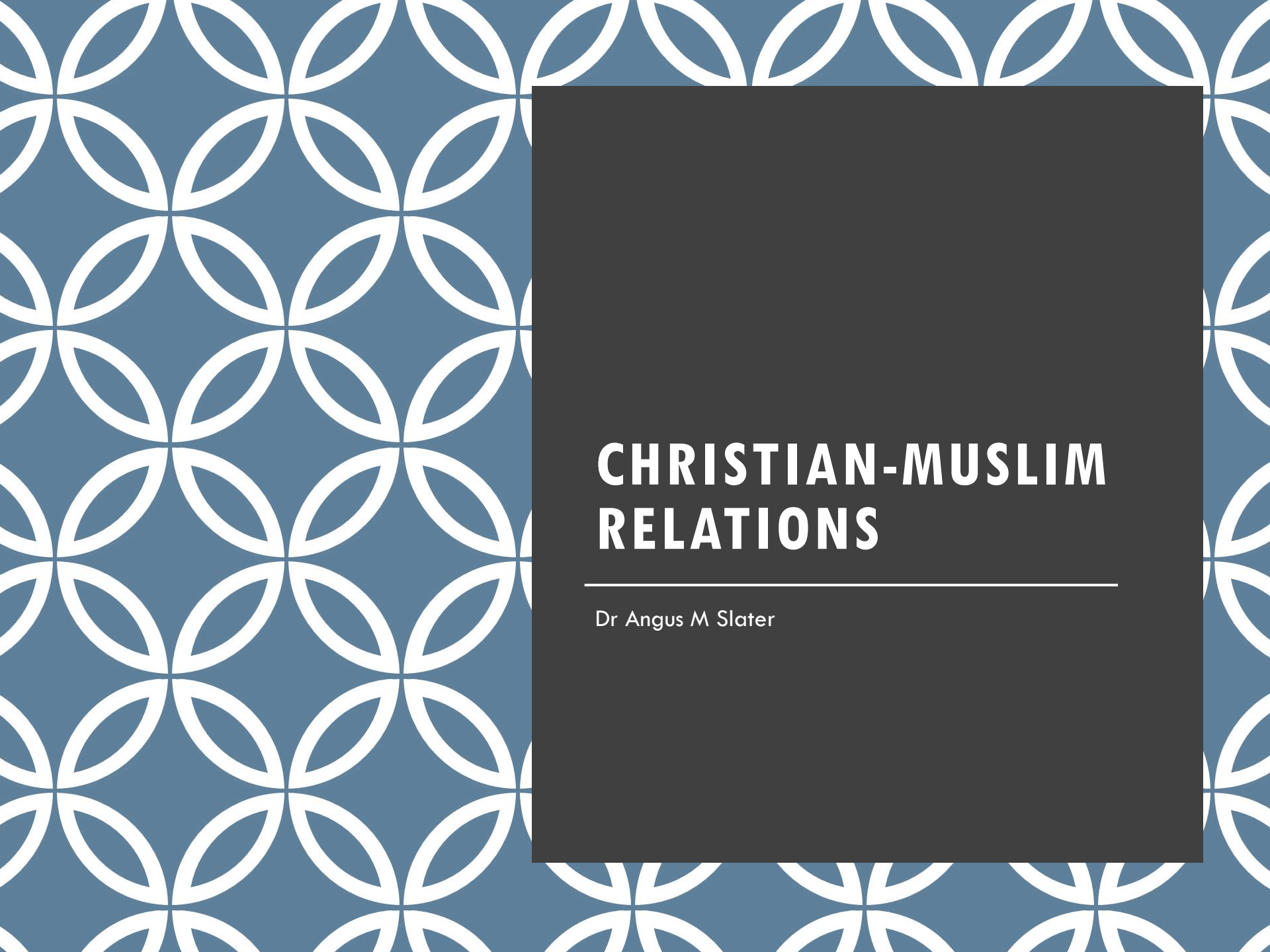




CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS

Dr Angus M Slater

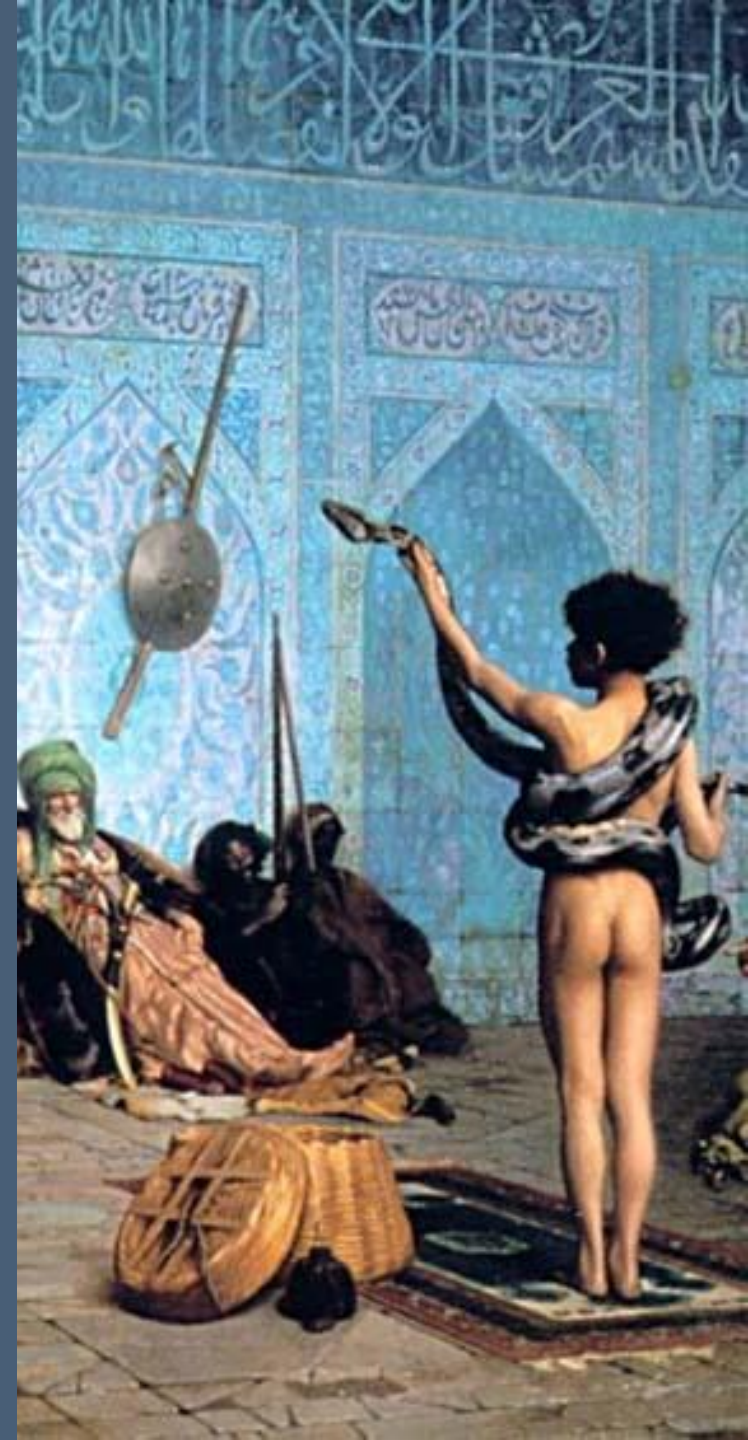
REVISION

The previous section dealt with a number of very important intellectual trends and discourses that have had a significant impact on the conceptualisation of Christian-Muslim relations in their respective societies. These trends – orientalism and occidentalism – seek to understand and categorise the other according to available epistemological and ontological structures.

In doing so, I hope that some of the danger apparent in these processes became clear – both rely on ideas about cultural purity and the divisibility of cultures between Eastern and Western according to inherent and immutable characteristics. These characteristics are often assumed to include aspects of religious identity – whereby Islam is seen as inherently Eastern, an indisputable characteristic of Eastern culture, while the same is true of Christianity and the West.

As the previous sections have hopefully demonstrated, the reality of Christian-Muslim relations is somewhat more complicated – a long history of entangled relations between Christian and Muslim communities that bridges an easy divide into East and West.

Yet, the reality of this entangled relationship is often deprioritised for social, cultural, or political benefit in our societies.

