

Mark Durie, *Revelation? Guidance for the Perplexed* (Upper Mt Gravatt: CityHarvest Publications, 2006)

## Introduction

*In Islam and Christianity do we worship the same god?*

Although Muslims claim that we do and the Quran demands this belief, Christians have good reason to challenge this. Although God and Allah have some attributes in common they have entirely different personalities and capacities.

From a Christian standpoint God cannot be considered without reference to Christ. Durie's book is not a defence of Christian beliefs or of the Bible, but simply focuses on the question of the identity of Jesus, the Holy Spirit and God.

### *Difficulties in using the Quran*

The Quran is characterized by a lack of order. Interpretation of the Quran is highly complex, requiring an ability to link passages in the text to *asbab al-nuzul*, "occasions of revelation" in the life of Muhammad. Durie believes "the individual verses of the Quran are embedded into a coherent religious world view and they can by and large be coordinated with progressions of events in the life of Muhammad" (5).

## Part One. Jesus or Isa?

### Chapter 1: Isa, the Muslim Jesus

According to the Quran Islam is not after Judaism and Christianity, but the primordial religion. So it is stated that "Ibrahim (Abraham) was not a Jew, neither a Christian; but he was a Muslim" (Q3:60-64; cf. 2:125-129). Further, various Old Testament figures (all called prophets) are said to have been Muslim and the bringers of Islam (42:10-14; 2:75-79; 2:285-289): Ibrahim (Abraham); Ishaq (Isaac); Yaqub (Jacob); Nuh (Noah); Dawud (David); Sulayman (Solomon); Ayyub (Job); Yusuf (Joseph); Musa (Moses); Harun (Aaron); Zakariyya (Zachariah); Yahya (John the Baptist); Isa (Jesus); Ilyas (Elijah); Ismail (Ishmael); Al-Yasa (Elisha); Yunus (Jonah); Lut (Lot) - to which the Quran adds Idris, Salih and Hud (no OT correspondents).

The Quran gives accounts of Isa's life, plus the Hadith establish his place in the Muslim understanding of the future.

What the Quran says about Isa:

- His message was pure Islam, surrender to Allah (3:75-79).
- Though Isa is honoured, Muslims regard Muhammad as the greatest prophet.
- Isa was a lawgiver (like all other Muslim prophets before him) so Christians are obliged to submit to his law (3:40-44), as did his original disciples, also true Muslims (5:110-114; 3:45-49).
- As per prior prophets Isa received his revelation of Islam in the form of a book (6:85-89; 19:30-34) - the Injil (5:45-49) [compare Tawrah of Moses and Zabur of David]. Hence Jews and Christians are called "People of the Book".
- Isa's revelation verified earlier prophetic revelations (3:75-79; 61:5-9), as later verified by Muhammad (4:50), so Muslims should believe in the Injil and Christians in the Quran (2:130-135).
- But Christians and Jews have corrupted and concealed the original form of their scriptures and done so at least partly deliberately (5:15-19; 3:70-74; 2:70-

- 74; 6:90-94), for financial gain (3:180-185). The Jews deliberately distort the meaning of their scriptures to lead Muslims astray (4:45-49).
- Isa's Injil, and the earlier "Books", were lost in their original form, so the Quran is the only sure guide to Isa's teaching. So to be true followers of Isa Christians and Jews should 'revert' to their true religion by accepting the prophethood of Muhammad and following Islam.
  - Isa was Al-Masih (the Messiah), supported or confirmed by the Holy Spirit (2:80-84; 5:105-109) and also the "Word of Allah" and a "Spirit" from Allah (4:165-169).
  - Isa's mother Maryam was Imran's daughter (3:30-34) and the sister of Aaron and Moses (19:29), fostered by Zachariah (father of John the Baptist) (3:30-34).
  - Maryam gave birth to Isa as a virgin (3:40-44; 21:85-89), when Maryam was alone in a desolate place under a date palm tree (not in Bethlehem) (19:20-25), with Allah mercifully providing dates from the palm to Maryam for food and a stream nearby for drink (19:25-29).
  - Isa spoke while still a baby in his cradle, saying, "Lo, I am Allah's servant; Allah has given me the Book, and made me a Prophet" (19:30-34; cf. 3:40-44; 5:109).
  - Isa performed various miracles, including breathing life into clay birds, healing the blind and lepers, and raising the dead (3:40-44; 5:110-114).
  - Isa foretold the coming of Ahmad (Muhammad) (61:5-9).
  - Isa did not die on a cross, but ascended to Allah (4:155-159).
  - Christians are repeatedly commanded not to believe that Isa is the son of God and to reject the doctrines of the incarnation and the trinity (4:165-169; 9:30-34; 18:1-4; 25:1-4) - that is belief in a family of gods: father god, mother Maryam and Isa the son, a "trinity" Isa rejected (5:115-119).
  - Isa taught that ultimate failure and a terrible doom awaits those who believe in the doctrine of the incarnation (5:75-79; 10:66-74).

