

# WHICH GOD? STUDY GUIDE

By Mark Durie

## **OVERALL PREMISE OF BOOK: In Islam and Christianity do we worship the same god? We do not!**

Let's compare the Lord (YHWH) of the Bible and Allah of the Qur'an. A careful study of the scriptures of Islam and Christianity shows that the Lord God of the Bible and Allah of the Qur'an are DIFFERENT in many respects. They have such different personalities, and different capabilities, that they cannot be said to be the same. They can be said to have some attributes in common but in other ways they are so profoundly distinct that to claim they are the same god would only be misleading.

In our Study Guide, we will many times highlight the differences between Islam and Christianity by using that same terminology.

## **PART ONE: JESUS OR ISA?**

**Premise:** Information and reflections on the “Muslim Jesus”, known as Isa, to help put the Islamic understanding of Christ in its proper context. This will lay a foundation to help us consider the identity of God himself.

**ISLAM:** One of the most prominent of Qur'anic “messengers” is Isa, the Muslim Jesus, the last and greatest prophet before Muhammad.

According to the Qur'an, Jesus' true name was Isa. His message was pure Islam, surrender to Allah (Qur'an 3:84-85). Muslims honor Isa, but do not regard him as the greatest prophet: this honor goes to Muhammad himself.

The true religion with Allah is Islam. The Qur'an repeatedly says that Christians and Jews have corrupted and concealed the original form of their scriptures and done so at least partly deliberately. Today, the Qur'an claims to be the only sure guide to Isa's teaching, so to be true followers of Isa, both Christians

and Jews should “revert” to their true religion by accepting the prophethood of Muhammad and following Islam.

According to the Qur’an, Isa was Al-Masih (the Messiah). He was supported or confirmed by the ‘Holy Spirit’ (Qur’an 2:87, Qur’an 5:110). He is also referred to as the “Word of Allah” and a “Spirit” from Allah (Qur’an 4:171).

**CHRISTIANITY:** The Gospels testify to the crucifixion of Christ, but the testimony of the Gospels is not accepted in Islam.

**ISLAM:** According to the Qur’an, although Christians believe Isa died on a cross, and Jews claim they killed him, in reality he was not killed or crucified, and those who said he was crucified were lying: Isa did not die, but ascended to Allah. On the day of Resurrection Isa himself will be a witness against Jews and Christians for believing in his death.

Muhammad was Allah’s gift to Christians to correct misunderstandings. They should accept him as Allah’s final Messenger, and the Qur’an as the final revelation.

On the other hand, a true believer will have nothing to do with people who oppose Muhammad. Christians and Jews who disbelieve in Muhammad will in any case go to hell.

*Fight those who believe not in Allah and the Last Day and do not forbid what Allah and His Messenger have forbidden – such men as practice not the religion of truth, being of those who have been given the Book – until they pay the tribute [the jizya or poll-tax, explained later] out of hand and have been humbled. (Qur’an 9:29)*

This verse provides the theological foundation for warfare (jihad) against Christians as well as for the arrangements for non-Muslims to live under Islamic law after conquest. To this verse may be added hundreds of Quranic verses on the subject of jihad in the path of Allah against unbelievers – Jews, Christians and pagans – as well as many traditions about warfare found in

the canonical hadith collections.

Those who die fighting in jihad against unbelievers will inherit paradise. The ultimate goal of all this struggle is for Islam to predominate over all religions:

*It is He who has sent His Messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth, that He may uplift it above every religion, though the unbelievers be averse. (Qur'an 9:33)*

The traditional Muslim view is: Far from being crucified, Isa was taken up from the earth without dying. To ask whether there is any sense in which Islamic sources can be used as historical evidence for the life of Christ? The answer to this question is most emphatically, “No, they cannot.” The Qur'an's Isa is not an 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.

**CHRISTIANITY:** This makes the Qur'an valueless as a source of historical information on Jesus.

Yeshua of Nazareth was never called *Isa*, the name the Qur'an gives to him, and despite the efforts of many scholars, no one quite knows where Muhammad got the name *Isa* from.

**ISLAM:** According to the Qur'an, the “book” revealed to Isa was the *Injil*. The word *Injil* is apparently a corrupted form of the Greek *euangelion*, “good news” or *gospel*, a term used in the Bible.

