

LECTURE 8: A VERY SHORT INTRODUCTION TO THINKING ABOUT SOME SEEN AND UNSEEN TYPES OF MUSLIM PEOPLE & 101 QUESTIONS

1 “Muslim Global Activist Trends”¹

- Different trends often divided into ideological responses to Western power, “traditional/fundamentalism” and “modernism/secularism”
- Ramadan’s categorisation:
 - Scholastic Traditionalism – importance of legal schools and personal piety
 - Salafi Literalism – follow the *salaf* not a legal school, no *bida*, isolationist, eg “Muhammad said if you miss one prayer that means you are no longer a Muslim”, Hadith about 73 sects reinforces own ideology (both sectarianism and orthodoxy)
 - Salafi Reformism – follow the *salaf*, in order to contextualise Islam for the socio-political challenges of the day, desire to recreate the caliphate
 - Political Literalist Salafism – grew out of political repression, oppose the West and non-Islamic governments in Muslim countries, intolerant and incite to violence
 - Don’t think this is a “male thing” eg Anabel Inge, *The Making of a Salafi Woman: paths to conversion* (Oxford: OUP, 2017)
 - Sufism – inward life most important, can both shun and promote social involvement
 - Liberal or Rationalist Reformism – secularising, Qur’an and Hadith cannot be primary reference points for being Muslim in the West
- Which is the “real Islam”? For at least your “local Islam” search <http://mosques.muslimsinbritain.org/index.php>

2 “Fundamentalists”

- Hard to define, but...publicly and privately think Islam is the answer to everything
- Includes Salafis, but not all fundamentalists are Salafis and v.v.
- Islamism/politics crosses over with Salafis, but they are not the same sect – same is true for jihadism and Taliban, neither are Salafi, but IS/ISIS/ISIL-K are

¹ This is taken from Tariq Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam* (Oxford: OUP, 2004) and helpfully summarised in Sadek Hamid, *Sufis, Salafis and Islamists – the Contested Ground of British Islamic Activism* (London: I. B. Taurus & Co, 2016), 8-14.

- Anthropology lectures from a depressed Marxist
- *Allahu Akbar*, God is great(-er, -est)!
 - Islam of 9/11 and 7/7 and some more²
 - Following the book and the man AND responding to injustice
 - Largely about power at a community/national/supra-national level
 - To bring all of life under Allah's rule
 - Might see it on the surface or find it underneath



2a) Strands of Influence

- Surah 3:104, 110, 7:157, 9:71: enjoin what is right, forbid what is evil
 - As Muhammad showed and said, “Whoever amongst you sees an evil, he must change it with his hand; if he is unable to do so, then with his tongue; and if he is unable to do so, then with his heart; and that is the weakest form of Faith”. (Reported in Sahih Muslim, [Riyad as-Salihin 184 - The Book of Miscellany - Sunnah.com - Sayings and Teachings of Prophet Muhammad \(صلى الله عليه وسلم\)](#)).
- Ahmad ibn Taymiyya (from Harran in Mesopotamia, 1268-1328): “The duty of commanding good and forbidding the evil cannot be completely discharged without power and authority.”³
 - A Hanbali scholar at time of Mongols – Islam in crisis, due to deviation from revelation, rejected scholars’ consensus and re-evaluated Hadith
 - Law and morality = the same thing⁴
 - Connecting of political power with literalist approach of whole of sharia had been a minority view, but was promoted by ibn Taymiyya.
 - Law in pre-colonial times usually sharia plus local customs.⁵
 - Forgotten, but in 18th and 19th C he influenced Wahhabis as they sought power in Arabia and reacted to Ottoman expansion (cf Mongols).⁶

² See Anthony McRoy, *From Rushdie to 7/7: The Radicalisation of Islam in Britain* (London: Social Affairs Unit, 2005) for lots more.

³ Quoted in Lesslie Newbigin, Lamin Sanneh and Jenny Taylor, *Faith and Power: Christianity and Islam in ‘Secular’ Britain* (Wipf and Stock, 2005), 62.

⁴ Bill Musk, *Holy War, – why do some Muslims become Fundamentalists?*, *The Unseen Face of Islam* (both, Oxford: Monarch, 2003), 210.

