ABSTRACT

Liturgical Exegesis: Genesis 1-11 as Sung in the Qur'an

Jacob Fareed Imam

Director: Professor Alden Smith

Past efforts of interreligious dialogues can be categorized as relativist, irenicist, and systematic. None of these attempts have led to genuine concord and mutual understanding amongst lay religious populations. This project seeks to tread down a new pathway for interreligious dialogue based upon a particular philosophy that emphasizes the aesthetic life. In particular, I argue that the liturgical narrative forum presents the ideal medium for inter-faith understanding. Herein I attempt what I have coined a "liturgical exegesis" of Genesis 1-11 as portrayed in the Qur'an. The primary content of this thesis—comparing some of the shared stories within the Qur'an and the Bible—stands as short examples of the model proposed in the first chapter. The thesis weds together a theological examination of the Holy Texts with an experiential reading of them. This thesis is designed as a preview to a promised religion curriculum particularly designed for Bethlehem University in the Palestinian Territories and for the consideration of His Excellency Fouad Twal for his municipal schools throughout his patriarchate of Jerusalem.

APPROVED BY DIRECTOR OF HONORS THESIS:

_____
Dr. Alden Smith, Department of Classics

APPROVED BY THE HONORS PROGRAM:

_____
Dr. Elizabeth Corey, Director

DATE: _____

LITURGICAL EXEGESIS:

GENESIS 1-11 AS SUNG IN THE QUR'AN

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

Baylor University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Honors Program

By

Jacob Fareed Imam

Waco, Texas

May 2016

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

To my father Hani Fareed Imam. Our dialogue has, at long last, produced

fruit.

PREFACE

"The bitterest enemy and also he who was your friend could again be your friend; love that has grown old can kindle."
Søren Kiekegaard

If our facts are correct, my family moved to Jerusalem at the end of the seventh century. I would like to think that they met Saint John of Damascus along the journey but he, perhaps, would have lived too far away from their path from Turkey. The new and rapidly spreading message of the Prophet Mohammad, transfixed my ancestors who adopted a devout religious life as they became teachers of the Islamic faith. In the twelfth century, Saladin gifted to my family the only house on the property of the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque, where they served as imams and muftis. It was there that my family lived and worked for centuries, ultimately leaving due to political squabbles.

In the hope of escaping Israeli occupation, my father Hani left with his American wife to the United States in 1979—the first time that the family had moved away from Jerusalem in thirteen hundred years. My parents raised me in the West and provided me with a thoroughly Western educated; my formation is a Western formation. And it was here in the States that I discovered Christian doctrine. Yet, it was not merely the statements of belief that my good neighbors taught me. It is not only what a Christian thinks, but also how a Christian thinks, that proved most valuable. Learning such enabled me to place my head into another paradigm. "Appreciating the other is hard," I said to a friend in my mid-teenage years, "when sitting within my own pattern of

thinking—in fact, it seems downright absurd!" Travelling to this new paradigm has been a long journey, and, I fear, the destination remains a long way off.

This thesis, in one sense, constitutes a record of my own personal development that has led me to conclude certain things about interreligious dialogue. My footprints left in my path I record in the latter three chapters as I try to remember myself frolicking in the scenes of the divine stories. I did not much think about the words and the form of the stories, and I failed to realize that they were powerfully re-conforming the way in which I thought. The first chapter is my more pensive staring at the ground, asking, "How did I walk here? What was my path?" The format for dialogue proposed, I believe, is novel and, hopefully, the construction will prove more fruitful—as it has already seen a supporter of ISIS rescind his fundamentalist convictions. I hope that these thoughts, in some way, bless those who read them, particularly my friends at Bethlehem University and Patriarch Fouad Twal, to whom this work is primarily addressed.

CHAPTER ONE

Interreligious Dialogue: Theory and Proposal

"Through the reading of the gospel, may our sins by blotted out."
Missale Romanum of Pope Saint John XXIII

"The King of the Poets laughed at the Qur'an, yet, out of idleness, or perhaps in
mockery, he condescended to recite the verses, and found himself instead ascending by
them."
Anonymous

"Tell me, for you are so educated, about the Christian religion." So said the

Caliph to John of Damascus around the year 710. John of Damascus would not be caught

by the wiles of the Caliph and replied, "But your Eminence knows so much, you must

instead teach me. And let me ask: what does the Qur'an say about Jesus?" Pleased by

the praise, the Caliph quoted the Qur'an, disclosing that Muslims believe Jesus to be the

Kalimatualla, the "word of Allah" (Surah 4:169). Finding a point of unity with the

Caliph, John of Damascus quoted in return from the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel, and

John the Evangelist's claim that Jesus is the "Word of God" (John 1:14). John then

asked: "Is the word of God created or uncreated?" The Caliph, as an orthodox Muslim,

replied, "eternal." "We Christians, too, believe that the word is eternal," John said, citing

the opening verse of Saint John's gospel once again. "Now if I may ask your Eminence

one last question: if Jesus is the word of Allah, and the word is eternal, and yet only Allah

is truly eternal [referencing Surah 112:4], then must the word be Allah?" The Caliph, a

1

cold look having fallen across his face, replied, "It must be as you say," and left the room.[1]

Saint John of Damascus' *De Haeresibus* (*Of Heresies*) provides the first robust extant evaluation of the Islamic faith. As one can see, it is mere apologetics at play. John's use of the word "heresy" here amounts to an admission that Muslims, despite their many departures from Christian orthodoxy, are in the same world of discourse as Christians when it comes to religious matters, albeit that the disparities are substantial.[2] The wider Christian world did not discount John's categorization but, rather, adopted and continued it—most famously in Dante's comedy as he places Mohammad in the infernal circle of schismatics because he sundered the unity of Christianity, stripping Christendom of Asia and Africa with his Arabian heresy. The idea that Islam is a heresy, even the "epitome of all heresies,"[3] and that the Qur'an was "an awkward figment of Satanic imagination" and as such a "treasury of heresy,"[4] would become popular not only in eighth century Byzantium, but also through twentieth century Europe, for many considered that the Qur'an held nothing but a mixture of old heresies that were refuted by

---

[1] Until recently interreligious dialogues between Muslims and Western Christians have been scarce. Commonly proselytizers attempted to understand the other for the sole purpose of conversion rather than peace and solidarity. Here I briefly recount the narrative of Saint John of Damascus and the Caliph based on the discussion in James Windrow Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology: A Study of the Interpretation of Theological Ideas in the Two Religions*, vol. 1, 1 (London: Lutterworth Press, 1945), 65-7, and *De Haeresibus* 758-777a. Saint John of Damascus had intimate knowledge of Islam, as his father was an official at the court of the Umayyad Caliphs and himself engaged in similar service as a layman before becoming a priest. The much beloved Saint Francis of Assisi also had a similar experience in which he challenged the "Soldan of Babylon" to a competition of faith. This intensely evangelistic approach to dialogue was the most frequently recorded form of dialogue found in the early years of interaction. Consider also the writings of Theodore Abu Qurra (ninth century), 'Abdul Masih (ninth-tenth century), Yahya b. 'Adi the Jacobite (tenth century).

[2] Sidney Harrison Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque: Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 32.

[3] Ibid, 42f.

[4] Hartmut Bobzin, "A Treasury of Heresies: Christian Polemics against the Koran" in Stefan Wild (ed.), *The Qur'an as Text* (New York: Brill, 1996), 158.

earlier Church verdicts. Coming into the period of the Reformation, Protestants such as

Martin Luther himself declared that Muhammad was one of the heads of the anti-Christ

(the Pope was the second head) and therefore sought to strengthen preaching against the

Islamic "temptation."[5] Neither did Catholics hold back but declared that Islam was

merely ritualism devoid, or even stripped, of sacraments and of mystery.[6] Thus one often

heard that the Islamic faith forced Muslims to submit blindly to a tyrannical overlord,

though such statements did not emerge out of an impassioned diatribe. The current day

holds a wide array of opinions, including everything from the Catholic Church's fraternal

statements in *Nostra Aetate* to the apparently common mega-church view that Muslims

are anti-American and anti-peace.[7]

Islam mirrored the rather static understanding of Christianity but in reverse, as it

believed Christianity to depart from the teachings of the prophets. The developments in

Islamic thought have not greatly varied through this past millennium and a half, though

Muslims continue to debate the proper response to infidels. Muslims, nearly universally,

believe that the followers of Jesus warped the true message of the prophets in the years

after the prophet's ascension. But Muslims still debate how the New Testament warped

the message of the Prophet Jesus. Imam Bukhari, provides the most common theory in

Islam: "the people of the scripture (Jews and Christians) changed their scripture and

distorted it, and wrote the scripture with their own hands and said, 'It is from Allah,' to

---

[5] Ibid, 49f.

[6] Es handelt sich beim Islam wesentlich um eine Gesetzesreligion, Gerhard Bergmann, *Die Herausforderung des Islam,* Neuhausen (Goch, 1980), 29.

[7] Cf. Thomas S. Kidd, *American Christians and Islam: Evangelical Culture and Muslims from the Colonial Period to the Age of Terrorism.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 96-118; 144-163.

sell it for a little gain." [8] Ibn Kathir recalls Ibn Abbass through Imam Bukhari stating that these changes, "means that they alter and add although none among Allah's creation can remove the Words of Allah from His Books."[9] Thus, under the shroud of inventive deceit the truth lies still preserved below. Ibn Taymiyyah has a less amicable position, claiming that "Christianity is nothing but an innovated religion that they invented after Christ."[10] Nonetheless, the early years of warfare and persecution did not mimic the barbarism of ISIS, though the doctrine of militarist jihad permeated throughout the Umma as a tenable view. Christians were not treated cruelly in the early Islamic empire, though they were second-class citizens. Many of the policies imposed external "inconveniences" that would make respectable people think twice about remaining Christians.[11] A continual debate surges between Muslims as to views ranging from the liberal to the extremism of ISIS.

In addition to theology, miscellaneous historical events and philosophical factors affected the understanding each of the religions has had of the other. History haunts the Christian as the residue of the Crusades resides in the Muslim mind; the memory of the reputedly barbaric political ambitions of Western Christendom hinders the Muslim from entering into dialogue with the Christian. This was not the only obstacle with ties to the medieval era. The Muslim world preserved and commented on many classical

---

[8] Sunnah Volume 9, Book 92, 461.

[9] Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir: Abridged*, ed. Shaykh Safiu-Rahman Al-Mubarakpuri, vol. 2 (Dar-us-Salam Publications, 2000), 196.

[10] Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymīyah, *A Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity: Ibn Taymiyya's Al-Jawab Al-Sahih*, ed. Thomas F. Michel, Studies in Islamic Philosophy and Science (Delmar, N.Y: Caravan Books, 1984), 8.

[11] Vernon Egger, *A History of the Muslim World to 1405: The Making of a Civilization* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2004), 33-56.

texts. The Christian West owes a great debt to the Muslim East for its contribution to scholarship. As Islam is often mistaken as anti-intellectual, forgetting this debt is particularly demeaning.[12] The West's amnesia about their contribution is the obstacle, and this amnesia was formed in modernity.

The development of various philosophies in the West, and their immigration to the East, began to morph the image some people had of religion. As the Renaissance and then the Enlightenment occurred, the understanding of the religions became systematized and separated: Christianity merely became one religion and Islam another.[13] As a result of the Reformation, the West's understanding of an individual and the state began to shift.[14] With this development, misunderstandings between cultures arose, such of the pseudo-distinction between mosque and state, the content and form of the sacred books, the confusions of family, of gender, and the like. At the beginning of Muslim-Christian dialogues, both religions would have very similar views on these matters but the cultural shifts tore these similarities away. The Modern movement followed the Enlightenment and understood true religion to transcend even itself, thus allowing people to adopt doctrines selectively for their private belief system.[15] Thus rampant secularity infiltrated both religions and arrived at the apex in the twentieth century as postmodernism—a view

---

[12] It must be granted that Islam only showed this vitality in its early history, when it was still developing its identity. Once it landed on the side of the strict jurists rather than philosophers like Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd, its intellectual dynamism died out, never to return.

[13] The shift first begins with Hobbes and continues through the influence of Locke and Rousseau.

[14] For more on this, see Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 3rd ed (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 51-61.

[15] Cf. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

that Rollins has argued "re-mythologizes" the religions leaving them meaningless, holding no effective causes nor motivating ends, yet nonetheless intriguing subjects.[16]

With this incomplete background to interreligious interactions, we turn to the present. For most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries interreligious dialogue was not a pressing concern since Islam then was rather moribund with the dissolutions of the Ottoman and Mongol Empires. Subsequently anti-colonial nationalism, and then more extreme interpretations of the Qur'an, and still further by Muslim immigration to the West reenergized Islam. With the quickening of globalization, a more striking need exists for Muslims and Christians to interact well with one another. Yet misunderstandings exacerbated by cultural and linguistic limitations have flooded the first sixty years of interactions. As militant aggression continues and understanding of the other fails to progress, the need for genuine interreligious dialogue between Muslims and Christians has become a more poignant concern now than ever before.

Various attempts at interreligious dialogue have been arranged based upon different principles. We shall briefly organize them into three general categories and submit their problems for consideration. The three are: relativism, irenicism, and systematics. The first is relativism,[17] which undermines the traditional purposiveness of religions: religion is not mere myth for it is understood by its adherents to be also true. This form of interreligious dialogue suggests that members from both religions must affix their gaze on utilitarian concord as the primary end of humanity. While relativists might wish religious people would cast aside penetrating and opposing beliefs in the name of

---

[16] Cf. Peter Rollins, *The Orthodox Heretic and Other Impossible Tales* (Brewster, Mass: Paraclete Press, 2009).

[17] Richard W. Rousseau, ed. *Christianity and Islam: The Struggling Dialogue* (Scranton: Ridge Row Press, 1985).

6

brotherly love, such a position proves to be problematic philosophically and historically.

If the narratives find no historical and objective grounding, then they undergird the

believers with no power and no assurance. In fact Samuel Huntington and others have

argued that many have converted to Islam and Christianity in order to escape a modernist

epistemology for a tradition-based one.[18] The personal mode of interpretation has left

people wanting for a greater communal stability and a greater assurance for truth. Truth

allows people to move beyond cultural and historical limitations. To limit truth would be

to limit the possibility of greater stability—which is the very goal of these theorists.

Mohammad Talbi's thought serves as a classic example of relativism as he stated that

"both paths provide means to salvation."[19] Such a philosophy has cultivated a reactionary

hostility in the past—a point to which we will return. In sum, to promote mutual

understanding amongst those who do not share an enlightenment and post-enlightenment

paradigm, it is prudent to avoid philosophies that are a product of the modern and

postmodern West.

The second category is irenicism, which comes from the Greek word for peace,

eirēnē.[20] Such attempts at interreligious dialogue emphasize the similarities between the

religions while ignoring the differences—though it is not relativism for the adherents will

readily admit the two religions in question are not the same. We must know the

---

[18] Cf. Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Making of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 41-47.

[19] Mohamed Talbi, "Islam and Dialogue: Some Reflections on a Current Topic" in *Christianity and Islam: The Struggling Dialogue.* Edited by Richard W. Rousseau (Scranton, PA: Ridge Row Press, 1985), 54. Ovey N. Mohammed, *Muslim-Christian Relations: Past, Present, Future* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2008).

[20] This term first appeared during the Renaissance to describe those who sought the similarities between the Catholic and the Protestant doctrines. Here I expand the use of the word from inter-tradition dialogues to interreligious dialogues.

similarities of the religions, but, despite irenicists' good-intentions, we must also know the differences. If our goal is peace, and friendship is the truest form of peace, then we must seek after friendship with the other. The greatest friends have a holistic understanding of one another. To ignore the differences would be to ignore a substantial aspect of the other. Irenicism, though well intentioned, seeks, in no genuine way, to know the other. Such could perhaps cause problems when unexplained differences naturally arise during interfaith interactions.

