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**A Comparative Analysis of the God of Christianity and the God of Islam**

A Thesis Submitted

To the Teacher and Students of Advanced Apologetics

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### **Introduction**

The three Abrahamic religions that are considered the monotheistic powerhouses are often compared when discussing their core beliefs. The world of Christianity often finds conflict between the doctrines of other world religions. One of the most controversial topics is whether or not the Muslim and Christian God are the same. Since these religions are two of the most significant monotheistic religions, through logic many argue they are indeed the same God. It is often interpreted that because both gods are presented as the god of Abraham and his descendants, the focus of both religions' worship is equivalent, but this is before the fact that Islam began centuries after Christianity is taken into consideration. Through assessing the character of Yahweh and Allah, it will become evident that Allah is a significantly different being than the triune God. Often, it is interpreted that Allah is a loving and merciful god and this could be comparable to the love and mercy of the God of Christianity, but when fully defined and the forms of love and mercy are assessed, it becomes clear that there is inconsistency.

Through contrasting the doctrines of Christianity and Islam, it can be made clear to others that they are indeed two different beings. Lastly, the idea of salvation remains to be the largest argument in question, since it would be completely illogical for one god to have different paths to salvation for his followers. When seen from surface level, it is possible to perceive that the god of Islam and the god of Christianity are the same god, but the fundamental doctrines of both religions, when interpreted, disclose otherwise. The god of Christianity and the god of Islam are not the same.

## **1. Origins of Islam**

### **1.2 Pre-Islamic Arabia: Politics, Society, and Religion**

The time before the implementation of Islam is given the title *al-jahiliyyah*, which can be translated as a time of ignorance or barbarism. This era was given its title to describe the paganistic culture of 6th century Arabia before Muhammad introduced Islam and, according to Muslims, the true version of Allah. However, the term *al-jahiliyyah* does not only represent religion, but it describes the politics and society within the Arabian Peninsula during the sixth century.

The idea of government was nonexistent, which evidently means there was no law, and the only type of law that existed during this period was lawlessness. When a man committed indecent acts to another, the injured person would take matters into his own hands, which usually resulted in bestial actions. There was no government, and as a result, there was no form of security, such as police, judges, and a justice system. Arabs found protection within their tribes. The idea of tribalism or, '*asabiyya*', was held to a higher importance than ethics, and "a tribe that failed to protect its members from their enemies, exposed itself to ridicule, obloquy and contempt."<sup>2</sup> Tribalism was instilled among the Arabs, and they had become anarchists by instinct. Since the Arabian Peninsula could not support all the tribes at the time, because the nomadic clans remained in the desert, warfare became a sport. Although war remained an efficient way to maintain the population at the time, the Arabs did not view war in this manner. Eternal peace held no appeal for them, and war provided an escape from drudgery and from the

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<sup>1</sup> Can be translated to clan spirit

<sup>2</sup> Arabia before Islam. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.al-islam.org/restatement-history-islam-and-muslims-sayyid-ali-ashgar-razwy/arabia-islam>

monotony of life in the desert.<sup>3</sup> In many cases, the Arabs fought merely for the glorification of their own tribe. In consideration of the social structure during the time of *al-jahiliyyah*, the patriarchy was dominant and inheritance was passed down through the male lines.

The most prominent form of religion within the nomadic peoples was polytheism. The center or sanctuary within the desert was referred to as the Kaaba. They had turned the Kaaba, which, according to tradition, had been built by the Prophet Abraham and his son, Ismael, and was dedicated by them to the service of One God, into a heathen pantheon housing 360 idols of stone and wood.<sup>4</sup> The Bedouins came from all over the Arabian Peninsula to this part of the desert in order to worship the deities that resided within the Kaaba.<sup>5</sup> Many of the rituals that were done amongst the pagan Arabs included songs of worship and dance in front of their gods, sacrifices, and prayers for health.<sup>6</sup> In addition, another ritual that was recorded was the act of circling the Kaaba seven times, but stopping to kiss each corner. To preface the information given, the understanding of the actions taken by pre-Islamic Arabia was recorded and passed down through oral tradition. According to scholars, there were no priests or pagan scriptures in pre-Islamic Arabia, but poetry was one of the most valued and sacred ways of expression and communication. Poetry was used as a way to communicate with the tribal community and discredit their enemies, but most importantly, poems were considered to be divinely inspired. It is claimed that the gods regularly revealed themselves through utterances of a group of cultic

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Arabia before Islam. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.al-islam.org/restatement-history-islam-and-muslims-sayyid-ali-ashgar-razwy/arabia-islam>

<sup>5</sup> The Bedouins is another name for the nomadic peoples during pre-Islamic Arabia

<sup>6</sup> Aslan, *No god but God*, 4.

officials known as the *Kahins*. The Kahins were poets that functioned as soothsayers that would charge people to reveal divine messages through rhyming couplets. Poets held a higher place in society in Pre-Islamic Arabia, but the Kahins were a spiritual version of the poet. The Kahins interpreted dreams, cleared up crimes, found lost animals, settled disputes, and explained ethics among the tribes.<sup>7</sup> Although the Kahins were viewed as the High Priests of the clans, no one could directly speak to Allah. The Bedouins did have a sense of who Allah could be; they referred to Allah as “the King of the Gods,” however, Allah was not the central deity of the Kaaba. At the time, Allah was believed to have created the heavens and the earth and made human beings to be in his image. Tradition claims that the pilgrims had a chant that they would proclaim as they approached the Kaaba:

“Here I am, O Allah, here I am.

You have no partner,

Except such a partner as you have.

You possess him and all that is his.”<sup>8</sup>

Scholars believe this processional chant is evidence for the earliest traces of *henotheism*—the belief in a single High God without necessarily rejecting the existence of other, lesser gods.<sup>9</sup>

Although other forms of religion existed, such as Judaism and Christianity, these religions only existed in the more established regions of the middle east. The absence of government left room for chaos, and the tribal clans and priests paved the way for a polytheistic

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<sup>7</sup> Aslan, *No god but God*, 7.

<sup>8</sup> Aslan, *No god but God*, 8.

<sup>9</sup> The term henotheism was coined by the German philologist, Max Müller.

society, which is the reason this era is given the name *al-jahiliyyah*. Islam later paved the way for a more civilized society and gave the Bedouins a single god to worship.

### 1.3 Muhammad's Early Life

Muhammad, short for *Abū al-Qāsim Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib ibn Hāshim*, is considered to be the founder of Islam, the messenger of Allah, and the proclaimer of the Quran. The written revelations within the Quran, which are claimed to be from divine inspiration, outline the basic beliefs of Islam.

