

The Boston Bombings and Understanding the Islamic Worldview

Interview with Mark Durie

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David Wheaton: Perhaps you watched the Boston Marathon bombings that killed four people and injured more than 200 others and wondered, "Why would two young Muslim men, who were granted political asylum in America years ago, educated in our schools, and received financial aid from U.S. taxpayers, set off two bombs in order to murder and maim as many Americans as possible?"

It's a very good question. It has been said that, "All Muslims are not terrorists ... but almost all terrorist attacks against America are committed by Muslims."

Why is this? What is it about Islam — or perhaps about America? — that leads two young Muslims to murder the people that have actually taken them in?

Mark Durie, an Australian pastor and author of three books on Islam joins us from Australia *The Christian Worldview* all the way from Australia.

Many pastors are trying to find common ground between the Christian faith and Islam, for instance the document that came out a few years ago in America, *A Common Word Between Us and You* signed by many evangelical leaders and the leaders of Islam. Why have you focused on the critical differences and pointed out some of the negative aspects of Islam?

Mark Durie: I think we do have precious common ground with Muslims, but it's in our humanity, not in faith.

I think it's really important to hold love together with truth, and not to abandon one for the other, or to pit them against each other. Truth means acknowledging the differences, which are great and significant, and not glossing over them or pretending they don't exist. When you're dealing with a very different faith it takes an effort and care to really understand those differences. That's been part of my work, to help people understand what seems incomprehensible, what those differences really are.

DW: The *Free Republic* [reported](#) on April 15, saying this, "Shortly after terror bombs exploded and murdered over 12 people at the Boston marathon – I guess that's an incorrect number – members of Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Hezbollah were reported to be dancing in the streets of Gaza, handing out candies to passers by. The head of an Islamic organization in Jordan, the Muslim Salafi group, said he's 'happy to see the horror in America' after the bombing attacks in Boston. 'American blood isn't more precious than Muslim blood,' said Mohammad al-Chalabi, who was convicted in an Al-Qa'ida-linked plot to attack US and other Western diplomatic missions in Jordan. 'Let the Americans feel the pain we endured by their armies occupying Iraq and Afghanistan and killing our people there.'"

Reportedly some people in the Muslim world celebrated the Boston bombings. The vast majority of the Muslim world not condemn it – I know there were some select Muslims who did.

MD: I think there are certainly Muslims who regard the West and America as the enemy and rejoice in what they regard as inflicting pain and harm on their enemy. So there are some like that. I think some Muslims in American also really prefer to emphasize that Muslims are the real victims – that's a theological theme in Islam, that Muslims are the victims – so they don't want the attention to be taken away from that. Also some Muslims don't want to apologize for Islam. It causes them distress to have to engage with this [incidents of Islamic terrorism] and they resent being held to account for their faith. So there's a deeper denial sometimes, at least among Western Muslims about Islamic radicalism. All these factors sometimes make it difficult for Muslims to engage.

DW: Now the response of the parents of bombers – the mother and the father – they had this to say in the immediate aftermath of the bombing: ...

[Mother [here](#):] "What happened is a terrible thing, but I know that my kids had nothing to do this."

[Father [here](#):] "Somebody clearly framed them. I don't know exactly who framed them but they did. They framed them and then they were so cowardly that they shot them dead. There are policemen like that."

[Mother:] "They were being killed just because they were Muslims. Nothing else."

[Interviewer:] "Do you think they'll get a fair trial?"

[Mother:] "Only Allah knows it. I don't know."

DW: So that was the mother and the father of the two bombers. You could understand how parents are in denial sometimes. But it seems that there is an unbridgeable truth gap between the West and the Muslim world. For instance, whether it is just denying the patently obvious of what took place in Boston, but even on a broader scale, denial of the holocaust; or saying that 9/11 was not done by Muslims, it was an inside job; or the 'fact' that America is out to take over the world – that sort of thing. In your studies is there an unbridgeable truth gap between the West and the Muslim world?

MD: I think there's an emotional world-view gap that drives the truth gap. Shame and honour are very powerful forces in Islamic culture, and there's a desire to claim the moral high ground of being a victim. They did this to them "just because they are Muslims," the mother of the bombers said.

