

ENGAGING MUSLIMS

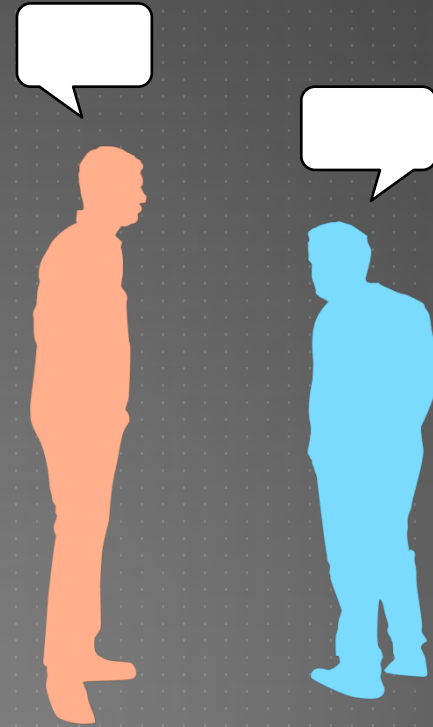
Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

— 2 Cor. 5:20

PLAN

- ▶ Who am I?
- ▶ Strategy Refresher:
Two ways to engage
- ▶ History of Islam
- ▶ Islamic Belief
- ▶ Modern Islam
- ▶ Christianity vs Islam
- ▶ Engaging Muslims
- ▶ Sharing Time

- ▶ Ask questions as we go along



WHO AM I?

- ▶ Malcolm Lithgow
- ▶ ECC Elder
- ▶ ECC Sunday Axiom teacher
- ▶ Co-Founder of Think Christianity (www.thinkchristianity.org)
- ▶ Original creator of Reality Bites, now Telos
- ▶ Previously a Software Engineer (most recently in smartphone apps)
- ▶ Now studying a Master of Arts in Science and Religion at Biola University

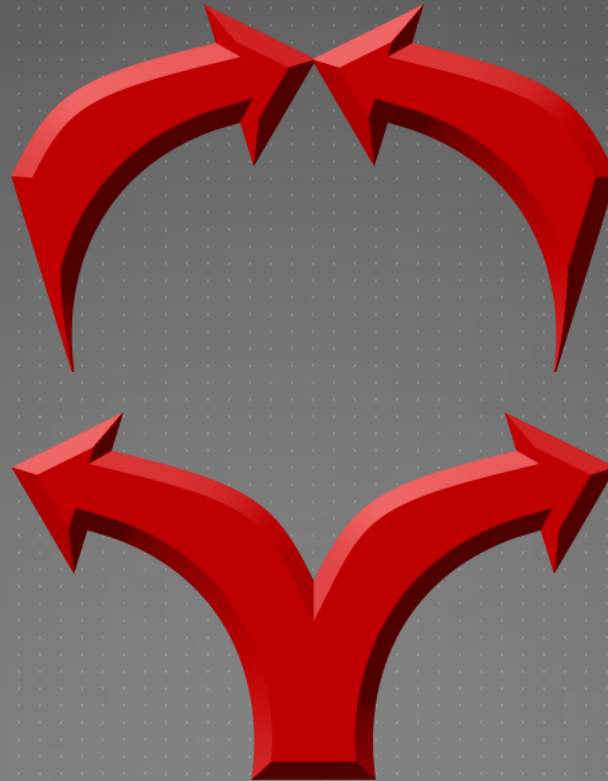
TWO WAYS TO ENGAGE

Ideal: master both ways

KNOWLEDGE

Know more

“Always being prepared to make a defence to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you”
—1 Pet. 3:15a