⁵ Bill Musk, *Holy War*, 228-229.

⁶ Charles Allen, *God’s terrorists – the Wahhabi Cult and the Hidden Roots of Modern Jihad* (London: Little, Brown, 2006)

- Crisis deepened as Western powers took over
- Became ideology for some independence movements, eg
 - Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi born in N India 1903 – In *Let us be Muslims* he wrote: “Islam does not consist merely in bowing [ruku], prostration [sujud], fasting [sawm] and pilgrimage [hajj]; nor is it found in the face and dress of a man. Islam means submission to God and the Messenger. Anyone who refuses to obey them in the conduct of life-affairs has a heart devoid of the real Islam – ‘faith has not entered their hearts.’ His Prayers, his Fasting and his pious appearance are nothing but a deception.”⁷
 - Hassan Al-Banna born 1906, assassinated 1949 – fed-up with colonialism in Egypt and “what’s wrong with Islam today”, formed Muslim Brotherhood in 1928⁸, post-Arab Spring government, grandfather of Professor Tariq Ramadan
 - Sayyid Qutb born 1906, at 10 was hafiz, wrote *Milestones*, executed in 1966 – society is either order of Islam or order of jahiliya/ignorance, jihad is means to an end, used ibn Taymiyya who allowed Muslim v Muslim war⁹
 - De-colonisation and beyond didn’t bring about Islamic states, hence...
- Not sunni, but influential in practice...Ayatollah Khomeini took power after Iranian Revolution in 1979, led the response to Salman Rushdie
 - Saw Christian clergy as complicit in Western oppression
 - Ruled through Revolutionary Guards and persecuted those who opposed him
 - Tried to export revolution thru Hezbollah, now in Syria of Saudi and Turkey
 - “Iran is not a serene puritanical society but a chaotic, morally hypocritical society characterized by corruption”¹⁰
- An aside: a great little video from RE about Shias and Sunnis: [Shia // Sunni - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kt3yFGiElrs), / <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kt3yFGiElrs>, with Fatima and Abu Bakr
- Fundamentally for Islamic law over all of life, within community, under ruler
 - So, Islamists want to get back to Medina (Salafis)

⁷ Bill Musk, *Holy War*, 101.

⁸ Bill Musk, *Holy War*, 124-129.

⁹ Bill Musk, *Holy War*, 130-136.

¹⁰ Bill Musk, *Holy War*, quoting an Iranian, 200.

2b) Some Examples Over There

- From Taliban decree, December 1996: To prevent sedition and female exposure, music, beard-shaving and its cutting, keeping pigeons and playing with birds, kite-flying, idolatry, gambling, addiction, British and American hairstyle, interest on loans...¹¹
- Bin Laden and al Qaida – against USA, Israel and Saudi Arabia
- Boko Haram – against books ie “Western education”

2c) Some Examples In Here

- An aside from “reasonable” fundamentalists at the Oxford Union (Adam Deen explains in 9mins why peace doesn’t mean absence of war at [Adam Deen | Islam Is A Peaceful Religion | Oxford Union - YouTube](#) ; Mehdi Hassan speaks for 13 mins “for Muslim people worldwide”, that they are not all suicide bombers and so Islam can’t be a religion of war at [Mehdi Hasan | Islam Is A Peaceful Religion | Oxford Union - YouTube](#)), so:
 - Islam is religion of peace b/c message of Qur’an is justice (which includes peaceful co-existence) and any injunctions to war fall within just war theory
 - Islam underpins peace but peace doesn’t mean an absence of war and pacifism isn’t a morally defensible option
 - Peace also means an inner peace which enables co-existence with others

2d) Specifically Salafis Here

- In UK, not many mosques explicitly salafi now, but could be ½ by 2030 due to training provided with Saudi money
- Some 1st generation immigrants were Salafi eg Ahl-e-Hadith (from S Asia)
- Most are 2nd generation or converts, especially Somali and Afro-Caribbean converts
- British Muslims are negotiating crisis personally, culturally, religiously and locally, as Islam doesn’t seem to be working – open to persuasive people who reject secularism, legitimise themselves and provide unambiguous direction
- Traditionally people have grown up unaware of which madhab they’re in – everyone around them is homogenous whole/group/nation, but now in UK variety is clearly seen and known about and want something “purer”.

