**Islamic State (understanding & responding to extremism)
Dr Richard McCallum, Centre for Muslim-Christian Studies, (Oxford)**

Islamic extremism, IS, persecuted minorities, Muslims in Britain, Islamophobia, Jesus responses ….. It is an impossible task to cover such a huge range of issues in one short seminar. Yet we can make a start. Reductionism – the art of making out difficult issues to be simple – is the enemy of progress in this arena. Reality is extraordinarily complex and the causes of and solutions for extremism are no exception. This seminar provides some key, non-hysterical background for understanding the rise of Islamic State (IS) and Islamic (Muslim?) extremism. It examines three common reductions:

1. Islam and the Qur’an are violent; therefore true Muslims – such as those of ISIS – will inevitably be violent. The only solution is to expose the Qur’an and Muhammad as frauds.
2. Islam is peace and has nothing to do with the violence, which is all politically motivated. The solution is to bomb the extremists and defeat them militarily.
3. It is the west that is violent and western imperialist interventions are the cause of all the trouble. The west has to be humbled.

Each has an element of truth. No one equation provides a sufficient explanation or solution to the presenting complexity of Islam and its relations with the west. We have to take into account a great range of factors as diverse as the Baath party, drought, Qur’anic texts, Saudi Arabia, the ‘Arab Spring’ and …. our role. What can we do?

* Be better informed and speak the truth
* Pray
* Write to MPs about key votes and debates
* Work with refugees, asylum seekers and the disenchanted
* Love our neighbor – and our enemies!

Resources

Alexander, A. 2016, *ISIS*, Critical Muslim Issue 17, <http://criticalmuslim.com/issues/17-extreme/isis-anne-alexander>

Al Jabbari et al, 2015, Rivers of Babylon: Iraq's Water Crisis—And What Turkey Should Do, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/iraq/2015-08-23/rivers-babylon>

Durie, M. 2015, Time to consider why the ‘religion of peace’ is so bloody, Lapido Media, <http://www.lapidomedia.com/phrase-islam-religion-peace>

McCallum, R. 2015, *The truth about Dabiq*, in CMCS Research Briefing Issue 5: Approaches to Muslim-Christian Studies, <http://cmcsoxford.org.uk/resources/research-briefings/>

Stansfield, G. 2014, Iraq Expert: ‘Insurgency is as Much Old Baathist as it is ISIS’, <http://rudaw.net/english/interview/29062014>

Brown, R. 2016, How you can slow down ISIS, <http://www.peace-catalyst.net/blog/post/how-you-can-slow-isis-down-the-power-of-following-jesus-in-a-violent-world>