

# Unveiling Divinity: A Comparative Quest Into The Perception Of God In Islam And Semitic Religions

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## Abstract:

*The quest to understand the perception of God across different religions has been a central theme in human civilization. This comparative study delves into the essence of divinity as perceived in Islam and Semitic religions, exploring the foundational beliefs and philosophical underpinnings that shape the understanding of the Supreme Divine Authority. Drawing from insights gleaned from renowned historian Arnold Toynbee's monumental work on the history of religion, this study underscores the significance of religion in unraveling the mysteries of existence. Despite attempts by non-religious ideologies like Marxism and Freudianism to undermine organized religion, the enduring presence of faith systems underscores the intrinsic role of religion in human existence. Through an examination of key scriptures, including the Glorious Qur'an, this study elucidates the commonalities and divergences in the perception of God, emphasizing the universal call to worship a singular, omnipotent deity. Moreover, it highlights the innate human inclination towards belief in the Creator, positing that acceptance of divinity requires no precondition, while disbelief necessitates conditioned skepticism. Ultimately, this study offers profound insights into the universal quest for understanding the divine, transcending cultural and religious boundaries to illuminate the timeless truths underlying human spirituality.*

**Keywords:** Concept of God, Semitic Religions, Islam, Comparative Theology, Religious Philosophy.

## SECTION I: Introduction

The quest to understand the divine is as ancient as humanity itself. This pursuit, deeply embedded within the human psyche, has led to a rich diversity of religious expressions, particularly within the realm of Semitic traditions. The study of how God is perceived is not only a central tenet of religious scholarship but also a crucial component of cultural anthropology and comparative theology. It offers invaluable insights into how communities shape their moral codes, social structures, and worldviews.

The Semitic religions, a term traditionally encompassing Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, have contributed significantly to the global religious landscape with their distinctive monotheistic portrayal of God. Each of these faiths articulates a unique relationship between the divine and the mortal, while simultaneously sharing a common lineage.

## Semitic Religions and Their Beliefs

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The term “Semitic religions” encompasses a group of ancient and modern faiths that share linguistic and cultural connections. These religions primarily emerged in the ancient Near East and Northeast Africa. Let us delve into the essence of Semitic religions, their beliefs, and their historical significance.<sup>1</sup>

### **Definition of Semitic Religions**

**Ancient Semitic Religion:** Refers to the polytheistic pre-Abrahamic religions practiced by the Semitic peoples. These include the ancient Hebrew religion of the Israelites, Judeans, and Samaritans, as well as the religions of the Amorites, Phoenicians, Moabites, Edomites, and Suteans.<sup>2</sup>

**Modern Semitic Religions:** Primarily refers to the Abrahamic religions, which include Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. These faiths trace their origins back to the Semitic tradition.<sup>3</sup>

### **The Essence of Monotheism in Islam and Semitic Traditions**

In the exploration of divine perception within Islam and broader Semitic traditions, monotheism stands as a pivotal concept. Such religions unequivocally affirm the existence of one supreme deity, a profound departure from the ancient world's polytheistic norms. The deity in these faiths is not merely a figure of worship but is seen as the omnipotent force that brought forth the universe and continues to govern it. This singular divine entity wields unchallenged authority over all creation and human affairs.

Divine revelation is a key tenet in these religions, with God choosing to engage in direct communication with humanity. Prophets and sacred emissaries are bestowed with God's wisdom, encapsulated within the holy scriptures, to guide and shape moral conduct, religious observance, and the very foundation of community life.

The covenant in Judaism, a profound agreement between God and the people of Israel, encapsulates mutual obligations and divine promises. It outlines a life of devotion and adherence to divine laws, offering blessings for obedience and prescribing consequences for transgression. This covenantal relationship is emblematic of the intimate engagement between the divine and the followers in Semitic faiths.<sup>4</sup>

Ethical imperatives are at the forefront of these traditions. Justice, compassion, and the responsibilities of society are not merely encouraged but mandated, reflecting the divine will in every aspect of human interaction.

The concept of an afterlife and the ensuing final judgment is a shared eschatological belief, with Islam and other Semitic religions viewing earthly existence as a precursor to an eternal state. Here, deeds are meticulously weighed, determining one's destiny in the life to come. This belief instills a profound sense of accountability, suggesting that the moral decisions of this life bear infinite consequences, thus enshrining the centrality of ethics in the pursuit of divine favor.