Irenicists often, though not always, emphasize a "shared core" of praxis.[21] This has two problems: first, is a deceptive relativism, the second, it neglects the potential philosophical predicaments. To examine the first issue, let us look at the highly acclaimed *A Common Word for Us and You* of 2007, the most important Islamic-initiated attempt at interreligious dialogue, which encompasses such an error. The document, originally signed by 138 leading Muslim scholars and intellectuals, argues from Qur'anic and biblical verses that at the "core" of both religions stand twin "golden" commandments of loving God and loving neighbor. This is a noble attempt at dialogue, and indeed a well-needed one, as both the then-current heads of the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church remarked. Muslims and Christians must join hands in an effort to serve the world as best they can. But this overemphasis on a shared core of praxis is dangerous and not a genuine representations of the religions. These are indeed the two great commands of both religions—yet with an important difference.

---

[21] *A Common Word between Us and You* (Amman: Royal Aal Al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2012). Abdul Rashid, *The Sermon on the Mount and the Farewell Address: The Common Content as the Basis for Muslim-Christian Dialogue*, eds. M. Darrol Bryant and S.A. Ali (St. Paul: Paragon House, 1998).

The difference is that, for Christians, these commands can be realized only in the God who has become human in Jesus Christ and who lives in the Church through the presence of the Holy Spirit. Such a life of faithful and sacramental obedience is possible, moreover, only as Christians participate in the life of God. One might see the difference more clearly as laid out in the statements about God: *Deus caritas est* versus *Allah Al-Wadud*—God is love versus God is the loving one. One speaks of God's nature, the other of God's action. Thus one religion asks the followers to enter into the nature of God, participating in the divine essence[22]—*divinae consortes naturae*—while the other commands the believer to work in accord with a divine action. One seeks to adopt mankind into a new essence while the latter sees no need for such. Why is this important? From different radicals stem commands that may seem similar at a basic level but the further extended they are, the more dissimilar they appear. At the core of the Islamic life is an ordinance; at the core of the Christian life is a person.

Jacques Maritain helps unveil this second predicament. "During one of the meetings of the French National Commission of UNESCO at which the Rights of Man were being discussed," he writes in *Man and the Sate,* "someone was astonished that certain proponents of violently opposed ideologies had agreed on the draft of a list of rights. Yes, they replied, we agree on these rights, *providing we are not asked why.*"[23] Maritain aptly recognizes that the fundamental starting places are often different between people of varying paradigms. In fact, it is quite surprising when such people do have common elements because their radicals are not the same. We would thus do well to

---

[22] Or "energies," as understood by the Orthodox Church

[23] Jacques Maritain, *Man and the State* (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 1998), 77.

converge practically where the results of doctrines overlap, but we must always be vigilant to understand the essential differences, lest one step on the other's toes due to presumption, and lest we grow lethargic in our particular obedience to the divine. Thus, let us celebrate where our branches overlap, not pruning them away, but let us not confuse the leaves as seeds—such would be an insult to both religions.

That said, we begin to see the need to recognize the importance of the works that analyze the systematic agreements and divergences between Islam and Christianity. This leads us to the third category: systematic analysis. Indeed differences exist, but when the positions are clarified, the bickering can be put aside. Rémi Brague, A. Christian van Gorder, Paul L. Heck, Martin Forward, S.A. Ali, and many others have advanced this arena of bridge-building.[24]

Systematic theology, however, will not act as a solvent for interreligious interaction. Systematics is too complicated and too seemingly obscure to allow most religious people to engage in appropriate dialogue with one another. Historically, people primarily approach religion to be grounded in a faith community—and to be formed or reformed—but not to grapple with the metaphysics of doctrines. The issue at hand is not a matter of doctrinal scrupulosity but rather of scholarly oversight: the masses cannot approach these conversations regarding systematics.[25] Most of all, irenicism, in its

---

[24] Cf. Rémi Brague, and Paul Seaton, *On the God of the Christians: And on One or Two Others* (South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 2013). Rémi Brague, *The Legend of the Middle Ages: Philosophical Explorations of Medieval Christianity, Judaism, and Islam*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009). Paul L. Heck, *Common Ground: Islam, Christianity, and Religious Pluralism* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009); John Dudley Woodberry, Osman Zümrüt, and Mustafa Köylü, eds., *Muslim and Christian Reflections on Peace: Divine and Human Dimensions* (Lanham: Univ. Press of America, 2005). A. Christian Van Gorder, *No God but God: A Path to Muslim-Christian Dialogue on God's Nature*, Faith Meets Faith (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2003).

[25] This statement brings a greater philosophical predicament of whether the cultural leaders, in this case the academicians, or the laity exercise greater influence on the other. It could be that doctrinal

common forms, does not accurately represent either religion. A set of propositions does not constitute a religion; the ethos of a religion expands more widely than mere cognizant affirmations of particular doctrines; the internal order of mysterious and obedient worship and prayer are not bound by systematics.

Most Muslim-Christian interreligious dialogues have generally fit within these three stated categories, but often they produce little effective and sustainable help. The first stages of a new approach, however, are just emerging, one that bases the conversation on aesthetics, on awe and beauty. "It's a very fortunate idea," says Navid Kermani, author of the acclaimed *God is Beautiful* and recipient of the 2015 Peace Prize of the German Book Trade, "to approach another religion through art, since theology can only divide—indeed, it must."[26]

This thesis seeks to tread down a new pathway for interreligious dialogue based upon a particular philosophy that emphasizes the aesthetic life. This short introduction is not the context to develop the philosophy but rather a place to borrow one and to begin to utilize it for interreligious understanding. We shall work from a host of philosophers— including Plato and Aristotle, MacIntyre and Smith[27]—in assuming that humans are not *primarily* thinking animals, Cartesian creatures capable of cognitively weaving their way through life. Rather we shall adopt the approach that suggests that we are animals of

---

scruples flower into interreligious fruits. Given the limited scope of this thesis, we will not argue this point but rather recognize practically that, for the most part, Christian and Islamic leaders have cordial relationships, but this does not seem to affect positively the lay masses.

[26] Kermani, Navid, and Martin Moseback. "Of Course Religion is First and foremost a Duty." *First Things*, January 16, 2016. https://www.firstthings.com/blogs/firstthoughts/2016/01/of-course-religion-is-first-and-foremost-a-duty.

[27] Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* (Chicago: Open Court, 1999); Christian Smith, *Moral, Believing Animals: Human Personhood and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

desire. Our desires are not determined but rather are malleable by habits and exposures.

Or, as James K.A. Smith labels these desire-forming actions, liturgies.[28]

The word liturgy comes from the Greek *leitourgia*—a compound word from *lēiton*, meaning public-center (related to *laos*, people) and *ergon*, work. And thus the construction refers to "public work" or a "service in the name of, or on behalf of, the people." Such participation of the people is simultaneously a formation of the people. Communal participation cultivates a "memory of a shared past" and a shared labor, according to Egyptologist Jan Assman, which enables a community to say "we."[29] The liturgy engenders particular desires in men and conforms the contours of their minds so that they might be fully shaped as workers of their religion, as right worshipers of their God. In sum, liturgy is a pattern of worship that patterns the adherent's life.

A simple, but radically important, difference separates Christian and Muslim liturgies. The sacramental Christian understanding of liturgy renders *leitourgia* as the participation of the People of God in the work and nature of God. Already we may be using particularly Christian language that Muslims cannot accept. All forms of Islamic orthodoxy reject the idea of participating with the divine. Muslims utilize the term not to speak of influencing the divine will or entering into the divine nature but, rather, to speak of entering into the divine plan; liturgy, then, primarily becomes an outward manifestation of an inward submission to the divine. For a Muslim, the liturgy implies a

---

[28] James K. A Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 15-39. See specifically page 24. Many liturgies exist outside of designated times of worship—particular calls and responses are found throughout our society (i.e. shopping uses the altar of merchandize, the check-out counter, for exchange). Yet these events are not controlled by religious institutions. We will hereafter be discussing Islamic and Christian liturgies specifically.

[29] Jan Assmann, "Communicative and Cultural Memory," in *Cultural Memories*, ed. Peter Meusburger, Michael Heffernan, and Edgar Wunder, Knowledge and Space 4 (Springer Netherlands, 2011), 15–27, 4.

radical submission while for the Christian, a cosmic friendship. This is a crucial

difference. Nonetheless, in either case, liturgy re-orients the worshiper by wedding

together theology and beauty.

Theology is the key that unlocks the secrets of existence. Theology teaches

humanity about its cause, its Lord, its telos, and itself. Theology helps to unveil the true

order of the cosmos. Worship hinges upon theology as it cultivates true orthodoxy, a

term in Greek that simultaneously means right worship and right belief. In fact, an

instance of communally ordered worship is the proper venue to deliver theology to the

people because it acts as a teacher to the laity, as well as to the magisterium.[30] The introit,

antiphons, scripture readings, etc. all have a pedagogical function. This list includes the

homily, which expounds upon the scriptures, whether that be the Qur'an or the Bible.

Exegesis comes from the Greek word *exēgeomai*, to describe, explain, direct, to make

fully known. Exegesis, however, is not merely an act of extracting information from the

text, but, rather, an act that allows for the text to more fully draw the listener into the text

itself; exegesis allows the listener/reader to better step into the narrative. This is, in part,

the role of the Sunday homily or Friday sermon, which invites the listener more fully into

the scriptures themselves. Exegesis, therefore, is itself a liturgical act.

Liturgy weds theology with beauty, which, in a theological reading, does not

merely reference the striking contrasts and splendorous techniques of a piece of art.

Beauty tempers and properly portrays theology by making Truth attractive and by most

accurately presenting the Truth. Beauty, as a transcendental—a property of the

---

[30] Historically, the liturgy for the Christian not only acted as the main theological instructor for the people, but also for the Church's teaching—informing both the laity as well as the magisterium as to proper belief. The rule of *Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi* manifested itself in a critical way at the First Nicean Council. The Church at the time did not hold explicit Trinitarian teachings, but was radically Trinitarian in terms of its prayers. Thus, the institutionalized beliefs followed the prayers of the Church.

Eternal[31]—weaves its way into many aspects of creation, both material and ethereal.

Beauty breads pleasure and in doing so, it attracts people to the divine. Beauty then must

be included in theology if people want to develop souls that are beautiful in virtue,

because without beauty the good becomes devoid of attraction, and no longer seems

worthwhile. Beauty has the capability and power to transform, for it is conducted by the

divine and thus it properly harmonizes with the need for which the cacophonies of our

lives pine. Indeed, the *crucis via dolorosa* can be labeled the most beautiful event in the

Christian's eye for the very reason that it *attracts* the world to God—it transforms

humanity by linking it with the *divine*. Likewise, for Muslims, does the Qur'an, poetic in

its linguistic complexity and incidentally rhymes on every verse, beckon the hearer to

Allah, for poetry mystically veils the truth in such a way that makes the listener crave to

know and to receive more. Yet, too often the beauty of a religion is lost due to a mere

systematic analysis of the beliefs.

"Syllogisms may still dutifully clatter away like rotary presses or computers

which infallibly spew out an exact number of answers by the minute," says Hans Urs von

Balthasar in his *Aesthetics*: "But the logic of these answers is itself a mechanism which

no longer captivates anyone. The very conclusions are no longer conclusive. And if that

is how the transcendentals fare because one of them has been banished, what will happen

with Being itself?"[32] Thus, Beauty does not analyze a test rat for a certain trait, but rather

---

[31] Again we run into a theological snafu: for a Muslim it is near damnable to say anything about God's nature beyond his radical monotheism. Rather, they would like to say "God is beautiful" rather than "God is beauty" which is the essence of regarding beauty as a Transcendental. The Christian understands all things that are labelled "beautiful" as manifestations of the Divine, who is the very form of these beautiful things, and thus is Himself "Beauty." Nonetheless, the argument that beauty can serve as an avenue for knowing the divine seems to hold.

appreciates the totality of the creature, therein not limiting it to a particular quality. Particulars are the ways of harmony and beauty, but they can only be fully understood and appreciated in seeing the total form. Thus beauty does with God—not limiting one's understanding of Him to a mere proposition but trying to revere all of who he is. Beauty cannot be disposed of theology, and theology, properly taught and learned, is done in a beautiful way. And thus the liturgy, which weds the two together, serves as the best forum for knowing the divine.

A central component of Islamic and Christian liturgies is their sacred scripture. For a Muslim the Qur'an is eternal, and as such, it is a manifestation of an aspect of Allah; the Qur'an is the richest of wells from which thirsty man is to drink the truths of Allah, the solution for the otherwise unquenchable restlessness of man. Similarly, the Christian understands his sacred text to be an externalization of God's own inward nature—something ready to be internalized by His followers: a palatable part of His Being that one is to consume and find sweeter than honey. The Holy Bible and the Noble Qu'ran are both liturgical books, texts oriented at orienting people—forming people to enter more fully into a divine narrative. They are not books merely to be read but rather to be used for prayer.

Early Christian and Muslim adherents quickly assembled and incorporated the Bible and the Qur'an into the prayers of their faithful; the spiritual leaders wished for the believers to be inculcated into these divine texts. The ancient adherents began to sing the words written in these celestial books so that the majestic sounds might settle in the sacred spaces of the brain, leaving a near indelible impression on the hearer. The word

---

[32] Jan Assmann, "Communicative and Cultural Memory," in *Cultural Memories*, ed. Peter Meusburger, Michael Heffernan, and Edgar Wunder, Knowledge and Space 4 (Springer Netherlands, 2011), 15–27, http://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-90-481-8945-8_2.

"Qur'an" means *lectionarium*—a holy text meant for chanting in a religious ceremony. Similarly, the Christian Synod of Hippo (397) declared, "Besides the canonical texts, nothing shall be read in the Church under the name of divine Scriptures."[33] Thus the Bible, too, was first designated for a communal religious setting. From their core, these texts primarily stood as a liturgical performance in their own genres.

This thesis approaches these liturgical texts with the understanding that they instruct their readers not only in what to think but also how to think. As hinted above, the sacred narratives, in particular, can act as a new forum for inter-faith discussions. Indeed, for inter-cultural discussions as well for these liturgical texts contribute in molding and forming the Umma and the Church. One should keep in mind in this regard that at some fundamental level it can be said that for both religions the primary approach to God comes through beauty and awe; mere intelligence cannot withstand the grandeur of God. When comparing textual and exegetical understandings, we are comparing the nature or the will of God and therefore the task is not completely tenable. Thus it is all the better that our basis for conversation is narrative, an imaginative component, saturated with splendor and inventive mystique. A narrative, as a property of the liturgy, can serve as the venue for unveiling both beauty and theology—both to extreme depths. But these depths do not have to be explored in order to understand the divine. The narrative is accessible to the masses; stories ask only for a zealous listener because they form, or reform, the contours of one's mind rather than filling the already fashioned contours. Let us look more closely at the nature of narrative.

---

[33] Charles Joseph Hefele, "Canon 24, Synod of Hippo" in *A History of the Councils of the Church: From the Original Documents*, trans. William R. Clark, vol. 2, 5 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1876), 468. "Item placuit ut praeter Scripturas canonicas nihil in ecclesia legatur sub nomine divinarum Scripturarum."

My muse for the discussion on narrative will be the twentieth century Oxford literary critic C.S. Lewis. The don understood stories to have two components: the logos—something said—and the poiema—something made.

> As Logos it tells a story, or expresses an emotion, or exhorts or pleads or describes or rebukes or excites laughter. As Poiema, by its aural beauties and also by the balance and contrast and the unified multiplicity of its successive parts, it is an *objet d'art*, a thing shaped so as to give great satisfaction.[34]

Narratives allow for the listener to step into the ethos of the other religion. Some doctrines are necessarily cause and effect, but others are interconnected. A narrative, rather than a systematic approach to religion, more faithfully allows one to step into a different world, where facts do not float about in a disordered mess, but, rather, have their own specific places. To exemplify this abstraction, let us consider Lewis's epistemology as explicated in his essay "Meditation in a Toolshed".

Lewis begins this discourse by reflecting on a beam of light penetrating through a crack in the roof of a toolshed. He then moves so that the ray of light falls on his eyes. "Instantly the whole previous picture vanished," he writes: "I saw no toolshed, and (above all) no beam. Instead I saw, framed in the irregular cranny at the top of the door, green leaves moving on the branches of a tree outside and beyond that, 90 odd million miles away, the sun. Looking along the beam, and looking at the beam are very different experiences."[35] This difference he again likens to a scientist explaining the hormones raging around inside an adolescent boy as opposed to the boy in love, who only feels the blissful delight of finding what always seemed to him to be missing from the world. Thus, to use more abstract language again, Lewis expounds a bipartite epistemological

---

[34] C. S. Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 132.

