

THE NEED FOR APOLOGETICS AND POLEMICS

What is its Purpose and why should it be part of Christian-Muslim Interaction?

Learning objectives:

- To understand Biblical approaches to Islam
- To gain a clear picture of how to respond to the Muslim missionary movement
- To recognize the need for Apologetics and Polemics to engage the Muslim mind
- To bring about confidence among those wishing to take the gospel to Muslims



Since the events of September 11, 2001 (and July 7th, 2005 in the UK), there is a dilemma in missionary circles concerning correct missiological methods to use with Muslims, especially with the more radical fringe groups whose violent acts have brought death and destruction to so many innocent people. The growing missional and Radical Muslim movements in our midst are forcing a re-evaluation of adequate responses to them.

The Dilemma Today - Post 9/11 and 7/7, there is one faith which stands against all others (compromising 'Multi-culturalism')

- In UK from 15% - +40% = Muslims want Islamic 'Shari'ah law to be introduced to Britain
- 20% of those polled supported the July 7, 2005 London Suicide bombers
- Radicalism: Turkey = 31%, Morocco = 45%, Jordan = 55%, Pakistan = 65% (80-90 million people)
- There is an aggressive and growing 'radical Islam' pretty much world-wide.
- It is a 'scriptured religion' (i.e. 'Dispatches' Undercover Mosque: The Qur'an = source/root)

- Creating a ‘Clash of Civilizations’, (i.e. Dr Samuel Huntington’s thesis in ‘Clash of Civilizations’: 1996, reiterated by Lord Carey, 2006)

“There is an international network of radical Muslims, committed to terrorism that must be stopped. They pose a legitimate threat which cannot be ignored, but confronted, and immediately” (Riddell 2004:172).

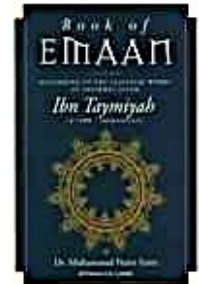
1) TWO SUPPOSITIONS WITHIN THE CHURCH:

1) Radical Islam is new, and is a political reaction to geopolitical problems

- 1948 = Creation of Israel
- 2001 = US Invasion of Afghanistan
- 2003 = US Invasion of Iraq
- 2014 = ISIS takeover of Syria/Iraq (due to Western imperialism)

2) Radical Islam is Not New and is founded in the Qur'an and in Islamic sources

- 1300 = Ibn Taymiyah
- 1700 = Muhammad Al Wahhab (Arabia) & Shah Waliulla (India)
- 20th c. = Hasan al Banna, Sayyid Qutb (Muslim Brotherhood), Abu Ala Mawdudi (Jamaat I Islami), Muhammad Ilyas (Tablighi Jamaat)
- 21st c. = Ayman Zawahiri, Osama bin Laden, Al Zarqawi (Al Qaeda), Yusuf Qaradawi (Muslim Brotherhood), Abu Bakr al Baghdadi (ISIS), Sheikh Omar Bakri Mohammed, Anjem Choudary



2) THE RISE OF RADICAL, POLITICAL ISLAM HISTORICALLY

Middle East:

- Hasan al Banna (1906 – 1948) -> “Muslim Brotherhood”
- Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) In the Shade of the Qur’an, Milestones
- Ayman Zawahiri – “Islamic Jihad” (Osama bin Laden) 1970s – (Al Qaeda)
- Hezbollah, Hamas, Muhajiroun, Hizb ulTahrir
- Yusef al Qaradawi – moderate, yet ‘out of the closet’ (picture on the right)
 - suicide bombers, wife beating & Homosexuals, Public vs. Private face of Islam



Indian Sub-Continent:

- Muhammad Ilyas - Tablighi Jamaat (1926)
- Abu Ala Mawdudi - Jamaat I Islami (1903-1979)



3) TYPICAL SOLUTIONS

1. Eradicate it: (Military)
2. Ban it: (Government)
3. Redefine it: from within (Moderates)



4. Reform it: from without (Most Everyone)
5. Ignore it: (Media, Church, & most Missiologists)
6. Join it: (Insider Movement)
7. Confront it: (Christian Confrontationists)

4) PROBLEMS WITH THESE SOLUTIONS

- Islam is based on an **ideology**, derived from a '**divinely**' revealed text (the **Qur'an**), and best modeled by a man (their prophet **Muhammad**, as exemplified in the Islamic traditions).
- It **cannot** be simply **removed** by either ignoring it, or by creating a humanistic alternative, or by employing the use of repressive laws, or even by using **violence**.
- History shows that **ideological movements**, especially those derived from a perceived 'divinely inspired' text, such as we have with Islam, thrive and **expand** when the members feel **repressed** or have been **attacked** violently from without. We need only look at our own Christian history to find examples.