### **Non-Semitic Religions: A Linguistic and Cultural Exploration**

The term “non-Semitic” refers to a category of religions that do not fall within the Semitic linguistic and cultural framework. Let us delve into the essence of non-Semitic religions, their beliefs, and their historical significance.<sup>5</sup>

### **Definition of Non-Semitic Religions**

**Linguistic Context:** Non-Semitic religions are those associated with languages other than the Semitic group. Semitic languages include Hebrew, Arabic, Aramaic, Phoenician, and Akkadian.<sup>6</sup>

**Cultural Context:** These religions span diverse regions and traditions, each offering unique perspectives on spirituality, cosmology, and human existence.<sup>7</sup>

The classification of "non-Semitic" religions serves as an umbrella for various faith systems that emerge outside the linguistic and cultural parameters traditionally associated with the Semitic group, which includes languages such as Hebrew, Arabic, Aramaic, Phoenician, and Akkadian. The non-Semitic religious traditions offer a plethora of spiritual perspectives, cosmological views, and philosophical approaches to the essence of human existence, characterized by rich diversity across different geographies and cultures.

The belief structures in non-Semitic religions are often complex and multifaceted. Polytheism is a common thread, with pantheons composed of multiple deities embodying various facets of life and nature, such as fertility, war, and love. Moreover, several non-Semitic faiths incorporate beliefs in cosmic cycles and the concept of rebirth, including the doctrines of reincarnation and karma that govern ethical behavior and spiritual progression. In addition, these religions typically proffer comprehensive ethical codes that promote moral rectitude, compassion toward others, and a commitment to social welfare. To guide their adherents, these religions are anchored in their own sacred texts, replete with myths, epics, and narratives that provide spiritual and ethical direction.<sup>8</sup>

Illustrative examples of non-Semitic religions elucidate the scope and depth of these belief systems. Hinduism, with its intricate polytheistic framework, emphasizes the importance of dharma (duty and righteousness) and the law of karma, which governs the cycle of samsara (rebirth). Buddhism delineates the path to enlightenment through the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path, ultimately seeking the cessation of suffering in nirvana. Confucianism, more a philosophy than a religion in the traditional sense, is rooted in an ethical code that underscores social harmony, respect for familial bonds, and veneration of ancestors. The ancient Greeks and Norse people, though their belief systems are often classified as mythologies in modern times, developed complex religious structures around a pantheon of gods, such as the Olympians in Greek tradition, and concepts like fate and destiny, with epic tales that speak to the human condition. Norse mythology, with its vivid cosmology of realms such as Asgard and Midgard, is rich with deities like Thor and Odin, and culminates in the apocalyptic narrative of Ragnarök.<sup>9</sup>

In conclusion, non-Semitic religions offer a rich tapestry of beliefs and practices that contribute significantly to the global cultural and spiritual landscape. Their historical significance is undeniable, as they provide insight into the multifarious ways in which human civilizations have sought to understand and articulate their place in the cosmos.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Although these Semitic religions arise from a shared geographical and cultural cradle, their perceptions of God demonstrate both convergence and divergence. In Islam, the divine is perceived as entirely transcendent, best encapsulated in the Quranic verse, "There is nothing like unto Him, and He is the Hearing, the Seeing"<sup>10</sup>. Christianity, with its Trinitarian doctrine, emphasizes a God who is both transcendent and immanent, culminating in the figure of Jesus Christ, God incarnate. Judaism focuses on a singular, indivisible God who is intimately involved in the affairs of the world, as expressed in the Shema, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one"<sup>11</sup>.

The disparity in these conceptualizations raises questions about the nature of divine revelation, the relationship between God and humanity, and the resultant religious practices that stem from these beliefs.

### **Significance of the Research**

This research focuses on exploring perceptions of God within the context of Islam and Semitic religions, namely Judaism and Christianity. It examines theological doctrines, sacred texts, historical narratives, and cultural practices to understand how the concept of God is conceptualized, interpreted, and transmitted within each tradition. By comparing and contrasting these perceptions, the study aims to elucidate the commonalities, divergences, and implications for interfaith dialogue and religious pluralism. The findings of this research are expected to contribute to academic scholarship, religious studies, and efforts towards promoting religious tolerance and coexistence in diverse societies.

### **Objectives of the Study**

This research aims to dissect the intricate tapestry of divine perception in these faiths, with a specific focus on:

1. **Theological Underpinnings:** Unraveling the foundational elements that construct the concept of God within each religion.
2. **Scriptural Analysis:** Examining key scriptural passages, such as Quranic verses and biblical texts, to understand their portrayal of the divine.
3. **Theological Evolution:** Tracing the development of the perception of God over time and how it has adapted to various cultural and historical contexts.
4. **Practical Implications:** Assessing how these conceptualizations impact individual and communal religious practices.
5. **Interfaith Dialogue:** Exploring how understanding these varying perceptions can facilitate dialogue and understanding between followers of the Semitic religions.