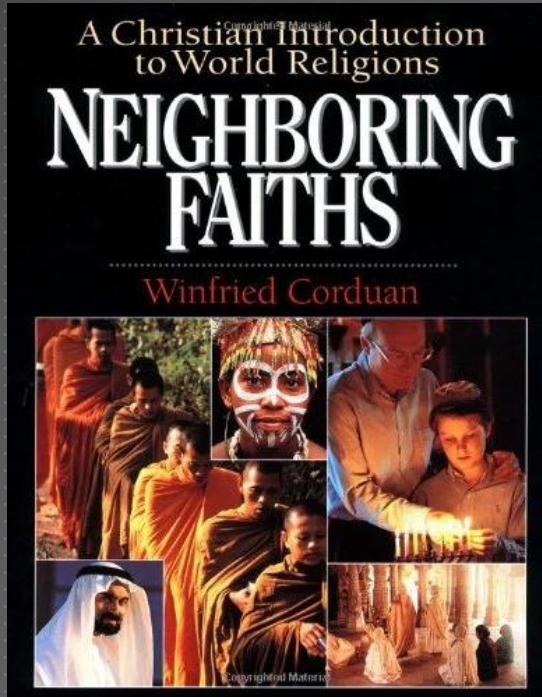


TACTICS

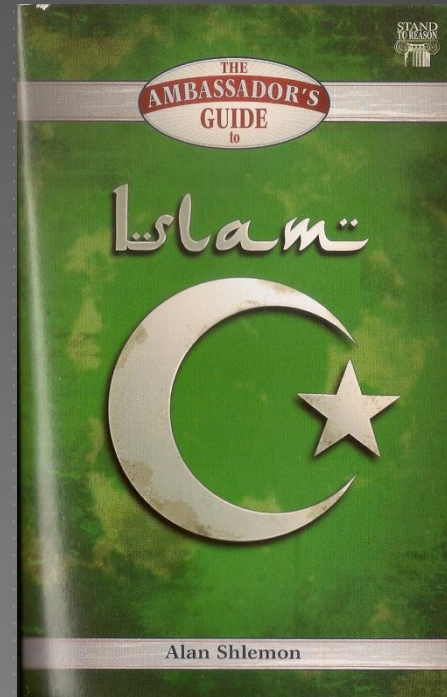
Know how to engage

“yet do it with gentleness and respect.”
—1 Pet. 3:15b

SOURCES



Intervarsity Press, © 1998



Stand to Reason, © 2010

HISTORY OF ISLAM

- ▶ Muhammad born A.D. 570 near Mecca
- ▶ Arabian peninsula was centre of trade, very cosmopolitan
- ▶ Mecca was pilgrimage centre, with ka'ba and numerous idols
- ▶ Muhammad probably born into ancient monotheistic tribe
- ▶ Judaism, Christianity and Zoroastrianism all monotheistic influences
- ▶ Strong Jewish community in Yathrib (Medina)

HISTORY: MUHAMMAD

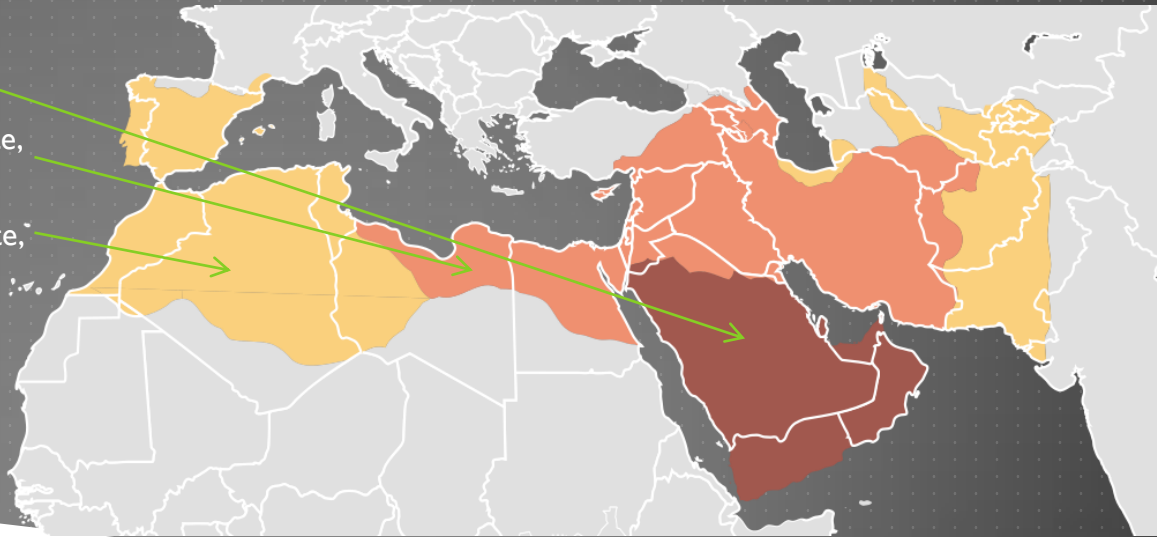
- ▶ Born poor, orphaned early
- ▶ Married a wealthy (merchant) widow, Khadija, who later supported his religious efforts
- ▶ A.D. 610, first heard from Gabriel, and began reciting what became the Qur'an
- ▶ Persecution of the young, evangelistic faith in Mecca lead to a flight (*hijra*) to Yathrib (Medina)
- ▶ Built up followers, including many Arabian tribes
- ▶ Captured Mecca and cleansed it of idols
- ▶ Died A.D. 632