[35] C. S Lewis, "Meditation in a Toolshed" in *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, ed. Walter Hooper (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1972), 212.

system; one can know, first, by analytic observations, and, second, by experience. He suggests that the analytic method of knowing is an effect of the modern movement.[36] Lewis assures the reader that both means of knowing are necessary, but he argues for the superiority of the latter view in two ways. First, without experience, facts can attach to nothing, and thus, "all the apparatus of thought busily work[s] in a vacuum."[37] He again critiques the former view by claiming that one cannot be faithful to learning about another way of thinking without stepping outside of his or her own paradigm, thereby claiming that no objective third position exists. "In other words," he writes, "you can step outside one experience only by stepping inside another."[38] And thus he gives the cultured charge: "If you will only step inside, the things that look to you like instincts and taboos will suddenly reveal their real and transcendental nature."[39] He again critiques the modernist with this incisive statement:

> The inside vision of rational thinking must be truer than the outside vision which sees only movements of the grey matter; for if the outside vision were the correct one all thought (including this thought itself) would be valueless, and this is self-contradictory.[40]

We must attend to this epistemology in our attempt to breed interreligious understanding. As religion is the ritualized attempt at loving the divine, we must help the Muslim step into the beam of light that is the Christian's and assist the Christian in letting the Islamic beam fall upon his eyes so that they may more genuinely know the other. I contend that this can be done by listening to one another's stories. For example, a Christian looking at

---

[36] Ibid, 213.

[37] Ibid, 214.

[38] Ibid, 213.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid, 215.

Islam might be off put by the favor of the Umma unless he or she understands the long

narrative of Allah painstakingly progressing his covenant with rebellious people. That is

not a fact understood by doctrines but by hearing the story, entering into the narrative

itself.[41]

Therefore, we will read three stories together, all from within Genesis 1-11, which

lays the groundwork for the entirety of the Christian Scriptures.[42] Our analysis will be

twofold: liturgical and theological. The liturgical analysis will primarily examine how

the passages form the desires of the listener, by inquiring, How does this past cultural

story illuminate the present by reference to its origin? The analysis shall properly

segment pericopes and search the elemental differences of the stories—asking, What are

the literary differences that allow for the listener to enter into the narrative in a particular

way? I suggest that the stories that I will examine should be read before reading the

chapters. Doing such will allow for the reader to fall under the liturgical spells, and thus

not merely look at the beam, but step under it.

In our attempt to place the two sacred texts in conversation with one another, we

cannot separate pure theological doctrines from spiritual understanding. Certainly,

exegesis does not always take the form of prayer, but because both books were produced

for prayerful recitation it would be unnatural and nearly barbaric to strip our study from a

spiritual center. The aim of what theologians are calling comparative exegesis is not

merely to scratch the proverbial intellectual itch but to allow understanding to

---

[41] If understanding the relationship of beauty and theology within the Holy Bible, a narrative, it is easy to see why Pope Benedict XVI has said that doctrine can only be derived from the Sacred Scriptures.

[42] "The early chapters of Genesis had arguably a greater influence on the development of Christian theology than did any other part of the Old Testament. In these early chapters the Fathers have set out the fundamental patterns of Christian theology." Andrew Louth and Marco Conti, eds., *Genesis 1–11*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), xxxix.

blossom.[43] To remove the spiritual intent behind the text would be to remove the

dominant intention behind religious adherents who read these texts.

     We will read the texts theologically as well as liturgically, but we must note that

this project is not an official *tafsīr*, commentary, on the Qur'an, or for the Bible. The

historical systematic approach to Qur'anic commentating comes in three stages: canon

and segmentation, lemma, and comment.[44] Commenting most usually begins with a host

of past authorities. Citing such allows for a polyvalent reading of the text, one that also

sets the commentary within a particular tradition and acts as a declaration of loyalty by

"defining the tradition in which one works."[45] Wildly different interpretations fill

thousands of biblical and Qur'anic commentaries, for polysemy occurs where narrative

does. Though this project will not be exhaustive, it will exhume exegesis from many

branches of Christianity and Islam. We will pull from a variety of Sunni[46] exegetes for

theological insights while the Christian exegesis will mainly consist of Eastern Fathers

that heavily influence Middle Eastern Christians still today but will also include the

valuable voices of Western Fathers and modern scholars.

     My hope is that re-appropriating one's paradigm via narratives can point toward

---

[43] Comparative Exegesis has reached the laity on in a few forums. First in Michael Lodahl, *Claiming Abraham: Reading the Bible and Qur'an Side by Side* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2010) and through the publications of Oxford's Centre for Muslim-Christian Studies. Lodahl interprets the two texts through Jewish sources, which, I propose, would lead to disastrous results. Not only does he ignore Christian and Muslim understanding of their own text, but he draws in a dissenting group that both religions dismiss. Though much more hope lies with the scholars in Oxford, this first chapter attempts the first theoretical justification for the study of comparative exegesis as applied to interreligious dialogue.

[44] Norman Calder, "Tafsīr from Tabarī to Ibn Kathīr: Problems in the Description of a Genre, Illustrated with Reference to the Story of Abraham," in *Approaches to the Qur'ān*, ed. G.R. Hawting and Abdul-Kader A. Shareefs (London, 1993), 101–39, 101-3.

[45] Ibid, 103.

[46] As no Shia communities live in the greater Palestinian area, we find no need to include them in this project.

mutual understanding and, ultimately, peace. We must learn to appreciate the

fundamental elements of both religions—how they differ and harmonize—so that we do

not think that the two religions are fundamentally the same with mere superficial customs

separating them. In the process of reading the texts together, members of both traditions

might learn how to interact with one another and discern how both attempt to cultivate a

full and free life worthy of humankind. Though both traditions seek this end, stores of

differences separate the means they use to achieve it.

The Canon Law and Sharia Law share certain similarities while diverging at their

radical,[47] despite the same attempt to usher in an organized and divinely synchronized

concord amongst the devout. Such a result, however, does not stem from the law

directly. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI wrote in his encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, "Each

person finds his good by adherence to God's plan for him… in this plan, he finds His

truth, and through adherence to this truth he becomes free (cf. Jn 8:32)." We find a

similar philosophy when analyzing Arabic philology. Although the word Muslim does

mean "one who submits" or "submissive one" the word holds no negative connotations.

Most Semitic alphabets only contain consonants with vowel markers scattered

within the words. The sin-lâm-mim root ("s," "l," "m") is the basis for the word *Muslim*

as it also is for the word Islam, which means "submission," a general entrusting of one's

wholeness to another. A *Muslim* understands himself to submit to Allah that he might be

salim—unbroken—and as a result of his seeking peace, he will find it in the bosom of

Allah's law. Thus a follower of Islam does not primarily think of himself or herself as

---

[47] Cf. Raymond Leo Cardinal Burke, *Canon Law and Sharia Law*, (Vatican: *Law Library of Congress*, 2010). Sharia, to varying degrees, seeks to meld itself with a government, to be manifested in the society. Christian praxis can occur in tandem with secular law or even a society constructed by a different religion.

submitting to an ironclad despot, but as submitting to Allah that peace might indeed flourish.[48]

In both paradigms the beginning and end of the liturgies are realized in this communal harmony. By entering into our text of Genesis 1-11 and the corresponding Surahs, the literary vehicle for this cohesion, we experience the decentering value of liturgical worship. Thus we can glean from this that both paradigms, though opposing in many respects, agree that adherence to divine ordinances harkens peace. In neither case can an interpretation be made by one's individual understanding of the texts—liturgies demand more than one participant, though not all have recognized such.

Shaikh Muhammad Abdu of Egypt (1849-1905) was a good bourgeois who underlined the congruity between Islam and modernity. Drawing again from the rich treasures of bourgeois individualism, he taught a new principle of *Ijtihad* (diligence): the privilege of individual interpretation of the Qur'an. This gave one the freedom to violate some of the traditional interpretations of Islam without violating its fundamentals.[49] Yet such an understanding has not fostered serenity.[50] Rather, a radical turn to the left by some has caused a false dichotomy in the minds of many other moderate Muslims: join the West or fight against it. The Islamic tradition slowly collapsing post-Ottoman, post-Mongol fall is not merely unfortunate but also dangerous because disintegrating

---

[48] Taken from Imam, "Lewis and Islam" Presented at the C.S. Lewis Society, 24 Nov. 2015.

[49] Paulos Mar Gregorios, "Liberalism and Fundamentalism in Islam and Christianity: How Two Traditions Have Handled Modernity," in *Muslim-Christian Dialogue: Promise and Problems*, eds. M. Darrol Bryant and S.A. Ali (St. Paul: Paragon House, 1998), 9.

[50] Ira M. Lapidus, "Islamic Revival and Modernity: The Contemporary Movements and the Historical Paradigms," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 40, no. 4 (1997): 444–60. Lapidus convincingly argues that as modernity publicizes itself in the Muslim world, Islamic extremism arises with it.

traditions often return as reactionary fundamentalism that engenders violence. The

nascent possibility of reaching beyond this violence lies in the texts themselves.

Though textual criticism remains an important aspect for Christian scholars, the

discipline has received little attention within Islam.[51] We will utilize the more historically

standard edition of the Qur'an—the King Fu'ad Edition[52]—and compare it to the Vulgate

as well as the Septuagint, for these are the main texts of Eastern Christians.[53] This project

finds no need to discuss the potential dilemmas posed by the text-critical world; the

interpretation proves a more important matter for us because we would herein rather

handle the texts that people are reading rather than the text that they, perhaps, ought to be

reading, or have historically read.

We should note that it is near inappropriate to write this thesis in English. Before

Mohammad presented the Qur'an to the world, the Arab people in his region already

recognized the superiority of their tongue. The poets, who acted as the politicians and the

oracles of ancient Arab societies, wooed their world with their words, as eloquence

(*fasāha*) was, along with archery and horsemanship, one of the three chief abilities of a

---

[51] Multiple groups have begun to produce a critical edition of the Qur'an—the first of its kind.
Most notably is Corpus Coranicum, in Germany http://www.roger-pearse.com/weblog/2010/03/17/critical-edition-of-the-koran-in-preparation/. Mehdi Azaiez from Katholieke Universiteit Leaven currently works
on a similar project. Though textual criticism is considered important by most Christian traditions,
Muslims are hesitant with the intention. Exegesis, however, need not dwell on manuscripts for too long;
expounding the sacred texts operates with the manuscripts provided rather than predict what *should be* the
texts stipulated.

[52] King Fu'ad of Egypt (1922-36), called for a standard edition of the Qur'an in the early
twentieth-century, which was the first time such a thing had been done. Syria has recently re-standardize
the Qur'an, but how widespread this edition will become is yet to be seen. The press release can be found
here: "Assad Unveils New Standard Version" 14 July 2015; The Syrian Observer.
http://syrianobserver.com/EN/News/29495/Assad_Unveils_New_Standard_Version_Quran/

[53] Syriac would very much serve us well in this thesis, but due to my linguistic limitations I cannot
provide these insights.

perfect man (*al-insān al-kāmil*).[54] *aʿjam/ī* in Arabic designates a thing that does not

converse in Arabic. This could constitute anything from a non-Arab to an animal.

According to Navid Kermani, "to Muhammad's contemporaries, being unable to express

oneself in the Arabic language was almost the same as being mute."[55] For a Muslim, this

idea has not deceased but, rather, enlivened; now Arabic is not merely the language of the

poets, but rather of the Prophet, Allah's divine messenger. Thus our exegesis becomes an

even more difficult task since it demands comparing stories told in Greek, Latin, and

Hebrew to one told in Arabic, while we explicate all the stories in English.

Let us look more at the form of these foundational texts. The Torah has

undergone exegetical scrutiny from its Jewish origins. Genesis 1-11, as told in the Bible,

is narrative literature, and therefore one must contemplate its teachings from within the

chronicles themselves. The Qur'an, however, is part of a different milieu—it holds

instructive, gnomic wisdom literature. Thus it turns the *muthos* into *dicta*. For this

reason, some Islamic scholars have considered exegesis an unnecessary exercise—but

this is a minority position and historically Muslims have considered it absurd. *Tafsīr*,

exegesis, of the Qur'an is one of the most important sciences for Muslims—if not the

most important—and from the religion's beginnings Muslims have dedicated their best

minds to the exposition of the Qur'an.[56]

To approach formally the task of exegesis we will first understand the general

---

[54] Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs: From the Earliest Times to the Present*, 10th ed. (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 91.

[55] Navid Kermani, *God Is Beautiful: The Aesthetic Experience of the Quran* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2015), 60.

[56] Jane Dammen McAuliffe, "The Task and Traditions of Interpretation" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'ān*, edited by Jane Dammen McAuliffe. Cambridge Companions to Religion (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 181-3.

traditional Christian approach to the Bible, the historical Muslim understanding of the

Qur'an, as well as how the two groups understand the other's text. At times, generalities

will be proffered, yet with the hopefully not too tacit recognition that individuals—real

people, not a generic Christian or a faceless Muslim—hold a wide variety of positions on

the matter. Christian leaders have traditionally held that God protects the Church and

guides her to truth. Such a formulation allows latitude for exegetical activity of the

Christian scriptures not readily available to the Muslim scholar who considers the Qur'an

to be dictated to Mohammad, through Gabriel, from Allah. The Bible is considered by

most Christians to be a product of the Church guided by the third person of the Trinity,

gathered into a canon of books by Church fathers.[57] Therefore, the use of the one book

has a human component while the other does not, and the resulting hesitancies of

interpreting the latter text are often seen.[58]

Nonetheless, the divine component of the Bible ought not be dismissed. For the

Christian, the New Testament and the Old Testament stand together. Saint Augustine

pithily explains: "God, the inspirer and author of both Testaments, wisely arranged that

the New Testament be hidden in the Old and the Old be made manifest in the New."[59]

Thus when reading the Old Testament, we must read it in parallel with the New

---

[57] Some adherents to Eastern Orthodoxy might have qualms with such an explanation because they have not officially promulgated which books belong in canon, though they have determined the annual liturgical cycle and set sequential readings.

[58] This difference can perhaps be more easily understood with an example. It is not uncommon to see a Christian on a street corner handing out bibles. A Muslim would not, or, at least, should not, ever be doing this. The Qur'an itself must be treated with the most delicate care. The top shelf in the home is the designated place for the Noble Book, and one often handles the Qur'an with gloves. To risk someone tossing it carelessly in the trash is foolish and criminal. There are thus two philosophies behind these ideas: the Qur'anic that suggests that the divine must be cherished and safeguarded, and the Christian that the divine ought to be for everyone.

[59] Saint Augustine, "Quest. in Hept." 2.73: PL 34.623.

Testament for it will either fulfill, complete, or allegorically[60] surpass the Old Testament. As Henri de Lubac wrote, "Jesus Christ brings about the unity of Scripture. Everything in it is related to him. In the end he is its sole object. Consequently, he is, so to speak, its whole exegesis."[61]

As mentioned briefly above, Muslims understand the New and Old Testaments in two ways. First, early followers of Jesus manipulated the texts and thus one ought not trust the Bible—particularly the writings of Saint Paul. Second, in as much as the New and Old Testaments represent the Word of Allah, they could not have undergone change.

Numerous references within the Qur'an provide grounds for suggesting the validity of the Torah and Injil (Gospels). For example, Surah Al-Ma'idah 5:68, as Yusuf Ali's translation says: "O People of the Book! You have no ground to stand upon unless you stand fast by the Law (Torah), the Gospel, and all the revelation that has come to you from your Lord." Imam Bukhari pronounces that the differences between Christian and Islamic doctrines are due to errant interpretation of the Bible by the Christians and that the Bible still constitutes a valid message from Allah.[62] Additionally, some shared narratives between the Bible and the Qur'an are said to be "retellings" in the Qur'an itself, as is with the case for the Sons of Adam story.[63] Nonetheless, people who hold either view can still find this exercise of comparative exegesis useful.