**CHRISTIANITY:** It is interesting that most of the so-called “prophets” of Islam, whose names are taken from the Hebrew scriptures, received no “book” or law code.

Biblical prophecy and Islamic prophecy are not the same thing. The Biblical understanding of prophecy is quite different from Muhammad's. The New Testament does refer to Jesus as a prophet.

**ISLAM:** He, himself, was the living “Word of God” (a title also used of Isa in the Quran 4:171).

The Quran claims that 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 (Qur'an 9:111).

**CHRISTIANITY:** Nothing could be further from the truth. The Torah contains no such promise. Far from teaching paradise for those who fall in battle, Jesus himself forbid fighting for the faith: he commanded his chief disciple Peter to “put your sword away” (John 18:11), and warned his followers that “all who draw the sword will die by the sword.” (Matthew 26:52)

All these inconsistencies are evidence that the Qur'an cannot be used as a source for the life of Christ. The Biblical narratives are rich with historical details, many confirmed by archeology.

**ISLAM:** In contrast the Qur'an'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. Many of the supposed historical events reported in the Qur'an have no independent verification.

The Qur'an, written in the seventh century A.D., cannot be regarded as having any authority whatsoever to inform us about Jesus of Nazareth. It offers no valid evidence for its claims about Biblical history, and its numerous historical errors reflect a garbled understanding of Biblical history.

**CHRISTIANITY:** In contrast to the Qur'an, the Bible is a genuine historical source for information on the life, teaching and actions of Jesus of Nazareth. The manuscript evidence for the Greek scriptures is overwhelming, far greater than for all other ancient texts.

We conclude that any statements about Isa (Jesus) in the Quran, made six centuries after Jesus' death, must be judged against the historical evidence from these first-century sources, and not vice versa.

**ISLAM:** When Muhammad linked the name of *Allah* to the religious histories of Judaism and Christianity, this was a way to claim them for himself, and for Islam. In the light of later events, and its purpose was to rob Christianity and Judaism of their own histories.

Although the Qur'an purports to "verify" all earlier prophetic revelation, it is oblivious to the real contents of the Bible. The claim that Christians and Jews deliberately corrupted their scriptures is made without evidence, and this only serves to cover up the Quran's historical inadequacies.

The legend of Isa of the Qur'an is based on no recognized form of historical evidence.

**POINTS TO CONSIDER:**

1. How is the God of Christianity different from Allah?
2. Who is "Jesus" of the Qur'an?
3. Who is Jesus of the Bible?
4. Was Muhammad Allah's gift to Christians?
5. Does Christianity teach "martyrdom"?

**PERSONAL REFLECTIONS:**

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# PART TWO: THE HOLY SPIRIT OR RUH AL-QUDRUS?

**Premise:** The Ruh Al-Qudus or “holy spirit” of the Qur’an is investigated and compared with the Holy Spirit of YHWH of the Bible.

**Synopsis:** The Arabic word *ruh* means “breath”, “spirit” or “soul”. In the Qur’an there are repeated references to a *Ruh Al-Qudus* “the Holy Spirit”, or simply to *ruh* “spirit”.

**ISLAM:** However, the way the Qur’an uses this expression “holy spirit” is not consistent. It is possible to discern a number of different meanings for the word *ruh*, including an angel, a creative word from Allah, or the “breath of life”.

One of the contexts in the Quran in which a “spirit” is mentioned is the announcement to Maryam, mother of Isa, that she will bear a son. A “spirit” is sent from Allah and appears in perfect human form to Maryam to announce the birth of Isa:

*And mention in the Book Maryam when she withdrew from her people to an eastern place, and she took a veil apart from them; then We sent unto her Our Spirit that presented himself to her a man without fault. She said ‘I take refuge in the All-merciful from thee! ...’ He said ‘I am but a messenger come from thy Lord, to give thee a boy most pure.’ (Qur’an 19:16–19)*

Other Quranic references to a “spirit” also make sense if the Ruh Al-Qudus is the angel Jibril. It was Jibril’s role to bring the revelation of the Qur’an to Muhammad:

*...Jibril – he it was that brought it down upon thy heart by the leave of Allah, confirming what was before it, and for a guidance and good tidings to the believers. (Qur’an 2:97)*

There are also other “spirit” references in the Qur’an which appear to refer to a being who is the foremost among the angels, that is to say, the angel Jibril:

*Upon the day when the Spirit and the angels stand in ranks they shall speak not, save him to whom the All-merciful has given leave, and who speaks aright. (Qur'an 78:38)*

Muslims believe that the angel Jibril may visit Muslims who are fasting and praying during the fasting month on the “Night of Power”.