HISTORY: SCHISM

- ▶ After Muhammad's death his cousin & son-in-law, Ali claimed to be designated successor (including inheritor of spiritual knowledge)
- ▶ Consensus (*sunna*) elected Abu Bakr, Muhammad's father-in-law & friend
- ▶ After Abu Bakr, Umar (A.D. 634), then Uthman (A.D. 644) were elected
- ▶ Uthman collected fragments of scripture together to form the Qur'an and destroyed all "inauthentic" pieces
- ▶ Ali became caliph in A.D. 656
- ▶ Mu'awiyah also laid claim to caliphate, which led to civil war between Sunnis (consensus, the majority) and Shi'ites (splinter minority)
- ▶ Sunni capital established in Damascus

HISTORY: CONQUEST

- ▶ Islam expanded rapidly, by conquest
- ▶ Reached maximum extent in A.D. 732 (100 years after Muhammad's death)
- ▶ At Battle of Tours the Franks defeated the Umayyad Muslims, ending Western expansion
- ▶ Expansion under Muhammad, 622–632/A.H. 1-11
- ▶ Expansion during the Rashidun Caliphate, 632–661/A.H. 11-40
- ▶ Expansion during the Umayyad Caliphate, 661–750/A.H. 40-129



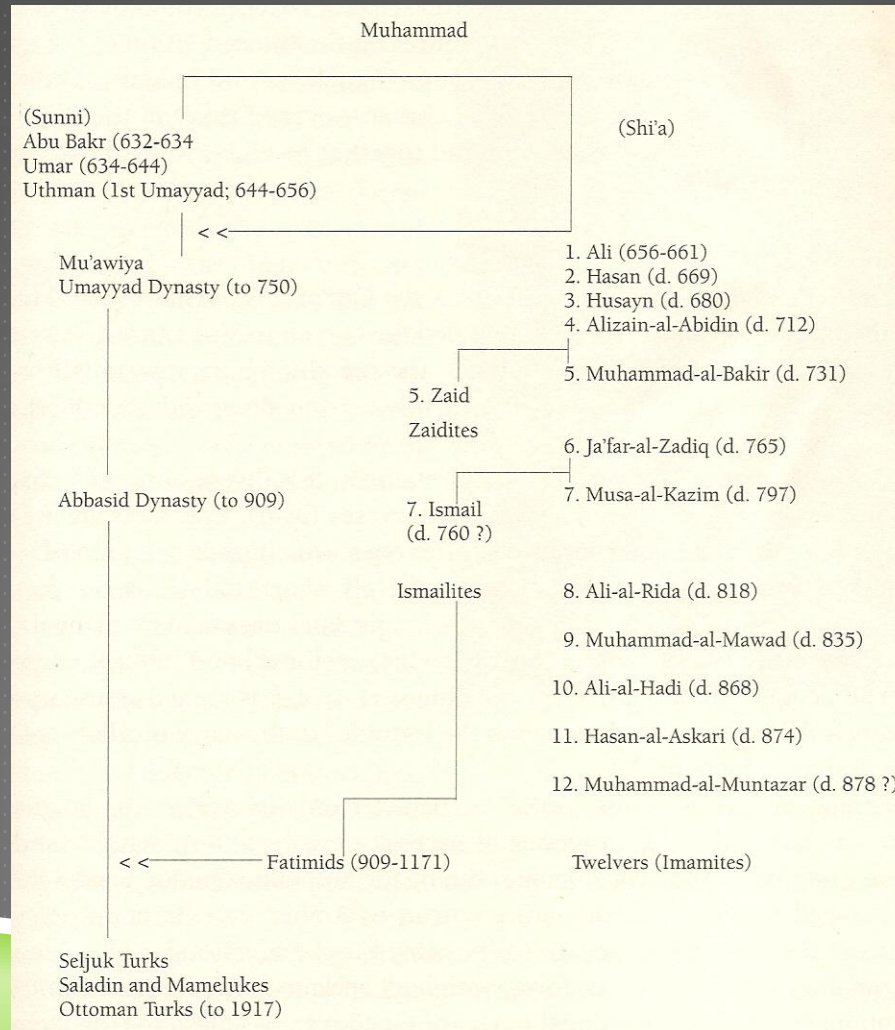
HISTORY: EXPANSION OF ISLAM

- ▶ Conquest justified by doctrine of jihad
 - ▶ All must submit (*islam*) to Allah
 - ▶ Islamic nations cannot attack other nations except in defense
 - ▶ Repression of Islam (including stopping emissaries demanding submission) justifies Islamic force in “liberating” oppressed peoples—this allowed rapid expansion
 - ▶ Once a territory has become part of Islam (Dar-al-Islam) it may never be allowed to revert to non-Muslim hands
- ▶ After rapid expansion, consolidation

HISTORY: EMPIRE

- ▶ Empire consolidated under
 - ▶ Abbasids
 - ▶ Fatimids
 - ▶ Seljuk Turks