Muhammad was born in 570 C.E., and as in the case with most prophets within the Quran, his birth was accompanied by signs and premonitions. Al-Tabari writes that “while Muhammad’s father, Abdallah, was on his way to meet his bride, Amina, he was stopped by a strange woman, seeing a light shining between his eyes,” and she requested that she sleep with him.<sup>10</sup> Abdallah refused the request of the woman and consummated his own marriage which resulted in the birth of the prophet. When Abdallah came across the woman the next day, she did not ask to sleep with him, and when he asked why, she responded, “The light which was with you yesterday has left you. I have no need of you today.”<sup>11</sup> It is inferred that the light in between the father of Muhammad’s eyes was divinely placed and was perceived as a premonition of the birth of the Prophet. Before Muhammad was born, his father died, but the signs of his prophetic identity continued. While she was pregnant with Muhammad, Amina heard a voice tell her she was “pregnant with the Lord of this people and when he is born...call him Muhammad.”<sup>12</sup>

Amina died when Muhammad was six years old, and he was sent to live with his grandfather

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<sup>10</sup> Aslan, No god but God, 19.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

Abd al-Muttalib, but two years after his grandfather died and he was sent to his uncle, Abu Talib. When his grandfather died, he made Abu Talib leader of the Banu Hashim clan and the new guardian of Muhammad. This outline of the early life of Muhammad may seem common due to the fact it functions as a prophetic *topos*: a conventional literary theme that can be found in most mythologies.<sup>13</sup> These narratives and premonitions that lead up to the birth of the prophet are not used to relate to historical events but merely to elucidate the mystery of the prophetic experiences.<sup>14</sup>

Another important aspect when understanding the life of the prophet is his familiarity in the religion and ideology of Hanifism. The origins of Hanifism are recounted in the writings of one of Muhammad's earliest biographers, Ibn Hisham, while the Meccans were celebrating a Pagan festival at the Kaaba—a group of men separated from the rest of the people and met in the desert. During this meeting, they agreed that they would never worship the idols of their forefathers. This way of polytheism is paganistic, which resulted in their solemn oath to return to the religion of Abraham, who was considered to be a pure monotheistic and neither Jew nor Christian. This is where the term *hanif* originated, meaning “to turn away from,” as in one who turns away from idolatry.”<sup>15</sup> One of the people within this newly found group of Hanifs was named Zayd ibn Amr, and like many preachers at the time, he was also a poet. Many traditions have recorded his admonitions towards the people at the Pagan festival at the Kaaba. Zayd rebuked the others by saying, “I renounce Allat and al-Uzza, both of them... I will not worship

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<sup>13</sup> Aslan, *No god but God*, 21.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Aslan, *No god but God*, 14.



Hubal... Not one of you follows the religion of Abraham but I.”<sup>16</sup> Hanifism began to flourish in certain parts all over the Arabian Peninsula. There were many Hanif converts in pre-Islamic Arabia. The main message of *hanifism* was the idea of an active god who was involved in the lives of his creation and did not need mediators to stand between him and his creation. Since most sedentary Arabs would have heard of the hanif ideology, the Meccans surely would have heard of it, and there can be little doubt that the Prophet Muhammad would have been aware of both. It can be inferred that *hanifism* could contribute to Muhammad’s introduction of the new religion of Islam. In consideration of the fact that as Muhammad was growing up surrounded by idolatry, he would not have followed idolatry and the polytheistic religion of those around him. According to one source, “[God] was the greatest reality for him, which can be inferred that he may have identified with the *hanifs* before Allah revealed himself to him.”<sup>17</sup>

#### **1.4 Muhammad’s First Vision**

The largest precursor to the religion of Islam was Muhammad’s visions. During the time of Muhammad’s visions, Arabia was still immersed in polytheism and idolatry, but Muhammad was never contaminated by sin and had never bowed before any idol. At around 25 years of age, Muhammad married Khadija, a wealthy widow, and this was his first look into prosperity and he became rich. Khadija gave him the ownership of her property and her slaves. By this time, Muhammad gained a reputation within his clan; he was called *al-amin*, or trustworthy. When the Prophet was over thirty years of age, he found a place for his meditations located on top of a hill with a cave shaped out of stone called Mount Hira. At the time of his first vision,

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Bennett, *Interpreting The Quran*, 24.

Muhammad was a merchant. Scholars suggest that “he was also unhappy with the treatment of the most vulnerable people in society, whose welfare was neglected by the elite.”<sup>18</sup> This unhappiness towards the conditions of society at the time increased the number of religious retreats he embarked on. Finally, when he was forty years of age in 610 C.E., he saw his first vision. As he was sitting in the cave while meditating, he felt the pressure of a presence crush him, and he was unable to move and was overwhelmed by darkness. This presence was sent by Allah, and it was his angel *Jibril*.<sup>19</sup> The pressure in his chest increased until he could not breathe, and then the presence commanded him “*Iqra*,” which means “recite” or “read.” Muhammad did not know what to recite until the presence tightened its grip and once more repeated the command. Then the pressure in his chest stopped and its silence engulfed the cave. Accounts record that Muhammad felt these words on his heart:

“Recite in the name of your Lord who created,  
Created humanity from a clot of blood.  
Recite, for your Lord is the Most Generous One  
Who has taught by the pen;  
Taught humanity that which it did not know.”<sup>20</sup>

This was Muhammad’s burning bush, the moment in which he ceased being a Meccan businessman and became a prophet. He is claimed to be the last Prophet of Allah, following his predecessors, Abraham, Moses, David, and Jesus; Muhammad would be something greater.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Bennett, *Interpreting The Quran*, 25.

<sup>19</sup> This is the Arabic name given to the angel Gabriel.

<sup>20</sup> The Holy Quran, Surah 96:1-5.

<sup>21</sup> Aslan, *No god but God*, 34.

Muslims believe that Allah continues to reveal himself through each of the prophets and that they have been chosen to relay Allah's divine message to humanity. Sometimes, it is the prophet's job to reveal sacred texts to the people: Moses revealed the Torah, David composed the Psalms, and Jesus inspired the Gospels.<sup>22</sup> These prophets are more than just prophets: they are referred to as *rasuls*, translated to Messengers of God. After the first vision, Muhammad will continue to recite the entire text of the Quran.<sup>23</sup> After that, Muhammad would be known as *Rasul Allah*: "the Messenger of God." When Khadija heard of Muhammad's encounter on Mount Hira she sent for her cousin, Waraqa, who, according to Islamic tradition, was a Christian, he referred to the verse in Deuteronomy 18:18, "*I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.*" Waraqa believed in the visions of Muhammad because of the foretelling of a prophet within the scriptures written by Moses. By the year 613 C.E., Muhammad proclaimed himself as the prophet of God. Muhammad recorded his visions, and a new religion was established. This new religion was referred to as Islam, and later in the Quran, the followers of this religion are referred to as submitters or (*muslimun*). The people who became Muslim were required to recite the *shahada*, a profession of faith that there is no god but The God and Muhammad is his Prophet.

### 1.5 Introduction to Islam

These visions marked the beginning of Islam as Muhammad had become the Messenger of Allah. The first people to hear about the vision were Zaid, Muhammad's freed slave, his cousin Ali, and Abu Bakr a friend of his childhood. Upon hearing of Muhammad's encounter,

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<sup>22</sup> Aslan, *No god but God*, 35.