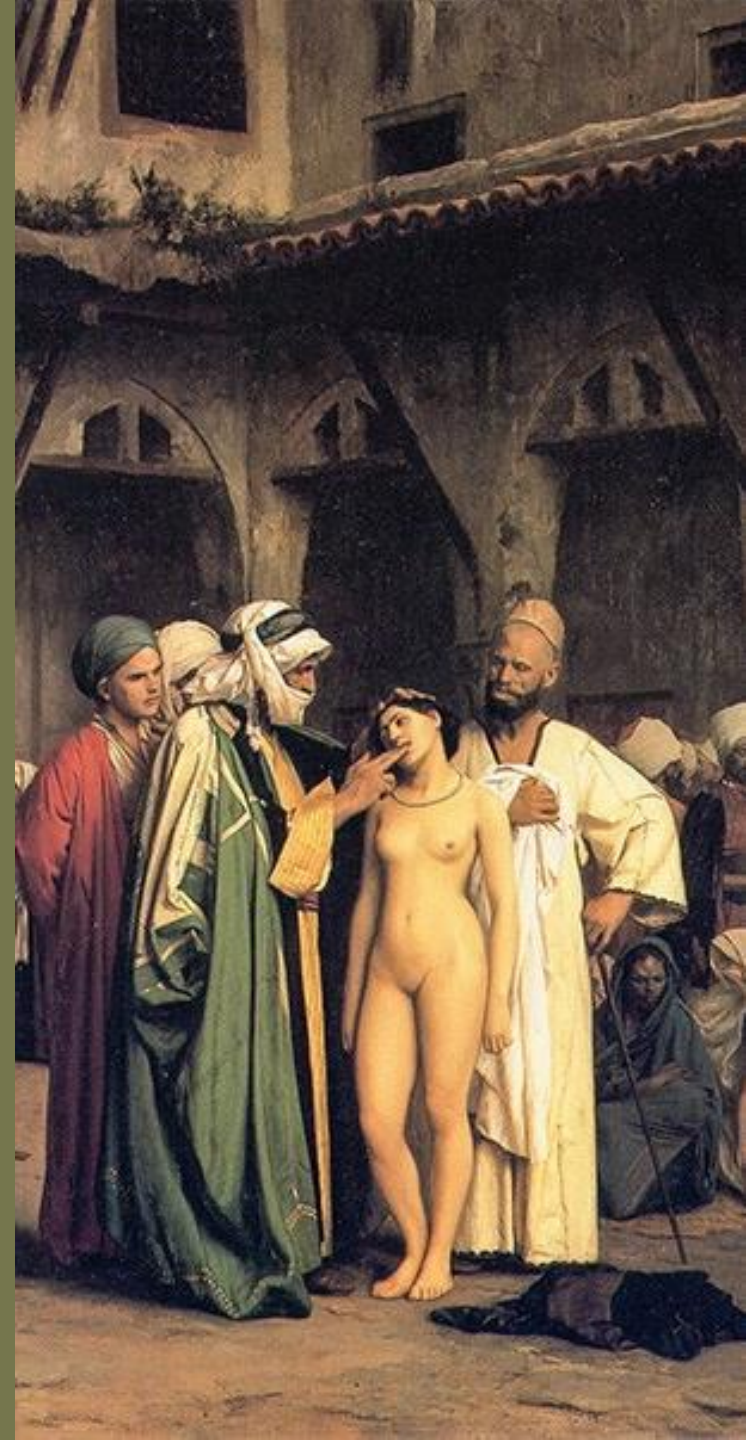


REVISION

The readings from the previous section sought to explore these dynamics, with the initial reading exploring the connection often seen developed between the 'West' and aspects of technological 'modernity'. This characterisation is particularly strong and has been a feature of both internally western critiques of modernity, as well as a variety of non-western criticisms.

Your other readings sought to explore in more depth the three key concepts covered in the previous section – Orientalism by Edward Said, a piece exploring the definitions of Occidentalism found in works from Islamic societies, and then a passage from Al-e-Ahmad's Occidentosis.

This last piece returns to the concerns expressed in the first and expands on it – positioning religious identity as central to resistance to cultural imperialism through a foregrounding of cultural authenticity lacking in assimilation.



CONTEMPORARY ISSUES
— CONTEMPORARY
POLEMICS

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES — CONTEMPORARY POLEMICS

In this, the last section of the module, I want us to have a look at the form of some very contemporary interactions between Christianity and Islam, those of contemporary polemics and polemical thinking between the two differing traditions. In doing so, a lot of the material looked at today could be found deeply offensive in tone and content — however a great of current interaction between the Christian and Islamic traditions depends on this polemical opposition and it colours to a significant degree even ‘academic’ conversations.