Only with Muhammad's coming with the Quran is it possible for Jews and Christians to be freed from their ignorance (98:1-4), so they should accept him as Allah's final Messenger and the Quran as the final revelation (4:50-54; 5:15-19; 57:25-29). Some Christians are faithful and truly believe (3:105-110), expressed in their becoming Muslims (3:195-199), while those who show love to Allah's and Muhammad's enemies are not true believers in Allah (58:20-24). So anyone who opposes Muhammad is not a true Christian, nor a true Jew. While some Jews and Christians are true believers, most are transgressors (3:105-109) and many of their leaders, in their lust for wealth, prevent people from coming to Allah. They will be tortured in hell for this by being branded with their wealth (9:30-39). All Christians and Jews who disbelieve in Muhammad will go to hell (98:5).

Jews and pagans have the greatest enmity against Muslims. Christians are "nearest in love to the believers (Muslims)" (5:85-89), but Muslims must not take unbelievers, including Christians or Jews, for friends (2:25-29, 110-114; 5:55-59, 60-64; 9:20-24). The must fight against Christians and Jews who refuse Islam until they surrender, pay the *jizya* tribute willingly and are humiliated (9:29). God has promised, not merely through Muhammad, but also through Moses and Isa, that those who die fighting in jihad against unbelievers will inherit paradise (9:110-114). The ultimate goal is for Islam to predominate over all religions (9:30-34).

What the Hadith say about Isa:

- Muhammad says that no further prophets will come to earth until Isa returns as: “a man of medium height, reddish hair, wearing two light yellow garments, looking as if drops were falling down from his head though it will not be wet. He will fight the people for the cause of Islam. He will break the cross {the symbol of Christianity}, kill swine {also symbolizes the destruction of Christianity since pigs associated with Christians}, and abolish jizyah {indicating no more tolerance or protection for non-Muslims}. Allah will perish [destroy] all religions except Islam {time of jihad - convert or die}. He will destroy the Antichrist (*Dajjal*) and will live on the earth for forty years and then he will die” (Abu Dawud).
- Isa will rule as a “just judge” according to Shari’ah (Sahih Muslim vol 2, p111).

## Chapter 2: Is Quranic History Valid?

1. The Quran’s Isa is not a historical figure:
  - His identity and role as a prophet of Islam is based solely on supposed revelations to Muhammad more than half a millennium after the Jesus of history lived and died. This makes the Quran valueless as a source of historical information on Jesus (29).
2. Jesus’ name was never Isa. He was known as Yeshua in Aramaic and no one knows where Muhammad got the name Isa from (Arab-speaking Christians call Jesus *Yasu*).
3. Jesus received no “book”. Injil is a corrupted form of euangelion (“gospel”) which was not a book but Jesus’ message (Isa 52:7; 61:1-3). There is no evidence Jesus received from God a “book” of revelation in the way Muhammad claimed to have received the Quran.
4. The “Gospels” of the Bible are biographies. Possibly, Muhammad’s mistaken idea of the Injil was based on the secondary application of the word *gospel* to refer to the four “Gospels”.
5. Most so-called prophets of Islam received no book, e.g. no evidence David received a book of laws for the Israelites; they already had the Torah of Moses. David was not a prophet in Islam’s sense of the word. The Psalms (Zabur) are not a book revealing Islam through David but a collection of songs of worship, not all David’s.
6. Biblical prophecy and Islamic prophecy are not the same thing. A biblical prophecy is not a passage reproduced from a heavenly eternally preexistent text, contrast the Quran.
7. As prophetic history, the Quran contains many errors and anachronisms and is not a credible source for biblical history:
  - a. All early sources agree that Jesus was crucified.
  - b. The Quran confuses Miriam (Moses’ and Aaron’s sister) with the mother of Jesus, with Muhammad erroneously thinking Moses was Jesus’ uncle, though they lived more than a thousand years apart!
  - c. Muhammad evidently heard fragments of stories from the Bible and patched them together without understanding their place in the overall narrative of the Bible, thereby conflating the timelines of the Bible, e.g. misplacing Haman (Q28:5; contrast Esther 3:1-2); a Samaritan (a much later people) instead of Aaron making the golden calf (20:85; contrast Exodus 34:1-6).
  - d. It is being ill-informed and false to say Christians believe in three gods – father, son Isa (Jesus) and mother Maryam (Mary) (5:115-119), or to say Jews said Ezra was a son of God (9:30).