<sup>23</sup> Which literally translates to the Recitation

Zaid and Ali immediately believed the newfound prophet's words. Abu Bakr was out of town at the time of the vision, but when he returned he was overwhelmed by the word of the people, many had begun to say that his friend had gone mad and begun to say that angels brought him messages from God.<sup>24</sup> Abu Bakr did not doubt the word of the prophet, he merely asked if angels indeed descended upon him, and when Muhammad responded yes, Abu Bakr declared his faith. And soon after a group of The Faithful was formed, they were all considered mad by the people around them, but they vowed to continue to spread the light of God all over the world.<sup>25</sup> The Faithful had created a message of Islam to be spread amongst all the Meccans, the message was that the people of Mecca should no longer worship any other than the Creator, and they must renounce their loyalty to the idols. The people of Mecca were not honoring their wives and mothers, and they continued to live in their drunkenness and gamble and that they should live in acts of compassion. They continued to ignore what The Faithful were preaching to be the one true god. When the elders of Mecca heard of this new message that Muhammad was preaching, they approached Muhammad's uncle, an esteemed leader of the clan, Abu Talib, and confronted him by asking him to command Muhammad to stop saying anything about their idols, but he may continue preaching that his god is One. In addition, this request was conditional, if Abu Talib did not stop his nephew, then the people of Mecca would no longer consider Abu Talib a leader of the tribe. According to Islamic tradition, Abu Talib responded by saying, "My nephew, go your way. Do your duty. Let my people give me up. I am with you."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ahmad, *The Life of Muhammad*, 11.

<sup>25</sup> The first believers of Islam were referred to as the Faithful.

<sup>26</sup> Ahmad, *The Life of Muhammad*, 21.

Muhammad and his small group of believers decided to leave Mecca and emigrate to Abyssinia. To leave Mecca was unheard of for the Arab people, since they believed they were the keepers of the Kaaba, but the move to Abyssinia was considered a necessity at the time because the Muslims faced persecution. Even after the Muslims had left Mecca to seek refuge in Abyssinia, the people of Mecca arranged a group to approach the King of Abyssinia at the time to persuade the king to turn against the new refugees, but the King refused to turn over the people to their persecutors. As the Message of Islam spread throughout different parts of the Middle East, the persecution increased. At this point, many Muslims had already left Mecca, but the group that remained suffered unbearable amounts of persecutions, but they continued to remain on the path of Islam. The amount of devotion to Allah was on the increase along with their hatred for the idols, the conflict increased. The non-Muslim Meccans decided to boycott all things Muslim, they were strongly encouraged to stop buying and selling to Muslims as well. This resulted in many believers to live without money, means, and reserves. As persecution increased, Muhammad saw this as a way to continue to spread the word of Islam, he did not mind persecution and mistreatment because he had the chance to meet and address people. Since the people of Mecca continued to become increasingly adamant towards the message of Muhammad, he moved to other cities to spread the message of the oneness of Allah towards other cities. Following the trends of the prior prophets, since he found that the people of Mecca would continue to persecute and not listen, he turned to different cities, like Taif and Medina, to preach of the message of Islam.

## 1.6 The Quran

The Quran is the Scripture of the Muslims and is a series of the oral revelations given to Muhammad between 610 and 632. What came from Muhammad's mouth was a recitation of the words of Allah, referred to as the "*al-quran*" which literally translates to "The Recitation." The Quran is considered to be the written word of Allah given to Muslims, the word of Allah was given to Muhammad and written into the Quran. The Quran makes the claim that the evident author is not the Prophet, but Allah; it pronounces that every word and phrase presented is directly from Allah. One of the main objectives of the Quran is to proclaim the prophetic mission which is aimed at the guidance of humanity, by delivering it from darkness and leading it towards light. This idea of darkness is not merely defined as ignorance alone, but the worship of material benefits, egoism, enslavement to desires, and greed. This means that the word darkness includes all kinds of evil that will divert the Muslim from righteousness, in Surah 2:257 of the Quran it says "God is the Protector of the believers; He brings them forth from the darkness into the light. And the unbelievers --their protectors are taught, that bring them forth from the light into the darkness ..." which indicates the Quran is inferred to be the word of Allah that brings each follower out of the darkness and onto the path of righteousness. The nature of the revelation or what is revealed in the Quran is the word of Allah and his will. The Quran teaches Allah's supreme revelation has been revealed within a book, and that his verbal revelation is written on a heavenly template that represents his word. There are four separate collections of these revelations: The Torah, The Psalms, The Gospels, and the Quran. According to Islamic tradition, the message of the Quran is to confirm the Torah and the Gospels but its authority is greater than theirs. Primarily, the Quran is the revelation of the will of Allah, it gives

instruction on what must be believed and how to live in obedience and submission to Allah. The method that was used to reveal the will of Allah was through the visions given to Muhammad in 610 C.E., after the vision it became the Prophet's role to preach the will of Allah to all the people of Mecca. Since Muhammad was supposed to memorize the word that was given to him by the angel Jibril, it is claimed that Islamic scripture is the word of Allah alone. Essentially, the Quranic revelation was a law given in a book to show Muslims the will of Allah and the way it should be followed. The Quran never fully reveals who Allah is because it is feared that this goes against his transcendence, as one Muslim scholar expresses, "You may not have complete transcendence and self-revelation at the time." Allah never fully revealed his full character because according to Islamic theology, this would mean that Allah, the Creator, is not above all his creation.

## **2. Origins of Christianity**

### **2.1 A Brief Overview of Christianity**

The point of origin and the central figure of Christianity was Jesus Christ. Unlike Muhammad, Christians, or followers of Christ, claimed he was not merely a prophet, but the physical embodiment of YHWH, and one of the parts of the Trinity. Essentially, the foundation of Christianity is placed on the life, death, and resurrections of Jesus. The birth of Jesus was foretold in the scriptures of the Old Testament, he was born to the Virgin Mary in the town of Bethlehem.<sup>27</sup> Jesus spent his early life in Nazareth, and there is hardly an account of his life during this time, except his time when he taught in the temple in Jerusalem at the young age of 12.<sup>28</sup> The Life of Jesus is recorded in the Four Gospels within the New Testament of the Bible. The Gospels of Matthew and Luke both record the birth of Jesus within their books, but from two different approaches. For example, within Matthew, the entire genealogy of Jesus is outlined in order to appeal to the Jewish audience. In contrast, the book of Luke revolves around the miracles of Jesus to appeal to the Gentiles reading the New Testament. Jesus began his ministry at around thirty years old when he was baptized by John the Baptist, and when John saw him, he immediately recognized him as the Christ or the one who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah. The gospel of Matthew records this encounter in Matthew 3 when John the Baptist initially refused to baptize Jesus because John believed he was unworthy. The message of the New Testament preached by Jesus, is known as the gospel means “good news,” in the singular the gospel refers to the message of Jesus Christ. The ministry of Jesus was constantly

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<sup>27</sup> Can be found in Luke 2, The Holy Bible

<sup>28</sup> Luke 2:36, The Holy Bible



scrutinized by the Pharisees, a Jewish society of scholars and priests, because of how involved Jesus was with the sinners and those who were less fortunate, they also claimed Jesus was a blasphemer because he claimed to be the Son of God. Jesus observed that the Pharisees followed only the Mosaic law and had not experienced the prophecy that had been fulfilled that the Messiah had indeed come. The Pharisees did not believe Jesus because they inferred that the prophecy meant that their Messiah would overthrow Jewish rule. Although some of his followers took him to be the long-awaited Messiah, Jewish and Roman authorities suspected him of having revolutionary aims that might sweep away their power. He was arrested by Roman soldiers and brought before the Sanhedrin, they condemned him to be a blasphemer and deserved death. According to Christian theology, the death and resurrection of Jesus had to occur in order to ultimately defeat death and save the followers of Christ from death as a consequence of their sin.<sup>29</sup> After the resurrection, Jesus instructs his followers to, according to Matthew 28:19-20, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” With this instruction, the followers of Christ were given the task to further his kingdom and continue to make more disciples, thus started the age of the early Christian church.