For this reason, and the slight entertainment value of bad youtube videos, We will have a look at some examples of contemporary polemical practices, particularly online as this is where a significant proportion of contemporary popular culture Christian-Muslim interaction takes place.

If you are interested, there is a great deal of material available in all sorts of corners of the internet for you to explore, some of which may be helpful for your third assessment.

CONTEMPORARY POLEMICS

CONTEMPORARY POLEMICS

As mentioned earlier, the seeming default of Christian-Muslim relations, particularly in written form, has through the ages, taken the form of polemical writing – writing that aims to prove the superiority of one tradition over the other.

The type of work we have been engaged in in this module – exploring shared and differing aspects of history and theology – has been a rare feature in the relationship between Christianity and Islam, and between Christian communities and Islamic ones. Yet, we have focused in this module largely on it – why is this?

There is an assumption in much of academia that polemic has no place in the serious of religion – it is deceitful and rhetorical by its nature and therefore is not a valid subject of study.



CONTEMPORARY POLEMICS

However, given the prominence of polemical writing in the history of Christian-Muslim relations and its current prevalence, this exclusion of polemic can lead to an overly rosy or historically detached vision for Christian-Muslim relations – where only those willing, or able, to engage dispassionately are welcome to contribute.

This would exclude a great deal of contemporary writing on Christianity and Islam, particularly in the fast-paced and argumentative sphere of the internet, as well as a great deal of historical interaction, such as some of the works we have already studied by John of Damascus or ibn Munqidh.

Importantly, religious polemics often showcase the inter-related nature of religious competition with wider competition over political, economic, and cultural hegemony that we began to explore in the previous section.

CONTEMPORARY POLEMICS

Polemical writing between the Christian and Islamic tradition have tended to display certain characteristic forms, that provide a hint at the continuing relevance of some of the interactions we have discussed previously in the module.

I want us to bear in mind three of these characteristic forms before considering some examples of contemporary polemics that touch either on West / East dynamics, or more explicitly on Christian / Muslim dynamics.

The first of these characteristics has been the central place given to discussions over issues of scripture – perhaps unsurprising given the epistemological centrality of scripture to both traditions and the relatively easy access to scriptural texts for comparison.

Polemical engagement has tended to focus on this, with Christians attempting to prove the fallacy the Qur'an and its antecedence in the Bible, and Muslims highlighting linguistic contradictions in the Biblical texts or seeking to uncover prophecies of Muhammad within it.



CONTEMPORARY POLEMICS

The second common characteristic of polemical writing, both historic and contemporary, is the attempt to understand and critique the other through the prism of religious and theological concepts that originate within the 'home' tradition – particularly when these concepts are understood to be universal.

What I mean by this is that often, while religious may share significant overlap, for example shared figures or scriptural texts, this sharing is misleading as it fails to understand the religio-cultural context of the point of sharing – the religious may be the same, but the details or purpose of that religious figure often fundamentally differs in the religious traditions.

We often see this in discussions over theological matters – for example, when Christian polemicists critique Islam's salvific discourse according to their similarity to Christian notions of salvation, or when Muslim polemicists critique the Christian veneration of multiple texts as part of their scripture. In both case, the polemic is seeking to engage with, and judge, the other according to standards which only make sense within the theological architecture of their own tradition.

Just because Christians / Muslims both talk about love, does not necessarily mean they are talking about the exact same thing.



CONTEMPORARY POLEMICS

The third characteristic of polemical writing is very important in considering the purpose and context of much of its production. This characteristic is the intended audience of the polemical material, such as that we will examine in the next slides.

Who is this material really written for – the religious other, or the author's co-religionists?

Often with polemical material, the intended audience is made out to be the religious other – a good-faith engagement between religious communities or traditions – while in actuality a great deal of polemical material is made for, and consumed by, the author's co-religionists in an apologetic or identity affirming manner.

This relates to second characteristic identified above – if the audience is the co-religionist, then the cultural and theological misses apparent in much polemical writing don't matter in the slightest.



CONTEMPORARY POLEMICS

I have picked out six examples of contemporary polemical production (two dedicated websites, two seemingly theological discussions on YouTube, and two entangled religio-politico-cultural presentations of Christian / Muslim / Eastern / Western relations) for you to have an explore of.