¹¹ Bill Musk, *Holy War*, 28.

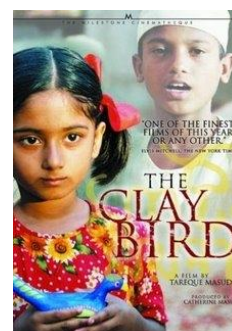
- They monitor boundaries, have paranoia about bida and shirk, and associating with unbelievers.
- But, remember people do go through change eg “born again Muslims” in university years and “calm down” later

2e) A Brief Response

- Musk: “If there is a sense in which all Muslims are “fundamentalist” in their approach to revelation, there is a sense also in which all Muslims are persuaded by some of the political arguments of the Islamists. Daring to believe God and daring to confront injustices against Muslims can be understood to go hand in hand.”¹²
- Indeed, “In Bangladesh it’s not just committed Islamists that approve of the Taliban. Our friends report that the majority of ordinary people are delighted at them gaining power in Afghanistan. This slogan has been popular in Sylhet for many years: ‘amra hokol Taliban, Bangla oibo Afghan!’ (“we are all Taliban, Bangladesh shall be like Afghanistan!”). Then there’s a smaller number of IS supporters who despise the Taliban for not being nearly ruthless enough. Why is there such support? One reason is the attraction of a ‘pure’ Islam that promises a version of God’s kingdom on earth. Another is that the Taliban’s success is seen as a triumph by the underdog against the rich and powerful West and their allies. They have not yet seen the other side of the coin: the violent oppression and loss of freedom that will inevitably follow Islamist rule, bringing in its train disillusionment with Islam, as has happened in Iran.” From Pray 4 Sylhetis
- BUT: “There was never any thing by the wit of man so well devised, so sure established, which in continuance of time hath not been corrupted.” (Preface to BCP, 1549)
 - AND: only Jesus can sort out evil in the world cf Luke 9:37-43

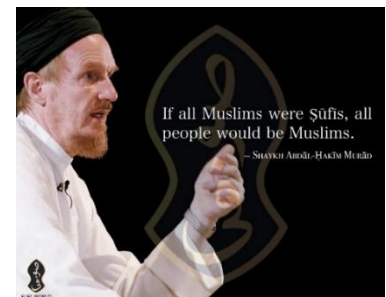
3 Sufis

- *Matir Moyna* (Clay Bird) by Tareque Masud, set in 1970-71 as Bangladesh begins to rebel against Pakistan, and as people think about the kind of Islam they want to follow: [Facebook](#) (from about 53mins to 57mins and 1hr19mins10 secs to 1hr22mins) and [Matir Moyna film\(মাটির ময়না \) - YouTube](#). More info here: [Matir Moina \(aplus.net\)](#)
 - Love for Allah v fear of Allah
- Sufis concerned with inner knowledge (*marifah*, not ‘ilm), the soul is on a quest
 - Worshippers respond to and in God’s love



¹² Bill Musk, *Holy War*, 232.

- 5 Pillars of Islam give you right submission (*islam*) and 6 Beliefs give you right faith (*iman*), a third part (*ihsan*) gives you a necessary inner dimension/path/relationship
 - Response to materialism – from *suf*/wool to show poverty (and copy desert monks?)
 - Inner dimension and closeness to God is possible – Allah is on his throne (s24:35) and near your throat (s50:16)
 - Need a guide/network and discipline as holiness is hierarchical – *murids* are led by *sheikhs* or *pirs* (saints) and ordered in *tarikas*
 - Poetry, song and *ganga*
 - Challenged: colonialism in 19th C
Challenged by: rationalism and Wahhabis, eg al-Hallaj executed in 922AD¹³ – can fall into pantheism
- Muhammad as the supreme sheikh/guide, perfect man, example and mediator of Poem of the Cloak in Muhammad Lecture
- Cuts across sunni and shia
- Types in the past: sober and ecstatic
Types now: universalists/non-Islamic, traditional Asian, non-traditional Asian, international¹⁴
 - International egs: Turkish Cypriot came to UK in 1973, went to Glastonbury, reached whites and subsequently Pakistanis; Syrian speaking English, Swedish and Arabic, helped South Asians deal with modernity; Glasgow woman, Principal of madrassa
 - Local outreach: flyers for food (served by young professionals not retired people), Christmas, chanting/whirling
- Importance of convert-scholars in West, took “Traditional Islam” space, not isolationist or territorial, reconnect with tradition of Salafis
- Need to respond to:
 - “Need supernatural to guide/save us”
 - “Experience not message is important”
 - “Mission is serving/love not arguing”