Another meaning of Arabic *ruh* is “breath”. This is the more basic meaning of the word. Following this sense, a “breath” from Allah can refer to his divine speech, his spoken word. In a key passage Isa is himself referred to as both a “word” and a “breath” from Allah, making the equation quite explicit:

*People of the Book, go not beyond the bounds in your religion, and say not as to Allah but the truth. The Messiah, Isa son of Maryam, was only the Messenger of Allah, and His Word that He committed to Maryam, and a spirit [‘breath’] from Him. So believe in Allah and His Messengers, and say not ‘Three.’ (Qur’an 4:171; see also Qur’an 3:45, where Jesus is referred to as a “Word” from Allah)*

There is another more likely interpretation for these passages, that the “breath” of Allah is a reference to the breath of life, apparently borrowing the language of the creation narrative in Genesis:

*...YHWH God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. (Genesis 2:7)*

This understanding of “breath” is suggested by the Quranic passages:

*See, I am creating a mortal of a clay of mud moulded. When I have shaped him, and breathed My spirit in him, fall you down, bowing before him! (Qur’an 15:28–29)*

At one point Muhammad is apparently warned that people will ask him about the Spirit. The answer, he is told, is that the Spirit is a mystery about which he has been given little knowledge:

*They will question thee concerning the Spirit. Say: 'The Spirit is of the bidding of my Lord. You have been given of knowledge nothing except a little.'* (Qur'an 17:85)

**CHRISTIANITY**: In the Bible the “Spirit of God”, “Spirit of the Lord”, or “Holy Spirit” certainly does not refer to an angel, but to the powerful, life-giving and creative presence of the living God.

**ISLAM**: Muhammad took many elements of his religious beliefs and practices over from the Jews and Christians he met in Mecca and Medina. Muhammad apparently derived his mistaken conception of the “Holy Spirit” from the accounts of Christians, confusing references to the Holy Spirit with angels or other spirits.

**CHRISTIANITY**: Paul speaks of the “temple of God” as the temple of the Spirit: where the Spirit is, God himself is present:

*Do you not know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple.* (1 Corinthians 3:16)

The Spirit gives life (Romans 8:11, Acts 3:15, John 4:14, 7:39). Who gives life, but is not himself given life, cannot be a creature. The scriptures teach us that by partaking in the Spirit we share in the Son and the Father. The Spirit is eternal:

*...how much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!* (Hebrews 9:14)

The Spirit's relation to God is to be understood as a person's relation to his own spirit. This means that the Spirit cannot be a creature or outside of and separate from God:

*For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the*

*same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. (1 Corinthians 2:11)*

The Spirit is called “Lord”, the title for God himself:

*Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. (2 Corinthians 3:16–17)*

**CONCLUSION:** The Quranic Ruh Al-Qudus is not God; the Biblical Holy Spirit is God. Throughout the Bible, the Holy Spirit is revealed as the creating, life-giving, renewing, sanctifying presence of the living God. The Spirit is no angel, nor any other kind of creature, but the power and presence of God himself. The Christian doctrine, that the Holy Spirit is God himself, and together with the Son and the Father, worthy of all praise and glory, is a faithful response to the consistent testimony of the scriptures.

**POINTS TO CONSIDER:**

1. What does the “Holy Spirit” mean to you?
2. Is the spirit of God revealed to you through the Holy Spirit?
3. Does the Holy Spirit give one the “breath of life”?
4. Is the Holy Spirit the creative presence of God Himself?
5. How did Islam “get it wrong” about the Holy Spirit?

**PERSONAL REFLECTIONS:**

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## PART THREE: WHICH GOD?

**Premise:** Let's examine whether the character or personality of YHWH is the same as that of Allah as portrayed in the Qur'an. We can now consider the question of whether Allah of the Qur'an is the God of the Bible. What should Christians make of the claim that "We all worship the same God"? More and more people are asking whether the God of the Qur'an (Allah) and the God of the Bible (YHWH) are the same. What is the truth?