Do so keeping in mind some of the issues we have looked at in this section and in previous sections — consider how religious identity becomes bound up with cultural or national attachments, which aspects of differing religions or cultures are prominently used and displayed in each, how historical aspects of Christian-Muslim relations return in contemporary discourses, and how differing polemics draw on each other to produce complex and inter-related schemes of understanding.



site topics

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• WHO IS JESUS?

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• BASIC CHRISTIANITY

• WHY THEY CONVERTED

• INDEX TO ISLAM

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• MUHAMMAD

• POLEMICS REBUTTALS

• WOMEN IN ISLAM

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THE TRUTH
and the Truth
shall set you free!"

John 8:32

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• Christmas at the Kaaba

At the heart of Christmas is the birth of Christ. According to the Bible he was sent by God from heaven to save his people from their sins. Astonishingly, a similar story is found in Mecca at the Kaaba, the holiest site in Islam. The Black Stone (Hajre Aswad) is located at its eastern corner. Authentic Islamic traditions report that it was sent by God from paradise. Whoever touches it would have their sins forgiven. This is an amazing illustration of the Christian Gospel message right in what for Muslims is the most sacred place on earth! It deserves closer scrutiny.





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Jesus' hyperboles [1]

Confusing, incoherent and oxymoronic language caused for quacks to make **sinful lawful** and **lawful sinful** (ex: pork became lawful, polygamy became lawful and many other **blasphemies and quackery**). See also [Oxymoron Trinity](#) (100+ verses). [Trinity is a lie](#) from Hell.

Jesus was also called **slave of GOD** in the OT many times.



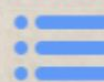
[Quran's Stunning Numerical & Scientific Miracles](#)

What Quran says about Bible [1]

[Quran's perfect preservation proven](#) (with ample images)

[A-Z \(3000+\)](#) | [Website's Capsule](#) | [Cults](#), [satanic shias](#), [pagans](#), [infidels](#) | [Islam](#) | [Bible](#) | [Jesus](#) | [Jews](#) | [Hijacked Bible](#)

Sections



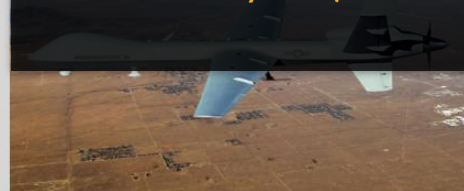
Jesus in [Matthew 24](#) referenced Daniel 11. The headquarters of the evil shepherd will be from Jerusalem to the Mediterranean sea:

[Daniel 11:45](#): "(the evil one) will establish his settlement between **Mount Zion** (Jerusalem) and the **Mediterranean sea**. Then he will be destroyed, and no one will be able to save him."

To all of Israel's holy toilet papers out there: This geography is precisely evil since today. With your blood, wealth, and culture's blood and wealth you plot, and fight and die for its evil cause against the Palestinians and the rest of the Muslims; the true believers of GOD Almighty. [9/11 was 100% an Israeli mossad and CIA job](#):



[Answering Christianity : Islam Answers Trinitarian Beliefs. \(answering-christianity.com\)](#)



THE DEEN



CONTEMPORARY POLEMICS

For me, Christmas is about
lit streets, it is about fun

[Reaction to Muslims Celebrating the Christmas Xmas Holidays with Santa TheDeenShow #827 - YouTube](#)