### **Research Methodology**

The methodology employed in this study involves a comprehensive review and analysis of primary and secondary sources related to perceptions of God in Islam and Semitic religions. Primary sources include religious texts such as the Quran, Bible, and Torah, as well as classical theological works and commentaries. Secondary sources encompass scholarly articles, books, and academic journals that offer insights into theological, historical, and comparative studies of religion.

## **SECTION II: The Judaic Concept of God: Monotheism, Sacred Nomenclature, and Ethical Implications**

Judaism, as one of the seminal Semitic religions, presents a distinctive monotheistic worldview, profoundly influenced by the teachings and prophetic mission of Moses (PBUH). Central to Jewish belief is the unwavering affirmation of one, indivisible God, a concept that is meticulously woven into the fabric of Judaic theology and practice.

### **Understanding the Reverence and Representation of God's Name in the Old Testament**

In the Old Testament, God's personal name appears more than 5700 times. This name was revealed to Moses during the incident of the burning bush.<sup>12</sup> In Hebrew, it is written with four

consonants and is pronounced probably as ' YHWH '. Its exact pronunciation is unknown because the Jews considered this name so sacred and blessed that they would only utter it on very special occasions like the Day of Atonement. Even then, only the High Priest was permitted to pronounce the name of God. Jews have carefully chosen an alternative word to read 'Yahweh' in their Holy Bible, which emphasizes the power of God. That word is 'Adonai,' meaning 'My Lord.' The Jewish scriptures, which Christians refer to as the Old Testament, are written in Hebrew only with consonants, without any vowels. Hundreds of years after these texts were first written, scholars producing more copies of the Holy Bible began placing the vowels of 'Adonai' under 'Yahweh' to remind readers not to pronounce the sacred name of God.<sup>13</sup>

### **The Jewish Concept of God's Name: Sacred Nomenclature and Its Significance**

In Jewish tradition, the name of an entity is profoundly significant. Unlike mere labels, these names encapsulate the essence and history of their bearers. This concept mirrors the general understanding that a "good name" reflects reputation and legacy, as seen in both individual and corporate identities.

The importance of God's name in Judaism extends beyond the literal to embody His nature and deeds. This is illustrated in Exodus 3:13-22, where Moses' inquiry about God's name delves deeper than its phonetics, seeking understanding of God's character and actions.<sup>14</sup> God's response underscores His eternal existence and His enduring relationship with His people, affirming His role as the redeemer from suffering and bondage.

In Jewish law and tradition, the sanctity of "The Name" is highlighted in the concepts of "chillul Ha-Shem" (desecration of God's Name) and "kiddush Ha-Shem" (sanctification of God's Name).<sup>15</sup> These terms refer not to the literal name but to the reputation and sanctity associated with it, where acts that dishonor or honor God or Judaism directly affect His perceived holiness.<sup>16</sup>

### **Names of God in Judaism<sup>17</sup>**

Contrary to the notion of a "nameless God" in Judeo-Christian dialogue, Jewish texts refer to several names for God, each reflecting different attributes and aspects of His divine nature:

1. **YHVH** Often considered the most sacred name of God, represented by the tetragrammaton Yod-Heh-Vav-Heh. It implies God's eternal existence, correlating with the Hebrew verb "to be". This name, suggesting His mercy and closeness to humanity, appears extensively in the context of God's relationships with people.
2. **Elohim** Used predominantly to denote God's might and sovereignty. The form of the word, which uses a plural ending, is traditionally interpreted as a majestic plural, emphasizing His power and authority.
3. **El Shaddai** Translated as "God Almighty," this name might derive from the root meaning "to heap benefits," or from a divine declaration of creation sufficiency, echoing a narrative of controlled cosmic expansion.
4. **YHVH Tzva'ot** Meaning "Lord of Hosts," this name highlights God's leadership over celestial or earthly armies, denoting His supreme command and often appearing in prophetic texts.