- e. The story of the “prophet” known as the “two horned one” (18:82) comes from the Romance of Alexander, but Alexander the Great was no Muslim!
- f. Biblical names are misunderstood, e.g. Elisha (“God is salvation”) turning El (“God”) into al (“the”), as per al-Iskander (instead of Alexander); Abraham (“father of many”) becomes a meaningless Ibrahim.
- g. 800 years before chain mail was invented David is said to have made it using iron rings because Allah made iron soft for him (21:80).
- h. Isa is the prophet of Islam. Yet with great certainty we know that Jesus’ Bible is the same text relied upon by Jews to this very day. It is inconceivable that Isa the prophet of Islam could have believed in and used a corrupted Bible.
- i. There is little understanding of what is in the Bible and what is not, e.g. claiming a command “prescribed for the Children of Israel” was from the Torah when in fact it came from the Talmud (5:35-39); the story of Abraham destroying idols (37:85-94; from a legend reported in the Genesis Rabbah, a Jewish commentary compiled in the 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century AD); the Quranic story of Zachariah, father of John the Baptist (based on a 2<sup>nd</sup> century Christian fable).
- j. The Quran claims the gospel and the law of Moses both taught martyrdom in jihad, with a promise of paradise for those who die trying to kill the enemies of God (9:110-114). “Nothing could be further from the truth. The Torah contains no such promise. Moreover, far from teaching paradise for those who fall in battle, Jesus himself forbade fighting for the faith, commanding his chief disciple Peter to ‘put your sword away’ (John 18:11), and warning his followers that ‘all who draw the sword will die by the sword’ (Matthew 26:52). He also informed Pilate that because his ‘kingdom is not of this world’ his followers did not fight to prevent his arrest (John 18:36). Finally, Jesus never instructed his followers to kill their enemies, but did command love for enemies (Matthew 5:43-45). If his disciples would only do this, Jesus said, they would be like God himself” (37).
- k. Virtually everything the Quran says about the life of Jesus which is not found in the Bible can be traced to fables composed more than a hundred years after Jesus’ death, e.g. the story of Jesus being born under a palm tree and the story of Jesus making clay birds come to life.
- l. The Quran provides no explanation for its use of the title Messiah in reference to Jesus.
- m. Jesus’ alleged foretelling of Muhammad’s coming (61:5-9) is based on a garbled reading of John 14:26, a passage clearly referring to the Holy Spirit.
- n. In contrast to the Bible “the Quran’s sacred history is devoid of archaeological support. Its fragmentary and disjointed stories offer no authentic reflection of historical cultures. No place name from ancient Israel is mentioned, not even Jerusalem” (38).
- o. Many of the supposed historical events reported in the Quran have no independent verification, e.g. that Abraham and Ishmael built the Kaaba in Mecca (2:127) in contrast to the Biblical account which does not place Abraham anywhere near Mecca.

### Chapter 3: The True Jesus of Nazareth

Durie points out the historical evidence from first century sources for the life of Jesus and concludes that any statements about Isa in the Quran must be judged against such

sources and not vice versa.

#### Chapter 4: Plundering History

Whereas Christians venerate the Hebrew scriptures the Quran is oblivious to the real contents of the Bible and Muslim leaders and writers today continue to teach and preach the Islamic Jesus. Islam is characterized by "historical negationism - appearing to affirm Christianity and Judaism while in fact rejecting and supplanting them - ... a linchpin of Muslim apologetics" (50). The Injil, as described by the Quran, is what Paul described as "a different gospel" (Galatians 1:6-8). Islamic theologians regard it as intolerable arrogance to challenge their "supersessionist claims that the whole biblical history of Israel and Christianity is Islamic history", thereby depriving Jews and Christians of their Holy Scriptures and of their salvific value (Bat Ye'or).

### Part Two. The Holy Spirit or Ruh Al-Qudus?

#### Chapter 5: Ruh Al-Qudus in the Quran

The Quran uses the expression "holy spirit" in an inconsistent manner. In 19:15-19 the "spirit" sent from Allah to Maryam is the angel Jibril and he seems to be the one intended by other references to the "holy spirit" (cf. 2:90-94 // 16:100-104; 2:80-84; 5:105-109) and "faithful spirit" (26:190-194). See too 78:35-39; 97:1-4. It is standard for Muslims to interpret the "Holy Spirit" as Jibril.

But the Arabic *ruh* also means "breath" and as a "breath" from Allah can refer to his divine speech, his divine word (4:165-169). "[When] Isa is spoken of as a word and a breath from Allah, this is a metaphor which emphasizes the mere humanity of a prophet, created by Allah's word" (59).

The Quran's version of the virgin birth differs from the biblical account by stressing the physicality of Allah's breath which he breathes into Mary (21:90-94) and into her *furu* ("vulva", literally "opening", though often rendered "virginity"; 66:10-14). The Quran's version, in contrast to the Bible, is insisting that Isa was a mere creation formed in Mary's womb. While here "breath" may refer to the creative word of Allah it is more likely that it is a reference to the breath of life (15:25-29; 32:5-9; cf. Genesis 2:7).