---

[60] A biblical "type" is a real person, place, thing, or event in the Old Testament that foreshadows something greater in the New Testament. See Gal. 4:22-6, 1 Cor. 10:6,11, 2 Cor. 3, & 2 Pet. 3 for explicit examples within the Bible itself.

[61] Henri De Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*. Translated by Mark Sebanc. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 237.

[62] Sunnah Volume 9, Book 92, Number 461.

[63] Cf. Surah 5:27. The groundbreaking intertextual studies of Gabriel Said Reynolds, Sydney Griffiths, Kevin Van Bladel pave the way for understanding the Qur'anic uses of the biblical text. This is a great attempt at bringing Muslims and Christians together to study.

Muslims believe that the Qur'an reveals Allah's will.[64] Allah sent the Noble Book to the people, the Umma, through Mohammad to convey truth to the pious. Many in the last century and a half have considered the Qur'an to be self-revelatory because no institution of authoritative interpretation exists.

As mentioned above, Christians historically have understood Islam as a heresy and have rendered the Qur'an a volume of lies. Nonetheless, many Christians believe that a reflection of a ray of the Truth often enlightens groups that do not explicitly know the person of Jesus Christ. It is with this respect, proper reverence, and hope of friendship that we shall proceed.

---

[64] Though a Muslim group of the ninth century called the Mu'tazilites affirmed and publicly taught the existence of a "natural right," analogous to the "natural law" of Thomistic philosophy, "theological subjectivism is the prevailing view of classical Islamic jurisprudence and theology," cf. George Hourani, "The Basis of Authority of Consensus In Sunnite Islam", *Studia Islamica* no. 21, (1964), 13-60, 48. See also B. Metzger, "Revelation and Reason: A Dynamic Tension Islamic Arbitrament", *The Journal of Law and Religion* vol. 11, no. 2 (1994-5), 697-714.

CHAPTER TWO

Hierarchy and Friendship: Naming the Animals

"True religion is a union of God with the soul, a real participation with the divine nature."
Henry Scougal

"Submission to Allah's will is the best companion; wisdom is the noblest heritage."
Imam Ali Nahjubalagha

The author of Genesis 2 restates the story of creation in order to concentrate on its formative function of human persons. Al-Baqarah[65] 2:29-41 begins by calling the listener to remember the tale of elevating man to vicegerent. Both texts invite readers to examine a retold narrative in interpretatively creative ways. The Qur'an begins by calling to mind the terse conversation between the angels and Allah: "When your Lord said to the angels, 'I am putting a successor on earth;' the angels reply with utter astonishment: "Will You place someone there who will cause corruption on it and shed blood, while we glorify You with Your praise and extol Your holiness?'"[66] This constitutes one of the more daring questions posed to Allah in the Qur'an. According to Maudoodi, it seems utterly bizarre to the angels that "a species of being which had been invested with discretionary power and authority could conform with the overall order of the universe which is based

---

[65] The name of this chapter is taken from the story narrated in v. 67–71, regarding the slaughter of a *cow*. As this chapter deals chiefly with the Jews, and as the idolatry of the golden-calf (in Exodus 32) overtook the Jews, the importance of that incident seems to have been rightly estimated in giving this chapter the name that it bears.

[66] Al-Baqarah 30.

on absolute and involuntary subservience to the will of God."[67] Allah's answer cautions the angels: "Surely, I know that which you do not know." Thus the topic of the tale takes its place: the superior knowledge of Allah.

The biblical passage begins with the empty world, with "no plants of the field"[68] having bloomed. Man comes to inhabit this empty world after "God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life."[69] God brought the man to Eden in order to till the ground in the garden. Thus, we find that God begins to engender an order into his creation. Right order continues as the theme when God declares, "It is not good that the man should be alone."[70] Before presenting Eve to Adam, God brought forth the beasts and birds to the man. In the Qur'an, Allah also introduces the creation to Adam.

After answering the angels, Allah affords Adam an aspect of divine knowledge: the names of everything. Qur'an expands the scope of the Bible. Ad-Dahhak said that Ibn 'Abbas commented on the Ayah: "Meaning, the names that people use, such as human, animal, sky, earth, land, sea, horse, donkey, and so forth, including the names of the other species."[71] Because there is a divine language within Islamic thought, Arabic, the language preexisted with Allah. Adam, as the newly named vicegerent, *khalīfah*, receives his first task from his celestial sovereign. Allah, turning back to the angels,

---

[67] Syed Abul 'Ala Maudoodi, *Towards Understanding the Qur'ān: Abridged Version of Tafhīm Al-Qur'ān*, trans. Ẓafar Isḥāq Anṣārī (Markfield, Leicester, U.K: Islamic Foundation, 2006).

[68] Gen 2:5.

[69] Gen 2:7.

[70] Gen 2:18.

[71] At-Tabari 1:458. According to this same tafsīr writer, Allah even taught Adam "the terms for breaking wind!" At-Tabari 1:475.

commands: "Tell me the names of these, if what you say be true."[72] The angels reply:

"Glory be to You; we have no knowledge except whatever You have taught us," and the

angels end the pericope with the adoring exclamation: "You are the All-Knowing, the

All-Wise!"[73]

The author of Genesis records a different interaction between God and the man:

"He led the animals to Adam, in order that he might see what he would call them."[74] The

act of naming somehow corresponds to a search for a human helper. But it was a futile

effort. God puts Adam in a deep sleep in order to draw out a helper from within his own

bones. "At last," Adam was able to declare:

> This is bone of my bones
> and flesh of my flesh;
> this one shall be called Woman,
> for out of Man this one was taken.[75]

These tales differ so vastly that one ought not be faulted for thinking them two distinct

stories. If it were not for the same act of naming, we should consider them different. But

these two varying contexts unveil the importance of the one who names.

The author of Genesis 2 reinterprets the story of creation. Plants arise only after

God creates man, and when the plants sprout so does the first covenant: "You may freely

eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall

not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."[76] Whereas Genesis 2 records the

first covenant, the second Surah rebukes those who broke the ancient covenant: "Those

---

[72] Al-Baqarah 31

[73] Al-Baqarah 32

[74] Gen. 2:19

[75] Gen. 2:23.

[76] Gen.2:16–17.

who break Allah's covenant after they have pledged to keep it, and sever whatever Allah

has ordered to be joined, and spread corruption in the land—it is they who are the

losers."[77] The biblical passage speaks of a covenant forming, the Qur'anic passage

reproves the dissolution of the former covenant. The biblical passage clearly implies that

a community must receive the covenant while the Qur'anic passage warns the new

community receiving the ancient covenant again to learn from the lack of faith of their

ancestors.

These contexts unveil two major themes regarding the persons of Allah and

Adonai.[78] Allah is herein presented as the "All-Knowing" and the "All-Wise." The

Umma must trust Allah as it is most prudent to do so. The Old Testament, on the other

hand, presents God as familiar, concerned, nearly paternal—and almost able to be

Adam's companion Himself. The familiar presentation for the God about to found a

covenant appropriately differs from the stern presentation of Allah who admonishes the

Umma not to do as the previous people did. The remainder of the divine performances

reveal a more fundamental insight to the persons of Allah and Adonai that can be clearly

portrayed in the act of naming.

According to Bruce Waltke, names connote "fame and progeny" and "in the

ancient Near East, a name was not merely a label but a revelation of character."[79] Often

the narrator uses a name to reveal his perspective on the person or to divulge something

about the speaker. To name is to assign "meaning," according to notable *tafsīr* writer Ibn

---

[77] Al-Baqarah 27

[78] For this distinction see the Appendix.

[79] Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2001).

Kathir, to read into a thing its function and destiny; naming brings order and familiarizes those things named.[80] This is not naming as we do with our newly born babies, an act of labelling, but an act of recognition or rather organizing of a thing's proper role. The creation of the cosmos cannot be considered complete unless its components are named.

Naming constitutes a necessary aspect of the creative act because it "is equated with existence;"[81] naming intellectually objectifies an object. The twentieth century British Philosopher Owen Barfield comments on the semiotic value of naming:

> It is indeed possible, when thinking of the relation between words and things, to forget what 'things', that is phenomena, are; namely, that they are collective representations and, as such, correlative to human consciousness. But those who decline to adopt this expedient, will find it impossible to sever the 'thing' by a sort of surgical operation from its name.[82]

A thing must be known to exist, but it is the divine which sustains creation by constant knowing. To understand this quote better, we might briefly consider the nature of language, which ought not be understood as a means of communication but as an intellectual capacity with which conceptual order is brought to life.[83] According to twentieth-century linguist André Jolle: "Language itself is an originating creative, interpretative something, in which arrangement, rearrangement, and regulation most properly occurs."[84] He continues by saying:

> Man attacks the confusion of the world; by proving, restricting and combining he

---

[80] Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir--Abridged*, ed. Shaykh Safiu-Rahman Al-Mubarakpuri, vol. 1 (Dar-us-Salam Publications, 2000), 190.

[81] Ibid, 83.

[82] Barfield, *Saving the Appearances*, 82.

[83] Cf. Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, trans. John H Marks (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), 83.

[84] André Jolles *Einfache Formen* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1968), 16. ist Sprache selbst ein Erzeugendes, Schaffendes, Deutendes, etwas, worin sich Anordnung, Umordnung, Verordnung eigenst ereignen.

brings together what belongs together. That which lies piled up in the confusion of the world does not at the start possess its own form; but rather, what is here distinguished with discrimination receives its own form only as it comes together in the analysis.[85]

Using language to identify, to entitle—and hence, to name—is a most complicated matter. The texts in question do not handle this act with a primitive connection between word and object, or between a name and its bearer. Rather the Holy Books reference a connection between a word and a fact—a far more complicated concept.

With this more precise understanding of the act of naming, let us observe the Qur'anic passage in greater detail. Celestial discussions open the passage, making the listener more attuned to the invisible world—something transcendent and perhaps more beautiful that lies beyond. After this *aide-mémoire*, a reminder of his humble state, man is crowned vicegerent. Pride is not the proper reaction upon hearing this. The listener should rather be overcome by the responsibility given him or her—particularly as he or she is reminded that Adam does not define the ways of the universe but rather receives instruction from the divine. Indeed, according to Salahi and Shamis, this is what occurs within his reception of the names: Adam learns the order of the universe and, as vicegerent, is to maintain this order and thus its purpose.[86]

The issue of man participating in the creation of the world brings us to consider the condemned sixteenth century group, the *Qadariyya*. The *Qadariyya* initiated a debate regarding the limit God's omnipotence placed on the independence and responsibility of

---

[85] Ibid, 21-22. Der Mensch greift ein in das Wirrsal der Welt; vertiefend, verringernd, vereinigend faßt er das Zusammengehörige zusammen, trennt, teilt, zerlegt und sammelt auf die Häuflein das Wesentliche. Die Unterschiede verbreitern sich, das Vieldeutige wird ausgeschieden oder es wird zur Eindeutigkeit bestimmt und zurückgebracht. Auslegend und einengend dringt er zu den Grundformen durch.

[86] Sayyid Quṭb, Sayyid Quṭb, and Adil Salahi, *In the Shade of the Qurʾān: Fī ẓilāl Al-Qurʾān* (Markfield: Islamic Foundation, 2000), 47-8.

humans.[87] They understood that Allah constructed the world in such a way that allowed

for human participation with the divine in willing particular outcomes. This theological

experiment had particular resonances with a group arising in the ninth century called the

Mu'tazilites. This faction affirmed and publicly taught the existence of a "natural right,"

similarly portrayed in Aristotle's *Ethics* and analogous to the "natural law" of Thomistic

philosophy.[88] If a natural right existed, then the Qur'an would not constitute the sole

source of truth. In fact, universal laws would even suggest a particular nature of Allah,

and yet "theological subjectivism is the prevailing view of classical Islamic jurisprudence

and theology."[89] Orthodox Islam quickly dismembered both of these theological

experiments. The reasons for the dismemberment fundamentally corresponds to the

message of Mohammad.

Mohammad routinely emphasized the two doctrines of Allah as All-Powerful and

All-Knowing. These competing doctrines of the *Qadariyya* and *Mu'tazilites* assail these

fundamental principles of Allah in two distinct ways. First, if Allah holds all things

together, continuously sustaining the entirety of creation, then humanity cannot

contribute to his own creation. But this idea of sustaining corresponds not so much to the

physical ability to create but, rather, references a telos. Defining or organizing,

understood as a creative act, determines the purposiveness of the creature and of how the

creature is to relate to himself and others. Such would imply that man has a basic ability

to participate with Allah in defining particular ends. Humans, whose purpose lies outside

---

[87] Cf. John L. Esposito, The Oxford History of Islam (Oxford University Press, 1999), 23, 450-452.

[88] George Hourani, "The Basis of Authority of Consensus In Sunnite Islam", *Studia Islamica* no. 21, (1964), 13-60, (here p. 48). See also B. Metzger, "Revelation and Reason: A Dynamic Tension Islamic Arbitrament", *The Journal of Law and Religion* vol. 11, no. 2 (1994-5), p. 697-714.

[89] Ibid, Hermani.

of themselves, cannot act as the bulwark of their own existence. Because Allah's will

ordained all of creation, man's participation in the divine act would usurp Allah's desire

and also his regality.

Second, Allah is the only one with complete knowledge. Humanity's attempt at

determining particular states of affairs within the framework of the universe would be

disordered and inherently wrong. Eric Ormsby, Professor of Islamic thought at McGill

University Institute of Islamic Studies, attempted to write an Islamic theodicy and in so

doing came to explain the nature of determinism. His description may serve us well here:

"The word as it is and not otherwise, the actual state-of-affairs, is superior to any merely

hypothetical alternative order."[90] Rather than enjoying the act of naming, humans ought

to rely on Allah's certain truth that would serve humanity incomparably better. For Allah

to reveal proper order to undeserving man, let alone name him vicegerent, manifests

Allah's benevolence. The implications of humanity's naming parts of creation is

exacerbated when one realizes that "this apotheosis of the self, to which human beings

naturally tend, along with a false reliance on worldly means, makes a genuine trust in

God impossible."[91] Thus, with these two expositions of Allah, as both All-knower and

All-able, we see the fittingness of his naming the animals.

In light of this way of thinking, it seems reasonable that the early Muslims would

derogatorily call Christians, as recorded by Saint John of Damascus, "'Associators,' ie,

those who joined parties, with God (*Mushrikū*—ἑταιριστός)."[92] Indeed, the Prophet Hud

---

[90] Eric L Ormsby, *Theodicy in Islamic Thought: The Dispute over Al-Ghazālī's "Best of All Possible Worlds,"* Princeton Legacy Library (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 41.
[91] Ibid, 42-3.

[92] James Windrow Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology: A Study of the Interpretation of Theological Ideas in the Two Religions*, vol. 1, 1 (London: Lutterworth Press, 1945), 65.

declares in Surah 11:54, "I disassociate myself from all those who claim to be partners with God." But Christians would readily accept the titles of "associators" and "partners." The nature of the Trinitarian God begins to reveal the reason why. Christians believe that everything in the universe resonates with the very nature of God—a near forbidden topic within Islam. God is one in essence but three in persons, three individual substances of a rational nature. God, then, is inherently communal and he, unlike humans, subsides within himself in perfect harmony. Love, the constant self-giving of oneself for the betterment of another, is the most apt description of God whose nature eternally and necessarily expresses itself in the begetting and proceeding of self-giving. His act of creation constitutes an ecstatic act—a coming out of himself—thereby expanding the scope of his love. Thus, as the Christian understands, it is for love that God has created him or her. Understanding this concept is crucial for appreciating two elements of this narrative. First, God sees Adam and says, "it is not good for man to be alone."[93] For the man to reflect God, he must be a communal being. God, then, brings animals to Adam for him to name them, and to discern if any of them could be his helper. Instead the animals came to Adam, in the words of Saint Ephraim, "as to a loving shepherd."[94]

What is the role of Adam the shepherd? It is not a mere pastoral role, but, rather, a hieratic one. Anyone who expounds [the creation narrative]" writes German biblical scholar Von Rad, "must understand one thing: this chapter is Priestly doctrine—indeed, it contains the essence of Priestly knowledge in a most concentrated form."[95] Severian of

---

[93] Gen. 2:18

[94] Saint Ephrem the Syrian, *Commentary on Genesis 2.9.3.* Fathers of the Church: A New Translation (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1947), 91:103.