It is a core doctrine of Islam that Allah is the God of the Bible: to be a true Muslim one must believe that they are the same. Christians should NOT accept this Islamic dogma? No one can truly understand the nature of a faith without engaging with the very essence of the identity of their god.

**ISLAM:** Allah is announced as God's name in the Qur'an, and referred to 2,700 times. Although the name Allah was adapted from Arab paganism, Muhammad categorically rejected any association between Allah and the old idols, as he sought to cleanse the worship of Allah from what he regarded as its pagan accretions.

**CHRISTIANITY:** The proper name of God in the Bible, YHWH, is written with consonants only, and in Jewish tradition is never pronounced. YHWH was revealed to Moses as God's name at the burning bush. This name, God tells Moses, is "my name forever."

One could study the similarities between YHWH and Allah, which is significant, it is differences which determine whether two individuals are the same. Although Islamic dogmas insists, as an article of faith, that Allah is the same deity as the God of the Bible, for a Christian, who does not accept Muhammad's claim that the Bible has been intentionally corrupted, such a claim can only be tested by comparing the teachings of the Bible with those of the Qur'an and the hadiths.

The attributes of Allah contrast with those of God as attested in both the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. What Judaism and Christianity have in common in their understanding of God is what marks them out as distinct from Islam.

**ISLAM:** Muslims must, as a matter of doctrine, believe in the uniqueness and purity of Allah. However, according to author Shayesteh, Allah has corrupted Satan to lead men and women into hell.

*Said he [Satan to Allah], ‘Now, for Thy perverting me, I shall surely sit in ambush for them on Thy straight path; then I shall come on them from before them and from behind them, from their right hands and their left hands; Thou wilt not find most of them thankful.’ Said He [Allah], ‘Go thou forth from it, despised and banished. Those of them that follow thee – I shall assuredly fill Hell with all of you.’ (Qur’an 7:16–18)*

**CHRISTIANITY:** In contrast to Allah, YHWH has no partnership with evil, and cannot even look upon it. In the Bible, evil is not something which God inspires in people. The essence of evil is rebellion against God and defiance of his will. God however is pure, good and true. Another distinction between YHWH and Allah is that YHWH, the God of the Bible, makes himself present in creation, in time and space, and in human affairs.

**ISLAM:** In Islam Allah is never specifically or distinctively present in time, space or human affairs; the conception that Allah is too transcendent for this. The Qur’an, unlike the Bible, does not speak of Allah as coming near or indwelling anything.

The Qur’an has no conception of the Holy Spirit as the presence of God with people.

**CHRISTIANITY:** In the Christian faith. The phrase “Kingdom of God” is used, but with a completely different meaning. This is not understood in terms of a political Kingdom, but in terms of the saving presence of God in human affairs.

*“Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ‘The time has come,’ he said. ‘The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!’” (Mark 1:14-15)*

**ISLAM:** The world itself becomes domain for faithful Muslims to impose the sovereignty of Allah. There is no distinction between secular and sacred, or between church and state. Far from being strangers in the world, “the earth belongs to Allah and his Apostle,” so the whole world rightfully belongs to Allah, and many would say, to his representatives, the Muslim community.

**CHRISTIANITY:** In Christian theology the “wow” factor in heaven is all about being in God’s presence. YHWH IS HOLY! It is in the understanding of the holiness of God that we find one of the most striking differences between YHWH and Allah.

**ISLAM:** In Qur’an research, there is no entry for holy or holiness. Holiness seems an unimportant, almost incidental, concept in Islam, whilst in both Judaism and Christianity it is absolutely center-stage. In the Bible, YHWH is above all holy and, what is more, God’s people are called to be holy in order to be like him.

When we carefully study the Qur’an, and compare it to the Bible, we can conclude that the concept of the holiness of Allah is not central in Islam. In contrast to the hundreds of references to the holiness of YHWH in the Bible, in the Qur’an Allah is referred to as holy only twice (Qur’an 59:23, 62:1)

The doctrine of humans being created in the image of God has profound implications. According to the Qur’an, the idea that people should be like Allah, or seek to become like him in any way, is regarded as blasphemy. Allah is incomparable, wholly one, unique, and apart.