 - ▶ Sunni Mamelukes
 - ▶ Ottoman Turks, until 1917
- ▶ Islam preserved Greek “science,” especially Aristotle, reintroduced into Europe in 12th century leading to Scholasticism
- ▶ Refined *shari’a* law (four schools plus Shi’a) from A.D. 750-850
- ▶ A.D. 1009, Caliph Al-Hakim destroyed the Holy Sepulchre, last straw for Christians (after much persecution) and led to the First Crusade

HISTORY: BRANCHES OF ISLAM



ISLAMIC BELIEF: AUTHORITY

- ▶ Primary source of authority is the Qur'an
 - ▶ Qur'an is in Arabic only (i.e. original words spoken by Gabriel)
 - ▶ Translations are considered commentaries
 - ▶ Composed of 114 *suras* (chapters) in order of longest first, each divided into *ayat* (verses)
- ▶ Second source is *hadiths*, and *sunna*. “As *sunna* (here again meaning “consensus”), the hadiths point to Muhammad’s actual life as indications of how Muslims should act.” Collected very early.
- ▶ Third source is *shari’a*: Islamic law. Four schools, developed A.D. 750-850
- ▶ Offshoot (almost heretical) is *Sufism*, a form of mysticism seeking a direct experience of Allah

BELIEF: BASICS

- ▶ Allah is unitary and alone (ascribing divinity to Christ is *shirk*, idolatry)
- ▶ Other supernatural beings exist, including angels (like Gabriel) and demons (jinn) led by the devil. See Folk Islam for more on this
- ▶ God reveals his will to prophets, mostly common to Judaism & Christianity (including Jesus), but Muhammad is the last
- ▶ Prophets who were apostles left books (Moses the Torah, David the Psalms, Jesus the Gospel) and “people of the book” may enter heaven
- ▶ God has set a time of judgement when all will be resurrected and judged