### **The Sanctity of Writing God's Name**

Jewish tradition holds the writing of God's names in high reverence, stemming not from the commandment against taking God's name in vain, which relates specifically to oath-taking, but from a broader prohibition against erasing or defacing these holy names. Therefore, Jews traditionally avoid writing divine names fully to prevent their desecration.<sup>18</sup>

Historically, the name YHVH was pronounced during daily and temple services.<sup>19</sup> Over time, however, the pronunciation of this name fell into disuse outside of the temple context, leading to its eventual loss. Today, Jews commonly use substitutes like "Adonai" (The Lord) or "Ha-Shem" (The Name) in prayer and religious study, avoiding casual pronunciation of any sacred names to preserve their sanctity.<sup>20</sup>

### **The Shema: An Affirmation of Divine Unity**

At the heart of Jewish monotheism is the Shema, a declaration from Deuteronomy, which states, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord."<sup>21</sup> This pivotal verse encapsulates the essence of Jewish theological conviction, asserting the unique oneness of God. The Shema is not merely a statement of faith; it is a foundational principle that distinguishes Judaism from surrounding polytheistic cultures. It underscores the singular nature of the divine, affirming that God's essence is undivided and unparalleled.

### **Exclusive Sovereignty of God in Isaiah**

The Book of Isaiah provides further elucidation on God's exclusivity. Isaiah states, "I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no saviour,"<sup>22</sup> emphasizing God's unique role as the sole architect of salvation. This is complemented by declarations in Isaiah 45:5 and 46:9, which assert God's unrivaled divinity and sovereignty. These verses highlight a fundamental Judaic belief: God's omnipotence and exclusivity, reinforcing the notion that there is no entity comparable to the divine.<sup>23</sup>

### **Judaism's Stance on Idolatry**

A critical aspect of Jewish monotheism is its staunch repudiation of idolatry. The commandments in Exodus 20:3-5 and Deuteronomy 5:7-9 are explicit in their prohibition of graven images and idol worship.<sup>24</sup> This denunciation is not merely a rejection of physical idols but signifies a deeper theological stance that God transcends physical form and human comprehension. By eschewing material representations of the divine, Judaism emphasizes God's intangible, incomprehensible nature, fostering a direct, unmediated relationship between the individual and the divine.<sup>25</sup>

### **God's Uniqueness**

Another verse from Isaiah proclaims, "I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me."<sup>26</sup> This declaration reinforces the concept of God's unparalleled nature and the absence of any other deity within the Judaic worldview.

### **The Theological and Ethical Implications of Judaic Monotheism**

The monotheistic doctrine of Judaism extends beyond mere belief in one God; it shapes the religion's ethical and moral framework. The divine commands, rooted in the belief in a single, just, and moral deity, guide the conduct of Jews, influencing their actions, community relations, and societal structures. The exclusive worship of a just and ethical God necessitates a reflection of these divine attributes in the believers' lives, promoting justice, compassion, and integrity within the Jewish community and beyond.

### **The Reiteration of Monotheism in Deuteronomy**

The Book of Deuteronomy reiterates the message of God's exclusivity and uniqueness. It conveys, "Apart from Me, there is no other god, so do not create any representation of Me. There is none like Me in the heavens above, on the earth, or in the depths of the waters. Therefore, you should not bow down to them or serve them. I alone am God and the sovereign."<sup>27</sup> This directive, found in Deuteronomy 5:7-9, underscores the imperative of monotheism and aniconism within Judaism. It reinforces the prohibition against idolatry, reminding the followers that there is no entity, celestial or terrestrial, that can parallel the divine.

This passage from Deuteronomy is crucial as it not only reasserts the singularity of God but also emphasizes the importance of worship being directed solely towards this singular divine entity, without the mediation of idols or images. It reflects a core Judaic belief in a transcendent God who is beyond any physical representation and insists on a form of worship that aligns with this transcendence.

The reiterated message in Deuteronomy highlights a fundamental aspect of Jewish theology: the unmatched and unparalleled nature of God. This theological stance is integral to the Jewish understanding of divinity and serves as a foundational pillar in their relationship with the divine, shaping their rituals, practices, and ethical standards. In the comparative study of Semitic religions, this articulation of monotheism and aniconism in Judaism provides a poignant contrast to the perceptions and representations of the divine in other faith traditions, offering rich insights into the diversity and commonalities within Semitic theological discourse.<sup>28</sup>

In conclusion, the Judaic concept of God, characterized by divine unity, exclusivity, and a profound rejection of idolatry, lays the groundwork for a rich theological and ethical tradition. As we embark on a comparative exploration with the Islamic perception of the divine, these themes offer a vital lens through which we can examine and appreciate the nuanced tapestry of beliefs that define and differentiate Semitic religions.

## **Contrasts Between Islam and Judaism**

### **1. Concept of God**

- **Islam:** Islam is purely monotheistic, and it strictly prohibits any form of association (shirk) with God. The Quran emphasizes, "Indeed, to Allah belongs the pure religion"<sup>29</sup>, and believers are urged to worship Allah with sincere devotion.
- **Judaism:** While Judaism emphasizes the oneness of God through the Shema "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one"<sup>30</sup>, there are historical claims, as mentioned in the Quran, that some Jewish sects considered Ezra a son of God<sup>31</sup>. This belief is not universally accepted in Judaism and is often debated among scholars.