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<sup>29</sup> Romans 6:23

## 2.2 The Bible

A common misconception relating to the scriptures of Christianity is that the Bible is the written word of God. The revelation of the Word of God was when the Word of God became flesh in the form of Jesus, the physical embodiment of YHWH himself.<sup>30</sup> In regards to the nature of the revelation within the Bible, the Bible not only claims to reveal the will of YHWH, but in addition, his laws and commands; it claims to be YHWH's self-disclosure. YHWH used the Bible as a way to reveal himself to his followers, Christians, but it is impossible for any Christian to understand God because he is infinite, however, YHWH still wants to reveal himself to his people so that they can know him and relate to him. The method of Revelation the Bible uses is the division between the Old Testament and the New Testament. The writers of the Bible were divinely inspired by the Holy Spirit, a part of the Trinity, who caused them to write down the words of the Bible while allowing their own individual styles of writing. The term inspiration refers to the way YHWH led people by His Spirit to write down his word, for prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.<sup>31</sup> The biblical writers also took into account of those they were addressing at the time and wrote the message they were supposed to convey accordingly. For example, even though the gospel Jesus Christ proclaimed consists of a unique message, it was written in four different accounts within the four gospels. Another example would be the fact Jesus spoke to his disciples in Aramaic, the language spoken by the Jews living in Palestine at the time, however, the four

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<sup>30</sup> John 1:1, 10, 14

<sup>31</sup> Moucarry, *The Prophet and The Messiah*, 31.

gospels were written in Greek because they were addressed to different ethnic groups that used Greek as the common language.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

### **Definition of Allah**

Allah is not a name that would definitely distinguish the Muslim god and the Christian god. The reason for this would be the Arabic translation of the word Allah, and when translated from Arabic to English, it means “the God.” The translation can often be seen as a way for many to say they are indeed the same god because of how the word translates. Since this is the case, all Arabs whether Christian or Muslim all refer to their god as Allah. According to most Arabic linguists, the word “Allah” is a contraction for the words “*al*” and “*ilah*” which directly translates to the God, implying that the God is the only god.<sup>33</sup> Christianity and Islam are both monotheistic religions, which means they both believe in the idea that only one god exists, and this god that exists is an omnipotent eternal being. For the purpose of understanding this thesis, Allah will be used to refer to the Muslim god, and Yahweh will be used to describe the Christian god. This monotheistic belief is often used as a central theme when debating the sameness of Yahweh and Allah but through the dissection of each of the aspects of both Allah and Yahweh, it is evident that they are two different beings with two distinctive characters.

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<sup>33</sup> Moucarry, *The Prophet and the Messiah*, 84.

### **Tawhid: the oneness of Allah**

One of the forefront messages of Islam is the doctrine of Tawhid, which is the emphasis of the oneness of Allah. The term Tawhid, or in full At-Tawhid, means to regard as one and only one. Many Muslims regard this doctrine as solely the basis of all monotheistic religions, meaning every monotheistic religion regards their god as one all-powerful being. In contrast, this specific doctrine is unique to Islam considering the Christian belief in the Trinity. The Tawhid is the idea that the Muslim god is one being because if Allah is identified as any other being than one, it would be considered a polytheism. This idea is established in the Quran,

“Say: He is Allah, the One and Only;

Allah, the Eternal, Absolute;

He begets not, nor is he begotten;

And there is none like unto him.”<sup>34</sup>

According to Islamic doctrine, the imposition of another being working alongside Allah would be considered incorrect because of the emphasis of the singularity of Allah. God is absolutely one, even before he created the universe Allah was alone. The Quran often emphasizes that Allah is One,

“[He is] the Originator of the heavens and the earth; He made mates for you from among yourselves, and mates of [and for] the cattle, too, multiplying you (humans and animals)

**thereby; nothing is like Him;** and He is the Hearing, the Seeing. (42:11).”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> The Holy Quran, Surah 112:1-4.

<sup>35</sup> The Holy Quran, Surah 42:11.

This passage highlights the key belief that Islam is founded upon: Allah himself, and nothing like him, sustains what he creates. The Quran does not further describe the creation story because it is believed that the message of the Quran is one of exhortation and warning. Islam forbids the association of any form of polytheism, along with division within the Godhead. This idea is highlighted within Islam so often that the idea of shirk, which means idolatry, is an unforgivable sin. Shirk not only includes worshipping other deities, but also giving Allah a companion.

In the doctrine of the Trinity, one of the principal beliefs of christianity, three beings eternally coexisted in one unit to complete creation. Islamic doctrine makes every effort to condemn the idea of the Trinity as blasphemy within the Quran,

“O People of the Scripture, do not commit excess in your religion or say about Allah except the truth. The Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary, was but a messenger of Allah and His word which He directed to Mary and a soul [created at a command] from Him. So believe in Allah and His messengers. And do not say, "Three"; desist - it is better for you. Indeed, Allah is but one God. Exalted is He above having a son. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. And sufficient is Allah as Disposer of affairs.”<sup>36</sup>

According to this Scripture within the Quran it is impossible to consider Allah as a relational being in the sense that Allah would have a son. They regard Jesus Christ as merely a messenger of Allah. Allah is considered to be one being, and the claim that he was relational in the sense of being the Father would be considered sacrilegious. Not only in the sense of the claim as Jesus Christ as his Son, but this doctrine also condemns the claims Christians make as

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<sup>36</sup> The Holy Quran, Surah 4:117

the sons of God, "But the Jews and the Christians say, "We are the children of Allah and His beloved." Say, "Then why does He punish you for your sins?" Rather, you are human beings from among those He has created. He forgives whom He wills, and He punishes whom He wills. And to Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them, and to Him is the [final] destination."<sup>37</sup>

One of the central teachings within Islam is the character of Allah as a relational being, but Allah had no other being to be relate with until his creation. According to Islamic teaching, Allah has ninety-nine names to describe him and give his followers an idea of who he is. For example, two out of his ninety-nine names are *ar-Rahman* and *ar-Raheem*, the Gracious and the Merciful.<sup>38</sup> The qualities of grace and mercy imply that Allah would indeed be relational, and that he expresses these traits towards someone. Although, because he is considered the God, and an all-powerful being, Allah could be capable of being gracious all by himself. However, he cannot actually be considered gracious, until he has shown an act of grace towards someone. This could be applied to the same idea of mercy, there is no way to be considered merciful until one has actually illustrated an act of mercy. The qualities of Allah are contingent upon his creation.<sup>39</sup> According to the Tawhid, since Allah is considered a monad, the only way for him to be considered relational is through his creation. In contrast, the Christian doctrine of the Trinity proves that Yahweh is able to be truly independent and self sufficient. The three beings that coexist as one unit that eternally love one another, so his love is not contingent upon his creation.