[95] Rad, (1972), 47.

Gabala recognizes this same fact in the fourth century when he identifies the garden as Adam's "Basilica."[96] The author of Genesis describes the Garden of Eden with language redolent of the Holy Temple: God instructs both Adam and the Levites to till [*abad*, *operaretur*, ἐργᾶται] and keep [*shamar*, *custodire*, φυλάσσειν] it; God walks [*halak*, (*de*)*ambulo*, περιπατοῦντος] or promises to walk around in both the garden and the Tabernacle/Temple; both the garden and the Temple face east and have an eastward entrance; both have a Tree of Life with twofold signification: the Tree in the Garden and the temple's menorah, which is given an arboreal description in Ex 25:31-40; both are associated with sacred waters, that is the rivers flowing from the garden and the temple; and both are guarded by Cherubim.[97] And thus, Adam is the priest of the garden, just as the levitical priests administer in the Temple.

In order to avoid a full discourse on the nature and role of the priest, we will only mention that the priest is to engender a participation with the divine. Participation is an act of love—of mutual self-giving, to cultivate an association of charity. Love inherently requires a knowledge of another and a free and unrestrained will to give of oneself voluntarily. It requires *participation* within the life of another. Thus it is only sensible that Genesis, according to the Christian Scriptures, records Adam naming the animals and thereby participating in the act of creation. God wills that humankind join in his loving nature.

The nature of this participation perhaps should be examined. We might ask whether Adam's act of naming was deterministic or if he exercised divine knowledge to name.

---

[96] The Creation of the World, PG 56:485.

[97] Michael P. Foley, "Male Subjection and the Case for an All-Male Liturgical Ministry," *Antiphon* 15, no. 3 (2011): 262–98.

The former would attribute more power to Adam than his own nature constitutes. The latter categorization seems to correspond better to the idea of "revealing the character" of certain parts of creation. The question still remains as to how Adam obtained this knowledge. To answer this we must first know the Christian understanding of God as a simple being that all parts of creation reflects within themselves.[98] From this understanding, we can reasonably assert that greater intimacy with God would inherently lead to greater knowledge. Adam, in his pre-Fall state, relates to God without any barrier of sin. Adam's pure and undefiled state allows him great intimacy with and thus knowledge about the divine and thus also of creation. Therefore, when God brings the beasts of the field and the birds of the sky to Adam, the man enters into the divine knowledge to determine the forms of the animals. In other words, Adam is a super namer because he is a super knower. Thus the participatory act of naming seems also to be an act of recognition. This specification as to the nature of the naming process only enhances the understanding of man as a participatory creature for it requires that Adam enters into the divine light.

Such an understanding also better illuminates the Christological elements within this pericope. Adam is the first namer, Christ then comes as the second and greater namer. Christ calls James and John the "Sons of Thunder" and he renames Simon, Peter.[99] Christ "knew all people"[100] for he "search[ed] the heart and examine[d] the mind."[101] His superior knowledge and ability to recognize the true passions of the heart

---

[98] Cf. Pseudo-Dionysius, "On Divine Names" in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. Paul Rorem, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1987).

[99] Mark 3:17; Matt. 16:18.

[100] John 2:24.

came from his indivisible unity with the divine. Knowledge stems from celestial intimacy and this union allows for one to better serve all aspects of creation by recognizing their true functions and roles in the world's order.

The Qur'an and the Bible recorded the same event for different purposes. The Islamic tale revealed Allah's knowledge and power. The listener was moved to trust Allah and cling to his covenant, not disbanding from it as those of the past. The Qur'an assumes, not inappropriately, that the Jews disbanded from their covenant because they assumed they held a greater knowledge than their God. This passage not merely emphasizes Allah as omniscient but also Allah as bestower of knowledge. Thus one must not disband from his covenant based upon presumption and arrogance. In contrast, the biblical account does not record God teaching Adam the names. God leads the animals to Adam so as "*to see* what he will name then" not *to learn* what he will name them. It might be said that God tests Adam as to whether or not he has an intimate knowledge of the divine before gifting to him a helper; God wants to see if Adam understands the life of God so as to model it with his bride. In honoring the covenant just formed, God provides an arbor of affection in which the human participates with the divine. The role of humanity holding dominion is then very different to the Qur'anic understanding of Adam as vicegerent. The biblical account does not have Adam as vicegerent submitting and enacting orders, but, rather, contributing to them.

Neither idea is devoid of justification. The nature of man's relationship to the divine in both Christianity and Islam stems from the deity's own nature. Muslims understand themselves to maintain the divine will while Christians see themselves as ushering it in. The conversation of their natures cause a sublimation of philosophical and

---

[101] Jer17:10.

contemplative desire. The two texts aim to attune our desires either to Allah or to the

Perichoresis, the Trinitarian community.

CHAPTER THREE

Fratricide and Sacrifice: The Sons of Adam

"A man lusts to become god… and there is a murder."
David Zindell

The narrative of Cain and Abel comes to us in the fourth chapter of the book

of Genesis and in the fifth surah[102] of the Qur'an.[103] The Qur'an introduces the story with

a request to hear it: "And recite to them the story of Adam's two sons, in truth, when they

both offered a sacrifice." The Bible, after recording the births of the two sons, recalls,

"Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel for his part

brought of the firstlings of his flock, their fat portions."[104] The presence of sacrifices gives

reason for Muslims and Christians alike to pause: neither religion, at this point, had

received instructions to offer sacrifices.[105]

However, neither religion should find a problem with this. Some Christian

exegetes did find a problem with this matter, but the fact that God had yet to deliver the

Old Testament law does not imply that people could not offer sacrifices—indeed, doing

---

[102] Al-Mai'dah, meaning "food" a name taken from the demand for *food* — "the daily bread" — on the part of Christian, to which reference is made towards the end of this chapter. This chapter discusses in length the Christian love for material pleasures. Cf. Maulana Muhammad Ali, "Al-Mai'dah" in *The Holy Qur'an: The Arabic Text with Commentary*, (2002).

[103] Slight variants exist between the Septuagint, and the Vulgate, though most insubstantial. Verse five has a minor difference that we should note: Cain becoming grieved ἐλύπησεν and grew angry יִחַר (which corresponds more to the Vulgates's *vehementer*. The seventh verse in Hebrew reads "If you do well, will not *your countenance* be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it." The LXX reads: "If you offer properly, but divide improperly, have you not sinned? Be still; to you shall he submit, and you shall rule over him."

[104] *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989),gen.4:3–4. All following quotations will be taken from the NRSV unless otherwise noted.

[105] Sahih Bukhari 5471, Book 71, Hadith 6, Vol. 1, Book 66, Hadith 379. See pages 43-4 for further discussion.

such provided a precedent for sacrificing later. The Islamic cause, I would argue, finds

no problem either, namely in the example taken from Eid al-Adha during which the

Malik-e-Nisaab sacrifice occurs. Affluent Muslims offer their best domestic animals

(usually a cow, but can also be a camel, goat, sheep or ram depending on the region) as a

symbol of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his only son. In addition to this, Imam

Bukhari notes the tradition of a "Water Sacrifice" for the birth of a child: "I heard Allah's

Messenger saying, 'Aqiqa is to be offered for a (newly born) boy, so slaughter (an

animal) for him, and relieve him of his suffering.'"[106]

Though not unprecedented, sacrifice still remains a bizarre detail, but one that

enhances the drama. God accepts the sacrifice from the younger brother and not from the

elder. With rage and jealousy, the older sibling yells at his younger brother, "I will surely

kill you," according to the Qur'an, and Abel then begins a short yet gripping monologue:

> God accepts only from those who are God-fearing. Even if you lay your hand on
> me to kill me, I shall not lay my hand on you to kill you; for I fear God, the Lord
> of all the worlds. I would rather you should add your sin against me to your other
> sins, and thus you will be destined for the Fire; since that is the just retribution of
> wrongdoers.[107]

The Old Testament author records no discourse between the brothers: "Cain said to his

brother Abel, 'Let us go out to the field.' And when they were in the field, Cain rose up

against his brother Abel, and killed him."[108] The Qur'an gives an equally stale description

of the murder: "And his soul permitted to him the murder of his brother, so he killed him

and became among the losers."[109] Neither narrative included a vivid description of the

---

[106] Sahih al-Bukhari 5472, Book 71, Hadith 7, Vol. 7, Book 66, Hadith 380.

[107] Al-Ma'idah 5:27-9

[108] gen.4:8.

[109] Al-Ma'idah 5:30.

means of death so as not to divert the focus from the grievance committed. As an aside, I would submit that the most dreadful, as well as the most holy, moments in writings cannot be recorded well. It may be that the Qur'an and for the Bible lack detail so as to bow to the gravity of the moment, thereby suggesting that words fail to capture this event. Until this point the narratives tell similar stories, but the differences do baffle readers. Let us note some of these differences.

The biblical story has a context—it stands as a narrative within a larger narrative—whereas the Qur'anic narrative stands alone, a preface before a law that stands within a larger argument. The biblical story names the sons of Adam and Eve, the Qur'anic story does not mention Eve and withholds the names of the sons. The Bible tells us the vocations of the sons—Cain, a worker of the land; Abel, a herder of cattle— the Qur'anic text does specify their vocation, though it may allude to them. As seen from the above passage, the biblical text tells us what species the sacrifices were while the Qur'anic text does not. The biblical story emphasizes Abel's blood crying out to God while the Qur'anic text does not. Each sacred text has one present dialogue and one absent oppositely paralleled. The Bible reveals the conversation between God and Cain after the murder, banishing Cain to wander aimlessly and cursing the ground that it shall bear him no fruit, though not without leaving him a mysterious mark of protection.

> Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" And the LORD said, "What have you done? Listen; your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground! And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you till the ground, it will no longer yield to you its strength; you will be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth." Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear! Today you have driven me away from the soil, and I shall be hidden from your face; I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and anyone who meets me may kill me." Then the LORD said to him, "Not so! Whoever kills Cain will suffer a sevenfold vengeance." And

the LORD put a mark on Cain, so that no one who came upon him would kill him.[110]

The Qur'an does not retell that a conversation occurred between Cain and Allah. The Qur'anic text, however, records a raven sent to Cain that reveals to him how to dig at the ground to bury his brother, while the biblical text does not. The Qur'anic story narrates the conversation that Cain and Abel have with one another before the murder while the biblical text does not. The Qur'anic narrative properly ends with Cain's remorse, but the biblical narrative does not end the scene until the poem of Lamech (Gen 4:23-4):

> Lamech said to his wives: "Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; you wives of Lamech, listen to what I say: I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me. If Cain is avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy-sevenfold."[111]

A textual command immediately follows the Qur'anic narrative whereas the Torah fails to include an interpretation. Here lies a host of differences, let us examine a few.

In the first passage of *Al-Ma'idah*, Allah reminds the Umma of his covenant with him, to which they were bound. This initial reminder serves as "encouragement to them to fulfill their pledges and to beware of breaking God's covenant."[112] The second section of the Surah warns, through counterexample, how past groups have formerly scorned Divine revelation—namely, the Jews and the Christians. It seems at this point that the Surah turns to legislation concerning human life and the fundamental basis of any law. We would do well to recall that the narrative serves to address Muslims constructing an Islamic society: and thus the commands at the end pertain to engendering a "society that

---

[110]Gen.4:9–15.

[111]Gen.4:23–24.

[112] Salahi, Adil, and Ashur Shamis. *In the Shade of the Qur'ān: Fī Ẓilāl Al-Qur'ān Sūrah 5, Al-Māidah.* Vol. 4 (Leicester: Islamic Foundation, 2001), 52.

guarantees mutual solidarity."[113] This fable, then, observes how Muslims ought to treat fellow Muslims. The following pericope discusses the adherence to Allah's law for constructing the "land of Islam." It is well summarized by Surah 9:71: "The believing men and believing women are allies of one another. They enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and establish prayer and give zakah and obey Allah and His Messenger."

The Bible relays its narrative within a larger narrative, a narrative that tracks the ongoing deprivation of man. The Fall, the first crime humankind committed against God, results in ontological depreciation—the essential worsening—of man, and thence a rapid decline occurs: man turns from the life-producing God and leaves the garden in which God dwells. In an attempt to imitate God's generative power, man produces life, a child, but that child turns to produce death. Adam and Eve sin via the temptation of the snake while Cain sins despite the encouragement of the Lord not to do so. God drives Adam and Eve to settle East of Eden while he sends Cain to settle nowhere—a wanderer without a home. Adam must till the soil for his food while Cain, despite his toiling, shall find the soil fruitless. Adam and Eve must leave the source of perpetual life—the tree of life—while Cain's life will be hounded by all whom he shall meet.[114] Cain perpetrated a similar evil as the serpent, which like an instrument served the devil's purposes, and as the serpent introduced mortality by means of deceit, in like manner Cain deceived his brother to give rise to his death. Hence, as God said to the serpent, "Cursed are you beyond all the wild animals of the earth," so also to Cain did God say the same when he committed the same evil as the serpent.[115] This biblical narrative provides no explicit

---

[113] Ibid, 81.

[114] See Bruce Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2001), 81-2.

teaching for the story is only yet beginning. The Qur'anic text hints at the fact that this story is indeed known and thus Mohammad is only asked to *re*cite it. But this retelling includes various differences.

The Qur'an does not determine the type or the purpose of the sacrifices. Usmani and Ibn Kathir follow the understanding of the Midrashic explanation of the event. In Rabbah 22, Rabbi Yoshua ben Korcha said: "two climbed into bed, and seven climbed out of it: Cain and his twin sister, Abel and his two twin sisters."[116] He continues, saying that Adam arranged for Cain to marry Abel's twin sister, the uglier of the two, while Abel was arranged to marry Cain's twin—the more beautiful of the sisters. Cain, obviously upset, protested, and Adam proposed sacrifices to divine Allah's will in the matter.

Such an idea is not carried by Church Fathers though it is not wholly neglected either. For example, Saint Ephraim the Syrian, working from the Septuagint, wrote of Cain: "His face became gloomy because there was laughter in the eyes of his parents *and his sisters* when his offering was rejected. They had seen that Cain's offering had been placed in the midst of the fire and yet the fire did not touch it."[117] In any case, offering sacrifices is a curious phenomenon for Islamic prophets. Perhaps a Christian explanation can be adopted in this circumstance.

Many understand sacrifices to be the renunciation of a good, and for many traditions that is a proper definition. Historical Christianity, however, does not teach this. There are two main forms of sacrifice, which are not mutually exclusive: latreutic and

---

[115] PG 53.162.

[116] "Sefaria.org: A Living Library of Jewish Texts Online," http://www.sefaria.org.

[117] Saint Ephraim the Syrian's Commentary on Genesis 3.3.3. FC 91:125.

propiatory.[118] Neither is about killing or suffering or loss.

Cain and Able first offer latreutic offerings, offerings of self-submission to the divine.[119] And why do they offer these sacrifices of dedication and thanks? What is the need of physical giving? Visible sacrifice is in conformity with the psychological requirements of man's present condition, the moral debt of his nature to God, and the social element of our make-up. Hence it is man's duty to pay worship to God in sensible ways, demonstrating his reverence, his obedience and his striving towards God, as his unique First Cause, his omnipotent Ruler, his ultimate End, by an exclusive form of external worship.

This giving is not necessarily a renunciation—Orthodox, Assyrians, Coptics, Catholics, and some protestants reject such an interpretation, for "the more closely a man is united to God," says Saint Ignatius of Loyola, "the more generous he is to the Supreme Majesty, and the more generous also will be the benefits conferred on him, and every day he will become more worthy of richer spiritual graces and gifts."[120] Man, for the Jew and Christian, is meant to be at one with God. Thus a rendering of gifts acts as a visible sign to help one realize that he has received an invisible spiritual gift from God. Despite the fact that, "Allah is knowing of that within the breasts," a sacrifice externalizes an internal

---

[118] Cf. Maurice de La Taille S. J., *The Mystery of Faith Regarding the Most August Sacrament and Sacrifice of the Blood of Christ* (Sheed & Ward, 1950) chapter 1. Thanks for this recommendation must be given to Father John Saward, University of Oxford.