### **2. Sacred Texts**

- **Islam:** The Quran is Islam's most revered text, followed by the Hadith. The Quran is considered free from any alteration, a protection guaranteed by Allah Himself<sup>32</sup>.
- **Judaism:** The Torah is the central text in Judaism, followed by the Talmud. Scholars like G.M. Gregor in "Bible in the Making" have identified numerous alterations in the Bible over time.<sup>33</sup>

### **3. Angels**

- **Islam:** Angels are viewed as infallible beings in Islam<sup>34</sup>.

- **Judaism:** In Judaism, angels are not considered infallible<sup>35</sup>.

#### 4. Sabbath

- **Islam:** Allah is described as the Creator who does not fatigue or need rest, as elucidated in Ayat al-Kursi<sup>36</sup>.
- **Judaism:** God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh, which is observed as the Sabbath, a day of rest and worship<sup>37</sup>.

#### 5. Prophethood

- **Islam:** Islam insists on believing in all prophets from Adam to Muhammad (peace be upon them), stating that rejecting one prophet is like rejecting them all<sup>38</sup>.
- **Judaism:** Judaism acknowledges the prophets up to Malachi, the last prophet in the Hebrew Bible, without necessitating belief in later prophets like John the Baptist, Jesus, or Muhammad.<sup>39</sup>

#### 6. The Best of Prophets

- **Islam:** Muhammad is considered the last and the greatest prophet, after whom the Prophethood has ended<sup>40</sup>.
- **Judaism:** Moses is regarded as the greatest prophet in Judaism, with a unique relationship with God.<sup>41</sup>

#### 7. The Scope of Religion

- **Islam:** Islam is considered a universal religion, open to all humanity, as it is described as a mercy to the worlds<sup>42</sup>.
- **Judaism:** Traditionally, Judaism is seen as an ethno-religious identity primarily associated with the descendants of the twelve tribes of Israel.<sup>43</sup>

### SECTION III: The Concept of God in Christianity: Christ's Mission and the Divergence from Islamic Theology

#### Concept of God in Christianity

Christianity, a Semitic religion, claims nearly two billion followers worldwide. Christians believe in Jesus Christ and hold him in high regard. Interestingly, Islam also profoundly respects Jesus Christ, making it the only non-Christian faith that mandates belief in him. Before delving into the Christian perception of God, it's important to note Islam's reverence for Jesus Christ. In Islam, belief in Jesus Christ is compulsory, and one cannot be considered a Muslim without this belief. Muslims view him as one of Allah's great and chosen prophets, miraculously born without a father, a point some contemporary Christians may dispute.<sup>44</sup>

Muslims believe Jesus performed miracles by God's command, reviving the dead and healing the blind and lepers. Now, the question arises: if both Muslims and Christians hold Jesus in such high esteem, where do the paths of these two religions diverge? A clear distinction between Islam and Christianity is the Christian insistence on the divinity of Jesus Christ. However, a thorough study of Christian scriptures reveals that Jesus never claimed divinity. In fact, the entire New Testament lacks a single statement where Jesus declares, "I am God" or "Worship me."<sup>45</sup> Instead, the attributed statements in the New Testament often contradict the notion of his divinity. For example:



- "My Father is greater than I."<sup>46</sup>
- "My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all."<sup>47</sup>
- "But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you."<sup>48</sup>
- "By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me."<sup>49</sup>

These passages illustrate that Jesus viewed himself as a servant and messenger of God, not as God Himself. In Christianity, unlike in Islam, the concept of the Trinity introduces a complex understanding of God, where Jesus is seen as the Son of God, one part of the triune Godhead. This fundamental theological difference shapes the divergent paths of Christianity and Islam, despite their shared reverence for Jesus as a remarkable prophet and healer.

### **The Mission of Jesus Christ: Fulfilling the Law**

Jesus Christ, recognized as a prophet in Islam and as the Son of God in Christianity, never claimed to be God Himself. He articulated the purpose of his mission clearly: He was sent by the Almighty God to affirm and fulfill the teachings of Judaism, not to abolish them. This is vividly evidenced in the Gospel of Matthew, where Jesus states, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven"<sup>50</sup>.

This statement underscores Jesus's commitment to the Law given to Moses and the teachings of the prophets that preceded him. He emphasized the continuity and completion of these teachings rather than their nullification, indicating that his mission was an extension and fulfillment of the divine revelations to the Jewish people.