¹³ Ayoub *Islam: Faith and History*, 145.

¹⁴ Based on seminars Ted Collins gave at Christian Responses to Islam Conference in 2019 and 2021. See also Ted Collins, *The Other Islam: Christian Witness to Mystical Muslims* (WEC Publications: 2021)

4 “Unseen”

- Aladin and new lamps for old – R and her coriander demons and Facebook posts
 - Largely about power at a personal level
 - Maybe orthodox eg jinn-possession in *Clay Bird*
 - To bring my life out of the fear of the spirit world



4a) Re-Interpretation of Orthodox Beliefs and Practices

Intended Function	Form	Meaning in Official Islam	Meaning in Popular Islam	Reinterpreted Function
EXPRESSION OF SUBMISSION TO GOD	Creed: Only God Angels Books Messengers Last Day Predestination	Monotheistic confession of faith Servants of God, at his pleasure Encoding of God's self-revelation Vehicles of God's word to man Ethical focus of man's life Ultimately, all in God's hands	Magical use of names of God Possible mediators and powerful in charms Bibliomancy and bibliolatry Possible mediators and veneration of relics Acts to gain merit for dead relatives Laylat al-Qadr to try to change destinies	TO MAINTAIN EQUILIBRIUM IN LARGELY HOSTILE WORLD
EXPRESSION OF BELONGING TO COMMUNITY OF FAITHFUL	Pillars: Confession Prayer Alms Fasting Pilgrimage	Proves one to be a Muslim Bodily purity for worshipping God Responsibility to fellow-Muslims Sign of communal commitment Visit epicenter of the faith	Protection in spaces inhabited by evil Removal by water of demonic pollution & sins Precaution against the evil eye Veneration of Muhammad and Laylat al-Qadr Obtaining of Baraka and alternative shrines	

Function, form and meaning in official and popular Islam¹⁵

¹⁵ Figure 22, Function, form and meaning in official and popular Islam, Bill Musk, *Unseen Face*, 201.

4b) Encountering Christ

Felt Needs in Popular Islam	Popular Level Answers to Felt Needs			Spiritual Crisis	Felt Needs Met By Jesus Christ
	More animistic		Less animistic		
Fear of the unknown	Idolatry, stone worship	Fetishes, talismans, charms	Superstition	POWER ENCOUNTER WITH JESUS CHRIST	Security in Christ as keeper, guide
Fear of evil spirits	Witchcraft	Amulets, knots	Exorcism		Exorcism by Christ, power over spirits
Powerlessness before power of shaman	Sorcery	Prophylaxes	Prophylaxes		Protection from attack
Fear of the future	Angel worship	Divination, spells	Fatalism, fanaticism		Trust in Christ as Lord of the future
Shame of not being in the in-group	Curse	Hair/nail trimmings			Acceptance in the fellowship of believers
Disequilibrium	Magic	Divination			Restoration and answered prayer
Sickness	Tree/saint worship	Healing magic			Divine healing in Christ's power
Helplessness in crisis	Magic	Vows	Intercession of saints		Christ answering prayer directly
Meaningless of life		Turning to spirit world			Purpose in life as God's child, using gifts, abilities
Vulnerability of women	Occult influence	Zar-type ceremony	Practices at birth, etc.		Security in Christ; influence as prayer warriors

Felt Needs in Popular Islam¹⁶

- To an extent it is under the surface among all Muslim people

¹⁶ Figure 3 Felt needs in popular Islam, Bill Musk, *Unseen Face*, 71.