2:03 / 1:02:12



ANSWERING ISLAM

Segment 13

**HAS THE QUR'AN BEEN
PERFECTLY PRESERVED?**

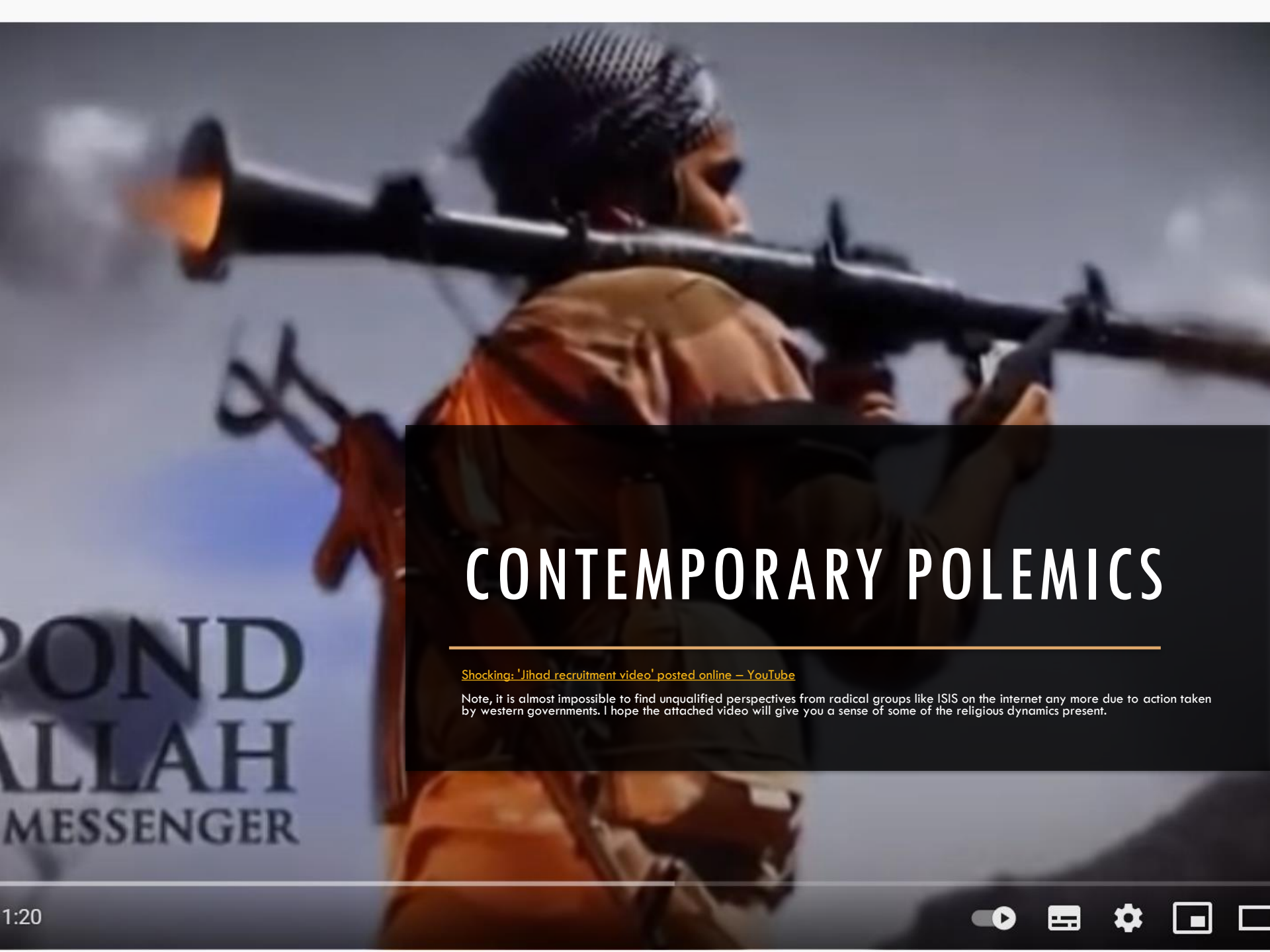
[Answering Islam 13: Has the Quran Been Perfectly Preserved? - YouTube](#)

ACTS 17.N



ISOA CONTEMPORARY POLEMICS

[Secure America Now Ad “Islamic States of America” - YouTube](#)



CONTEMPORARY POLEMICS

[Shocking: 'Jihad recruitment video' posted online – YouTube](#)

Note, it is almost impossible to find unqualified perspectives from radical groups like ISIS on the internet any more due to action taken by western governments. I hope the attached video will give you a sense of some of the religious dynamics present.

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN CHRISTIAN- MUSLIM RELATIONS

Of course, it is in the nature of any programme of study to leave a number of issues unaddressed – the scope of Christian Muslim relations is, by its nature, far too big to be encapsulated in a single module with any degree of depth.

I want us to leave the module with ideas for future expansion and progression – ideas of the different areas in which your studies may take you.

In this last section, I want to just highlight a few of the areas of Christian-Muslim relation that I find interesting, as examples of areas you may find interesting, and in the hope that they inspire you to explore this topic further either in your own time or through further study.

RELIGIO-CULTURAL CONSTRUCTIONS - BEAUTY

The main focus of my research interest in Christian-Muslim studies are the religio-cultural uses of the concept of 'beauty' within each tradition – specifically how 'beauty' has been used in both traditions in theological, ethical, or epistemological arguments.