In Islam, Jesus is viewed as a messenger who was consistent with the line of prophets in Judaism, reinforcing the message of monotheism and adherence to divine laws. The Quran acknowledges Jesus's miracles and his esteemed role but maintains a clear distinction from Christian theology, rejecting the concept of his divinity and the Trinitarian view of God.<sup>51</sup>

Thus, while Islam and Christianity share a reverence for Jesus, they diverge significantly in their understanding of his nature and mission. Christianity views Jesus as the fulfillment of Jewish prophecy through his death and resurrection, introducing a new covenant. In contrast, Islam sees him as a prophet who confirmed the message of previous prophets and anticipated the final prophet, Muhammad. These perspectives highlight the deep theological nuances that distinguish the two faiths, despite their shared acknowledgment of Jesus's significant role in their respective religious narratives.

### **God's Mission for Jesus Christ**

The Gospel elucidates the prophetic mission of Jesus Christ, pointing out that his teachings were not his own but those of the Father who sent him. For instance, John 14:24 states, "The word which you hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me."<sup>52</sup> This clearly indicates Jesus's role as a messenger, relaying the divine message from God to humanity.

Moreover, John 17:3 provides further insight into his mission: "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."<sup>53</sup> This verse emphasizes the distinction between knowing the only true God and recognizing Jesus Christ as the one sent by God, reinforcing the concept of monotheism central to Christianity's theological foundations.

In the Gospels, Jesus explicitly refutes any notion of his divinity, emphasizing the singularity of God. For example, when addressed as "Good Teacher" and asked about the path to eternal life, Jesus responds, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone"<sup>54</sup>. By redirecting the notion of goodness exclusively to God, Jesus underscores his own subservience to the divine will and the necessity of following God's commandments to attain eternal life.

These passages challenge the interpretations that attribute divine qualities to Jesus or suggest that salvation is solely through his crucifixion. Instead, they align with the broader biblical theme that adherence to God's commandments is the path to salvation. Jesus's teachings, as presented in the Gospels, consistently highlight the importance of obedience to God's will, reinforcing his role as a messenger rather than a divine entity.

In conclusion, the Gospel narratives present Jesus Christ as a figure wholly committed to fulfilling God's mission, emphasizing the importance of knowing God and obeying His commandments to achieve salvation. These aspects of Jesus's teachings provide a crucial link between his role as understood in Christian theology and his revered status as a prophet in Islam, underlining the profound respect both religions have for his mission and teachings.

### **Jesus of Nazareth: God's Endorsed Servant**

The following statement from the Gospel resonates with Islamic beliefs, affirming that Jesus Christ was a prophet of God: "O Children of Israel! Listen to these words: God has approved a man among you, Jesus of Nazareth, to perform miracles, wonders, and signs that God did through him in your midst, and you yourselves know this."<sup>55</sup>

This passage underscores the role of Jesus as a messenger and servant chosen by God to carry out divine acts among the people. The reference to "miracles, wonders, and signs" aligns with the Islamic view that Jesus was endowed with the ability to perform extraordinary deeds not by his own power but through the will and support of God. These acts served as evidence of his prophetic mission and divine endorsement.

In Islam, Jesus (known as Isa in Arabic) is revered as one of the great prophets, sent to guide the Children of Israel and reaffirm the monotheistic teachings of previous prophets. The Quran acknowledges Jesus's miraculous birth, his teachings, and the miracles he performed by God's permission, highlighting his significance in the Islamic faith.

The statement from the Gospel aligns with this Islamic perspective, portraying Jesus not as a divine figure but as a divinely guided individual whose mission was to convey God's message and demonstrate His power through miracles.<sup>56</sup> This portrayal challenges the notion of Jesus's divinity, emphasizing instead his role as a devout servant and messenger of God, a concept that bridges the theological understandings of Christianity and Islam regarding Jesus's nature and mission.

### **The Foremost Commandment: God is One**

The Gospel does not support the doctrine of the Trinity. When a scribe asked Jesus of Nazareth about the greatest commandment, Jesus echoed the words previously spoken by Prophet Moses. He repeated a Hebrew phrase, which translates to:

"The Lord our God, the Lord is one."<sup>57</sup>

This response by Jesus emphasizes the monotheistic essence that is central to both Judaism and Christianity. By reaffirming the declaration made by Moses, Jesus highlighted the continuity of the monotheistic tradition. This assertion aligns with the Islamic perspective, which also upholds the oneness of God and recognizes Jesus as a prophet who adhered to and propagated this fundamental belief.