5) TWO MISSIOLOGICAL METHODS TO DEAL WITH RADICAL ISLAM TODAY

1. **Irenic, Traditional Method**
2. **Confrontational Model**

a) **Irenics, Traditional Method**

Premise: Friendship; "inter-faith dialogue"; 'Grace' method (UK); 'Insider Movement' (US)

- **Islamic Violence** is simply an **aberration**, practiced by a few, due to geo-political problems (Israel, Iraq, Afghanistan)

Solution: Solve these geo-political problems

- Something for governments to do, not the Church.

Church: listen to the Muslim's grievances

- Address them with a repentant spirit,
- Give them a voice through the vehicle of **inter-faith dialogues**
- And refrain from confrontation (i.e. Polemics)

b) **Confrontational Model**

Premise: **Violence** is **not** an **aberration**, nor recent, nor due to 19th c. colonialism, nor



American imperialism, nor even to recent geo-political flare-ups. Islam has **always used violence**, legitimized by passages in the Qur'an, and exemplified by Muhammad himself (Peter G. Riddell and Peter Cotterell, *Islam In Conflict*, Leicester, England: IVP, 2003:7-8)

Solution: Confront the ideology which supports the revelation which authorizes this violence

- Go beyond dialogue to public **debate**
- Use both apologetics and **polemics**

1st Problem: We have only one model (irenic)

2nd Problem: We have no 'Confrontation Theology'

3rd Problem: We have few Models or Schools

Why should we use Apologetics & Polemics?

- To challenge the foundations of Islam
- Redefine 'Love', so that it includes 'Tough love'
- Apologetics - something everyone can do
 - Know the Bible and Jesus
- Polemics - something only a few are called to
 - Know the Qur'an and Muhammad



6) WE HAVE HISTORICAL PRECEDENCE

Tübingen & Wellhausen: Historical criticism against Christianity in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (attacking historical authenticity of the Bible, and the credibility of Jesus Christ)

- **Result:** It brought about an enormous **disillusionment** within the European church, leading to millions leaving the church
- So that now hardly 5-7% of Europe's citizens believe in God, or even go to church (except for christenings, weddings or funerals)
- But then we did our homework, found the historical material to support the Bible (i.e. BM/L tour)
- The mounting evidence for the Bible, Old and New Testaments, from documentary, manuscript and archaeological findings is unmatched in comparison, In the words of Nelson Glueck *"To date no archaeological finding has contravened a properly understood Biblical Statement"*
- This has brought about renewed confidence in our Scriptures and in Jesus Christ as a universal model
- He is the best and **only alternative!**



7) IS PUBLIC CONFRONTATION BIBLICAL?

Apologia - 5 times in NT:

- Acts 22:1; 25:16; 1 Cor 9:3; 2 Cor 7:11; 2 Tim 4:16
- Twice Christians are asked to defend the Gospel (Phil 1:7, 16; 1 Pet 3:15)

Jesus' Example

- a) **Friendly** dialogue = Nicodemus (John 3:1-21)
- b) **Moderate** Reproach = Rich young ruler (Matthew 19:16)
 - Pharisees and Herodians (Mark 12:13)
 - Dispute with Pharisee host at a dinner party (Lk 7:36-50)
- c) **Strong** Confrontation = Money-changers (Mt 21:12-13; Lk 19:45)
 - Pharisees in Matthew 23:13-33

Paul's Example

- a) **Contextualized** his message:
 - With the dispersed Jews (Acts 13:13-15)
 - In the Aeropagus in Athens (Acts 17:22-31)
- b) **Reasoned** with the Greeks using their traditions (Acts 17:1-2, 17)
- c) Strong **Confrontation**, using apologetics and polemics, to *speak boldly, refute, debate, and argue* with others (Acts 13:46; 17:17; 18:28; 19:8-9; 2 Corinthians 5:11; 10:5).
 - **Ephesus**, began "*arguing persuasively*" in the Jewish synagogue for three months (Acts 19:8)
 - Then continued in the lecture hall of **Tyrannus** for two more years (Acts 19:9-10).
 - **Rome**, for another two years, he "**BOLDLY TRIED TO CONVINC**E" those who came to talk to him about Jesus (Acts 28:23-31).