BELIEF: FIVE PILLARS

- ▶ Religion of practice more than belief, thus five pillars:
- ▶ Confession (*shahada*)
 - ▶ There is no God but God, and Muhammad is the apostle of God.
 - ▶ *La ilaha illa allah Muhammad rasul Allah*
- ▶ Prayer (*salat*)
 - ▶ Five times a day
 - ▶ Preferably in mosque (for men), following precise ritual
- ▶ Fasting (*sawm*)
 - ▶ Especially during the month of Ramadan, no food or drink during daylight
- ▶ Almsgiving (*zakat*)
 - ▶ Traditionally 2.5% (1/40th) of profits
- ▶ Pilgrimage (*hajj*)
 - ▶ Should visit Mecca at least once; may visit for others; follow proscribed rituals
 - ▶ Gain in social status

ISLAM NOW

- ▶ 1.6 billion adherents worldwide
- ▶ Rapidly growing due to high birth rate relative to developed nations
- ▶ Immigration into Europe is rapidly shifting the population towards Islam
- ▶ Many Western Muslims are peaceful
- ▶ Islam as a world religion is violently aggressive
 - ▶ Egypt (Muslim vs. Copt), Palestine (Muslim vs. Jew), Iraq (Sunni vs. Shi'ite), etc.
- ▶ Islam is opportunistically expansionist (e.g. will use Western laws to force submission from Christianity, etc.)

FOLK ISLAM

- ▶ 70% of Muslims are nominal
- ▶ Extensive superstitions revolving around jinn (animism)
- ▶ Rituals become spirit control rather than submission to Allah
- ▶ Sharia and culture are conflated with Islam
- ▶ Fatalism is common (“Allah wills it”)
- ▶ Authoritarianism create comfort and thus is generally supported

CHRISTIANITY VS. ISLAM

- ▶ Bible vs. Q'uran
- ▶ Q'uran is dictated by God, Bible's inspiration much more complex
- ▶ Q'uran's "canon" defined by Uthman, Biblical canonisation messy and complex process
- ▶ Q'uran cannot be translated, Bible can be translated (the word is in the meaning)
- ▶ Q'uran unstructured, Bible highly structured (but flexible)
- ▶ Q'uran written by one man, Bible written by dozens across millenia
- ▶ Q'uran poor manuscript attestation, Bible best in the world
- ▶ Q'uran ultimate authority, Bible ultimate authority (for Protestants)

CHRISTIANITY VS. ISLAM

- ▶ Allah vs. Yahweh
- ▶ Allah is unitary, Yahweh is trinity
- ▶ Allah is transcendent, Yahweh is both transcendent and immanent
- ▶ Allah is merciful, Yahweh is merciful and just (loving)
- ▶ Leibniz law of the “indiscernibility of identicals” proposes that identical things will have identical properties
- ▶ Allah has different properties from Yahweh
- ▶ Therefore Allah is *not* Yahweh

CHRISTIANITY VS. ISLAM

▶ Salvation

▶ In Islam

- ▶ Salvation depends on living a life of submission to Allah
- ▶ Since we never completely submit all our lives, we rely on Allah's mercy
- ▶ Allah's mercy is effectively arbitrary (thus fatalism)

▶ In Christianity

- ▶ Salvation depends on accepting God's grace and letting go of our own efforts
- ▶ We may fail throughout our lives and still be accepted as God's children
- ▶ God's mercy and love are never failing and assured (thus hope)

CHRISTIANITY VS. ISLAM

▶ Jihad vs. Evangelism

▶ Islam

- ▶ According to Islamic principles, conversion cannot be coerced
- ▶ However, under Dar-al-Islam, you either:
 - ▶ Convert and enjoy full citizenship
 - ▶ Do not convert, pay a tax and be a second-class citizen (although note that in the early empire, such as Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates, Christians were well treated)
 - ▶ Die
- ▶ We see some practice of this now in the Middle East, Egypt, and Malaysia
- ▶ Islam attempts to implement shari'a wherever Muslims live, so shari'a law in the UK
- ▶ Violent responses to criticism of Islam

