸ This, he argues, is nothing less than a ‘Wahhabi war song’ and widely understood as such; in other words, any instances of unrest already experienced offered undoubted evidence of a growing Wahhabi threat.

‘History and doctrine of the Wahhabis’

Though O’Kinealy’s oeuvre relating to Islam in India resides mostly in the reports prepared in the course of his work and in articles previously mentioned, there is one publication that has achieved particular prominence. His translation from the Arabic of an important early Wahhabi document, the ‘History & Doctrines of the Wahhábís by Abdullah’, appeared first as a long article in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*⁷⁹ and was only published in book form in 2004. The relatively short treatise explicates basic Wahhabi beliefs and was

⁷⁷ Hardy, *Muslims of British India*; Morgenstein Fuerst, *Indian Muslim Minorities*. On ‘Abdul ‘Aziz’s famous fatwa, see also Friedmann, ‘Dār al-islām’. Regardless of their evident difference in approach, Tareen argues cogently that Bareilvi and ‘Abdul ‘Aziz had much in common around the issue of foreign occupation. Tareen, *Perilous Intimacies*.

⁷⁸ Hunter, *Indian Musalmans*, 66; O’Kinealy, ‘Wahhabis in India’, 396.

⁷⁹ O’Kinealy, ‘History and Doctrines’.

penned by ‘Abdullah, son of the founder of the movement (‘Abd al-Wahhab) following the conquest of Mecca by Wahhabis in 1803, a campaign in which ‘Abdullah took part.

O’Kinealy describes ‘Abdullah as a grandson of Abd al-Wahhab (as does the introduction to the 2004 publication) but David Commins’s genealogy indicates that he was actually his son.⁸⁰ The treatise is regarded as important source material, ‘an essential condensation of Wahhabi beliefs’,⁸¹ and was widely cited by religious reformers in Egypt and Iraq in early twentieth-century discussions concerning the true nature of Wahhabism. In his treatise, ‘Abdullah discusses the campaign to take Mecca. The aftermath of the conquest is reviewed in detail, as are strategies the victors adopted to win over local Islamic religious leaders to the new order. Actions taken to impose a Wahhabi interpretation of Islam on the populous are outlined, including the razing of tombs and monuments and new prohibitions to be imposed, as well as the abolition of taxes. Overall, the text provides a brief, comprehensive statement on Wahhabi Islamic history and thought.

In his introduction to the 2004 publication, Amalendu De (d. 2014),⁸² one time Guru Nanak Professor of History at Jadavpur University, describes ‘Abdullah’s tract as an important contribution and confides that he has drawn on O’Kinealy’s English version in his own work.⁸³ He underscores the importance of Abdullah’s condensation of beliefs penned at an especially important moment in Wahhabi history, just as Mecca had been taken in 1803. In a short preface, O’Kinealy contends that the Wahhabis looked upon their taking of Mecca in the same light as the Crusaders entering Jerusalem.⁸⁴ Commenting on ‘Abdullah’s explication of Wahhabi history and doctrines, O’Kinealy reflects on why he has chosen to translate and

⁸⁰ Commins, *Wahhabi Mission*, 29.

⁸¹ Ibid., 223.

⁸² Roy and Misra, *Reflections in History*.

⁸³ De, ‘Introduction’, 14.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 17.

circulate this particular document, opining that, '[I]t proves beyond all possibility of doubt, the identity on all important points of Wahhábí doctrines in Arabia with Wahhábí doctrines in India, and confirms the prevalent view that one is the offshoot of the other.'⁸⁵

Making this document available, first published just as the discussion around Muslim loyalty to the Raj was reaching its apogee, O'Kinealy hoped to underscore his long-held contention that Wahhabism had taken hold amongst Islamic reform groups in India. Yet again, O'Kinealy was focussed on influencing his fellow ICS officials as well as reaching out to an educated, English speaking Islamic constituency in effort to apprise and warn them as to how Wahhabi doctrine, extreme and overbearing, would challenge their positions within Muslim communities and alter Islamic culture in India. Whether O'Kinealy was an expert and accurate translator must await consideration by an appropriately qualified scholar. His decision to render this particular document into English, and to place it in the public domain, does indicate a familiarity with contemporary original language materials and a sensibility as to key sources. This was the first, comprehensive statement of Wahhabi history and doctrine from the pen of a significant source (the son of the founder) published in the English language.