Muhammad taught that the Spirit is a mystery about which he had been given little knowledge (17:85-89), ironical since there is a wealth of information about the Holy Spirit in the Bible.

#### Chapter 6: The Holy Spirit in the Bible

In the Bible the Holy Spirit is most certainly not identifiable with an angel, let alone Gabriel. Possibly Muhammad's erroneous conception reflects his confusion on hearing the accounts of Christians so that he mixed up references to the Holy Spirit with angels and other spirits. But this also illustrates a fundamental deficiency in Islamic theology - it's inability to conceive of Allah being present or "indwelling" any person or place.

Durie goes on to explain that the biblical Holy Spirit is God, recapping arguments by Athanasius and Basil. Clearly, the Quranic Ruh Al-Qudus, unlike the biblical Holy Spirit, is not God.

## Part Three. Who is the LORD God?

### Chapter 7: What is at Stake?

Durie notes that it is a cornerstone of Islamic doctrine that Allah is the God of the Bible, insisted on by the Quran and Hadith. This is always a central component of the presentation of Islam to Christians and Jews and the linchpin of Muslims' efforts to convert the "people of the Book" to Islam. Christians who accept this view develop a measure of respect and even support for Islam.

Marcion believed the god of the Old Testament was different from the god of the New Testament. Many today have a marcionite position, viewing the OT god as judgmental and vindictive and the NT god as loving and forgiving. This is sub-Christian thinking.

### Chapter 8: The Divine Name

Many Arabic Christians today refer to YHWH as Allah, but there is no evidence that the Arabic name Allah (or any dialect variant of it) was used by Arab Christians or Jews in Arabia as the personal name of God before the time of Muhammad.

In the Quran God's name is Allah, used 2,700 times (13:15-19). Linguistically it is a contraction of the Arabic expression *al-ilah*, "the god", a generic expression used for gods in general. The word *ilah* comes from an ancient Semitic root also reflected in the Hebrew Elohim ("God, gods").

There is reason to believe that *Allah* had been used as the title of a pagan Arabian deity known to the Meccans before the time of Muhammad:

- The feminine form of Allah, derived in parallel fashion from *al-ilat*, "the goddess", was the title of a specific idol known among the Arabs.
- Muhammad's father died before Muhammad was born and was already called Abd Allah (Abdullah), that is, "slave of Allah", indicating "Allah was the principal deity of Muhammad's grandfather, since it was a common practice among the pagans to name their children after their personal god" (80).
- The Quran's insistence that Allah was but one of many gods or that he had divine sons or daughters indicates pagan reflections about Allah were very much a live issue during Muhammad's prophetic career (53:19-24; 37:145-159; 16:59; 6:100).
- The Quran indicates that while "pagan Arabs regarded the god Allah as the creator of the world, god of the heavens, the weather and the waters... they had other gods in their pantheon beside this god of the wind and waves" (29:60-69; cf. 39:35-39).

It is often claimed that the Islamic symbol of the crescent moon derives from moon-god worship, but it was actually taken over from the Byzantines after the Turks conquered Constantinople. Evidence for the view that Allah was originally the moon god is tenuous.

Before Muhammad the chief deity in the Kaaba was Hubal, the "Lord" of Muhammad's tribe, the Quraysh. It is possible he was a manifestation of Allah. If so this would "help account for the continued use of the Kaaba in Islam for the worship of Allah, for Hubal's idol was located in the centre of the sanctuary beside the Zamzam sacred well" (82). Muhammad's family were devotees of Hubal and his grandfather had undertaken to sacrifice Muhammad's father (Abd Allah) to Hubal.

When Muhammad conquered Mecca and took control of the Kaaba he destroyed the idol of Hubal, along with all the other idols, and he categorically denied any association between Allah and the old gods.

Durie next considers the name YHWH, as used in the Bible, citing Exodus 3:13-15; 34:5-7.

### **Chapter 9: A Question of Mistaken Identity**

Similarities between Allah and YHWH include: both are said to be the creator, all-powerful, merciful, and the judge of humanity; both have spoken to humanity and provided laws for people to live by. But it is the differences which determine whether two individuals are the same.

The Bible's approach to punishing theft is to require restoration to the victim, whereas the Quran's penalty is amputation of the hand. This raises the question as to how the same god could apply completely different principles for punishment in the Bible and the Quran.