- Probably more prevalent among less well educated
- Was more obviously prevalent in Tower Hamlets 15 years ago

5 “Scientists”¹⁷

- Remember Zakir Naik? eg [FULL - Dr. Zakir Naik The Quran and the Bible in the Light of Science vs Dr William Campbell - YouTube](#), with great critique here: [Is the Logic of Zakir Naik Reliable? - Evidence for God's Unchanging Word](#) (or [Naik - 25 mistakes in 5 min \(6.2\) - YouTube](#))
- [Scientific Facts in The Quran - Must See! - YouTube](#) – (4 mins 45 secs) a lying and sinning forelock = frontal lobe, using, surah 96:9-16
- [9 Shocking Facts From the Quran! - YouTube](#) – (13mins, less slick) many miracles, Islam based on reason and proof
- [New Miracles of The Quran 2018 Scientific Facts - YouTube](#) – (6-7 mins, very slick) light, chlorophyl, olive oil and planets, using surah 24:35
- [Ouzo effect in the Quran - There Is No Clash - YouTube](#) – (6-7 mins, still slick) milky liquor and emulsions, using surahs 76:4-6, 15-18, 37:45-47
- Intra-Islamic discussion: [Warning on the Science Miracle claims youtube channel 'ThereIsNoClash' \(feat. their video "Cosmic Calendar in holy Quran"\) : islam \(reddit.com\)](#)



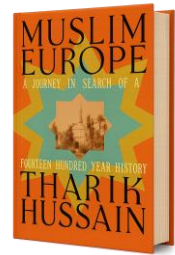
[Deconstructing the "Scientific Miracles in the Quran" Argument - Traversing Tradition / https://traversingtradition.com/2018/04/09/deconstructing-the-scientific-miracles-in-the-quran-argument/](#)

- But, why are these done/so important?
 - Issues of “backwardness”, colonialism, identity, challenge Eurocentric history, challenge atheism, convert...(and similar to 1,000 Islamic Inventions)
 - Internet is changing the way Islam is being promoted and can communicate directly with many ordinary Muslim people

¹⁷ Seminar on *Islamic Pseudo Science* led by C. B., at Christian Teachers of Islam meeting as part of Christian Responses to Islam In Britain Conference 2019.

- Also responses here:

- g [\[FILM\] 1001 Inventions and the Library of Secrets - starring Sir Ben Kingsley \(English Version\) - YouTube / https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JZDe9DCx7Wk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JZDe9DCx7Wk)



- What should we say?

6 Many Questions

- Not just questions in UK – true for 4 BIG objections and others
- Some helpful ideas from Aaron Sorkin via President Bartlett, Chief Justice Lang and Colonel Jessup
 - More than 10 words are often needed ([Ten Word Answers - YouTube , https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=85dKvletfSo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=85dKvletfSo))
 - Think about the people you're talking to ([The West Wing, The Supremes, Glen Close Mobile - YouTube , https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p371H1hMPbl](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p371H1hMPbl))
 - Use words because you mean them not as a punchline ([You Can't Handle the Truth! - A Few Good Men \(7/8\) Movie CLIP \(1992\) HD - YouTube , https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9FnO3igOkOk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9FnO3igOkOk))
- How might you begin to respond to the following questions/issues? In responding:
 - a) Think about the question or issue behind-the-question
 - b) Think about what questions you might ask the person asking you
 - c) Think what Bible passages you might take someone to
 - d) What answer would you provide? (In one sentence, a minute or two, for a bit longer...)

6a) Some Theological Questions

- 1) Jesus never said, "I am God worship me". So, why do you worship him as a god?
- 2) Your church approves of homosexuality, that shows how wrong you are, doesn't it?
- 3) Your Bible says you are saved by grace, but what about works?
- 4) Your Bible says you are saved by grace, but then talks about works, that's contradictory, isn't it?