*“Say: ‘He is Allah, One, Allah, the Everlasting Refuge, who has not begotten, and has not been begotten, and equal to Him is not any one.’”  
(Qur’an 112)*

*Shirk* (“association”) is the name given for the sin of associating or joining anything or anyone with Allah. Literally meaning “sharing” or “division”, *shirk* is the vice which is in opposition to *tawhid* (“unification”), the doctrine of Allah’s unity. In the Qur’an, pagan polytheism and Christian Trinitarian doctrines are both rejected as examples of *shirk*.

**CHRISTIANITY:** In contrast to the doctrine of *shirk*, the Biblical doctrine of God means that the character of God is regarded as a model or example for people to follow. For example, the experience of grace is meant to make us gracious, like God:

Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. (1 John 4:11–12)

The Christian's destiny is to be like Jesus Christ. In Christian thought the imitation of God finds its clearest focus in Jesus. Jesus commands his followers to love their enemies, because if they do this they will be like God, "children of your Father in heaven":

*You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. (Matthew 5:43–45)*

The Apostle Peter instructs Christians not to return abuse, nor to threaten those who cause Christians to suffer. Why would he give such instructions? If they achieve this, Peter says, they will be following God's example shown to them in Christ.

**ISLAM:** 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.

The principle of retribution was not merely a theoretical one for Muhammad. It was lived out by Muhammad through the genocide of the Quraiza Jews of Medina. Muhammad had found this tribe guilty of not coming to the aid of the Muslims when they were besieged by the Meccans. After the Meccans lifted their siege, Muhammad attacked the Quraiza Jews. A hadith from the *Sahih Muslim* reported the outcome of their appeal for clemency:

*Then he [Muhammad] killed their men, and distributed their women, children and properties among the Muslims ... All adult male Quraiza Jews – six to eight hundred in all – were beheaded in the market place of Medina in a single day. Islamic authorities who justify this event do so by emphasizing the culpability of the Quraiza Jews. In other words they appeal to the principle of retribution.*

The doctrine of “shirk” also applies in the political domain. To submit to any legal or political authority in this world which is not Allah’s is also shirk. This teaching underpins the radical Islamists’ desire to overthrow democratic states and replace them with sharia rule. According to some extreme formulations, any political authority which is not based on sharia law is a form of idolatry.

**CHRISTIANITY:** The contrast between “church” and “state” came from the Bible. When the idea of Christendom was instituted, the distinction between the “ecclesiastical” and “secular” domains was recognized from the beginning, and it became deeply embedded in the terminologies of Christian cultures.

However, Allah will tolerate no associates in his reign over the earth.

Who Does God Love? A characteristic of God – his faithfulness in love to those to whom he has covenanted himself – is revealed again and again throughout the Bible. *God loves sinners.* When the Bible says that God’s love is everlasting, this is in spite of human sinfulness. There are a number of points in the Bible, which state that God hates sin and condemns those who sin. We also read that God has a special love for those who obey and follow him:

*Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father and I will love him and show myself to him. (John 14:21)*

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. (John 3:16–17)*

*We love because he first loved us. (1 John 4:19)*

**ISLAM:** This is so unlike Allah of the Qur'an. In the Qur'an, Allah loves, protects and shows mercy to those who follow his commands, who fight in his cause in battle, and who love Allah. But much more frequent than statements about who Allah loves are statements about who Allah does not love: transgressors, ungrateful people, those who do mischief, traitors, and those who go beyond Allah's limits. The love of Allah of the Qur'an is conditional.

**CHRISTIANITY:** The love of YHWH of the Bible is a gift of grace. The concept of grace as God's faithful love to sinners – 'Amazing grace, how sweet the sound' – is central in the Christian faith, but not in Islam. The closest equivalent in Islam would be Allah's mercy shown to the righteous, that is, to those who submit to him.

The faithfulness of YHWH: Throughout the Bible we find that YHWH binds himself into covenants with humanity which are described as eternal.

Through Abraham: "I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. (Genesis 17:7)

YHWH is unchanging and ever faithful to his word. God's faithfulness to a nation which rejects him is not because of any merit on their part, but for the sake of his name:

*It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name... I will show the holiness of my great name... Then the nations will know that I am YHWH...when I show myself holy through you before their eyes. (Ezekiel 36:22–23)*

**ISLAM:** Faithfulness is not an attribute of Allah. Allah acts as he pleases. He is under no obligation to be truthful or fair to human beings.