In Islam, the concept of Tawhid (the Oneness of God) is paramount, mirroring the emphasis Jesus placed on the unity of God as the foremost commandment. This shared emphasis on monotheism serves as a common thread linking the Abrahamic faiths, despite the differing theological frameworks that define each religion.

### **Belief in the Trinity and Christian Theology:**

Augustine was considered an authority in his lifetime for bringing clarity to many points of religion. In fact, he established beliefs that included the explanation of the Trinity of God, which were not lacking in detail. "I am forced to choose the path of a difficult and dark subject." He noted this in his book "De Trinitate," which was a massive tome that he wrote over a period of 20 years. Essentially, to answer the Arians, Augustine sifted through such contentious points that would later emerge as fundamental points in the Council of Chalcedon's debate. In 451 AD, his book "On the Trinity" is a seminal work in Christian theology. Augustine's fundamental assumptions are quite clear in his early writings, including his letters and sermons. He wrote to Nebridius: "Whatever is done from the Trinity will be understood in the sense that it was done either by the Father, or the Son, or the Holy Spirit."<sup>58</sup>

In his opinion on the Trinity, Augustine emphasized that there is only one God in place of the three gods. They all come together to form a divine union that is indivisible, bound in equality. In this Trinity, "if one is spoken of, all are meant, indivisible conjunction and the cause of similar things."<sup>59</sup> He established the supernatural basis of the Christian Trinity, which pertains to the nature of God. In Father, the believer knows that God is the source of all beings. In the form of Christ, the Savior, and in the form of the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier.

### **SECTION IV: The Uniqueness and Consistency of Divine Attributes in Islam**

The Qur'anic discourse on the attributes of Allah emphasizes the concept that if the Creator is eternal and everlasting, so too must be His attributes. This theological stance asserts that Allah's qualities do not diminish over time nor do they evolve. The immutability of these attributes signifies their absoluteness, challenging the notion of multiple deities sharing these infinite qualities.

Philosophical inquiries into the nature of divine power further elucidate this point. The hypothetical presence of more than one deity with absolute attributes, such as omnipotence, introduces logical inconsistencies. For example, if two omnipotent creators existed, it would be conceivable that conflicts could arise between their wills, leading to paradoxes and contradictions in the governance of the universe. The Qur'an addresses this theoretical dilemma, asserting the singularity of Allah and dismissing the possibility of any divine partners. It articulates this through a critical examination of polytheistic beliefs: "Allah has not taken any son, nor has there ever been with Him any deity. [If there had been], then each deity would have taken what it created, and some of them would have sought to overcome others. Exalted is Allah above what they describe [concerning Him]."<sup>60</sup>

This passage effectively counters polytheistic interpretations by highlighting the logical impossibility of a universe managed by multiple all-powerful beings, thereby reinforcing the monotheistic doctrine that there is only one, all-encompassing deity.

### **The Concept of God in Islam:**

In the historical context, idolatry was prevalent among the Arabs before the advent of Islam.<sup>61</sup> Despite their idolatrous practices, the Arabs held a vague notion of a supreme God, worshiping idols as intermediaries to draw closer to Allah. Islam emerged at a time when not only was the concept of God distorted by idolatry but various other forms of corruption had also permeated Arab society. The mission of Islam, then, was to correct these misconceptions about God and cleanse society of its spiritual ailments. Through the doctrine of Tawhid (Oneness of God), Islam not only corrected dispersed notions about God but also rectified other philosophical and moral issues.<sup>62</sup>

The philosophy regarding the concept of God in the Quran aligns with that of other divine scriptures, but due to alterations in those texts, the monotheistic concept became obscured. Thus, the Quran emphasizes, "And do not argue with the People of the Scripture except in a way that is best, except for those who commit injustice among them, and say, 'We believe in that which has been revealed to us and revealed to you. And our God and your God is one; and we are Muslims [in submission] to Him.'"<sup>63</sup>

Furthermore, in the Torah's Book of Deuteronomy, a similar proclamation is made: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one."<sup>64</sup>

Islam presents a pristine concept of God, devoid of any deficiencies. From the Islamic perspective, Allah is the Creator of the universe, and in this creative process, He has no partners. Once this concept is established, there is no room for any association or likeness with God. The statement "There is no deity except Allah"<sup>65</sup> provides a solid monotheistic foundation that outright rejects the notion of multiple gods and elevates Allah's existence above human existence. This idea is reflected in "Bismillah al-Rahman al-Rahim," indicating God's attributes of mercy and compassion.<sup>66</sup>

According to Islamic belief, the relationship between humans and God is that of the creator and the creation, and the connection with God is maintained through prophethood and revelation. The chain of revelation concluded with the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Islam firmly holds that God has never taken a human form or shared His divinity. The Quran clarifies this by affirming Jesus's humanity and prophethood, countering any divine claims attributed to him.<sup>67</sup>