▶ Christianity

- ▶ Christian kings have conquered in the name of Christ, and the church has supported them, but the Bible opposes this
- ▶ Christianity works with the local culture and legal system, transforming it from the bottom up rather than imposing rules on top
- ▶ Christianity's main approach is persuasion (thus we are "ambassadors" not conquerors, except of sin)

CHRISTIANITY VS. ISLAM

- ▶ Fate vs. Freedom
- ▶ Allah has absolute sovereignty
- ▶ Whatever happens is therefore Allah's will
- ▶ Therefore there is no chance for our own will
- ▶ Therefore we may as well resign ourselves to our inevitable fate (fatalism)
- ▶ Very prominent (and destructive) in Muslim cultures like Egypt
- ▶ In contrast, even Reformed doctrine insists on a place for human will, and exhorts hope and responsibility
- ▶ Christianity thus encourages responsibility and diligence with hope

ENGAGING MUSLIMS

- ▶ Alan Shlemon (of STR) suggests a game plan for engaging Muslims
- ▶ Muslims dismiss the Bible as corrupted (Islamic position since 9th century)
- ▶ Jesus as God is *shirk* and thus unacceptable
- ▶ The person of Jesus is central to Christianity and its difference with Islam
- ▶ How can one argue for Jesus's divinity and saving power on the cross without the authority of the Bible?
- ▶ Answer: use the Qur'an, which Muslims accept as the ultimate authority

ENGAGING MUSLIMS

- ▶ I. The Qur'an says the words of God cannot be changed or corrupted.
 - ▶ Surah 6:34: "And certainly were messengers denied before you, but they were patient over [the effects of] denial, and they were harmed until Our victory came to them. **And none can alter the words of Allah.** And there has certainly come to you some information about the [previous] messengers."
 - ▶ Surah 6:115: "And the word of your Lord has been fulfilled in truth and in justice. **None can alter His words,** and He is the Hearing, the Knowing."
 - ▶ Surah 10:64: "For them are good tidings in the worldly life and in the Hereafter. **No change is there in the words of Allah.** That is what is the great attainment."

ENGAGING MUSLIMS

- ▶ 2. The Qur'an says the Bible is the Word of God.
 - ▶ Surah 2:136: "Say, [O believers], 'We have believed in Allah and what has been revealed to us and what has been revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the Descendants and what was given to Moses and Jesus and what was given to the prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and we are Muslims [in submission] to Him.'"
 - ▶ Surah 29:46: "And do not argue with the People of the Scripture except in a way that is best, except for those who commit injustice among them, and say, 'We believe in that which has been revealed to us and revealed to you. And our God and your God is one; and we are Muslims [in submission] to Him.'"

ENGAGING MUSLIMS

- ▶ 3. Therefore, on the Qur'an's own authority, the Bible could not have been changed or corrupted by humans, as many Muslims claim.
 - ▶ The Muslim may reject this, but if so, they must either reject the authority of the Qur'an, accept that it is inconsistent (which is essentially the same, considering that it is God's direct words), or reject the interpretation.
 - ▶ There is no danger in encouraging investigation of the interpretation of these passages, since the primary interpretation is from the hadith, which were written well before the 10th century and thus hold that the Christian scriptures are true. (It was only as Islam engaged with Christianity thoroughly that the realisation that the two were conflicting forced the assertion that Christian scriptures were corrupted.)
 - ▶ The hadith indicate that Muhammad himself believed the Christian scriptures were true, and since we have documentary evidence demonstrating that they have not changed since then (e.g. Codex Sinaiticus from the 4th Century) they are still true.
 - ▶ Once this is established, we can go on to share Christianity's claims with them.

SHARING TIME

- ▶ Share personal experiences with Muslims