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<sup>37</sup> The Holy Quran, Surah 5:18

<sup>38</sup> Qureshi, No God but One, 66.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

Yahweh's expression of grace and mercy to his creation is merely to express his eternal love towards his creation.



### **The Triune God**

One of the primary beliefs of Christianity is the belief in one God that is triune, three eternal beings coexisting within one unit. This is one of the most difficult concepts to grasp within Christianity, but through assessing each being, it will be evident that they are one God. This teaching contradicts the Islamic teaching of absolute oneness, At-Tawhid, but in the Bible from the beginnings within the Old Testament, the Bible teaches of a composite oneness. In Deuteronomy 6:4 it says, “Hear, O Israel: the Lord Our God, the Lord is one.”

This verse outlines the fundamental truth of Israel’s religion, the uniqueness and unity of Yahweh, along with the fundamental duty founded upon it. In this verse he has revealed himself to Israel, and has represented himself as the God with whom no other can be compared. The word ‘one’ does not refer to the absolute oneness of the doctrine of the Tawhid. When translated to Hebrew the word ‘one’ means *echad*, and when this word is used within the Old Testament is often used to describe composite unity. For example, In Genesis 2:24 it says, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” The word ‘one’ in this verse is also translated to *echad*, and the idea of two becoming one flesh is a composite unity because it is the idea of two married people becoming one unit. The Bible expresses there is only one God, but from the beginning, it is evident that Yahweh is multiple beings within a composite unit that make him one singular God. And from this assertion and the assessment of the New Testament, within the beliefs of Christianity there are three beings coexisting as one God. One of the largest misconceptions when discussing the Trinity is the idea of the triune God’s indivisibility. It would be incorrect to claim that the three beings work indivisibly because within the New Testament there are accounts of when a certain

voice of the Father spoke, but it was not the voice of the Son; and that none except the Son was born in the flesh, and suffered, and rose again, and ascended into heaven; and that none, except the Holy Spirit, came in the form of a dove.<sup>40</sup> Although this is the case, the triune god is considered one substance, or according to Augustine, “one essence,” and it is impossible to fully understand the triune God. This is one attribute that remains highlighted within Christianity, the doctrine of the Trinity is embraced, but so is the idea of the impossibility of the mind to fully comprehend the nature of God because of how this trait adds to the omnipotence of Yahweh.

When questioning the nature of Yahweh, the idea of Jesus Christ as 100% and 100% divine always creates controversy. Although Jesus is held to a higher status within Islamic doctrine, he is not considered the son of Allah, but merely a Prophet of Allah. This belief is not held within Christianity, since Christians belief that Jesus is the Son of God and is God himself. From John 1:1, it illustrates the manner in which the Father and the Son coexisted in the beginning of time,

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

John, the writer, introduces a Being who he refers to as “The Word.” He uses this term because it is assumed to already be familiarized among Greek and Jewish thinkers. In efforts to alleviate the difficulty of comprehending an invisible, infinite God, one theory was used to by John in order to achieve this, the idea of a mediator between the Creator and his works. This

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<sup>40</sup> Augustine, On the Trinity.

theory was used to bridge the chasm between the Eternal God and his works by proposing the idea of a being which was referred to as “the Word of God.” This name seemed appropriate because the Word of God was seen as a way to designate that through this Word, God made himself known. And by using “the Word,” John took the opportunity to introduce the manifestation of the Eternal, the Image of the Invisible. The title itself holds significance, since the word of man is that by which he utters himself. By a man’s word, one could perfectly know him, his word is distinct. In the same way, the Word of Yahweh is his character in expression and God’s word is His will going forth, the Source of life and being. The intelligence and will that brought all things created into being is God. It is apparent then why John chooses this title to designate Christ in his preexistent life. No other title brings out so clearly the identification of Christ with God, while also highlighting the function Christ to reveal God. This term made the transition between Jewish monotheism to Christian Trinitarianism. This title is chosen by John as the best way to illustrate Him through whom all revelation of God in the past has been mediated, and who has completed the revelation of God himself. The term itself does not affirm personality; but what it helps to make clear is that this same Being, the Word, who manifested and uttered God in creation, reveals him now in humanity. According to Christian doctrine, the living Word of Yahweh is Jesus Christ. In this verse it describes that the Word was in the beginning with God, and the Word was God as well. Jesus is considered to be God, and one of the reasons is the fact that he was also there at the beginning of time before creation. And clearly, this verse expresses he was not made, but through him all things were created. In saying that the Word became flesh, but the Word created the visible world, but the Word did not become the visible world. The Word created all men, but He did not become the human race,

but one man, Christ Jesus. It is conceivable that one man should fully illustrate all that God meant to human nature. John describes this process as “the word became flesh, and dwelt among us,” in addition to what the Word already was, he assumed human nature. The Jews were familiar with the idea of God dwelling among His people, but they understood it in the sense of the tabernacle. However, the tabernacle was made human, Jesus Christ, the indwelling Person was divine. By using the word “dwelt” John links the body of Christ to the ancient dwelling of God round which the tents of Israel had clustered. God now “dwelt” among men in the humanity of Jesus Christ and Christians believe he was indeed not created, but all things were made through him, and if he was not created, then he is of the same substance as God the Father.<sup>41</sup> Then, the Word became flesh, and was born of virgin, and when it came time the Son was baptized, this is one of the accounts all parts of the unit appeared in an event.

In Matthew 3:16-17, it records the event, “As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

Jesus, the Word, became flesh, and the Spirit of God is the Holy Spirit.<sup>42</sup> John the Baptist is explicitly a witness to the all three of the beings. Jesus was from the Holy Spirit from conception, but the present anointing has to do with the formal inauguration of Jesus’ ministry which is marked by the baptism. The Spirit is described as “descending as a dove,” and the reference to the dove is found in all four gospels. Here, the reference seems to be adverbial worded as “the Spirit descended as a dove might.” With the opening of the heavens comes not

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<sup>41</sup> Augustine, On the Trinity.

<sup>42</sup> The Holy Spirit is the third being of the triune substance.

only the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, but also a divine revelation of the identity of the one who has received the Holy Spirit. The “voice from heaven” means a divine voice, and in this passage, Matthew means a voice that is transcendent. In this passage, the Spirit of God is abundantly active, and God speaks from the heavens with directness and authority. The affirmation of Jesus as God’s son partakes of messianic associations, Jesus now anointed with the Spirit, is through this ceremony, Jesus is about to enter into the era of his life that is his ministry. Jesus is now marked, formally, as the Son of God in conjunction with the beginning of his work. When Jesus had been baptized, God the Father, spoke the words from the heavens showing his love towards his Son. The role of the Holy Spirit remains prominent within Christianity today, starting from the first mentions of it as an advocate promised by Jesus himself. Christ is specifically speaking to his apostles, followers of Christ, at the time when he promises a Spirit that will abide with them forever,

“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever... But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”<sup>43</sup>

Christ himself promised to remain with them, but his intent was not to leave them with a memory, but he meant to be with them sustaining them and guiding them. The way he planned to achieve this is through sending his presence in the form of his Spirit. The one proof of his ascension that Christ promised was the bestowal of His Spirit. In this verse, Jesus promises his followers an advocate that will continue to abide with them eternally, this being is believed to be the Spirit of Yahweh. The bible uses the word ‘helper’ in this context, and when translated into

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<sup>43</sup> The Holy Bible, John 14:16, 26. ESV.

the original Greek text the New Testament is written in the word for helper in Greek is *paraklétos*. The only other occurrences of this specific Greek word are other times that the bible is referring to an eternal Comforter, Helper, or Advocate that will abide with his followers forever. The doctrine of the Trinity is one of the foremost principles of Christianity, the belief that all three beings coexist eternally in a single substance, or a singular unit. Jesus Christ, the Son is considered to be God as well as The Father. This contrasts greatly with the Tawhid and the emphasis of the oneness of Allah throughout the Quran and further Islamic doctrines.