[119] Dedicatory offerings could be either animal, as in the case of the burnt-offering (Leviticus 1), or grain, as in the case of the "meal offering" (Leviticus 2). Our narrator here designates three times (vv 3, 4, 5) the brothers' offerings by מִנְחָה, a grain offering.

[120] Jesuits and Ignatius, eds., *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms: A Complete English Translation of the Official Latin Texts* (Saint Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), p. 3, c. 1, par. 22.

state.[121]

This latreutic sacrifice, however, is not the only sacrifice that Cain offers. Saint Ephraim the Syrian notes in the typological meaning of Abel in the story, and he moves from Abel the hieratic sacrificer to Abel the sacrificed lamb, which he understands as an allegory of Christ as the lamb of God.[122] The death of Abel typifies the death of Christ, just as the writer of Hebrews declares, you come to "Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel."[123] Propitiatory sacrifice, for nearly all cultures, including ancient Israelite society, concerns itself not with killing but with blood, which holds the life of the flesh.[124] "For sacrifice," says William of Auvergne, "is a gift which is made sacred in the offering, and to offer sacrifice is essentially this, to make the actual gift sacred by the offering."[125] Cain sacrificed unjustly, which is why the blood of his brother cries out condemning him—an idea reminiscent of Saint Paul's admonition not to "eat and drink judgment on oneself."[126]

Once Cain murders his brother, God speaks to him; God reveals himself to be a God of dialogue: "Where is your brother Abel?" "What have you done?" The Qur'anic text does not include this as Allah never speaks in the narrative. Rather, Allah sends a

---

[121] Al-Ma'idah 5:7. This idea corresponds well to 5:9: "Allah has promised those who believe and do righteous deeds [that] for them there is forgiveness and great reward." The belief in the breast must become works by the hands.

[122] P. Kronholm, *Motifs from Genesis 1-11 in the Genuine Hymns of Ephrem the Syrian* (Lund Gleerup, 1978), p. 135-149.

[123] Heb 12:24

[124] Leviticus 17:11

[125] De Fide et Legibus, c. 24 (Opera Omnia, Paris, 1674), p. 72. Perhaps ironically, this discourse comes with an evaluation of Islam—favorable to some extent (he attributes the end of paganism to the Islamic sword) and some not favorable (as he suggests that Mohammad made gluttony and lust the telos of man). He, then, in contrast makes the above statement, which, with further irony, he did not realize could very well apply to Islam.

[126] 1 Cor. 11:29

subtle reminder to Cain of his grossly humble state. Allah himself taught Cain, through

the raven, how to bury his brother. Abel and the raven speak and act in the Qur'an when

God speaks in the Bible. The Muslim adherents then must consider: What subtle

messages in the world are in fact Allah's voice to me? This omission acts as a literary

tool to invite the hearer to bring the narrative framework out of its context in order that he

might evaluate of his own life.

In addition to this, the Qur'an name neither brother. These details, or lack

thereof, allows for the narrative to be less individualized and more symbolic; readers are

more easily able to put themselves within the story itself, readying themselves to receive

the law at the end of the tale. By this omission, the Qur'an perhaps better allows for the

narrative to come into the world, allowing for the listener to apply the framework of the

tale to his personal experience. Names in the Hebrew Bible often display the character of

the person they label—subtle literary enhancements to enliven the story and its message.

But the Bible does not only include the names as mere literary niceties. Rather the

interest in the particularities further concretizes the Christian assertion that truth is

wedded to the annals of history—that divine veracity has manifested itself in reality—and

that God is found in a traceable spiritual tradition.

A number of Church Fathers, including the Venerable Bede and Saint Ambrose,

understood Cain to typify the Jews at Christ's passion: the killing of Abel as the passion

of Christ and the earth that opened its mouth and received Abel's blood from Cain's hand

as the Church, which received, in the mystery of its renewal, the blood of Christ poured

out by the Jews.[127] Like a slave, Cain received a mark. Saint Ambrose says: "Thus is the

---

[127] Bede the Venerable. *Homilies on the Gospels*. Cistercian Studies 110–111. Translated by Lawrence
T. Martin and David Hurst. Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian. Homilies on the Gospels 1.14.

sinner a slave to fear, a slave to desire, a slave to greed, a slave to lust, a slave to sin, a

slave to anger. Though such a man appears to himself free, he is more a slave than if he

were under tyrants."[128] The call of repentance does not manifest itself here in the text, but

the grace that God demonstrates here—marking and not killing—gently beckons Cain to

become pure as his brother is. The Qur'an clearly portrays the futility of Cain's strife

when the crow surpassed him. His remorse reveals his humility. He lacked "wisdom,"

says Usmani, "and in sympathy for a brother than that raven." Whether or not Cain

demonstrates genuine repentance is dubitable in either story.

The Old Testament narrative continues as Cain's offspring only steeps further into

sin. Lamech, the first recorded man to engage in polygamy, kills a man and fears for his

life as a result. He sings a poem to his wives:

> Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; you wives of Lamech, listen to what I say: I have
> killed a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me. If Cain's revenge is
> sevenfold, then Lamech's is seventy-sevenfold (ἑβδομηκοντάκις ἑπτά, septuagies
> septies).

Lamech intensifies God's promise to Cain. Within the parameter that God hid the New

Testament in the Old, we find that Jesus inverts these same words in the Gospel

according to Matthew: "Then Peter came and said to [Jesus], 'Lord, how often will my

brother sin against me and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus responds to

Peter, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times"[129] (ἑβδομηκοντάκις ἑπτά,

septuagies septies).

The intertextual resonance between Matthew and Genesis is both clear

and illuminating. Just as a reputation for unlimited vengeance serves to deter and repel

---

[128] Ambrose. *Letters to Priests*, 54; FC 26:297.

[129] Matt. 18:21-22

people, so a reputation for unlimited forgiveness should serve to attract, and this is the reputation Jesus calls his followers to have.

The following decree acts as the crescendo for the Qur'anic narrative:

We decreed upon the Children of Israel that whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption [done] in the land—it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one—it is as if he had saved mankind entirely. And our messengers had certainly come to them with clear proofs. Then indeed many of them, [even] after that, throughout the land, were transgressors.

This law suggests a "need for a deterrent legal code to ensure justice."[130] But it also demands humanity's sacredness to be recognized. Indeed, it is a Qur'anic command to do so: "God has made the soul inviolable, except with due cause."[131] For human dignity to be acknowledged universally, it must be known individually. As Maudoodi aptly recognizes: "the survival of human life depends on everyone respecting other human beings and in contributing actively to the survival and protection of others."[132] Peace begins with each individual recognizing the comprehensive sanctity of each human. "Whosoever kills unrighteously," Maudoodi continues, "is thus not merely guilty of doing wrong to one single person, but proves by his act that his heart is devoid of respect for human life and of sympathy for the human species as such."[133] He who kills, or even attempts violence against another human being—brother Isaac or brother Ishmael—fails to understand the inherent dignity that either the will or the nature of God has determined for man to have. An act of unjust violence against a human being is an act of treason against the authority of Allah. An earlier verse in Surah 5 declares: "To Allah belongs

---

[130] Salahi (2001), 84.

[131] *Al-Isra'*, 17: 33

[132] Maudoodi, *Towards Understanding the Qur'ān*, 156.

[133] Ibid.

the dominion of the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them. He creates what he wills, and Allah is over all things competent."[134]

This is indeed a strong interpretation, but *Mishnah Sanhedrin* 4:5 may have another insight to lend. It reads:

> We find it said in the case of Cain who murdered his brother: the voice of your brother' bloods cries out. It is not said here blood [דָּם], in the singular, but bloods [דְּמֵי] in the plural, meaning, his own blood and the blood of his [would-be] descendants.[135] Humanity was created single in order to show that to whomever kills a single individual, it shall be reckoned that he has killed the whole race; but to whomever preserves the life of single individual, it is counted that he has preserved the whole race.[136]

These are not mere echoes but rather the exact same words as the Qur'anic command. Mohammad, faithful to the request, is retelling the story of Cain and Abel, while including the traditional exegesis. Though modern readers may miss this at first, the contemporary hearers of Mohammad would recognize that he comes from a tradition that he hopes to extend.

In sum, though Christians do not understand the nature of sin in the way a Muslim understands crime, the two groups agree that they are actions against the will and, or, nature of God, and thus are inherently incongruent with the way he created the universe. Cain, a murderer, opposes humanity while Allah revealed himself to be in favor of humankind. Though the ways in which Muslims and Christians approach murder is slightly different, the two can mutually affirm the dignity of life and the fullness of life through peace based upon the declaration of God's desire.

---

[134] Al-Ma'idah 5:17

[135] This is a common Jewish understanding decedents—that they already dwell in the parents. See Hebrews 7:1-10 for another example.

[136] "Sefaria.org : A Living Library of Jewish Texts Online," *Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5*, accessed February 28, 2016, http://www.sefaria.org/Mishnah_Sanhedrin.4.5?lang=en&layout=lines&sidebarLang=all.

Both ought to emulate as Abel as Saint Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, describes

him in *De Civitate Dei*: "Cain built a city, while Abel, as though he were merely a

pilgrim on earth, built none. For the true city of the saints is in heaven, though here on

earth it produces citizens in whom it wanders as on a pilgrimage through time looking for

the kingdom of eternity."[137]

---

[137] City of God, 15.1. FC 14:415.

CHAPTER FOUR

An End and A Beginning: Noah and the Divine Family

"When those who had seen Adam were no longer in the world, God sent Noah whom he saved, and drowned the whole earth by a miracle which sufficiently indicated the power which he had to save the world, and the will which he had to do so."
Pascal *Pensées* 10.644

The flood narratives serve as perhaps the most fear-inducing, as well as hope-inducing, stories in the Qur'an and the Bible. The author of Genesis places Noah's tale after a genealogy following the murder of Abel. Humanity's wickedness develops from Cain to the point at which "every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually."[138] The cohesive narrative continues and still the text provides no explicit teaching. The Qur'an gives much attention to Noah, rendering him a prominent role in two Surahs—one of which is named for him—though in many others mention him.[139] Neither Surah conveys the same biblical meaning, rather, Allah sends Noah as a prophet to warn the people, but the Qur'an does not indicate a continued moral worsening that has led to humanity's total spiritual repugnance. The Christian Scriptures do not record Noah warning his neighbors of a coming destruction, though we would be remiss to exclude the epithet that Saint Peter gives Noah: "a herald of righteousness."[140] Both Surahs are worthy to be treated in comparison with the biblical story, and thus we shall proceed.

---

[138] *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989),Gen.6:5.

[139] Surahs 5, 7, 10, 21, 23, 26, 29, 37, 54. The latter four accounts are lengthy themselves, but provide few new tidbits of information that surahs 11 and 71 do not already include.

[140] 2 Peter 2:5.

Al-Hud comes in a stream of four Surahs all explicating the continuity of the prophets' message. In fact, not only is the content similar and the truths perfectly resonate—as one might describe the Old Testament prophetic literature—but all of the prophets exhibit the identical pattern with the people to whom they are sent. Initial preaching occurs, people disbelieve and protest, the prophets continue to preach, and finally the prophets call forth Allah's destruction.

Though the Qur'an does not provide the context for this preaching, it is clear that the impiety of the people demanded a divine corrective from a prophetic voice. The very fact that the narrative lacks a context allows for the hearer's imagination to fill the gap with his or her own circumstance. Given that Muhammad explicitly aligns himself with the past prophets, it seems reasonable that he implicitly affiliates his listeners with those of Noah. Thus, the famous mohammadian statement is found fitting: I am all the prophets.

As mentioned, the biblical pericope provides a context for God's reaction to the world's wickedness: "He regretted that he had made the world."[141] The vulgate records the word *paenituit*—that God was penitential for his act. For the Catholic Tradition, the word *paenituit* captures a part of the adherent's imagination that implies that God must do his penance for his creative act. The Septuagint translates the Hebrew more directly, though the words chosen hold very different connotations in Greek than in Hebrew. God becomes *enethumēthē* and *dienoēthē*—two words suggesting that he became thoughtful, though the former can imply anger. And thus, for the Orthodox, we find a contemplative God who must consider how best to reform the world whereas the Catholic translation connotes a God who actively seeks corrective. So we face the first challenge between the

---

[141] Gen. 6:6

Qur'an and the Bible: the interfacing between human behavior and the divine character.

Allah does not regret for he does not change his word or decrees.[142] The Qur'an would be

spurious and deceitful to attribute to Allah such emotions. But not so in the Bible.

Though not every Christian tradition rejects God's basic ignorance of future events

posited by open theism, this passage does not usurp God's immutability.[143] In *De Civitate*

Dei, Saint Augustine attempts to explicate this paradox:

> God's "anger" implies no perturbation of the divine mind. It is simply the divine
> judgment passing sentence on sin. And when God "thinks and then has second
> thoughts," this merely means that changeable realities come into relation with his
> immutable reason.[144]

The query still remains why the biblical author would record such a vulnerable, emotivist

reaction of God. In other words, why would the Christian Scriptures attribute human

emotions to God? The answer comes with a perfectly liturgical response: The Holy Text

condescends to the level of the lowliest reader, that they might feel at home. "Only

thus," says the great Bishop of Hippo, "can Scripture frighten the proud and arouse the

slothful, provoke inquiries and provide food for the convinced."[145] As a liturgical book,

the Bible primarily aims to orient the hearer to faith before providing precise

philosophical truths.

The Qur'an finds no need for such a story because, as we read in the naming

narrative, both the angels and Allah saw the coming depravity of man: "Will you place on

---

[142] Surah 6:115.

[143] The Eastern Orthodox Church, for one, does not rule on this doctrine. Cf. Richard Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

[144] City of God 15:25.

[145] ibid.

earth one who will make mischief in it and shed blood?"[146] Allah, had no need to grieve, for, as he declares: "did I not tell you that I know the unseen?" Allah's knowledge surpasses any notion of, or allusion to, anthropomorphic regrets. It must be passages such as this in the Bible that causes modern scholar Jamaal al-Din M. Zarabozo to write:

> It is only the Muslims who possess the revelation from God in its original and unaltered form. The distorted revelations in the hands of the Jews and Christians contain passages that are repugnant, for good reason, to the modern mind.[147]

In this sense, the Qur'an acts as a textual ark that can prevent its readers from drowning in the deceptions and denigrations of the world.

Yet the Qur'anic ark does not sail alone, for the prophets throughout history navigated the proper delivery and reading of the Noble Book. Two theories attempt to explain the etymology of *Nabi* (نبي) Prophet. The first suggests that the term is derived from *Nubuwwat* (نبوة) "to be high." Thus, *Nabi* would mean a "High person." He is high in the presence of Allah, for a prophet enjoys his exalted state in the presence of Allah. The second theory submits that *Nabi* is derived from *Nubu-at*, meaning to prophesize— perhaps a more plausible interpretation.[148] Such constitutes a continuous line from Adam to Mohammad of unerring messengers who have delivered a seamless message of Allah's call to submission. A *Nabi* "expresses the communicative nature of prophethood," though the message must be "exemplified in his life."[149] A *Rasul*, by contrast, speaks to the emissary role of prophethood. Both terms are used of Mohammad,

---

[146] Al-Baqarah 30.

[147] Jamaal al-Din M. Zarabozo, *How to Approach and Understand the Quran* (Boulder, Colo: Al-Basheer Co. for Publications and Translations, 1999), 258.

[148] "Nubuwwah," *Al-Islam.org*, accessed April 1, 2016, http://www.al-islam.org/prophethood-sayyid-saeed-akhtar-rizvi/nubuwwah.

[149] John L. Esposito, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World*, vol. 4. "Nabi." New York, N.Y: Oxford University Press, 2009.

and both imply that the prophet delivered a written text.[150] Standing alongside

Mohammad, Solomon, Jesus, and Moses is Noah.

Allah first calls Noah to preach repentance to the wayward people. Allah sends

him to deliver the same message that so many other prophets after him, culminating in

Mohammad, would also convey. Thus, as Mohammad tells this story, the listener should

think that a new Noah has arrived whose admonitions one should harbor, given that they

were validated once before. This is a far cry from the Noah of the Bible who does not

utter one word to the people of his generation. Noah's preaching to the people and

prayers to Allah did not all go for not, as Allah declares: "And Noah had certainly called

Us, and [We are] the best of responders. And We saved him and his family from the

great affliction."[151] This message that the Qur'anic Noah preaches is the subject of Surah

71.