Further, the Bible teaches that God's promises to Israel are irrevocable (Romans 11:29; cf. Isaiah 49:15-16). While earlier verses of the Quran indicate a positive stance towards the Jews, this sours, with the Quran's final message being that God has, with finality, rejected the Jews as a nation. The Quran depicts the Jews as the Muslim's worst enemies (5:85); as those who start wars and cause mayhem in the earth (5:65-69); as evil-doers (5:65-69); as cursed for saying Allah's hands are tied (5:65-69); as loving this life more than eternal life (2:89-90); as, at one time, under Allah's curse being turned into monkeys and pigs for their evil deeds (7:165-169; 5:65-69; 2:60-64); as cursed by both Dawud and Isa (5:80-84); as cursed by Allah for their unbelief (4:49).

As Durie comments, "It is not credible that the same god would take such two contradictory positions towards the Jews" (88).

7% of the Quranic text involves retelling Bible stories. There are many differences between what the Quran says and what the Bible says.

There are also many discrepancies between the life and teaching of Muhammad and that of Jesus. Things first commanded in the Torah, then abrogated through Christ are reinstated through Muhammad, casting grave doubts on the idea that the same God was responsible for such vacillation, e.g. stoning of adulterers, food taboos, use of the sword and hatred of enemies.

### **Chapter 10: The Author of Evil**

Durie bases this chapter on Daniel Shayesteh's comparison of world religions in his book *A Journey from 'gods' to Christ*. As an Iranian Revolutionary Guard, imprisoned by Khomeini, tortured and expecting imminent death, Shayesteh, already able to recite the Quran in Arabic, now began to read it in his own language. Disturbingly, he discovered that Allah presents himself as the author of evil and he drew a connection with his torturers who claimed to be torturing him in accord with the teachings of the Quran.

Durie claims that while Muslims are required to believe in Allah's uniqueness and purity, their own Quran presents Allah differently: (1) as the one who inspires debauchery in humanity (91:5-9), yet, unjustly, having caused him to commit sin, requires him to purify himself; (2) as the one who corrupts Satan to lead men and women into hell (7:10-14). Durie contrasts this reading of the Quran with the biblical stress on YHWH's absolute separation from evil. In the process he considers the presentation of God in judgment, hardening hearts and sending a powerful delusion (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12), while concluding that God is in no way the author of moral evil, perversity and rebellion.

### Chapter 11: The Indwelling God

In contrast to Allah YHWH makes himself present in creation, in time and space, and in human affairs. Durie cites a plethora of biblical references. He stresses that the presence of God is crucial in a biblical theology of Christology, the Holy Spirit, the Trinity, the Church, the Kingdom of God and Salvation (God saves by "visiting" his people). By contrast Islamic theology and Quranic statements stress the utter transcendence of Allah, with statements concerning Allah's nearness (2:109; 2:180-184; 4:125; 50:15-19) being completely different from the conception of YHWH as an indwelling God. Allah's 'nearness'

simply means that he is cognizant of us and our actions whenever and wherever we may be. This Islamic concept of Allah being 'very near' is not meant to mean a time-specific or place-specific presence. Allah can never draw near to a place, or leave it, or be closer to one person than other. He is never present today, but absent tomorrow. It would also be impossible for anyone to 'draw near' to Allah. His nearness is just a way of speaking about his omniscience and omnipotence, not of actual presence (100).

According to the Quran people relate to Allah in terms of obedience to his commands, not in terms of his presence. So the Muslim is a "slave of Allah" (an *Abdullah*). It is in *Dar al-Islam*, the "house of Islam", that obedience is realized - the zone where Islam is dominant and human beings implement sharia law. Islam's eschatological hope is that this zone will expand to include all the earth in a politically-realised sharia state, the "kingdom of Allah".

At this point it is not clear whether Durie's comments about Dar al-Islam and the hope of a sharia state constitute his summary of the teaching Quranic and/or Hadith (if so, no references are supplied as elsewhere in his book) or whether he is summarizing his understanding of mainstream Islam or of a particular school of Islam.

Durie does point out, however, that the biblical "Kingdom of God" is very different from the "kingdom of Allah" he has just depicted. The kingdom of God is not a political kingdom, but centres on God's saving presence in human affairs. He notes that Jesus explicitly rejected the idea that this kingdom was a political entity or a geographical territory (Luke 17:20-21). Indeed, God's people, who enjoy God's presence, are exiles in the world (1 Peter 2:11). By contrast, in Islam the world becomes the domain for faithful Muslims to impose the sovereignty of Allah, with no distinction between the secular and the sacred, or between church and state.

Again here, as before, given the lack of any references from the Quran or Hadith, it is not clear what is informing Durie's concept of Islam at this point and to what extent he is doing justice to Islamic thought.

Durie concludes this chapter by noting that in Christian theology “the ‘wow’ factor is all about being in God’s presence (Revelation 21:3-4)”, whereas in a hadith and the Quran Allah’s presence is not centre-stage, but rather the theme of eternal success – what Durie calls an “oasis” view of heaven – “an absence of stress and trouble, many great delights and pleasures, including, according to many authorities and the Quran itself, sexual partners” (103).