Stephen: When challenged by members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (i.e., the Jews of Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia and Asia), Stephen held his ground and returned their arguments, so much so, that "*they could not stand up against his wisdom*" (Acts 6:9-10), and finally decided to execute him (Acts 7:57- 8:1). One does not get executed for merely "agreeing to disagree", in the context of a dialogue!

Philip: Philip was likewise comfortable when confronting the Ethiopian (Acts 8:26-40).

Samuel Zwemer: "*Paul disputed in the synagogues (Acts 17:17) in the school of one Tyrannus, daily (Acts 19:9) for two years. In Jerusalem he disputed against the Grecians until they sought to slay him (Acts 9:29)...II Corinthians, Galatians and Colossians could be classified as controversial literature of the first century...His military vocabulary is proof*



enough that he was no spiritual pacifist but fought a good fight against the enemies of the Cross of Christ and all those who preached 'another gospel'" (Zwemer 1941:225)

So, why do we consider confrontation detrimental to the gospel, when it was this very model that was used so often by the earliest believers who gave us the gospel?

8) CONFRONT ONLY CO-RELIGIONISTS?

- Jesus = Woman at the well & the Centurion
- Paul = Gentiles living outside the Jewish community
- Philip = Confronted the Ethiopian (Acts 8:26-40)

9) HISTORICAL EXAMPLES OF CHRISTIAN POLEMICISTS

- John of Damascus (8th c.)
- 'Al-Kindi' (9th c.)
- Raymond lull (13th c.)
- Carl Pfander (19th c.)
- Samuel Zwemer (20th c.)

10) PRESENT PROBLEMS

- 1) **No Missiological Model** – only Church planting & conversion are taught
 - We teach responses from the Reformation, not apologetics/Polemics with Islam
- 2) **No Schools** – Except for Pfander & i2 Ministries, there are no schools which teach apologetics & polemics to Islam
 - We have to fly in and out, employing 'Module's to teach it
- 3) **No Confrontation Missiology** – All geared to 15% Arab world, not 85% Asian/African

11) TYPES OF DEBATES

- **University** Debates
 - The 'Parliamentary' model (4x4)
 - The 'Populist' Model (1x1)
- **Impromptu** Debates (5 minutes back and forth)
- **Radio** Debates
- **Internet** - Online debating (FB – YouTube – Zoom Webinars)

12) 'SAULS BECOMING PAULS'

- Debates attract 'opinion leaders', the 'makers and shakers' of their communities, the 'Saul's who become Pauls'.
- Few Christians have sought to confront Islam's foundations polemically, due to fear, or their methodological restraints
- Yet, we, like the radical Muslims, start from a similar pre-suppositional framework, a revelation modelled by a 'Book and a Man', so we understand them better than others
- Debates are one of the few vehicles we have to destroy the foundations of Islam, their 'Book and their Man'



- Unlike Christianity, Islam has no relationship with their God, thus, propositional truth against their ‘Book and Man’ creates doubt, which leads to disillusionment, whose solution we have
- We must give room for both apologetics and polemics, to not only defend our faith, but also confront theirs
- We need to be proud of our theological and historical foundations, and demand reciprocity, because we have the most to gain, while they have most to lose
- Debating and Theological Confrontation fits their culture; thus it is contextual

13) CONCLUDING REMARKS

- Some of us need to eradicate the foundations and authority for the most radical Muslim groups
- Some of us need to use a model of ‘tough love’ well suited for our times
- All of us need to use verbal and public defense (apologetics)
- Some of us need to publicly and verbally challenge (polemics)
- We don’t use “*weapons of this world*” (2 Corinthians 10:3), but instead, through the use of “*arguments, taking captive every thought and making it obedient to Jesus Christ*” (verse 5); employing the use of one’s mouth..., mind, and volition.

14) SEVEN AREAS OF APOLOGETICS/POLEMICS WHERE CHRISTIANS WIN!

- 1) The Bible vs. The Qur’an
- 2) Women in the Bible vs. Women in the Qur’an
- 3) The Kingdom of God vs. The ‘Khilafa’ (Islamicstate)
- 4) Yahweh of the Bible vs. Allah of the Qur’an
- 5) Jesus in the Bible vs. ‘Issa’ in the Qur’an
- 6) Peace in the Bible vs. Violence in the Qur’an
- 7) The Relevancy of Christianity vs. the Irrelevancy of Islam



15) WHAT WEAPONS WILL WE USE?

“For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they are divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)