- 5) Why does God need to become a human?
- 6) Jesus' "one-ness" with the Father is just like the one-ness his disciples have and doesn't prove he is God (John 10:30 cf 17:20-23), does it?
- 7) Jesus' death doesn't conquer death for others (because we all still die) so it doesn't achieve anything, does it?
- 8) If Jesus died for the world, then hell should be empty, shouldn't it?
- 9) How are pre-Jesus-people (BC people) saved?
- 10) The Bible has no intellectual proof that it is from the Creator. Doesn't this mean that Christians advocate blind faith?
- 11) If Peter said "x" (in 1-2 Peter), where and how did Peter come to these teachings? How can this be "God's word" if Peter wrote/said it?
- 12) How is sin dealt with in this life?
- 13) If God cannot be tempted (James 1:13) and Jesus was tempted (e.g. Luke 4:1-13), either the Bible is contradictory or Jesus is not God. Which is it?
- 14) Jesus called the Syro-Phoenician woman a "dog" (Mark 7:27). This is the most offensive thing a person could say in the ancient world. Do you mind following a swearing Jesus?
- 15) Do you drink wine in church?
- 16) Christianity makes impossible moral demands. Islam doesn't demand more than is reasonable because God knows that we are frail. This shows Islam is from God, doesn't it?
- 17) Islam has no priesthood or special caste of people. Christianity is elitist, isn't it?
- 18) We recognise Jesus as a prophet, why don't you recognise Muhammad?
- 19) Why don't you recognise the Bible foretells Muhammad's coming (e.g. Deuteronomy 18:15, John 14:16, Isaiah 21:7-15)?
- 20) The Trinity is unbiblical and illogical, isn't it?
- 21) If I go into a bookshop I can find 20 different versions of the Bible. New versions are being brought out every year. That shows that the Bible has been changed and is constantly being changed, doesn't it?
- 22) *'Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but he was a true Muslim and he was not an idolater* (surah 3:67 cf 2:135). What do you think of that?
- 23) Do you think that the church's understanding of the Trinity evolved or did the church just make it up?
- 24) Why does Jude quote the Apocrypha?

- 25) Where is God when Jesus is on earth?
- 26) Your religion has no interpretive key/detailed rules for interpretation, that's why Christians disagree and cannot ever interpret the Bible, isn't it?
- 27) Your God changes his mind and deceives people. That's not very God-like, is it?
- 28) Muslims believe the Christian message, why don't you believe ours?
- 29) Do we worship the same God?
- 30) Are Muslims damned?
- 31) If God loved the world so much why did he send his son and not come himself?
- 32) Malachi 3:6 says that God doesn't change. So, can you show me the unchanging Trinity in the Bible?
- 33) You talk about the Lord Jesus. Is this Lord a prophet?
- 34) What do you mean by God being a "husband" or "father"?
- 35) Why are there so many versions of the Bible?
- 36) Why were we created?
- 37) What will happen on judgement day?
- 38) Deuteronomy 24:16 & Ezekiel 18 talk about people not suffering for the sins of fathers so how can one take the sins of another (e.g. Christ)? And, how can Adam's sin be linked to us?
- 39) Luke 1:3 talks about careful investigation, so how can it be from God?
- 40) Why do you believe in a genocidal, ethnic-cleansing, tribal deity?
- 41) Jesus' mission wasn't successful, Muhammad's was. What do you think of that?
- 42) Jesus only came for Jewish people, Muhammad came for the whole world. So, you should follow Muhammad not Jesus, shouldn't you?
- 43) Jesus didn't bring a shariah for all of life, but Muhammad did. Therefore, we know exactly how to live for God and you don't, do you?
- 44) Jesus did not come to abolish the Law, and yet you eat pork. Why?
- 45) The rich young ruler calls Jesus a good teacher, but Jesus replies that only God is good. Therefore, Jesus is saying that he is neither good nor God, isn't he?

- None of these questions necessarily require any knowledge about Islam or Muslim people – can answer from Scripture
- Can help to ask a few questions before diving in with an answer of Nick Chatrath on “Bible’s corruption”
- Here is an example of trying to think about question 1 “Jesus never said ‘I am God worship me’. So why do you worship Jesus as a god?”.
- a) *Behind the question*: the right thing to always ask, Christians are misinterpreting God’s word and associating partners with God, if not misinterpreting then the Bible had been changed.