### Chapter 12: YHWH is Holy

Durie observes that any dictionary or encyclopedia of the Bible will have a long article on holiness, whereas in McAuliffe’s Encyclopedia of the Qur’an there is no entry for *holy* or *holiness*. Further, Wikipedia’s entry on *holiness* includes no reference to Islam.

While holiness is an unimportant, even incidental concept in Islam it is centre-stage in both Judaism and Christianity. Durie proceeds to consider biblical references on this subject. He notes that in the Quran Allah is referred to as holy only twice. *Al-Quddus* (“the Holy”) is listed among Islam’s 99 Beautiful Names of Allah, but 46 of these names appear more frequently in the Quran than *Al-Quddus*.

Usually in the Quran and hadiths it is the following that are termed “holy”: land, battles, certain times and the Quran itself. The Islamic idea is that certain objects or places are sacred, underpinning the significance of such “sacred sites” as Mecca or Medina (I would add Jerusalem). But, strikingly, this is not connected to any concept of Allah’s inherent holiness – in sharp contrast with the Bible:

Mecca is holy to Muslims, not because Allah is holy and Allah dwells in Mecca, but because by divine decree Mecca has been set aside to be a place of devotion and religious observance for Islam (108).

He also notes

If every reference to holiness was removed from the Quran, the Islamic faith would be barely touched, but if the same was to be done with the Bible, it would be absolutely gutted (108).

He also observes a fundamental distinction between holiness and submission:

In Islam submission is not an attribute of Allah, but only of his slaves. Human submission is matched by Allah’s dominance. In Biblical faith, however, human holiness is a way of participating in God’s own holy nature. The concept of submission emphasizes the otherness of God from humanity, the concept of holiness emphasizes God’s identification with his creatures: “You shall be holy, for I YHWH your God, am holy” (Leviticus 19:2, a call renewed in 1 Peter 1:13-16).

### Chapter 13: In His Image

Durie begins by explaining that the biblical doctrine of humans being created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27) means that anthropomorphic language can be used about God, e.g. the jilted husband (Hosea), the Father of Israel (Exodus 4:22-23), “the hand of the Lord” (Acts 11:21).

The Quran does speak of Allah ‘seeing’ things, but anthropomorphic language is much less extensive. One hadith even speaks of man made in Allah’s image (Sahih Bukhari, vol 8, p6227), though the translator (Muhammad Muhsin Khan) explained this did not imply that the attributes of Adam and Allah were comparable. This disclaimer was required “because this hadith is a theological oddity, which is not consistent with and

cannot override the clear teachings of the Quran" (113). Indeed, in the Quran it is blasphemous to think that people should be like Allah or seek to be like him in any way, since he is utterly incomparable, wholly one, unique and apart (112). It is *shirk* ("association") – the worst and only unforgivable sin (4:50-54) – to associate or join anything or anyone with Allah – in opposition to *tawhid* ("unification"), the doctrine of Allah's unity. *Shirk* includes believing there are multiple gods, worshiping an idol as god, attributing human qualities to Allah or godlike qualities to humans, and worshiping Allah for the wrong reasons, e.g. for self-interest, which is to set up one's own desires as an object of worship.

By contrast, in the Bible the character of God is a model or example to follow, e.g. the example of grace is meant to make us gracious (1 John 4:11-12); believers are "children of God", called to be like their parent (Ephesians 5:1-2). The Christian's destiny is to be like Jesus (1 John 3:2; 2 Corinthians 3:18); being conformed to the pattern of Christ's life – as God incarnate – in his death, resurrection, glory and, ultimately, also his reign (2 Timothy 2:10-12).

Jesus commands his followers to love their enemies in order to be like God, their Father (Matthew 5:43-45) – revenge and cursing are forbidden, even with respect to enemies (Romans 12:14-21). It is following God's example not to return abuse or threaten those who cause Christians to suffer (1 Peter 2:20-24).

Durie contends:

The attitude of Islam to enemies, expressed in many Quranic verses and hadiths, and in countless statements by theologians and especially in textbooks dealing with the doctrines of jihad, is quite the opposite. It is the right and duty of Muslims to be strict in exacting retribution against their enemies, who are also the enemies of Allah... (117; Durie cites 2:185-189; 3:110-119; 60:1-4).

Muslims are not forbidden to show kindness and fairness to non-Muslims who are at peace with them, but they are forbidden to make friends with those who have fought against them (60:5-9).