### **Jesus Christ: A Messenger of Allah**

According to Islamic doctrine and the Quran, Jesus Christ was merely sent by Allah to reveal to Muslims the four gospels,

“And We sent, following in their footsteps, Jesus, the son of Mary, confirming that which came before him in the Torah; and We gave him the Gospel, in which was guidance and light and confirming that which preceded it of the Torah as guidance and instruction for the righteous.”<sup>44</sup> Within the Quran, Jesus is regarded as a messenger, or a prophet of Allah, chosen to reveal his message of the gospel, and regarding him as God is blasphemy. In this specific Surah, Surah 5, ayats before the mentioning of Christ being sent to reveal the gospel, the Quran mentions Moses’ task in revealing the Law amongst all of Allah’s people. In this Surah, it lists prophets chosen to reveal a message, such as the Law (the Torah), or the gospel revealed by Jesus. According to Islamic doctrines, Jesus is held to a higher standard, but he is placed at the same level of other ‘prophets’ such as Adam, Moses, Noah, Abraham and Muhammad. Although he is given an eminent rank he is placed into a category of one out of the six greatest prophets, which goes against the principal of Christianity that holds Jesus Christ as the Son of God, while also being God himself. According to the Quran, as an apostle of Allah, he received the gospel and the ability to perform miracles through divine permission, but he was regarded as “no more than an apostle” according to Surah 5:75.<sup>45</sup> The Quran also gives many titles to Jesus, some titles that are within the Bible as well; for example: *kalimatuhu*, which means ‘Word of

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<sup>44</sup> The Holy Quran, Surah 5:46.

<sup>45</sup> Moucarry, *The Prophet and The Messiah*, 175.

God,’ and *kalimatun minhu*, which means ‘Word from God.’<sup>46</sup> Since the doctrine of the Trinity interprets the idea of Jesus as the Word, it means he is the embodiment of the Word of Yahweh himself, the view from Islamic doctrine is distinct to Islam. According to the Muslim theologian, Imam Al-Razi, he explains that the verses within the Surah that consider Jesus as the Word of Allah should be interpreted in light of the birth of Jesus. Al-Razi explains that all embryos are brought into existence through merely Allah’s creative word, ‘Be,’ and in addition to this, Jesus did not have a father which adds onto this argument that his entire existence is through Allah’s creative command, the Word of Allah.<sup>47</sup> The interpretation of the word ‘*kalimatun minhu*’ which means the Word from God, is interpreted from the context of Surah 3.

“[And mention] when the angels said, "O Mary, indeed Allah gives you good tidings of a word from Him, whose name will be the Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary - distinguished in this world and the Hereafter and among those brought near [to Allah ] He will speak to the people in the cradle and in maturity and will be of the righteous."<sup>48</sup>

Within this Surah, it describes the interaction between Mary, the mother of Jesus, and a messenger sent from Allah and the angel has foretold the birth of Jesus who will bring to the world the gospel, the Word from Allah. Another title that is mentioned in the Quran as a title of Jesus is ‘*al-Masih*’ which means the Messiah. According to al-Razi, there are many reasons for why the Quran would mention Jesus as the Messiah, and many are based on the verb, ‘*masaha*’.<sup>49</sup> According to this verb, this would imply that Jesus is merely the subject of action, for example,

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<sup>46</sup> Moucarry, *The Prophet and The Messiah*, 177.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> The Holy Quran, Surah 3:45-46.

<sup>49</sup> This verb according to the Arabic language could mean, to touch, to anoint, to wipe away or to move around.



when he touches and a person is healed, or whenever he laid his hands upon children and blessed them. Through another interpretation of this title, it could be assumed that the verb is applied in a passive sense, implying that Jesus is the anointed one, or the one who is touched. This interpretation could be assumed through the fact that he is believed to be pure, and free from sin and evil. From a few of the titles given to Jesus within the Quran, it is clear he is regarded of high importance, and high status due to the fact he was indeed sent by Allah, but in contrast to Christian doctrine, Jesus is not considered divine or apart of the Godhead. According to Islamic principle, there is no possible way God would have a son and uphold the doctrine of the Tawhid. Al-Razi describes three reasons as to why it would be impossible for Allah to have or beget a Son.<sup>50</sup> The first reason is, in order to produce a son, one part of the father must come off the father before his son is made in his likeness, however this would be impossible since Allah is one single substance. The second reason is, since a son acquires a part of the identity of his father and this would be impossible because Allah is considered the Necessary Being by His Essence, and this could only apply to one being by definition. The final reason, would be in order to have a son, this would imply that Allah has a wife of the same kind as him, basically a goddess, but this would also contradict the oneness of God. According to Islamic interpretation, and belief in the sole oneness of Allah, there is no way Allah would have a Son that is also divine as believed within the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.

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<sup>50</sup> The following reasons come from the commentary of the Holy Quran written by Muslim Theologian, Al-Razi, XIII:26, 168-169.

### **Jesus Christ: The Divine Son of God**

The forefront of Christian doctrines proclaims the divinity of Jesus Christ, he is the Word who was God, became flesh. Christians uphold the fact that Jesus is indeed the Son of God, the human form of God to be given as the ultimate sacrifice. In contrast to the Islamic view of Jesus' title as the Word of God, Jesus is viewed as the living embodiment of God's word, and the revelation of God to the followers of Christ. The Quran is seen as the revelation of Allah to Muslims, and is held to almost the same status of Jesus to Christians. When assessing another title given in the Quran and the Bible, 'the Messiah,' the Bible holds this title to a standard that begins the discussion of Jesus as the Son of God. In the Bible, the word 'Messiah' refers to a rite performed in certain circumstances in Israel, and it was customary to introduce kings, priests and prophets to their positions through anointing them with oil; hence the meaning later given to the word 'Messiah': the chosen one.<sup>51</sup> This idea of the Messiah becomes foretold as the chosen king who would be raised up to save the world. The only way for the Messiah to complete and become enthroned as the Messiah is through being God, dying sinless as a human, and resurrect from the dead which ultimately defeats death and saves the world. Jesus Christ was foretold to be the person, who was 100% divine, but 100% human to complete this task. He could not complete this task without being the personified revelation of God, thus Jesus Christ is considered the Son of God. Through the mission of Jesus Christ, God revealed himself as God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as assessed earlier through his baptism. Through the life of Jesus, he is constantly revealing to his followers that he is indeed the Son of God, from