Ibn Sina states that God, in terms of essence, status, and causality, precedes the universe. The idea that the universe influences God is impossible because it would imply a change in God's will, which is inconceivable as God's will is immutable.<sup>68</sup>

### **The Oneness of God in Islam: A Pure Monotheistic Perspective**

The Islamic view of God is entrenched in pure monotheism (Tawhid), devoid of any form of plurality or association. The Quran consistently describes Allah as the singular entity, emphasizing His uniqueness and the exclusivity of His divinity. This is evident in several verses where Allah is referred to with emphasis on His oneness and omnipotence.

For instance, the Quran states, "He is Allah, the One"<sup>69</sup>, reinforcing the concept of God's unique and singular nature. Another verse declares, "So know that there is no deity except Allah"<sup>70</sup>, further emphasizing the monotheistic belief that underpins Islam.

Additionally, the Quran addresses the denial of dualism or polytheism explicitly: "And do not take two gods. Indeed, He is one God"<sup>71</sup>. Such verses underscore the Islamic tenet that Allah is the sole creator and sustainer, without any partners or equals.

These verses, among others, articulate a clear and unambiguous representation of monotheism in Islam. They emphasize the importance of recognizing and worshiping Allah as the only deity, negating any concept of multiple gods or shared divinity. This foundational belief not only defines the essence of Islamic theology but also guides the ethical and spiritual conduct of Muslims, anchoring their faith in the worship of one, all-powerful, and merciful God.

### **The Futility of Worshiping Humans: Emphasizing Islamic Monotheism**

Just as the idea of God assuming human form is unacceptable, it should also be universally acknowledged that worshiping any human being is futile. If God were to take on human form, He would no longer retain His divine attributes but would instead possess human characteristics. For instance, if a brilliant professor loses his memory in an accident, it would be foolish for students to continue seeking knowledge from him. Similarly, if one were to accept that God could adopt human traits, the notion of Him regaining divine attributes would be impossible, as the very definition of a human includes the inability to become God. Therefore, attributing divinity to a human and worshiping them is a logical fallacy that is detestable in all its forms.

This is why the Quran strongly rejects any concept of God manifesting in human form. The Quran states in Surah Ash-Shura, "There is nothing like unto Him, and He is the Hearing, the Seeing."<sup>72</sup> This verse emphasizes that nothing in the universe resembles Him, underscoring His unique nature as all-hearing and all-seeing.

The Islamic perspective clearly delineates the boundaries between Creator and creation, emphasizing the impossibility of any overlap between the two. Worship is exclusively directed toward Allah, the Creator, who is beyond human limitations and imperfections. In Islam, the act of worshiping anything or anyone other than Allah is considered shirk (polytheism or idolatry), a grievous sin that detracts from the purity of Tawhid (monotheism). The Quranic message is a call to recognize and affirm the singular, unparalleled nature of Allah, guiding humanity away from the fallacies of idolatry and the worship of created beings.

### **SECTION V: Conclusion**

The understanding of God and the human perspective on divinity has been a profound and enduring issue, traversed through various epochs where intellectual debates flourished. Throughout history, this concept has undergone transformations across different languages and cultures, reflecting an evolutionary journey of theological and philosophical maturity.

The advent of Islam marked a pivotal moment, crystallizing the notion of absolute monotheism. While some believe that this notion of Tawhid (Oneness of God) concluded the evolution of the concept of God, others opine that subtle shifts in this perception continue to emerge. Historically, the concept of monotheism found resolution with the arrival of Abrahamic religions, emphasizing a singular divine entity.

In various advanced civilizations, despite diverse understandings of God, it's evident that the concept invariably gravitates back towards monotheism, finding its definitive expression from Prophet Abraham to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon them). Despite the teachings of prophets, political and societal shifts occasionally swayed this understanding.

The results indicate that the principle of Tawhid plays a crucial role in the rise and fall of nations. For instance, during the era of Akhenaten in Egypt, the monotheistic concept elevated the nation, contrasting with societies that deviated towards polytheism or idolatry, which eventually declined.

Prior to Islam, although Abrahamic teachings laid some groundwork for understanding the relationship between God and humans, Islam presented this concept of Tawhid in a comprehensive and profound manner, reinforcing the monotheistic belief unequivocally.

In essence, the evolution of the concept of God, particularly within Islamic teachings, underscores a return to a pure, unadulterated form of monotheism, offering a foundational perspective that influences the trajectory of civilizations and individual belief systems.

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