But a level of unthinking-ness to this question: “It’s a summary of shahada”

- b) *Some questions*: “What’s your point? What’s your problem? Does this question really matter to you?” to tease out whether it’s a question about the Bible itself, or our interpretation, or that the questioner thinks I’m an idolater, or that they really don’t care.

Depending on their answers, I might ask whether Jesus could have said this and what they think defines God

- c) *Some Bible passages*: Psalm 65, particularly v3 and 7, to show some God-like activities, then go to Luke 5:17-26 and 8:22-25
- d) *One sentence*: “You’re right, Jesus doesn’t say that exact statement, but would you be willing to accept that it could be a summary of Jesus’ words and work?”

A few sentences: “Just in the same way that the *shahada* [confession of faith] is a summary of Islam, yet there is not one verse in the Qur’an which has the exact words of the *shahada*, so we could sum up much of Jesus’ life and teaching with ‘I am God, worship me’. Why do I say that? Well, if we look at some words of the Prophet David, he says that God sorts out sin and calms storms. You can see that here in the Zabur, Psalm 65:3, 7. Do you see that?”

“Well, it’s interesting that when Jesus was in Palestine he did both those things. Let’s look at the Injil and Luke 5:17-26 and 8:22-25. Do you see that people hear and see him doing God-like things? He does not need to use the words ‘I am God worship me’ because his teaching and actions show it very clearly. And, if he did say those kinds of words he would have been immediately arrested and probably executed for blasphemy. As it was, it took the authorities 3 years to put him on trial for his claims, because he had said and shown who he was in more thoughtful ways.

“Also, it’s interesting that a few times in the Bible, people fall at an angel’s feet and the angel immediately says they should get up and not worship them. When people fall at Jesus’ feet, he never says that. So, what do you now think of Jesus? What do you think of his words of forgiveness and his power over nature? Do you think that you can be forgiven now, and can be safe on the Last Day? Why...?”

- Now you try:
 - a) Think about the question or issue behind-the-question
 - b) Think about what questions you might ask the person asking you
 - c) Think what Bible passages you might take someone to
 - d) What answer would you provide? (In one sentence, a minute or two, for a bit longer...)

6b) Some “Social/Cultural” Questions

- All questions and answers are theological, but below are some social or cultural questions, and show how confused culture and faith can be...

- 1) Why do you have Father Christmas?
- 2) Henry 8th made up the Church of England, you’re a political not spiritual organisation, are you?
- 3) The West is in decline therefore Christianity false, isn’t it?
- 4) Why do you have a Christmas tree in your house when it’s a pagan symbol?
- 5) Islam is the fastest growing religion. What do you think of that?
- 6) If God is over all of life, can secularism be accepted? When and where does God have a say in life?
- 7) If you submit to rulers aren’t you supporting a secular world? Aren’t you then supporting the implementation of wrongdoing? Does this mean Christianity has no solutions for political affairs?
- 8) Why do you eat pork, which is unclean?
- 9) Why do you drink alcohol?
- 10) Democracy is about man pretending to be God, so why do you vote?
- 11) Charging interest is wrong, so why do you have a bank account, mortgage etc?

12) Children don't obey their parents in the West as they do in Muslim countries. That shows Islam works, doesn't it?

13) Our women are cared for much better, than yours. Western women are subject to immorality and pressures our women never face. That's why more women are converting in the West than ever before, isn't it?

14) Why do Christians support the state of Israel?

15) Do you want to prevent the mega-mosque being built, like those other fundamentalist, right-wing Christians?

16) What do you think of the "war on terror"?

17) If everyone became Christian in the UK, and the UK was then invaded, you would be able to do nothing about it because Christianity is pacifist and therefore unworkable, isn't it?

- Again, have a think about:

a) The question or issue behind-the-question.

b) What questions you might ask the person asking you.

c) What Bible passages you might take someone to.

d) What answer would you provide (in one sentence, in a few sentences, in a ten minute talk)?

