

SOCIAL & ETHICAL ISSUES GROUP

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT ISLAM?

Much of our recent news and recent headlines have been around ISIS, Syria, and fear in Western countries of terrorist attacks, arising from organised groups or suicide bombers who align themselves with Islam.

These are troubling times for many in Western culture, in particular for Christians, but how much do we understand about the Muslim faith? What motivates this terrorist activity with a desire to kill other human beings? Is this part of the Muslim faith system or not?

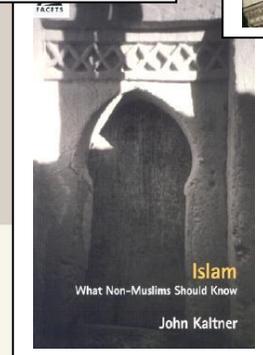
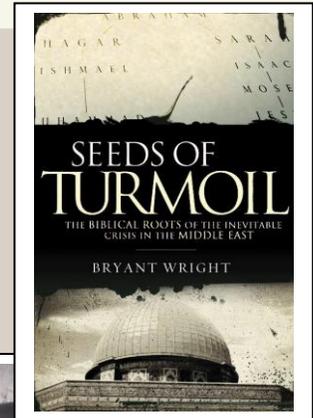
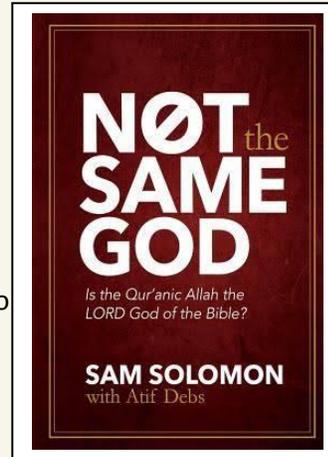
Whilst we clearly have a desire to pursue understanding of our own faith, we must also seek to understand other faiths which impact our society. So where can we look for this information?

One book which serves as a starting point is: ***Islam, What Non-Muslims Should Know*** by John Kaltner. This is a good summary of what Islam is about in a simple and accessible way. It traces the origins of Islam and lays out the principles of the faith including the five pillars of Islam which give Muslims guidance for life and living.

Kaltner suggests that there are no grounds for war and killing, especially of Jews and Christians, as these are all monotheistic (one God faiths). It also suggests that Islam is guided in the Qur'an to be sympathetic to Jews and Christians and live in peace and tolerance together.

Another book worth looking at is: ***Not the Same God*** by Sam Solomon.

This book looks much more in depth at differences between Islam and Christianity. It is written by a former Muslim who has significant personal insight and claims that Allah is not the same god as the God of the Bible whom Jews and Christians worship.



A third useful publication is ***Seeds of Turmoil: The biblical roots of the inevitable crisis in the Middle East*** by Bryant Wright.

This book is not specifically about Islam but more a look at why the crisis has developed in the Middle East and how it is foretold in the Bible.

There is clearly no excuse for ignorance in attempting to understand the culture and faith of Islam and knowledge derived from the above publications may assist in encouraging our understanding and also in fuelling discussion with our Muslim neighbours.

Kaltner: Islam, Fortress Publishing 2003. 80 pages, price around £7.
Solomon: Not the Same God, Wilberforce Publications 2015. 220 pages, price around £8.
Wright : Seeds of Turmoil, Thomas Nelson Publishers 2010. 220 pages, price around £8

TELL THE GOVERNMENT WHAT YOU THINK!

The Scottish Government is keen on running consultations before it introduces new legislation.

Some of these are fairly specialized; there is one consultation being run at present on Wild Seaweed Harvesting.

It's unlikely there will be anyone in SBC with the knowledge or interest to be involved in seaweed harvesting – if there is, here's your big chance! – but many of the consultations are on issues of a more general nature, for example education, social work policy, health.

While many of the respondents to government consultations will be pressure groups, charities or professional associations, it is entirely appropriate for the individual citizen with relevant knowledge, experience or expertise to make his or her views known to government.

Here are some of the consultations currently running which some SBC folk will be well qualified to respond to:

If you are involved in education:

- Empowering teachers, parents and communities to achieve excellence and equity in education (closes 6th January 2017)
- The expansion of early learning and childcare in Scotland (closes 9th January 2017)

For those with an interest in countering human trafficking:

- Consultation on aspects of Scotland's human trafficking legislation (closes on 23rd December)
Advice on responding to this consultation can be found at <http://bit.ly/2h3739t>

Details of all current consultations can be found at the Scottish Government's Consultation Hub, <https://consult.scotland.gov.uk/>; then click on 'See all open consultations.'

Even if you're not a seaweed harvester, you may have particular expertise on some of the issues where responses are being requested.

Children to be safer online

November 30th was not only significant for being St Andrews Day.

It was also the day when the Digital Economy Bill was ushered to the House of Lords, having received an unopposed third reading in the Commons, meaning that it is much closer to becoming law.

The Bill aims to put in place crucial protections that will prevent children being able to access 18+ related content online.

There are two significant powers in the Bill which will provide greater safety and security:

- An 'age-verification regulator' will be appointed with the power to block a web site from accessing the UK market if robust age-verification checks are not in place
- These new regulations will also apply to web sites based outwith the UK

While the Westminster government eventually introduced these measures itself, MPs Fiona Bruce and Claire Perry have campaigned long and hard on this issue.

NSPCC: '53% of 11-16 year olds have viewed graphic pornographic content online'

3-Parent Babies Given Go-Ahead

The UK Government's Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority has given permission for 3-person IVF to be trialed, giving hope to parents who may be at risk of passing on a serious inherited disease to their children.

Despite the supposed benefits of this technique, it does put the UK well outside the mainstream of bioethical regulation; most countries do not sanction this technique because of the risk of unknown consequences involved.

The campaigning group Comment on Reproductive Ethics responded to this decision by saying, 'It cannot be repeated often enough that the UK does not have a democratically-elected bioethics committee.'

You can find helpful, balanced background on this topic at <http://www.wired.co.uk/article/what-is-three-person-ivf>