Noah is not met with a receptive audience, as he says to Allah: "All my pleas

have only increased their aversion."[152] He even provides a striking auricular image: "And

indeed, every time I invited them that You may forgive them, they put their fingers in

their ears, covered themselves with their garments, persisted, and were arrogant with

[great] arrogance."[153] And yet Noah himself is persistent—950 years persistent, as Surah

Al-Ankabut 14 records. This persistence serves two plain purposes: to reveal humanity's

hard-hearted depravity and yet also to expose Allah's mercy. Noah continues to exercise

---

[150] John L. Esposito, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World*, vol. 5. "Rasul." New York, N.Y: Oxford University Press, 2009.

[151] Surah 37:75.

[152] Nuh 6.

[153] Nuh 7.

his prophetic position and beckons the people by asking "Will you not take heed?"[154] The

unbeliever scorns kindness against the betterment of his or her life. By contrast, if he or

she so worships Allah, Allah will grant to him or her "abundant rain," multiply his or her

"wealth," increase the number of "sons," and enhance one's "gardens and waterways."[155]

This may pose some qualms for the Christian reader as he or she may consider the

benefits trivial. The reason becomes clear in the next phase of Noah's preaching.

Noah begins to remind the reprobates of the human world's creation, for knowing

where humanity is from informs where he ought to be tending. Humans ought to meet

generous provisions with thankfulness, and Allah provided humanity no greater provision

than his telos. Yet the most intriguing aspect of the warning, as a Christian might

contend, is the reality of death that was preordained for humanity to endure prior to any

sin-induced fall. We must remember that Islam does not have a doctrine of the Fall;

ontological worsening of humanity has no place within Islamic thought, and thus Islam

does not need a miraculous, reconciling Incarnation. "In the case of a religion like

Mohammedanism," says C.S. Lewis in "The Grand Miracle", "nothing essential would

be altered if you took away the miracles. You could have a great prophet preaching his

dogmas without bringing in any miracles; they are only in the nature of a digression, or

illuminated capitals."[156] The Christian notion of sin is replaced with the Islamic notion of

crime. Crimes cause no eternal gulf between man and Allah as do sins; the Shariʿī and

the Qur'anic commandments attempt to correct one's relationship and orientation to

Allah but do not act to reconcile people with him. Because Islam lacks a robust doctrine

---

[154] *Hud* 30.

[155] *Nuh* 11-12

[156] *God in the Dock*, "The Grand Miracle" p. 80.

of the Fall, it lacks a doctrine of separation and reconciliation that points toward greater

intimacy with Allah and that would understand humans as "'associators,' ie, those who

joined parties, with God." [157] Or, to say it as did Charles Williams in his Arthurian poetry:

"For if we deny the image we are losing, then clearly there is no loss to be accepted" for

"We affirm the image at the very moment of affirming its opposite." [158] If we deny the

reality of sin, then we simultaneously deny the chasm between humanity and God and the

prospect of and need for Christ, the Bridge, providing a path for human persons to

journey from depraved separation to glorious consummation with the Divine.

Noah, in the biblical account, acts as the mediator between the creation and the

Creator. Noah preserved the animals that Adam named.[159] Yet he is not meant merely to

preserve the ordered creation, but rather to unite it with the Divine as he ultimately

becomes the father of a new covenant. *Ahd*, covenant, in the Qur'an is a "swearing of

allegiance."[160] Unlike the biblical accounts, there is only one covenant within Islam: "And

when We took a covenant from the prophets and from thee, and from Noah and Abraham

and Moses and Jesus, son of Mary, and We took from them a solemn covenant."[161]

Indeed, the methodology each prophet exhibits in positing the covenant to the people is

seamless: "When Allah took the covenant of the prophets, [saying], 'Whatever I give you

of the Scripture and wisdom and then there comes to you a messenger confirming what is

---

[157] Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology*, 66.

[158] *Arthurian Torso*, p. 181.

[159] Bruce K. Waltke and Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach*, 1st ed (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2007), 363.

[160] John L. Esposito, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World*, vol. 1. "Ahd." New York, N.Y: Oxford University Press, 2009.

[161] Al-Ahzab 7.

with you, you [must] believe in him and support him.'"[162] Mohammad systematizes the past attempts of sending Allah's message, not only to align himself with them kerugmatically but also covenantally. This seamless history, such as this suggests to Muslims, assures them of their singular religious tradition and certain path to Allah.

The Christian understand covenants slightly differently. According to biblical scholar Scott Hahn: "Covenants in antiquity served to extend (or renew) sacred kinship bonds between parties through legal sanctions and liturgical rites. Intrinsic to covenants, then, are these three distinct but interrelated elements: familial relations (life), legal obligations (law), cultic celebrations (liturgy)."[163] What specific theme, then, does the Noahic covenant have? The Catechism of the Catholic Church says this:

> After the unity of the human race was shattered by sin God at once sought to save humanity part by part. The covenant with Noah after the flood gives expression to the principle of the divine economy toward the "nations", in other words, towards men grouped "in their lands, each with [its] own language, by their families, in their nations" (*Gen* 10:5; cf. 9:9-10, 16; 10:20-31). This state of division into many nations is at once cosmic, social and religious. It is intended to limit the pride of fallen humanity (Cf. *Acts* 17:26-27)… But, because of sin, both polytheism and the idolatry of the nation and of its rulers constantly threaten this provisional economy with the perversion of paganism (Cf. *Rom* 1:18-25). The covenant with Noah remains in force during the times of the Gentiles, until[164] the universal proclamation of the Gospel... Scripture thus expresses the heights of sanctity that can be reached by those who live according to the covenant of Noah, waiting for Christ to "gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad" (*Jn* 11:52).

---

[162] Ali 'Imran 81

[163] Scott Hahn, "Covenant, Kingdom and the Family of God: Exploring N. T. Wright's Biblical Theology of Covenant" (Scripture and Hermeneutics Seminar Meeting, San Francisco, November 18, 2011), http://www.scotthahn.com/download/attachment/5079. See also, Scott Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant: A Canonical Approach to the Fulfillment of God's Saving Promises*, The Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 1-33 for a longer discussion of this idea. Hahn claims that: "By the end of the 20century, a majority of biblical scholars—Protestant (F.M. Cross, G.P. Hugenberger), Catholic (D.J. McCarthy, P. Kalluveettil) and Jewish (M. Weinfeld, A.F. Segal)."

[164] "Until" does not mean "at which point it ends." See section 71 of the CCC.

This examination finds that this covenant concentrates on a human unity that awaits the incarnation of Christ. Similar to the Islamic understanding, this Noahic covenant is "everlasting" and thus will remain to the end of time.[165] Nonetheless, future covenants build upon this one, including the Abrahamic, the Mosaic, and the New Covenant, all of which are distinct from one another. This dynamic understanding of covenants corresponds to the modern Christian understanding of the development of Christian doctrine, whereas Islam holds to a static, codified law that the current Umma ought to implement to modern cultures with retroactive appropriations.

If in fact a covenant does constitute a kinship bond, it seems fitting that God would adopt the entire family into the pledge. Both the Qur'an and the Bible record this for different reasons. After 950 years of preaching, Allah tells Noah, "No more of your people will believe in you than those who already believe."[166] Ironically, that means only the original eight family members! He continues:

> "Build the Ark under Our eyes and in accordance with Our revelation. Do not plead with Me concerning the evil-doers. They shall certainly be drowned." So he began to build the Ark, and whenever leaders of his people passed by, they scoffed at him. He said, "If you are scoffing at us, we shall scoff at you, just as you scoff at us: you will soon come to know who will receive a humiliating punishment, and find unleashed against him an everlasting punishment.[167]

Noah restrains from grieving, as Allah commanded him. Allah commands Noah to place into the ark "a pair from every species,[168] and your own family,"[169] which not only stands

---

[165] Gen 9:16

[166] *Al-Hud* 41

[167] Ibid. 36-39.

[168] Saint Ambrose attempts to explain why the animals must be destroyed in the flood when it is humanity's wickedness that was so ruinous, not any fault of the animals. He writes: "Man is a mind

as a command but also as a divine promise. Yet the Qur'an records that "Noah's son was among those who were drowned."[170] Once Noah cries out for an explanation, Allah answers: "Noah, he was not one of your family. For, indeed, he was unrighteous in his conduct."[171] Some interpreters understand Noah's son to be illegitimate.[172] Others read the text and find that the son neither believed nor followed Allah's precepts. Thus, Allah, in terms reminiscent to Jesus Christ's, has brought "father against son and son against father."[173] And thus the story culminates with Allah's divine words: "Do not question Me about something of which you have no knowledge; I admonish you lest you become like an ignorant man."[174] The Qur'an's justification for placing the family on the ark is quite clear: to evidence the omniscience of Allah.

Allah's knowledge of the family exceeds that of the husband and the father, and thus the people must trust Allah above themselves. Indeed, the prophet must trust the words that he receives for he might not completely understand the words he has been given. This story also brilliantly situates the Prophet Mohammad with the people who received his prophetic message. As Mohammad utilizes this story to speak to his own

---

endowed with reason. Man is defined as a living, mortal and rational being. When he, who is the principal element, disappears, every aspect of sensible life also disappears." *On Noah* 4.10, PL 14:386.

[169] Ibid. 40.

[170] Ibid. 43. Surah 66:10 also records Noah's wife as being among the dissenters, but whether this is before or after the flood is not said. "Allah presents an example of those who disbelieved: the wife of Noah and the wife of Lot. They were under two of Our righteous servants but betrayed them, so those prophets did not avail them from Allah at all, and it was said, 'Enter the Fire with those who enter.'" This verse may serve as evidence that Noah's son was indeed illegitimate.

[171] Ibid. 46.

[172] Ijaz Chaudry, *Quran Translation* (Lulu.com, 2013), 132.

[173] Lk 12:53.

[174] Al-Hud, 47.

situation, he simultaneously warns the Meccans as well as himself: both must trust

Allah's words lest they become like an "ignorant man." Hearing the vulnerability of

Mohammad sobers the Muslim's mind to face the laws of Allah with greater fidelity.

Simultaneously, a poignant point is made about the Umma, the Muslim community

bound beyond biological ties. This admission comes in the Bible as well by the words of

the prophet Ezekiel: "Even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live, says the Lord

GOD, they would save neither son nor daughter; they would save only their own lives by

their righteousness."[175] Each individual must determine for oneself to obey God by

joining the divine community.

      The biblical author conceals the explicit reason for Noah's family's deliverance.

The author intends less that we catalogue a historical record and more that we ingest a

theology of family and its relation to the godhead. The Divine mysteriously instituted the

family as the foundation of political and ecclesial society. Noah mediates the proper

relationship between his family and his God: "Before the [Mosaic] law [the father and

husband] acted as the family priest (Gen. 12:7–8; Job 1:2–5)."[176] Noah mediates a

domestic relationship. Families illustrate the Blessed Trinity in its familial roles as the

Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Thus, families fittingly worship a communal God in

community.

---

[175] Eze 14:20.

[176] Brent R. Kelly and E. Ray Clendenen, "Family," ed. Chad Brand et al., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 556. The conciliar document *Gaudium et Spes*, explicating the role of the parents, says that the family is a privileged community called to achieve a "sharing of thought and common deliberation by the spouses as well as their eager cooperation as parents in the children's upbringing" Vatican Council II, "Gaudium et Spes [Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World]". http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html. Such an idea corresponds and compliments the paternal role of mediator: one that ought to properly propagate his intimacy with the divine into the next begotten generation.

Our two stories diverge when the families board the ark. Both the Qur'an and the Bible record waters flowing from below and from above. Streams from heaven and from earth storm and annihilate the world's population. In the Hadith, Imam Bukhari records Ibn Miqsam: "I testify the truth of your father's statement (with regard to this tradition) that the Prophet said: One who is drowned is a martyr."[177] Yet one's internal disposition allows for drowning to be a sacred act. Nonetheless, these drowned unbelievers ironically witness to Allah's judgment.

The Qur'an omits any discussion of the journey while the Bible spends thirty-two verses on the nautical affair; the biblical author invests in the end of the deluge as well as the journey itself. Judgment is the overarching and unparalleled emphasis in the Qur'anic tale. Allah justifiably judges between believers and unbelievers. The biblical author emphasizes this as well. In the flood, God annihilates the marked and fratricidal legacy of Cain, since Noah descended from Cain's brother Seth. Ibn Kathir also records Noah as from the line of Seth, but through Lemach, whom we saw in the previous chapter: "He is Noah b. Lamech, b. Methuselah, b. Idris, b. Jared, b. Mehalaleh, b. Kenan, b. Enosh, b. Seth, b. Adam."[178]

Furthermore, the Qur'an omits the tale of sailing, and excludes any mention of the birds that Noah sends out of the ark, as both the Bible and the Epic of Gilgamesh record.[179] Many Church Fathers saw this seemingly trivial detail as the first signs of a divine promise. Saints Augustine, Maximus of Turin, and the Venerable Bede claimed

---

[177] Sahih Muslim 1915 a, Book 33, Hadith 236.

[178] Brannon Wheeler, *Prophets in the Quran: An Introduction to the Quran and Muslim Exegesis* (A&C Black, 2002), 52.

[179] Tablet XI.

that the biblical author hid Christological and pneumatological allusions within the image of the dove. [180] The Christian tradition cannot interpret this narrative without baptismal allusions. At the Council of Florence, the Catholic and Orthodox Church[181] declared that baptism was the *vitae spiritualis ianua*.[182] Baptism constitutes a rebirth for the Christian, a rebirth that requires death. Saint Maximus of Turin says: "this was clearly a baptism in which the wickedness of sinners was removed and Noah's righteousness preserved."[183] Saint Ambrose similarly writes, "For that dove descended afterwards, when Christ was being baptized and dwelt with him, as John brought witness in the Gospel saying, 'I saw the Spirit descending from heaven as a dove, and it remained upon him.'"[184] The Christian adherent naturally intuits these allusions and their conveyance of both life and death.

The Qur'an and the Bible both comingle mercy and justice, administer judgment and unite righteous in a familial bond. As Imam Bukhari reminds us, the Umma is the true Islamic family, and even a son cannot be assumed in by another's faith—all must be active members of the cosmic family: "A group of people from my Umma will continue to obey Allah's Command, and those who desert or oppose them shall not be able to do them any harm. They will be dominating the people until Allah's Command is executed

---

[180] Augustine, "On Christian Doctrine," 2.16.24, FC 2:83. Bede the Venerable, "Homily 1" in *Homilies on the Gospels.* Translated by Lawrence T. Martin and David Hurst. Cistercian Studies. Kalamazoo, Mich: Cistercian Publications, 1991.

[181] Despite common perception, the schism did not officially occur until after this council.

[182] Quoted from 204 cannon of the Council of Florence, found in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1213.

[183] Maximus of Turin, "Sermon 64," in Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation. Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1946, 50:158.

[184] Ambrose, "Letter 40" FC: 26:393.

(i.e. Resurrection is established)."[185] The biblical Scriptures provide a look into a re-creation, and yet still awaiting further renewal in the perfectly righteous Son of God. Just as a Muslim finds preservation from the deluge of incontinence in the Umma, the Christian finds purity in the community of the Body of Christ, that is, the Church. In both stories God provides an ark in which to reside despite the threat of chaotic waters.

---

[185] Sahih Muslim 1037 c, Book 33, Hadith 250.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

Stories often transfix children, with each detail beckoning them further into the tale. Children do not bore of the mystifying experience, but instead wish to hear the narrative again and again. And if one detail changes from one reading to another—say there was an old man with a magic camel and then the parent retells the story so that there was an old woman instead—the child would become indignantly unhappy. The details give form to the story in a way that is important, and yet, not articulable for a child.

In many ways devout religious worshipers similarly approach their sacred text, not least because they have heard these stories since childhood. The entire stories' milieu depends on the details. These details not only act as a window that one can peer through to see truth, but also as a door through which one can enter into a world to consider if it feels true, if it converges with everything for which their nature yearns. Does Adam name the animals? Does it matter? For the Christian and the Muslim it matters quite a bit. But why? Often they do not know.