"We are the victims!" one Muslim scholar was screaming on al-Jazeera, in a debate with Wafa Sultan, who is a doctor who left Islam. She had challenged him, saying, look Muslims had done some bad things, but he just began to scream at her: "[We are the victims!](#)"



This sense that "**We** are the victims: there's nothing wrong with us, it is someone else's fault": that is what drives these wild conspiracy theories and denial of obvious and plain truth. I think underlying it is something like shame or just some sort of fear, and this creates the sense of unreality. The Muslim world is awash with bizarre conspiracy theories. There **is** a truth gap, but it is because of an emotional world-view gap.

DW: Chris Matthews, a politically liberal host here in America, had [this to say](#) as they were trying to find a possible reason or motivation behind these bombings.

[Clint Van Zandt, FBI Profiler:] "The pieces we don't have Chris is "Where was their inspiration? Where did they get their guidance? Who taught them how to build the bombs? Where did they build them? These are a lot of questions."

[Chris Matthews, interrupting and shouting over Van Zandt:] "Why is that important? Why is that important to prosecuting? Is that important to prosecuting? I mean, what difference does it make why they did if they did it? I'm being tough here but I don't know whether, when you look at all this evidence..."

Frankly Mark, I **do** want to know why they did this. How much credence is there to [the

claim that] Muslims conducting terrorist attacks in America is because of America's "meddling" in the Islamic world, like that previous quote, of being involving in Iraq and Afghanistan. Others will say they hate our freedom and lifestyle and they try to kill us because of that.

Contrary to what Chris Matthews just said, I really do want to know what motivates these Islamic terrorists, these two young men specifically, to do this kind of thing.

MD: Well the first thing is that it is not just Americans that are being attacked by radical Muslims. Just recently the Coptic cathedral in Cairo was attacked and someone was shot. Actually Christian minorities in Muslim countries are attacked and hated as well, so it is not just America.

The root of the problem is in the Qur'an. The Qur'an says "Fighting is obligatory for you, though you dislike it." [Sura 2:126]. The word in Arabic for fighting means "to kill." And it says also "I shall cast terror into the hearts of the disbelievers. Cut off their heads, and cut off their limbs." [Sura 8:12]

There's a stream that's at the core of Islam that generates hatred against non-believers. Christians are being killed and attacked in Nigeria and in the Sudan, and that's not because they are a world power or a dominant force.

There is an old Islamic doctrine that the blood of infidels is **halal**: it can be taken. It's not a crime to attack a non-Muslim, and the radicals, like the Tsarnaev brothers, they are taught this sort of worldview. It's the devaluation of the lives of non-Muslims in these radical versions of Islam that's the real problem.

The blame-the-victim response – "it's our fault that we're being killed" – that's a terrible mistake to fall into. That's just what the terrorists **want** you to think – that it's your fault.

DW: So if America weren't involved in the Middle East, let's say not involved in Afghanistan and Iraq - let's say still supporting Israel as an ally - these kind of things would still happen?

MD: Oh absolutely. The hostility would only increase. America stands for the freedom and the power and might of the non-Muslim world, and that's enough to justify the jihad. You won't get peace by withdrawing from those places. It's not going to happen.

DW: I watched these Boston bombings and the aftermath in the media, and I thought "What are they really trying to accomplish, these two Muslim men, by just setting off two bombs and randomly killing some civilians on a street in Boston. One would think that would turn world opinion against them, but it doesn't seem to. What do you think is trying to be accomplished? Are they trying to take over America? Obviously that's not going to work. They can't do it with a couple of bombs on a sidewalk in Boston.

MD: Well, there's two reasons. One is, as the Qur'an says, to strike terror in the hearts of the enemy [Sura 8:60, see also 3:150, 8:], to condition fear in who they [the terrorists] regard as the enemy, which is non-Muslims.

And the other is, as a leading scholar in Syria [Al-Bouti see [here](#)] said in a ruling made about suicide bombings, it is permissible to do it to spite the enemy, that is to hurt them. So there's the desire to hurt someone who is thought to be an enemy. That's the pleasure of inflicting harm on your enemy.

DW: Mark, let's come back to America, from the standpoint of Americans to this. Why don't you think President Obama ever mentions the words Muslim or Islam in connection with terrorist attacks like this in Boston, when clearly the Islamic religion is the motivating force behind these Muslims doing this?

MD: For one thing he has a secular liberal view that all religions are much the same. So he denies that Islam is the reason or makes any contribution to these acts.

Furthermore he **identifies** with Islam – as he has explained to the Muslim world – because his father was a Muslim and he was exposed to Islamic worldview and background when he was a kid. So he is very deliberate about deflecting attention away from Islam. He has forbidden his spokespeople to make any links between Islam and terrorism. It is his

deliberate policy to do that.