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<sup>51</sup> Moucarry, *The Prophet and The Messiah*, 180.

showing his power of nature by calming the seas (Matthew 8:27), and Jesus declares himself the Lord,

“I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”<sup>52</sup>

In verses 25 and 26, focus on the Father’s sovereign purpose, worked out in the decisions for and against Jesus and his message. In verse 27, the use of the word “Son” correlates with the Son of God Christology used in the rest of Matthew. In this passage it is made evident that everything has been granted to the Son by the Father. The context of this verse is the revelation Jesus gives to his disciples, the knowledge of the truth given by the Father through his Son. Thus, points to the necessity for Jesus Christ as the mediator of the knowledge of God to humankind which is linked to his role as the representative of God. The statement in verse 27 that “only the son knows the Father” also alludes to the knowledge of God and his plan to save his followers which is revealed through the preaching of the kingdom and the ministry of Jesus. This statement is also “Christological,” meaning the true identity of Jesus and his relationship to the Father is veiled to his followers and is known only to Yahweh. Jesus is the sole mediator of the knowledge of the Father and of his salvation purposes. Jesus Christ declares himself the Son of God, but only through the revealing by his Father are his followers able to comprehend the Son himself. Jesus is regarded the Son of God, and without him being divine, and without him

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<sup>52</sup> The Holy Bible, Matthew 11:25-27

completing his sacrifice, there would be no way for humans to be saved from death. Christian doctrine upholds the belief in the true divinity of Christ, and through his perfection as the ultimate sacrifice, believers of him will receive life through Him. In John 5:19-21 it describes the full divinity and authority of the Son given by the Father,

“So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel. For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will.”

As previously stated under the section ‘The Triune God,’ the Christian Doctrine of the Trinity regards Jesus Christ as eternal, and coexistent with the Father before Creation according to the passage in John 1. The divinity of Jesus Christ, while also being able to achieve human form is the reason Christians believe he has defeated death and has restored the ability for Christians to truly fellowship with The Father. In the bible, within the New Testament, Jesus’ name translated to Greek *Iēsous* which stems from the Hebrew *Yeshua* which translates to ‘God saves.’<sup>53</sup> Through the incarnation of the living Word of God, Jesus became a mediator between God the Father and his followers. Although Jesus was incarnated into 100% human, he was not any less than the Father or the Holy Spirit. For example although Jesus says in John 14:28, “You heard me say to you, ‘I am going away, and I will come to you.’ If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I,” according to Augustine, in this verse Jesus was talking about his 100% human nature.<sup>54</sup> Jesus gave up his

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<sup>53</sup> Moucarry, *The Prophet and The Messiah*, 128.

<sup>54</sup> Augustine, *The Doctrine of the Trinity*

place, and made himself less than himself, “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.”<sup>55</sup>

Paul uses this passage to assess that Jesus was recognized as God before the beginning of his life on earth. This verse uses the words “emptied Himself” to show the fullness of his incarnation into the likeness of men. Understanding the pre-existence of Christ, is the key to understanding the humanity, as well as the sacrifice, of Jesus. Jesus was not less than the Father prior to the time he became human, through his omnipotent power, he was able to make himself into the likeness of humans to fully defeat death. According to the principles upheld by Christianity, Jesus is considered God as well as the living word of God. Jesus is the embodiment, and the fullness of the revelation of God to mankind, in contrast Islamic doctrine places him as a prophet amongst five other prophets that are considered equals. The belief that Jesus is “in very nature God” was one of the very first beliefs of the church, and because of this one cannot understand the gospel without understanding this. The gospel has solely been about Yahweh and what he has done for humankind: he created them, loved them, lived among them, saved them, continues to guide them.<sup>56</sup> The doctrine of Jesus’ deity makes a tremendous difference in how the Christian faith is understood.

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<sup>55</sup> The Holy Bible, Philippians 2:7. ESV.

<sup>56</sup> Qureshi, No God but One, 79.

### **Muhammad The Prophet**

Muslims upraise Muhammad as more than merely a Prophet, he is given the title ‘the Seal of the Prophets’

“Muhammad is not the father of [any] one of your men, but [he is] the Messenger of Allah and last of the prophets. And ever is Allah, of all things, Knowing.”<sup>57</sup> In Islamic tradition, Muhammad is without sin, and has been given the task of speaking the revelation of Allah. This revelation of Allah is considered infallible and inspired by Allah. In contrast to the doctrine of Jesus within Christianity, Muhammad is considered Allah’s greatest prophet and the final prophet, and he confirms the message of the former prophets and brings to completion the revelation of Allah.<sup>58</sup> In Surah 9:32-33, it proclaims the message of The Prophet,

“They want to extinguish the light of Allah with their mouths, but Allah refuses except to perfect His light, although the disbelievers dislike it. It is He who has sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth to manifest it over all religion, although they who associate others with Allah dislike it.”

According to the exegesis of this verse by Muslim theologian, Al-Razi, the ‘light’ described in this passage refers to the proof and evidence of the truthfulness of Muhammad.<sup>59</sup> The image of light is used as an image of these proofs illuminating the liability of Muhammad and the validity of his message from Allah. The evidence that points to Muhammad are categorized into two categories: his message and his miracles. The greatest miracle regarded by

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<sup>57</sup> The Holy Quran, Surah 33:40.

<sup>58</sup> Moucarry, *The Prophet and The Messiah*, 219.

<sup>59</sup> Moucarry, *The Prophet and The Messiah*, 220.

Muslims performed by Muhammad was the Quran. The Quran is characterized as a great miracle because of the content, the ‘literary perfection’ in spite of Muhammad’s illiteracy. Islamic doctrine vindicates the Quran as miraculous because of the many new ideas Muhammad reveals that any ordinary being would not have known at the time. Many of the things revealed to Muhammad included events of the past unknown to any ‘ordinary being,’ such as the stories of the past, stories of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Christ and others. Muslims believe that there was no scholar of Mecca from which he acquired this information, but it was merely by revelation from Allah.<sup>60</sup> This became even more of a miracle because of the claimed illiteracy of Muhammad. The belief of the illiteracy of Muhammad was based on the verse in the Quran, Surah 7:157,

“Those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered prophet, whom they find written in what they have of the Torah and the Gospel, who enjoins upon them what is right and forbids them what is wrong and makes lawful for them the good things and prohibits for them the evil and relieves them of their burden and the shackles which were upon them. So they who have believed in him, honored him, supported him and followed the light which was sent down with him - it is those who will be the successful.”

The word ‘unlettered’ when translated into the original Arabic text, the word is ‘*ummi*,’ and this stems from either the the word ‘*ummiyya*’ which means illiteracy or ‘*umma*’ which means nation. Another aspect that is raised into question is whether or not Muhammad was illiterate in the sense of reading and writing, or merely religious illiterate, meaning he was ignorant in the knowledge of Jewish and Christian Scripture.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Moucarry, *The Prophet and The Messiah*, 223.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

Islamic doctrine upholds Muhammad as the Seal of Prophets sent to reveal the Word of Allah. In contrast to the Christian doctrine that the Word of God is God and that he became flesh to reveal himself to his followers. Muhammad is The Prophet of Allah, and the last Messenger of Allah to reveal the will of Allah and guides his followers towards what they must believe and how to live in obedience and submission to Allah.