This thesis sought to answer this question by placing three shared stories in conversation with one another, juxtaposing the differences and examining what theological backbones explain these variances. I argue that particular theological truths inform each detail; those listening to these stories, however, do not need to know each doctrine explicitly for the tales to form the adherents and to teach them the character of their religion and the divine. For example, through the naming narrative we examined

the two differing teloi of humankind according to the two traditions: participation with the divine versus absolute submission to the divine will. Though neither story used either phrase, the Christian learns that their deity seeks an amicable relationship and intimate knowledge of creatures while the Muslim recognizes the supreme wisdom of Allah who draws him or her into wise obedience.

From this story of beginnings, we find that one's relationship to the divine determines one's relationship with others. This naturally led us to inspect the fraternal narrative of Cain and Abel. In this story, perhaps more than any other scriptural tale, we find an exploration of the relationship between solidarity with the divine and solidarity with community. Cain cuts down the favored brother only to become favored by God through messages of mercy—namely, the raven or the mark. Whereas the Christian's narrative ends in suspense, waiting for the new Abel to arrive, the Muslim's story concludes with a grave warning for communal care, as this is the last Surah that Mohammad addresses to the community. The Christian knows that he must render his leutratic sacrifice to God while the Muslim realizes the vital importance of the Umma. And the sacerdotal roles of the brothers correspond to that of the Prophet Noah who explores the waters of salvation while exercising an exemplary faith to save the Umma.

The authors of both the Qur'an and the Bible flood the Noah stories with details. We explored the proper Christian and Islamic understandings of prophets, covenants, families, and the like. But it is the progressive suspense of the narrative that heightens the listener's fear and thus prepares him for hope. The Muslim soberly realizes that he must board the ark which is the Qur'an and its many commands to find a safeguard from

the storm of crimes against Allah. The Christian, in a similar mode, sees the person of Christ and the sacramental life in the Church as the ark into which he or she must climb.

The Christian and the Muslim grow up with these stories and become attached, rightfully, to the details of their respective narratives. Though they may not realize the importance of these differences, I have argued that the alterations do matter doctrinally and take their effect liturgically. It is through this liturgical basis that conversations and mutual understanding may flow. If only Muslims and Christians might exercise the goodwill needed to step underneath the beam of the other's religion, to allow for their paradigm to teach them a new way of thinking that they might know and appreciate the other for whom they most precisely are.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

The Question of a Shared Deity

The number of Christians who deny that they worship the same God as do Muslims appears to be rising. As this thesis seeks a new forum to foster peace and interreligious dialogue, it seems that this denial may detrimentally influence our ability to reinforce the conversations we hope to promote because it may stunt good will. This appendix argues that Christians and Muslims worship the same nature that they do, though not the same person who animates the nature.

The common reasons as to why we do not have a shared deity situate around Trinity v. Unity, God begets v. God cannot beget, God can become man v. God cannot become man, etc. These differences are substantial, but we might evaluate the evidence more carefully. We will first examine the Bible itself and then turn to Church documents. Next, we will briefly examine a metaphysical aspect of the Trinity based upon the thought of Saint Thomas before turning to C.S. Lewis and our conclusion.

In the gospels we are provided a model by Christ for interreligious dialogue, that being Christ's discourse with the Samaritan woman in John's gospel.[186] "The woman said to him, 'Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.'" Immediately she bars the conversation from becoming personal by referencing a discrepancy of right

---

[186] Syrophoenician woman may be another interreligious dialogue. But since the meaning of the conversation is masked behind metaphors, we will remain with this more straightforward, and perhaps more helpful, narrative.

worship—a discrepancy that depends on a doctrinal divergence. Recognizing this barrier, Jesus replies, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem." He does not negate the fact that she worships the same God that he does. Rather he states: "You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews." This statement regarding ignorant worship has wonderful resonance with Saint Paul's statement atop the Areopagus, speaking of "The Unknown God" that the Greeks worshiped: "What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you."[187]

These examples from Jesus Christ and Saint Paul are not in conversation about purely polytheistic religions. The Samaritans were severed from the Jews at the exile—they shared a past, though not the prophets. Some Greek sects, despite their many gods, still held in highest esteem the Demiurge, the god, according to Plato, who fashioned the world using knowledge of the Forms, yet who was largely unknown. Thus both groups could declare with the psalmist, about God: "He made the heavens and earth."[188]

And still relations with Allah are closer than with the Demiurge. The Muslim calls him "The most beneficent, the most merciful," "the creator of all," "the God of Abraham," "the loving," "the bestower of peace," "the forgiver," "the truth." He is the God who calls people to repent, to pray, to serve the poor, and to exercise spiritual giving as acts of service to himself. The Catholic Church, recognizing some of these shared concepts of God, gives high praise to Muslims in the conciliar document *Nostra Aetate*:

> The Church regards with esteem also the Moslems. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all-powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to men; they take pains to submit wholeheartedly to

---

[187] Acts 17:23.

[188] Ps. 146:6

73

even His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God. Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as a prophet.[189]

This statement resonates with the historically Christian understanding of Islam as a heresy—therein linking it closer to the Christian tradition in understanding Muhammad as a false prophet about a true God. Saint Thomas may suggest why he believes this to be the case in *Tertia Pars* of his *Summa Theologica*. He asks the question: Can Nature, with Personality Abstracted in our minds, Assume? He answers the question: Yes, because naming the personalities of God are additional doctrines that follow the qualities of God such as his omnipotence, etc, which allow him to assume. In his *respondeo*, Aquinas says:

> The intellect stands towards God, not indeed as knowing God as He is, but in its own way, i.e. understanding manifoldly and separately what in God is one: and in this way our intellect can understand the Divine goodness and wisdom, and the like, which are called essential attributes, without understanding Paternity or Filiation, which are called Personalities. And hence if we abstract Personality by our intellect, we may still understand the Nature assuming. It is possible to separate a doctrine of God from Trinitarian theology, but that in doing so, we are not thinking of God as he is.[190]

Saint Thomas here suggests that it is possible to separate a doctrine of God from Trinitarian theology—but if we were to do so, we would not be thinking of God as he is.

---

[189] Full statement on Muslims: Ecclesia cum aestimatione quoque Muslimos respicit qui *unicum Deum* adorant, viventem et subsistentem, misericordem et omnipotentem, Creatorem caeli et terrae, homines allocutum, cuius occultis etiam decretis toto animo se submittere student, sicut Deo se submisit Abraham ad quem fides islamica libenter sese refert. Iesum, quem quidem ut Deum non agnoscunt, ut prophetam tamen venerantur, matremque eius virginalem honorant Mariam et aliquando eam devote etiam invocant. Diem insuper iudicii expectant cum Deus omnes homines resuscitatos remunerabit. Exinde vitam moralem aestimant et Deum maxime in oratione, eleemosynis et ieiunio colunt. NA 3.1 the clause that includes "unicum Deum" could be translated they adore a one God. Though it has not been the tradition following the council to understand the phrase this way.

[190] Alio modo se habet intellectus ad divina, non quidem quasi cognoscens Deum ut est, sed per modum suum, scilicet multipliciter et divisim id quod in Deo est unum. Et per hunc modum potest intellectus noster intelligere bonitatem et sapientiam divinam, et alia huiusmodi, quae dicuntur essentialia attributa, non intellecta paternitate vel filiatione, quae dicuntur personalitates. Et secundum hoc, abstracta personalitate per intellectum, possumus adhuc intelligere naturam assumentem. *ST* IIIa q. 3 a. 3 co.

This seems to lead to the conclusion that the abstract doctrine of God, which is that on the basis of which we have a common concept of God with other religions, is not according to the way God is. That would further imply that other religions that do not think God as he precisely is in person, still understand, and know, him, fundamentally, meaning, by his nature.

It can be argued in turn that Saint Thomas has things wrong: because omnipotence is the power to do anything and because an action is of persons and not of natures, it would seem that the divine nature cannot be omnipotent except insofar as it is personated. Therefore, it is to say, from the Christian framework, that it is only as Trinitarian that God is omnipotent. Saint Thomas' response would amount to what he says in *ad* 2: "Even if we abstract the three persons from the Godhead, we will still, in thinking of its powers, apply a provisional personhood to the essence itself." For the specific question that Aquinas addresses (whether God could assume while abstracted) the answer he gives would probably be incorrect because he has made a perfectly plain contradiction. However, for our purposes with the argument, the case firmly stands. The Christian could consider Muslims to have abstracted the Trinitarian persons of God without misunderstanding the nature that those persons animate.[191]

The core of God is his person; his nature would have no operations without his person activating it. But his person is also the most hidden aspect about Him. What person sits behind the omnipotence and other divine characteristics that we see clearly expressed in the world? Moses, as the first to ask this question, received a veiled response: I am Who I AM. It is not until the New Testament that a Christian is able to correctly identify the Person*s* of God. Does this imply that Jews were not worshipping

[191] Thanks must be given to Dr. Junius Johnson for identifying the discussed contradiction.

God for who he was? It seems perfectly bizarre to ask this—and thus the same principle would extend to Muslims.

C.S. Lewis also had statements that echoed this same idea: "I think that every prayer which is sincerely made even to a false god or to a very imperfectly conceived true God," he wrote to a Mrs. Johnson on 8 November 1952, "is accepted by the true God... For He is (dimly) present in the good side of the inferior teachers they follow."[192]

This statement is not a mere conjecture, but grounded with particular biblical justification. As Hagar fled the terrors of Sarai, the angel of the LORD said to her, "Behold, you are pregnant and shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because the LORD has listened to your affliction."[193] In fact the very name Ishmael, יִשְׁמָעֵאל, means, "God hears"—though because יִשְׁמָע is in the imperfect, it could be rendered in the future—and thus could act as a promise.

Christians may find this compilation of the Holy Bible, the Church tradition, and modern scholars convincing as they all argue with one voice that Muslims correctly recognize the nature of God, yet ignorantly mistake the Persons animating said nature. Might it be that the Christian could think himself to worship the same God, but with more precision than the Muslim? The Muslim would, in Christian eyes, believe in the Father alone but not the Father as revealed by the Son. Immanuel unveils man's eyes to see with greater clarity God Himself. If he is not known, are human beings left without any knowledge of the true God?

---

[192] Letter of 8 Nov 1952, *The Collected Letters of C.S. Lewis*, 3:245.

[193] Gen.16:11.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Balthasar, Hans Urs von, Joseph Fessio, and John Kenneth Riches. *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*. 2nd ed. San Francisco : New York: Ignatius Press ; Crossroad Publications, 2009.

Bergmann, Gerhard. *Die Herausforderung des Islam,* Neuhausen: Goch, 1980.

Charles Joseph Hefele. *A History of the Councils of the Church: From the Original Documents*. Translated by William R. Clark. Vol. 2. 5 vols. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1876.

Chaudry, Ijaz. *Quran Translation*. Lulu.com, 2013.

Egger, Vernon. *A History of the Muslim World to 1405: The Making of a Civilization*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2004.

Esposito, John L., ed. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World*. New York, N.Y: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Foley, Michael P. "Male Subjection and the Case for an All-Male Liturgical Ministry." *Antiphon* 15, no. 3 (2011): 262–98.

Hahn, Scott. *Kinship by Covenant: A Canonical Approach to the Fulfillment of God's Saving Promises*. The Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.

Hitti, Philip K. *History of the Arabs: From the Earliest Times to the Present*. 10th ed. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.

Ibn Kathir. *Tafsir*. Edited by Shaykh Safiu-Rahman Al-Mubarakpuri. Vol. 1. Dar-us-Salam Publications, 2000.

Ibn Taymīyah, Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm. *A Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity: Ibn Taymiyya's Al-Jawab Al-Sahih*. Edited by Thomas F. Michel. Studies in Islamic Philosophy and Science. Delmar, N.Y: Caravan Books, 1984.

Saint Ignatius, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms: A Complete English Translation of the Official Latin Texts*. 1st ed. Series I--Jesuit Primary Sources, in English Translations, no. 15. Saint Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996.

Kermani, Navid. *God Is Beautiful: The Aesthetic Experience of the Quran*. Malden, MA: Polity, 2015.

Kidd, Thomas S. *American Christians and Islam: Evangelical Culture and Muslims from the Colonial Period to the Age of Terrorism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009.

Lapidus, Ira M. "Islamic Revival and Modernity: The Contemporary Movements and the Historical Paradigms." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 40, no. 4 (1997): 444–60.

Lewis, C. S. *An Experiment in Criticism*. Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Lewis, C. S. *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*. Edited by Walter Hooper. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1972.

MacIntyre, Alasdair C. *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. 3rd ed. Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007.

Maritain, Jacques. *Man and the State*. Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 1998.

Maudoodi, Syed Abul 'Ala. *Towards Understanding the Qur'ān: Abridged Version of Tafhīm Al-Qur'ān*. Translated by Ẓafar Isḥāq Anṣārī. Markfield, Leicester, U.K: Islamic Foundation, 2006.

De La Taille, Maurice S. J. *The Mystery of Faith Regarding the Most August Sacrament and Sacrifice of the Blood of Christ*. Sheed & Ward, 1950.

McAuliffe, Jane Dammen, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'ān*. Cambridge Companions to Religion. Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Mohammed, Ovey N. *Muslim-Christian Relations: Past, Present, Future*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008.

Norman Calder. "Tafsīr from Tabarī to Ibn Kathīr: Problems in the Description of a Genre, Illustrated with Reference to the Story of Abraham." In *Approaches to the Qur'ān*, edited by G.R. Hawting and Abdul-Kader A. Shareefs, 101–39. London, 1993.

"Nubuwwah." *Al-Islam.org*. Accessed April 1, 2016. http://www.al-islam.org/prophethood-sayyid-saeed-akhtar-rizvi/nubuwwah.

Ormsby, Eric L. *Theodicy in Islamic Thought: The Dispute over Al-Ghazālī's "Best of All Possible Worlds."* Princeton Legacy Library. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984.

Pseudo-Dionysius. *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*. Translated by Paul Rorem. The Classics of Western Spirituality. New York: Paulist Press, 1987.

Quṭb, Sayyid. *In the Shade of the Qurʾān*. Edited by Adil Salahi. Vol. 9. Markfield: Islamic Foundation, 2000.

Rad, Gerhard von. *Genesis: A Commentary*. Translated by John H Marks. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972.

Rollins, Peter. *The Orthodox Heretic and Other Impossible Tales*. Brewster, Mass: Paraclete Press, 2009.

Schleiermacher, Friedrich. *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*. Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy. Cambridge [England] ; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Scott Hahn. "Covenant, Kingdom and the Family of God: Exploring N. T. Wright's Biblical Theology of Covenant." presented at the Scripture and Hermeneutics Seminar Meeting, San Francisco, November 18, 2011. http://www.scotthahn.com/download/attachment/5079.

"Sefaria: A Living Library of Jewish Texts Online." Accessed April 27, 2016. http://www.sefaria.org.

"Sefaria.org : A Living Library of Jewish Texts Online." Accessed February 28, 2016. http://www.sefaria.org.

Sweetman, James Windrow. *Islam and Christian Theology: A Study of the Interpretation of Theological Ideas in the Two Religions*. Vol. 1. 1. London: Lutterworth Press, 1945.

Van Gorder, A. Christian. *No God but God: A Path to Muslim-Christian Dialogue on God's Nature*. Faith Meets Faith. Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2003.

Waltke, Bruce K., and Cathi J. Fredricks. *Genesis: A Commentary*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2001.

Waltke, Bruce K., and Charles Yu. *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach*. 1st ed. Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2007.

Wheeler, Brannon. *Prophets in the Quran: An Introduction to the Quran and Muslim Exegesis*. A&C Black, 2002.

Woodberry, John Dudley, Osman Zümrüt, and Mustafa Köylü, eds. *Muslim and Christian Reflections on Peace: Divine and Human Dimensions*. Lanham: Univ. Press of America, 2005.

Zarabozo, Jamaal al-Din M. *How to Approach and Understand the Quran*. Boulder, Colo: Al-Basheer Co. for Publications and Translations, 1999.