- Here is an example of trying to think about question 5 'Islam is the fastest growing religion. What do you think of that?'

a) *Behind the question:* since Islam is the fastest growing religion, it must be right. Might be pride in being on the winning side and/or a defensive response to Islam seeming to be on the losing side in the colonial era and to the fact that Islamic nations appear less economically developed than Western nations. (Along with an impression that the West is full of immorality that comes from its Christian basis and past, again showing that Islam is superior and right.) – important for people who can feel marginalised due to their ethnicity or their religion, it can be very important

- b) *Some questions*: what evidence do they have? In the UK, in Europe or in the whole world? Is this growth by conversion or birth or immigration or something else? Just about some white British people being converted?

“I’ll see your UK converts and raise you half of Africa” usually led to accusations that those numbers are false and that any such conversions are only due to bribery

- c) *Bible passages*: Back in the previous prophets, Almighty God promised that his people would be as numerous as the stars in the sky (in Genesis 15:5). His kingdom would become the biggest mountain that filled the whole earth (Daniel 2:31–45). Jesus the Messiah taught that his kingdom would grow from tiny beginnings into the biggest tree (Luke 13:18–19). Like yeast, it would spread through the most enormous amount of flour (Luke 13:20–21). His kingdom often looks small and insignificant (from our narrow viewpoint of twenty-first-century Christianity in the UK), but will ultimately involve countless multitudes from every language and culture (Revelation 7:9–12).
- d) *One or two sentences*: “There are more non-Muslims than Muslims across the world, but does that mean “non-Islam” is true? How convinced are you that that numbers prove truth?’ Depending on the person’s answer, I might use some of the thoughts above, particularly about things not looking impressive in the West but that this is not the whole picture or the finished masterpiece.

That said, I do not think that facts are really the issue here and so a better line of questioning, which then leads to the Bible, might be: ‘Are you talking about growth in numbers or growth in righteous living? Do you think that large numbers show that something is true? After all, Muhammad was followed by very few to begin with, and so do you think that meant his message was false? Often it seems that God’s people are few in number and seem marginalised, as you might remember from the prophet Daniel’s day. Can I share his story with you?’ I might then look with them at Daniel 2 and Luke 13:18–30. I would conclude along the lines of: ‘Whatever the numbers, do you think that more people are living rightly? Can someone live perfectly rightly for God? Do you?’

- However we answer: we’re not trying to win an argument – our Muslim friend is made in God’s image, fallen and in need of knowing Jesus. They need to be won for Christ, not for our ego.
- We must also remember that however good, true and faithful our answers are, we need to depend on God to move people’s hearts.

As the missionary Henry Martyn wrote, ‘O that I could converse and reason, and plead, with power from on high. How powerless are the best-directed arguments, till the Holy Spirit renders them effectual.’¹⁸

7 Coming Back to the Start

- Remember 2 Timothy 3:16

¹⁸ Henry Martyn, 1781–1812, was a missionary to Muslim people in India and Persia. These words of his are recorded in *Journals and Letters of Henry Martyn*, ed S. Wilberforce, Volume 2 (Seeley & Burnside, 1837), 373.

- Remember faith and love, not fear and loathing – Muslim people are made in the image of God, yet are fallen suppressors of truth, like everyone else.
- Build a team, train and pray
- And pray some more

8 Some Resources for Further Study

Charles Allen, *God's Terrorists- the Wahhabi Cult and the Hidden Roots of Modern Jihad*, (London: Little, Brown, 2006)

Innes Bowen, *Medina in Birmingham, Najaf in Brent: Inside British Islam* (London: Hurst and Company, 2014)

Colin Chapman, *Christian Responses to Islam, Islamism and 'Islamic Terrorism'*, Cambridge Papers vol 16, no 2, June 2007

William Dalrymple, *The Last Mughal: The Fall of Delhi 1857*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2009)

Giles Foden, *Zanzibar*, (London: Faber, 2002)

Khaled Hosseini, *Kite Runner*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2003)

Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi, *Towards Understanding Islam*, (Leicester: Islamic Foundation, 2007).

Bill Musk, *Holy War – why do some Muslims become Fundamentalists?*, *The Unseen Face of Islam* (both, Oxford: Monarch, 2003) & *Touching the Soul of Islam* (Oxford: Monarch, 2004).

Sayed Qutb, *Milestones*, (Islamic Book Service, 2006).