*"Allah leads astray whomsoever He will, and he guides whomsoever he will; and he is the All-mighty, the All-wise." (Qur'an 14:4)*

According to both Sunni and Shiite – someone is permitted to lie, and even deny their faith, in order to save themselves. However, a Christian should confess Christ even at the cost of their life (Matthew 10:28, 33).

**POINTS TO CONSIDER:**

1. Is Allah of the Qur’an the same God of the Bible?
2. Can you name at least two differences between Allah and the God of the Bible?
3. Who has NO partnership with evil; Allah or God of the Bible?
4. Is heaven all about being in God’s presence?
5. Are we to be like Jesus? Are you?
6. Is one of the characteristics of God “love”? Do you exemplify that in your life?

**PERSONAL REFLECTIONS:**

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## **PART FOUR: ETERNAL CONFLICT?**

**Premise:** Consider an argument that people should believe Muslims and Christians worship the same God in order to avoid conflict and ensure peaceful coexistence between faiths. Does one God mean peaceful coexistence?

Influential Yale theologian Miroslav Volf has argued that Muslims and Christians worship the same God. However, fearless examination of the available evidence could lead someone to the conclusion that the two religions worship distinct Gods: “Two supreme divine beings always means war.”

According to Volf, the six core beliefs of monotheism are:

1. There is only one God.

2. God created everything that is not God.
3. God is radically different from everything that is not God.
4. God is good.
5. God commands us to love God, and
6. God commands us to love our neighbors as ourselves.

**ISLAM:** In Islam, “martyrdom operations” are completely legitimate if the motive is to spite the enemy. Blowing oneself up is not considered to be suicide. Islam glorifies martyrdom operations. Many leading Muslim scholars, both past and present, have endorsed jihad to make Islam dominant in the world. The consensus view of classical scholars is that the primary purpose of military jihad is to extend Islam. Aggressive jihad is also supported by many Saudi scholars.

It is also striking that Volf is unable to cite a single verse of the Qur’an to support the idea that Allah commands love for one’s neighbor. What *can* be found in the Qur’an are disturbing instructions on how to deal with non-Muslim neighbors, such as:

*“O you who believe! Fight [to kill] those who are near to you of the disbelievers, and let them find harshness in you. And know that Allah is with those who fear him.” (Qur’an 9:123)*

One must also reject the evidence Volf uses to justify his claim that Islam “commands us to love God with our whole being.” To show this, Volf cites *Allahu waḥdahu* “God alone”, from the Qur’an 39:45, and rather grandiosely translates it as “God, One and Only”. Scores of other attributes of Allah are far more central and are mentioned more frequently than love.

How can Islam coexist with non-Islam? Muhammad, the Qur’an and normative Islam consistently teach that Muslims should strive to achieve political dominance over the adherents of other religions. For example, Qur’an 48:28 states, *“He [Allah] has sent His messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth, that He may cause it to triumph over all religion.”*

This belief is expounded in countless commentaries, legal textbooks and writings of Muslim scholars, past and present: it is a core part of normative Islam, which has not yet been renounced by the Islamic mainstream.

Some claim that a shared faith in the one God can provide a common political roof under which Islam and Christianity can coexist peacefully. Volf is not alone. In the present day, the number of authorities is legion who clamor to affirm that jihad is defensive and Islam means peace.

**POINTS TO CONSIDER:**

1. Is there peaceful coexistence between Islam and Christianity? How?
2. Judging by the news, does Islam sometimes use military jihad to expand?
3. Does Islam really mean to exude peace?
4. Does the God of the Bible command you to love one another? Your enemy?
5. Even though there is an eternal conflict, what can you do to peacefully co-exist?

**PERSONAL REFLECTIONS:**

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# PART FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

**Premise: Allah and the God of the Bible are NOT the same God!**

There are profound and far-reaching differences in the attributes of YHWH of the Bible and Allah of the Qur'an. The same is found to apply when one compares Jesus and the Holy Spirit of the Bible with Isa and the Ruh Al-Qudus of the Qur'an. These differences are deep and significant enough to make it reasonable to reject the claim that Christians and Muslims worship the same God or honor the same Christ.