The great Wahhabi case

The now infamous prosecution brought against two well respected brothers from Calcutta (Kolkata), Amir and Hashmadad Khan, on charges of financing Wahhabi rebels engaged in fomenting conflict with the British in the northwest frontier, brought O'Kinealy to a level of public prominence he had not before experienced. Popularly known as the 'Great Wahhabi Case', the prosecution of the two prominent merchants was the last and most controversial in

⁸⁵ Ibid., 18.

a series of large-scale show trials of suspected Wahhabis leaders in the 1860s and 1870s.⁸⁶ Prosecutors argued that the state was in danger from seditious fanatics bent on the destruction of empire as a matter of religious principle, such that extraordinary measures were required. The brothers were held without charge for 14 months before they brought a case to the High Court in Calcutta seeking a writ of *habeas corpus*.

In the end, the court ruled that *habeas corpus* could be suspended, resulting in a *de facto* type of administrative detention or internment for the brothers and others similarly accused. Legal proceedings played out over a number of years, involving hearings in Calcutta, London and Patna. In effect, existing legal principles were being stretched or ignored when applied to the Muslim minority, arguably articulating a new binary approach to imperial rule based on a philosophy of ‘colonial difference’.⁸⁷ The Queen’s proclamation of 1858 (following the suppression of the rebellion) had promised the same protections in law to Indians as afforded to British subjects, regardless of religion or race. Reneging on this promise was met with widespread unease, even amongst expatriates, who were unsure if they themselves could fall foul of this legal interpretation.⁸⁸ The trial became a focal point for testing the contention that an indigenous Indian Wahhabi movement was gaining in ascendancy.

O’Kinealy’s direct and indirect contribution to this important case was significant. It was probably a surprise when he was appointed as officer in charge of the prosecution, 33 years old and not quite finished his formal legal training, though he did not actually appear in court. He did have friends in high places; he had the ear of his fellow Irishman, the Viceroy, Lord Mayo, three times Chief-Secretary of Ireland. The Viceroy referenced advice he

⁸⁶ Stephens, ‘Phantom Wahhabi’.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 35; Chatterjee, *Nation and Its Fragments*, 22.

⁸⁸ Stephens, ‘Phantom Wahhabi’.

received from O’Kinealy on the education question in notes written around the time of the trial.⁸⁹ While other officials produced briefs for the case outlining the alleged sedition, O’Kinealy prepared detailed background historical information on the rise of militant movements in India.⁹⁰ Rehearsing once more his core argument, O’Kinealy prepared a close analysis on the conditions to be met for Muslims to wage militant jihad, freely translating various scholarly tracts in support of his contention. In the end, he complained once more that the general sense of dissatisfaction amongst Muslims was directly related to the lack of opportunities open to them and the unfair nature of the tax regime under which they laboured – all a recipe for encouraging militancy. Adding to the very public drama surrounding the case, which had been the object of intense press coverage both in India and across the Empire, on the day of the Khan brothers’ final appeal, the High Court judge hearing the case was assassinated on the steps of the court, by an assailant known to have studied in a mosque with suspected links to Wahhabi teaching.⁹¹ Two years later, Lord Mayo also died by an assassin’s knife, attacked while visiting the penal colony on the Andaman Islands.⁹² These killings, as Stephens states, ‘provoked a new wave of Wahhabi conspiracy theories’.⁹³

The trial provides an important locus for analysis, as it threw into sharp relief conflicting tendencies within British colonial ideology and projected these debates onto an empire-wide stage.⁹⁴ When, after a long legal process, one of the brothers was sentenced to a lengthy period in prison, O’Kinealy was prominent in efforts to have his sentence commuted

⁸⁹ Hardy, *Muslims of British India*, 90; Ali, ‘Hunter’s *Indian Musalmans*’, 44.

⁹⁰ Ali, ‘Hunter’s *Indian Musalmans*’. One such lengthy report is contained in Box 1 of the O’Kinealy Archive at the University of Galway.

⁹¹ Hardy, *Muslims of British India*, 84.

⁹² McMahon, ‘Assassination and Apotheosis’.