### **The Transcendence of Yahweh and The Transcendence of Allah**

Both Islam and Christianity claim that their God is transcendent, meaning God is above and separate from his creation. Transcendence requires an essential discontinuity between the Creator and the universe he has made. The Quran clearly emphasizes the transcendence of Allah in Surah 42:11, “[He is] Creator of the heavens and the earth. He has made for you from yourselves, mates, and among the cattle, mates; He multiplies you thereby. There is nothing like unto Him, and He is the Hearing, the Seeing.” within this ayat, it is made emphasized there is none alike Allah, for he is the Hearing, the Seeing and remains above his creation. In contrast, from a biblical perspective, the divine transcendence of Yahweh does not exclude resemblance between God and mankind. According to scripture, mankind was created in the image of Yahweh,

“Then God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.

So God created man in his own image,

in the image of God he created him;

male and female he created them.”<sup>62</sup>

The general idea of likeness between God and man frequently occurs in classical literature, and the same term “*ad imaginem*” is used. “Man” in this context is the generic, not the proper name of an individual. Christians believe that because they are created in the image of

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<sup>62</sup> The Holy Bible, Genesis 1:26-27, ESV.

Yahweh, this underlines the superior rank of mankind over other creatures. This belief also emphasizes the ability of the relationship Christians are able to maintain with their Creator, while being granted the power to have make use and look after the world he has granted them. The creation of mankind in the image of God is not found within the Quran, but the Quran does describe humanity as Allah's caliph on earth. The Arabic word *khalifa* that the word caliph stems from when used in the context of referring to humanity, it means that Muslims are called to representation of Allah. However, there is no idea of the expression of Allah's creation to be in his image. The concept of transcendence within Islam does not mean he is absent from mankind, or distant from his creation, the Quran mentions that Allah is waiting for his followers to turn to him, "And when My servants ask you, [O Muhammad], concerning Me - indeed I am near. I respond to the invocation of the supplicant when he calls upon Me. So let them respond to Me [by obedience] and believe in Me that they may be [rightly] guided."<sup>63</sup> In this manner Christianity also emphasizes the transcendence of Yahweh, but the Bible implies the 'otherness of God' as there is no other God and there is no-one like God, but Yahweh is unique in the sense that the Creator is also the Savior. In Christianity, Yahweh reaches out to humankind to the fullest extent: becoming a human being.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> The Holy Quran, Surah 2:186.

<sup>64</sup> Moucarry, *The Prophet and The Messiah*, 88.

### **The meaning of Salvation**

Salvation does not hold the same meaning between Islam and Christianity, which further proves the fact that Allah and Yahweh are different beings because there is no logical way that one God would have two separate paths to saving his followers.

In terms of salvation within Islamic beliefs, the reason that Muslims fulfill their religious obligations is to avoid the judgement of Allah, receive forgiveness, and enter paradise. The steps towards paradise are faith, obedience, repentance, and the intercession of the Prophet. The Quran states that the first steps toward salvation is believing in the five articles of faith, this means believing in Allah, his angels, his books, his apostles, and the day of judgment. However, faith is inseparable from practice, meaning in order for faith to be valid Muslims must practice the five pillars of Islam. The five pillars of Islam are the recitation, or the confession of faith, statutory almsgiving, annual fasting, and the pilgrimage to Hajj.<sup>65</sup> A muslim's salvation depends on the assent to the truths listed in the Quran as well as the continuous practice of religious duties, "Righteousness is not that you turn your faces toward the east or the west, but [true] righteousness is [in] one who believes in Allah, the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets and gives wealth, in spite of love for it, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the traveler, those who ask [for help], and for freeing slaves; [and who] establishes prayer and gives zakah; [those who] fulfill their promise when they promise; and [those who] are patient in poverty and hardship and during battle. Those are the ones who have been true, and it is those who are the righteous."<sup>66</sup> The commitment to doing good works is constantly highlighted within the path to

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<sup>65</sup> The profession of faith is, "I bear witness that there is no god but God, and that Muhammad is the apostle of God.

<sup>66</sup> The Holy Quran, Surah 2:177.

salvation for Muslims. The Quran teaches that those whose good works outweigh their evil deeds will enter paradise, but as for those whose evil deeds outweigh their good works, it is according to the mercy and sovereignty of Allah. Salvation in Islam is based on the sovereignty of Allah and his followers' natural capacity to carry out his will, both on his mercy and their ability to compensate with their good deeds.<sup>67</sup>

Although Christianity does call for the commitment of good works and following the law given by Yahweh, it does not determine the salvation of Christians. The path towards salvation lies solely in the cross and the Word in the Flesh, Jesus Christ. The representation of the love of Yahweh was expressed through the sacrifice of the Son, "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit."<sup>68</sup> The burden of the unrighteous world was laid upon the righteous son of God because of God's love for sinners. This passage describes that the manifestation of the love of Yahweh is among his creation, in the sense that he chose sinful human beings to display his love. The sinlessness of Christ was essential to his mission, the chastisement of the innocent is the only equal trade for the saving of the guilty. Humans were powerless, but through the death of Christ both the righteous and unrighteous were saved, the expression of his love reached its height for while Christians were sinners, Yahweh gave his followers a way to achieve salvation. After accepting and believing fully in the sacrifice of Jesus, obedience of His law is merely an echo of expressing God's love within a Christian's life. In John 14:15, Jesus says, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments," Yahweh has expressed his eternal love

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<sup>67</sup> Moucarry, *The Prophet and The Messiah*, 105.

<sup>68</sup> The Holy Bible, 1 Peter 3:18, ESV.

for his followers, and the way they are able to show love towards him is obeying the law he has given them. In contrast to the Islamic path towards salvation, the major purpose of the law given by Yahweh is to reveal to Christians the weight of their sin and bring into light that they must have complete reliance of their God for salvation.

The idea of salvation by works is not possible within Christianity, Paul writes in Romans “For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.”<sup>69</sup> Therefore, no Christian can rely on good deeds to bring them salvation, but faith in the death of Jesus Christ.

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<sup>69</sup> The Holy Bible, Romans 3:20, ESV.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this thesis has outlined the key doctrines of Islam and Christianity, and through the analysis of each key doctrine, it proves that Allah and Yahweh are two different beings. Both gods are described as loving, merciful, and transcendent, but through the assessment of how each god expresses these attributes there is complete evidence that they are not the same. Although comparable in the fact they are both One being, and both religions emphasize the key belief of monotheism, the idea of Allah being a 'monad' goes against the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Lastly, the Word of God and revelation of God to men is believed to be Jesus Christ, who is also considered to be, by Christians, God. In contrast to the Islamic doctrine that proclaims Jesus is a Prophet, and the eternal word of Allah is the Quran. The doctrines of each religion provide sufficient evidence that the god of Christianity and the god of Islam are not the same.

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