Durie refers to the genocide of the Quraiza Jews of Medina as illustrating that Muhammad himself lived out this principle of retribution (Sahih Muslim, vol 3, p4364), involving the beheading of all 600-800 adult male Quraiza Jews in a single day, with the women and children distributed to the Muslims as booty, with some sold as slaves to purchase weapons for jihad. Some who converted were allowed to keep their freedom. This event is referred to in the Quran 33:25-29. Significantly, Durie observes that *when Islamic authorities justify this event by emphasizing the culpability of the Quraiza Jews they are appealing to the principle of retribution.*

Durie makes another telling observation: There is a potential inconsistency in Islam. While Islam opposes the imitation of Allah it appears that the character of Allah as revealed in the Quran does influence Muslims' understanding of what is right and wrong in human relationships: "Muslims' expected attitude to their enemies is the same attitude shown by Allah to his enemies" (120). So there is a sense in which it can be said that the Quran shapes Muslims into the image of Allah.

The doctrine of *shirk* also means that to submit to any legal or political authority in this world which is not Allah's is also *shirk* (17:100-114; 18:25-29; 12:35-39). On this

basis radical Islamists want to overthrow democratic states and replace them with sharia rule and some extreme formulations treat any political authority not based on sharia law as a form of idolatry. Though many Muslims avoid extreme views, "it has been the classic view of Islamic jurists that a government which does not submit to sharia principles is invalid" (120). At this point Durie does not provide any evidence to substantiate this major claim. However, he adds another claim (again unevidenced) by way of buttressing this, namely that many majority Muslim nations name the sharia as the source of all legislation.

For Christians, while the goal of transformation into God's likeness may be applied to the political process, it does not require a political implementation. So a Christian community with no access to political power can still pursue this goal with integrity. Further, there is no expectation of Christendom in the New Testament. Indeed, the "Christian hope of participation in God's nature - in the image of God restored - does not have political realisation as one of its preconditions" (121). Political rule does not have to be Christian to be respected and obeyed (Romans 13:1-7).

Christians had no political power until the edict of Milan in AD 312, when Constantine officially tolerated Christianity. In 380 Christianity became the state religion under Theodosius. Yet, even with this commencement of Christendom, a fundamental distinction between the "ecclesiastical" and "secular" domains was clearly recognised. Through the centuries many Christian communities have existed outside of a 'Christendom' framework, e.g. the English non-conformist tradition, present-day Christians in China. Christians who live under Islamic rule maintain their hope in the Kingdom of God, but have no aspirations of political dominance over their Islamic neighbours. By contrast, among Muslim minorities in the former lands of 'Christendom' there are always those who hope for Islam to become politically dominant, as expressed in numerous sermons and tracts and on numerous websites.

#### **Chapter 14: Who Does God Love?**

Durie begins by stressing the biblical revelation of God as loving by way of covenant commitment (Exodus 34:5-7). He even compares himself with the husband of a prostitute in Hosea 2:19-20, something unthinkable in Islam.

Islam assumes that Allah would not use prophets who were not exemplary and possessed of superior character. By contrast, the prophets, patriarchs and kings of the Bible are very imperfect, being instruments of God's grace. Indeed, most prophets are portrayed as sinful, with Daniel being a notable exception, though he too confesses his sinfulness (Daniel 9:20).

So when the Bible speaks of God's love as everlasting this is in spite of human sinfulness. God hates sin and condemns those who sin (Leviticus 20:23), and he has a special love for those who obey and follow him (John 14:21; 16:27). Yet he treats with favour and love those who don't deserve it - the gospel (Jeremiah 31:3; Lamentations 3:31-33; John 3:16-17; Ephesians 2:4-5; Romans 5:6-8; 1 John 4:10). While the love of YHWH is a gift of grace, the love of Allah is conditional: "Allah loves, protects and shows mercy to those who follow his commands, who fight in his cause in battle, and who love Allah" (126; 3:70, 140-144, 150-154; 19:95-99). Even more frequently, the Quran speaks about those whom Allah does not love: "transgressors, ungrateful people, those who do mischief, traitors, and those who go beyond Allah's limits" (126;

3:25-29; 3:50; 22:39; 5:89). The closest Islam comes to a concept of grace is with respect to the mercy Allah shows to the righteous, that is, to those who submit to him. According to Islamic theology, good deeds are not adequate (Sahih Al-Bukhari, vol 7, p5673) and is not obligated to spare anyone.

### Chapter 15<sup>1</sup>: Is God Faithful?

Durie begins by stressing the way YHWH binds himself into covenants with humanity (Genesis 9:11-12; 17:7-8; Psalm 89:3-4; Hebrews 13:20-21), remaining ever-faithful (Numbers 23:19; Psalm 136; Romans 11:28-29; Titus 1:2; James 1:17; Hebrews 6:17-19). Though covenant curses for Israel ensued upon their abandonment of the covenant, their return was anticipated (Deuteronomy 30:1-7). God's faithfulness is not based on human merit, but for his own glory (Ezekiel 36:22-23; cf. Psalm 94:14-15; Malachi 3:6).