⁹³ Stephens, ‘Phantom Wahhabi’, 46.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 37.

and he was eventually pardoned. The trial also became a focal point illustrative of the Ireland/India dimension of the imperial enterprise. The Khan brothers elicited the support of two very highly regarded and well-connected barristers for their defence; Thomas Dunbar Ingram, Professor of Jurisprudence in Hindu and Muhammadan law at the renowned Presidency College in Calcutta, and Thomas Chisholm Antsey, a well-known legal counsel and one-time attorney-general of Hong Kong. Ingram, a unionist, was born in Newry and later domiciled in Dublin.⁹⁵ Antsey, though born in Britain and raised in Tasmania, spent his early career representing Youghal in County Cork as a Member of Parliament in Britain's House of Commons. He was a well-known supporter of Daniel O'Connell and Home Rule, and a leading advocate of Roman Catholic political interests.⁹⁶

In fact, many of the actors at the centre of this show trial (including the Viceroy) hailed from Irish religious and political contexts. They were engaged in a deep discussion around the role of religion in colonized India, drawing on principles of Islamic jurisprudence, knowledge of the history of Islamic reform movements in India and the writings of prominent Muslim scholars. In all this, however, they did not express themselves overly conscious of the situation at home. If these agents of empire were not vicariously addressing questions at the heart of the Irish question through their activities in far-off India, they were surely, as we have seen with O'Kinealy, affected by their discrete experiences and backgrounds in Ireland. The functionaries of state at the centre of these lengthy proceedings (including O'Kinealy) espoused complex, nuanced relationships within imperial networks in India. As Crosbie comments with respect to such officials,

⁹⁵ McCabe, 'Ingram, Thomas Dunbar'. His brother, John Kells Ingram, is more prominent in Irish history as a highly regarded Trinity College scholar and author of the famous poem concerning the rebellion of 1798 in Ireland, 'The Memory of the Dead'.

⁹⁶ Reynolds, 'Antsey, Thomas Chisholm'.

[W]hile their presence may have served imperial purposes, archival evidence suggests that their motivations were different from those who fully embraced and contributed to imperial interests, and were important factors in differentiating the Irish from other Britons both at home and abroad during the nineteenth century.⁹⁷

This and other Wahhabi trials were widely reported in the Irish nationalist press and Wahhabis variously characterized as ‘Mahomedan Fenians’. In one instance, the headline ‘Long life to the Wahabees’ is reported to have appeared in an Irish nationalist newspaper. Understanding of the issues was, however, quite superficial.⁹⁸ It was not that Irish nationalists regarded colonized Muslims seeking advancement as equals in a common quest of resistance to empire. Muslims (and indeed Indians) were still regarded as inferior and the term ‘savages’ was sometimes used in newspaper comment in Ireland to describe colonized Asian and African peoples. Ironically, as Jagjeet Lally remarks, nationalists espoused ‘the very sorts of racial difference and hierarchy that had historically led to Ireland’s own oppression’.⁹⁹ The famous court case underscores the central involvement of Irishmen in all echelons of the ICS and complexifies Irish attitudes to India, both as ‘colonized and colonizer’. More importantly for the purposes of our argument here, it highlights the central role O’Kinealy played in seminal events in India, his attitudes and approach and the use of his scholarly gifts in service to empire. The trial marked the acme of his public exposure.

⁹⁷ Crosbie, ‘Curious Case’, 110.

⁹⁸ Townend, ‘Between Two Worlds’; de Nie, ‘Speed the Mahdi’; Lally, ‘Mahomedan Fenians’, 140–69. Stephens cites the *Pall Mall Gazette* of 22 September 1871, where mention is made of a newspaper, the *Irish Nationalist*, declaring ‘Long life to the Wahabees’ during the course of the trial. The *Gazette* does not make clear whether the declaration was made at the time of the trial or sometime earlier. Curiously, there is no record of a newspaper called the *Irish Nationalist* from that period. Stephens, ‘Phantom Wahhabi’, 37.

⁹⁹ Lally, ‘Mahomedan Fenians’, 156.

Conclusion

Crosbie postulates that, with respect to participation in support of empire, ‘the Irish should not be cached under any single descriptor’.¹⁰⁰ While it is clear that O’Kinealy supported imperial interests, it is also true his motives were not always fully aligned to the purposes of the regime. In his work on agrarian reform, his family background in Ireland was undoubtedly an influence. When it came to his approach to Islamic reform movements in India, we can also observe a deviation from the official line and a readiness to argue his case with colleagues and superiors. Warning against rising rebellious inclinations amongst Muslim communities can be seen as an expression of anxiety around the security of the realm, but it can also be understood as a plea to his superiors to encourage Muslims. Most Muslims, he considered, would not support insurrection and, if afforded more rights and opportunities, would surely support the status quo.