DW: The political left here in America were openly hoping that the bombers would be an American terrorist, like a Timothy McVeigh, the guy who blew up the Federal Building in Oklahoma, sort of a home grown right-wing extremist type person. They were hoping the bombers would not be Muslim. Why do you think the political Left want to protect Islam, especially when Islam is so against what the Left holds dear, things like sexual "freedom", homosexuality, multiculturalism... None of these things are tenets of Islam. They stand against those things, but the political left sides with the Muslims, they go soft on calling this what it is, Islamic terrorist.

MD: It's true, David, that those on the left wouldn't last long in an Islamic state, but they support the Islam project. That's a really fascinating thing and there's a number of reasons that all come together. One is that the left hasn't really come to terms with the failure of communism, and they don't actually have an ideal to hold out as a result, except that they hate capitalism, and thus they hate America as well, and they share that hatred with radical Islam. So on the basis that "Whoever is my enemy's enemy must be my friend," there's a natural partnering there.

Another is the victimhood thing. The left loves a victim, and Islam promotes itself – Muslims promote themselves – as victims, so there's a partnering there.

And another is that both ideologies are totalitarian, so there's somehow an affinity where the two work together. But as you say, radical sharia law would just destroy many of the projects that the left holds dear.

DW: I've often thought that the Islamic world – those who are intent on world domination – think that the bigger force to deal with first are those who hold the conservative or Christian worldview in the west, and once they are dealt with there's going to be no problem to take out the political left.

Mark, these young men, the Boston bombers, had been in America – they were actually given political asylum here in America, escaping their homeland over in the former Soviet Republic of Chechnya. They had been in America for many years – I think at least one of them had been here for about ten years – and were supported financially to a large extent by Americans taxpayers. From your understanding, your research, how does one get radicalized to the point that they would actually attack the country that had helped them?

MD: I think there's two reasons. One was explained by their uncle, Uncle Ruslan, [\[here\]](#) who had absolute contempt for them. He said they did not 'settle' – that is, they couldn't find a meaningful way of making a path for themselves. Tamerlan had wanted to be an engineer, but he did not do well enough; then he wanted to do boxing, but he wasn't quite good enough at that; he felt superior but he wasn't getting on.

But the [second] key factor then was that they were exposed to radical teachers who told them about their superiority as conservative Muslims, and offered them this sense of significance, the hope of achieving paradise if they gave their lives in jihad. It's that radicalisation, the teaching, the doctrine, which was the key issue.

DW: The wife of the older bomber. She was just a regular American girl. I think she was just in college. She met the older bomber and then was married to him, and she actually converted to Islam, which is to me very unusual, to grow up in America, to know the lifestyle here in America of personal freedom versus voluntarily taking on the constrictions of Islam with the headcovering and the different kinds of lifestyle restrictions. What is allure of Islam for a American girl who decides all of a sudden to convert to that religion?

MD: It's interesting David that quite a lot of women are converting to Islam in the West, more perhaps than men. One woman explained to me that sometimes Muslim men are good looking and attractive, so there's that factor.

And for some young women, the modern secular west seems rootless, and morally and spiritually lost and Islam seems to offer safe-haven, a place where you know what you are supposed to do, where you've got a clear place, and where you don't have to put yourself on show.

Sometimes women are ignorant and deceived.

There's also the issue of dominance. It seems that Katharine Russell partnered with a young man who was abusive and dominating and he put a lot of pressure on her. All those factors can come together.

DW: A strain of Islam, both preached by some Imams and practiced by certain followers, actually encourages death – either death by martyrdom for the cause of Islam, as the only sure path to Allah, or also death to non-Muslims, as you have been talking about, and that's where we see these terrorist attacks as something that pleases Allah. Now it's just the opposite in the Christian faith. Jesus said "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly." Jesus also said in John 8:44 "He, Satan, was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and a father of lies." I don't want to be too extreme on this, because Satan is the father of all false religions, because he's very happy that people are religious but not following the one and only true way through Jesus Christ. How do you categorise Islam compared to other false ways?

MD: I think it's true that Islam does emphasize death, and the Qur'an criticizes the Jews for loving life [Sura 2:96]. And it's also true that Islam is in many respects very antagonistic to core values of the gospel. Muhammad, for example, hated crosses and would destroy anything that had a cross on it. Also Islam has been the most devastating ideology in terms of its impact on the Christian world. Most of the ancient Christian world was overwhelmed. His track record is really incredibly devastating. I believe Muhammad was a false prophet. His message was not true. He did not lead people to God but away from God.