Durie summarises his understanding of contrastive Quranic teaching:

- The Quran speaks of Allah 'scheming' and 'plotting' (3:54; 8:30). He can act as he pleases being under no obligation to be true or fair to human beings (14:4; 32:10-14; 5:20-25).
- Allah can annul or amend previous words he gave, the principle of "abrogation" (16:100-104; 2:100; 17:85-89). The doctrine of jihad becomes increasingly militant on this basis.
- Allah can deceive and arbitrarily change his mind without this reflecting badly on his justice. While Islam forbids humans to seek to be like Allah, this does find a parallel in the doctrine of *taqiyya*, which Durie insists is found in both Sunni and Shiite Islam - a doctrine which allows and even requires people to lie under certain circumstances, e.g. to lie and even deny one's faith to save oneself, contrast Matthew 10:28, 33.

### Chapter 16<sup>2</sup>: A Final Word

Durie concludes it is reasonable, notwithstanding some similarities, to reject the claim that Christians and Muslims worship the same God or honour the same Christ.

Durie identifies the trajectories of Islamic and Christian faith in this way:

	PROBLEM	SOLUTION	RESULT
ISLAM	Ignorance of Allah's laws	Guidance and submission	Success in this life and the next
CHRISTIANITY	Sin and alienation	Forgiveness and God's saving presence	Salvation and reconciliation with God

Durie reiterates some of the essential conclusions I have already summarized above. He comments,

If God is as the Quran depicts him, then he has no power to save, not in the way the Christian faith understands salvation.

Durie realizes that Muslims who become Christians typically don't see themselves as exchanging gods. Instead they usually think they have revised their understanding of Allah. This indicates the value of building upon some of the positive understandings of Allah and Isa found in the Quran when sharing the gospel with Muslims. It is the acknowledgment of the deep differences between Islam and Christianity and clinging

to the distinctive biblical revelation of the triune God that will equip Christians better for witness to Muslims, provided this is done with a loving heart.

#### **Appendix A: Tables of Comparison**

In tabular form Durie summarises the differences he has identified between: (1) Jesus and Isa; (2) The Holy Spirit and the Ruh Al-Qudus; (3) YHWH and Allah.

#### **Appendix B: Conversation Starters for Dialogue with Muslims**

##### *Questions about God*

Do we worship the same God?

Why do you believe this is so?

Is Allah good?

Where does evil come from?

Who made Satan evil?

Can sinful people dwell in God's heaven?

Is Allah personal?

Is Allah with you? How do you experience this?

When do you sense his presence?

David said 'Do not cast me from your presence.' (PSALM 51) What do you think he meant by this?

Is God holy? Why do you say so?

What does this mean for you personally?

Are people meant to be holy too?

Does this make them like God?

How can people become holy?

Is God good? How can you know this?

Should we be good like him? How?

Jesus said that if we forgive those who wrong us, we will be like God (Matthew 6:14). Do you agree?

Is Allah loving? Why do you say so?

How can we experience God's love?

Who does Allah love?

Does Allah love you?

Is God faithful?

Can we count on him to be faithful?

Does he always keep his promises?

Would it reflect badly on God if he didn't?

Is it your personal experience that God is faithful to you?

##### *Questions about salvation*

Do you believe that the righteous will always be successful? How does this work?

Do you think that people need a saviour? Who is your personal saviour?

*Questions about Jesus and the Bible*

Do you believe in the Injil? Shall we read Jesus' words together from the Bible?

What does the word Injil mean in Arabic?

Do you know what the word *euangelion* ('gospel') means?

Did Jesus (Isa) die on the cross? Why do you say so?

Christians believe he was crucified and died.

Do you know why they believe this?

Christian pastors often study Hebrew, so they can read the Jewish scriptures in the original language of the Jewish people. Muslims revere the prophets of the Bible, and the Law of Moses, so do Muslims study Greek or Hebrew as part of their training, so they can read the Bible? Why (not)?

*Questions about the meaning of names*

What does the name *Ibrahim* mean in Arabic?

Do you know where the name Abraham came from? (Genesis 17)

What does the name *Ismail* mean in Arabic?

Do you know how the name Ishmael came about and what it means? (Genesis 16)

What does *Allah* mean?

Does it matter whether this word has a meaning?

Do you know what was revealed to Moses as the name of God? (Exodus 3)

What does the name *Isa* mean in Arabic?

Do you know where the name *Jesus* comes from, and what it means?

Isa is called the Masih in the Quran. What does the word *masih* mean in Arabic and how did this apply to Isa?

Would you like to hear what the word Messiah means, and why we call Jesus the Messiah?

---

<sup>1</sup> This is misnumbered as an additional "Chapter 14".

<sup>2</sup> Because of the mistake with respect to having two Chapter 14s this chapter too is wrongly numbered as "Chapter 15".