We can see this when beauty is invoked in ethical reflection, an appeal to the most ethically beautiful or beautifying outcome of an ethical dilemma, in the Islamic legal work of Khaled Abou El Fadl, or when the beauty of the narrative of the Christian tradition is invoked as the reason for its truthfulness in the work of Christian scholars like John Milbank.

As we have hopefully seen, these shared concepts, while perhaps using the same word, can have hugely different foundations in scripture or cultural touchstones, and have hugely different implications for the religious traditions in practice.



THE HERMENEUTIC, THE EPISTEMIC, AND THE AESTHETIC

These different foundations of a concept like 'beauty' are the core of the second angle of most of my research in Christian-Muslim relations, which deals with excavating the differing ways in which the theologies of the religious traditions operate and process their sources.

In this case, an example might be the differing epistemological statuses of the Qur'an and the Biblical texts in their respective traditions – the Qur'an is the direct and unchanged word of God, while the Biblical texts are understood to be accounts written by human authors.

This difference in epistemological status leads to a very different role being played by the scriptural text in the production of meaning, the hermeneutic task, and a very different role for the text in locating aspects of ethical certainty, the epistemic task.

In each case, differing forms of usage take on differential purposes and roles, highlighting the aesthetic difference between their situations.



AUTHORITY, TRADITION, AND RESISTANCE

The third avenue of research interest for me, is in the interaction of the religious tradition with mechanisms of the secular state in both traditions.

In this case, multiple scholars in both traditions have identified the theological as the location for effective resistance to the norms of the secular, and secularising state – as providing an alternative locus of authenticity against the mechanistic relativism and marginalising violence against the assumptions of secularity prevalent in our contemporary world.

In doing so, however, they draw on different sources of authority and develop different methods of resistance to this norm-building.

Pulling from my interest in Queer Studies, these strategies around authority, power, and resistance are fascinating.



BEYOND C-M STUDIES

These facets of Christian-Muslim studies do not only have valence within the field – they highlight and assess important factors about studying religion and society more broadly.

Similarly, the work I am engaged in in C-M studies does not remain there – it interacts strongly with my broadly interest in aspects of post-modern philosophy and theology, including the use of post-modernity in aspects of Islamic narration against modernity, in my abiding interest in questions of authority and identity, from a C-M perspective but also from queer and philosophical perspectives, and with my interests in the preservation of religious systems of knowledge, the systematic Christian theology or Islamic Law I teach in a secular-modern university.

In each case, knowledge of and attachment to C-M studies offers up interaction and progression beyond what would be available without it.



CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS

This may sound quite self-referential, and I apologise if it does.

The purpose is to highlight the importance and relevance of a subject you have invested time and effort into acquiring knowledge of, and hopefully to prod you to take things a little further.

Christian-Muslim studies offers a history-sweeping chance to investigate the philosophical and theological musing of two of the worlds great traditions, locating the lives and beliefs of hundreds of millions of people within their complex and ever-evolving societies.

I hope you have enjoyed the module, and I look forward to working with you again soon!



READINGS

READINGS

Your readings for this section are split into two groups. The first group examines and furthers your understanding of the role of polemics in Christian Muslim relations – with a historical piece and a contemporary piece.

In reading these two, try and see the links between historical polemical forms and contemporary ones. I hope the typological focus of the first piece will be helpful with this.

The second two pieces are examples of differing forms of Christian-Muslim studies that are available to you and that represent some of my own interests. Have a read of the them if the subjects are attractive to you.



READINGS

Zwirahn, F. (2018) “Typologies and Argumentation Tactics in Religious Polemics - An Analysis of al-Jawāb al Sahih and the Cyprus Letter”, *Entangled Religions*, 5, p.44-94

Greifenhagen, FV. (2011) “Scripture Wars: Contemporary Polemical Discourses of Bible Versus Quran on the Internet”, *Comparative Islamic Studies*, 6:1-2, p.23-65

Slater, A. (2021) “The Hermeneutic, the Epistemic, and the Aesthetic in Christian-Muslim Dialogue”, *Journal of Dialogue Studies*, 8:1, pre-print.

Slater, A. (2016) “Khaled Abou El Fadl’s Methodology of Reform: Law, Tradition, and Resisting the State”, *Journal of Law, Religion, and State*, 4:3, p.293-321