We can all agree that there are important similarities in the doctrine of God in the two faiths. However what is shared between Christianity and Islam is more than matched by the most profound contrasts in the identity of God, which have far-reaching implications, even affecting attitudes to behavioral ethics, politics and the state.

The Christian hope is based upon trust in God's faithful covenantal love, his call to humanity to be restored to their destiny as beings created "in the image of God", and participation in his life-giving saving presence through Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Islam regards itself as the true Christianity and the true Judaism, so that Allah as he is revealed in the Qur'an must be the true God of the Christians and Jews. Islamists say: "We worship the same God" and "We reverence your prophets" forward as the basis for interfaith dialogue masks a profound denial of the work of Islam regards itself as the true Christianity and the true Judaism, so that Allah as he is revealed in the Qur'an must be the true God of the Christians and Jews. Christ, and rejection of the saving attributes of the God of the Bible. These principles undermine the very foundations of the Christian faith.

If God is as the Qur'an depicts him, then he has no power to save, not in the way the Christian faith understands salvation. The Allah that Muslims believe in is not the same person as YHWH of the Bible.

Generally speaking, Muslims who become Christians do not consider themselves to have exchanged gods, but rather to have revised their understanding of Allah.

It is the Bible which truly reveals the identity and character of God, Christ and the Holy Spirit, and not making a hasty and ill-informed surrender to Islam's claim that "we all worship the same Allah."

It is essential to acknowledge these differences if Christianity and Islam are to engage constructively with each other in one world. However, the question of the identity of Allah is still a matter of profound disagreement, both in principle and in practice. The evidence presented in this book concludes that the Bible and the Qur'an rest upon entirely different foundations.

To simply state that we both worship the "creator" or the "God of Abraham" finesses the question of God's identity. Shared identity is not only a matter of having common titles or shared attributes. It must also be filled out by considerations of character.

Islam arose in the seventh century A.D. as a new creation, its precepts and requirements given shape through the utterances and example of Muhammad of Mecca. It is true that Muhammad did borrow elements extensively from the Judaism he encountered in Arabia at the time. One example is found in the form of Islam's daily prayers. There are also influences from Christianity, though these seem to be less pervasive, for Muhammad seems to have had fewer contacts with Christians than with Jews. One example of a Christian influence is the Qur'an's story of Mary's virgin conception.

Alongside borrowings from other religions of the Middle East, Islam also draws heavily on pre-Islamic Arab paganism.

Muhammad did not have a Jewish or Christian spiritual formation to build upon or modify. It was shaped by the pagan spiritual worldview of his childhood and his life experiences, and colored by snatches of stories and phrases heard around him in the spiritually diverse environment of the 7<sup>th</sup> century Arabia.

At its very core, the foundations of Muhammad’s spiritual vision of his god Allah owe more to Muhammad’s own personal conceptions, formed within himself based on his cultural background (which included paganism), life experiences and prophetic ambition, than to an inheritance of Biblical revelation.

The character of Allah, which emerges into the light of day to become part of Islam, lacks key definitive traits of YHWH, the God of Moses and Jesus. It would be wrong to say that Muhammad omitted, erased, or “painted over” them like the ceiling of the Hagia Sophia: he most likely never apprehended them in the first place. This was not an attenuation of a pre-existing Abrahamic continuity, but the ignorance of it.

Islam, then, can be seen as the ultimate new creole religion, built upon pagan roots, and incorporating elements taken from Judaism (and to a lesser extent Christianity), as well as other faiths, all molded in the crucible of Muhammad’s life experience and unfolding spiritual awareness.

**BOOK CONCLUSION:** Despite significant similarities, there is no family resemblance. Some features from the face of the God of the Bible may have been glued onto Muhammad’s Allah, but the heart of the matter is that Allah and YHWH share no DNA. They are not the same God!

**POINTS TO CONSIDER:**

1. What are the attributes of God of the Bible?
2. What are the attributes of Allah and Islam?
3. What are the main differences between Islam and Christianity?
4. Are there any similarities between Islam and Christianity?
5. Were parts of Muhammad’s belief system grounded in some pagan roots?

**PERSONAL REFLECTIONS:**

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