Is it the ultimate? Is it the worst expression of the Satanic delusion, that all of us can be affected by? I'm reluctant to say that, but certainly militant Islam has had a hugely devastating effect.

This is one reason why I find it very distressing when people in the West speak of "the prophet Muhammad". He's not a prophet. He's a false prophet. And we need to find ways that really distance ourselves from the claims of Islam, so that we don't just accept them or speak about it with reverence and respect. Because it is not a true religion.

DW: What would you say to those professing Christians that think that Islam and Christianity can work together because of our shared values of "loving God and loving neighbor"? A lot of Christians think that Allah and God – and Muslims used those words interchangeably — are the same thing. How would you respond to that Mark?

MD: I think it's tempting to think that people of a different faith just believe more or less the same things that we do. We look at another faith and think "Oh it must be the same." But that's just too easy. You need to pay attention to what people actually teach and believe. And even some leading Christian thinkers and writers like Miroslav Volf from Yale University have said "Islam teaches love of the neighbor." It's not true. Islam teaches love of the **Muslim** neighbor, but not of the non-Muslim neighbor.

The Qur'an actually teaches Muslims to show harshness to non-Muslim neighbors and to fight against them [Sura 9:123, Sura 48:29] so you shouldn't look to religion to be the basis of working together. You should look to common humanity.

I think Christians and Muslims **can** work together, but not based on a shared religious belief, but rather on their shared humanity, their conscience, their awareness of right and wrong that's not necessarily based on religion at all, but is just part of the human condition.

DW: What have you found that helps Christians and people in general understand and deal with Islam in the best way?

MD: I think it's really important to study Islam for yourself. Look at the original sources. There are some very good books that make those sources available. Take the Life of Muhammad: to understand how different it actually is, you really need to be confronted with teachings that say do not love non-Muslims. You need to read those things thoroughly. My book **The Third Choice** explains Islam clearly, and that's a resource.

Another thing is you need to set aside the need to be comforted, such as thinking that all religions are the same, or everyone is basically decent: that's not a good basis for examining these differences. You have to pay attention and look at the issues for what they are.

Another is don't try to find solutions too quickly. Solutions come later. First you have to understand the problem and live with that and understand **that** first. The solutions will come as you allow those facts to come to your mind.

DW: Tell us what the situation is like in Australia with regards to Australia? Are you experiencing a lot of the same things, maybe more, because you are closer to the Islamic world? What's it like down there Mark?

MD: About 2.4% of the Australian population is Muslim. They come from many, many different countries, so their stories are very diverse, because they come from different places. Some Muslims have had difficulties settling here, and we have certainly have the radicals here too – as in the US, where I think there have been hundreds of potential Boston bombings that have been thwarted by the FBI – we've had issues here too: people have been arrested and imprisoned for plotting here. In general most Muslims are doing pretty well and adapting well to Australia, but it's not all roses by any means.

One really good thing that's happened here is that both sides of politics have repeatedly said very clearly we're not going to have sharia law here. There's one law for all. All people are going to be equal before the law. That's our common law tradition. And if you want to live in Australia that's what have to put up with, and that's the way it works. That's been good: our government has made very clear statements about our values and our legal system to the Muslims that have come into the country. And I wish government leaders around the world would say that very clearly to their Muslim immigrants.

DW: Now Mark one final question. You've written three books on Islam. You're a pastor. You speak very graciously and yet the truth that you speak might be offensive to some Muslims in Australia and Muslims who are listening today. What has been the response to a pastor saying the kinds of things you say? It doesn't seem to be inflammatory. You point out the differences, which I think is completely fair game. What has been the response that you get from the Muslim world.

MD: I've had a range of responses. Sometimes Muslims have been intrigued by what I've had to say and I've had some very interesting interactions with them. Understanding the religion enables that to happen. Occasionally people have just been offended and they dismiss you, but I find that if you love people and you express your views graciously, and you don't assume that the person who you're speaking to has certain beliefs, and you ask them what they believe, and inquire about what they believe, you can have a very good relationship with them. I have friends who debate with Muslims in Hyde Park in London, and often if you can engage in a very frank and open way you can connect very powerfully, much better than if you have a wishy-washy fearful "Oh we'll all be the same" approach. You are much less likely to have a significant engagement with Muslims if you have that view.

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