Morton considers that O’Kinealy’s background as an Irish Catholic definitely influenced his support for the Muslim minority in India, particularly his advocacy around opportunities for education.¹⁰¹ It would not have been lost on O’Kinealy that, when Catholics in Ireland had been ‘emancipated’ (in the late 1820s), this led to positive outcomes. Indeed, as a consequence of emancipation, he and his siblings were eventually able to access a university education. Perhaps, in his ‘entangled’ complex of approaches and orientation, O’Kinealy felt common cause with minoritized Muslims, seeing similarities in how Catholics had been denied opportunity for advancement in Ireland. In the end, however, we must acknowledge that O’Kinealy was a willing supporter of a worldview based on prejudice. Indians, whether Muslim or not, were in effect ‘the white man’s burden’.

¹⁰⁰ Crosbie, ‘Curious Case’, 110.

¹⁰¹ Morton, *Family of the Raj*.

Though he disagreed with Hunter's analysis and proposed solutions, as articulated in his influential *India's Musalmans; Are They Bound in Conscience to Rebel against the Queen?*, O'Kinealy was still engaged in promoting similar arguments to Hunter's around whether Islamic jurisprudential principles could be appropriated to build a cast-iron argument guaranteeing the loyalty of Muslims. The nub of the matter was how British rule in India should be classified in Muslim law: whether British India could be regarded as *dar-ul-islam* or *dar-ul-harb*. How to encourage Islamic leaders and Muslim communities to throw in their lot with the Raj as *dar-ul-islam* was a serious point of contention within the administration, especially around what educational and employment opportunities should be afforded to Muslims. Characterizing reform movements, such as that of Siyyid Ahmad Barelvi, as Wahhabi, and marshalling his facility in Persian and Arabic to translate tracts and produce materials in support of that contention, became a major focus of O'Kinealy's attention. His arguments, directed at influencing his colleagues and senior officials in the ICS and 'moderate' Islamic leaders, were based on moral and religious principles – pushing an 'indirect rule' agenda and creating, perhaps for the first time, categories of 'good Muslim/bad Muslim' in public discourse.

O'Kinealy's career represents a nexus of entanglements connecting Ireland, India and Islam; he was an Irish Catholic supporter of empire and an ardent and seemingly empathetic student of Islam. If the 'Great Wahhabi Case' marks the high point of his public prominence, he continued his close involvement with Islamic issues until his retirement from the ICS in 1899. Serving in a number of senior administrative roles, he was appointed a High Court judge in the Bengal judiciary in 1882. He became known for favouring tenant farmers in his rulings in support of their quest to assert their rights against landowners and for his general support for Muslim petitioners. Morton posits that, at this stage of his career, he was again

acting out of his own experience as a Catholic in colonised Ireland.¹⁰² O’Kinealy’s experience, Morton contends, inflected itself into his work, whether on agrarian reform or with respect to Islam, and he was not afraid to disagree with powerful voices within the administration.

While it is true that all who were in India as part of the apparatus of power were supporters of a self-serving enterprise, which had terrible and lasting consequences, that body of officials was not itself a monolith. James O’Kinealy emerged from a particular religious, political and social milieu, which influenced his work in service to colonialism. He was a leading figure in the midst of the tumultuous events unfolding in India at a seminal moment in the history of empire. His work around Islamic reform movements was influential and fed into a vibrant discussion around the composition of government policy and whether Muslims could be encouraged to support the Raj. The articles he wrote rank amongst the first detailed studies on the Wahhabi question and Indian Islamic reform movements published in the English language. His translation of ‘Abdullah’s tract is the first English language articulation of Wahhabi history and theology from the pen of a prominent early Wahhabi protagonist.

If, at the time of the publication of ‘Abdullah’s treatise on Wahhabism, there was still a debate to be had, that was soon not the case. ‘[P]rocesses of racialization and minoritization’,¹⁰³ propagated by the various echelons of empire, in effect, further racialized and essentialized the Muslim population; Muslims could not escape classification as essentially violent and disloyal, a monolith, seditious and jihadist. The years that followed witnessed the rise of various movements in India, some associated with religions, which ultimately led to partition on the sub-continent. Before long, the question of whether Muslims

¹⁰² Morton, *Family of the Raj*, 83.

¹⁰³ Morgenstein Fuerst, *Indian Muslim Minorities*, 152.

could support the colonial authorities in the imperial enterprise became moot in the face of more intense cultural hegemony and more aggressive governance. The rise of Indian nationalism and Islamic universalism¹⁰⁴ soon diminished O’Kinealy’s vision of a pacified and more integrated Muslim population in imperial India. On retirement, he made his home in London for the short few years before his death in 1903.

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¹⁰⁴ Jalal, *Partisans of Allah*, 310.

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